

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

5 December 2012

Consumer NZ is warning people not to use sunbeds following another mystery shop which showed out of 66 sunbed operators, only 11 met all the safety requirements we were looking for.

Even worse, three operators provided broken goggles and only about half gave a formal skin assessment.

Consumer NZ chief executive Sue Chetwin says: "Enough is enough, sunbed operators aren't complying with the voluntary standard, and it's time to make that standard compulsory and to license all operators."

This year's poor result was similar to last year's mystery shop and follows years of Consumer campaigning to clean up this industry.

It's important when using sunbeds that protective goggles are worn. Without eye protection, UV rays can damage your eyes and increase the risk of getting cataracts. "Yet at Anytime Fitness in Whangarei our shopper was told wearing goggles was optional and she could close her eyes if she didn't want to wear them. Eight operators provided goggles that were a loose fit and three provided broken goggles," Chetwin said.

The standard provides for warning notices in sunbed cubicles specifying the risks of exposure to UV and also to warn specific groups about their higher risk. Less than half the operators had all the warnings recommended in the standard.

Customers should also be given a consent form to sign that spells out the risks of sunbed use, emphasises who's at high risk and the importance of wearing goggles. Only 34 operators provided this.

Following Consumer's last mystery shop which showed only seven operators compliant with the standard, the Commerce Commission warned the industry they shouldn't make false or misleading claims about the health benefits and risks of sunbed use. Chetwin said despite being put on notice 13 operators continued to make claims Consumer had concerns about. "We'll be passing those on to the commission."

New Zealand has high summer UV-radiation levels compared with other countries, and this places us all at increased risk of developing skin cancer. If you have lots of moles or freckles, or otherwise sun-damaged skin, you are more at risk and shouldn't use a sunbed. Family history is also important. If a close relative has had melanoma, you're more at risk.

For more information contact:

Sue Chetwin 021472748

suzanne@consumer.org.nz