



MEDIA RELEASE

24 August 2007

Cancer Council applauds Prime Minister's call for solarium regulation

The Cancer Council Australia has welcomed the Prime Minister John Howard's announcement today that he would ask Health Minister Tony Abbott to look at uniform national laws on solarium use in Australia.

Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, said solarium use significantly increased the risk of skin cancer and that the proliferation of solariums across Australia without any reasonable safety controls was a serious public health issue.

Professor Olver said recent research showed that the number of solariums in Australian capital cities had increased fourfold over the past decade, with more than 400 solariums operating without any uniform regulation to help reduce their potential for skin cancer death and disease.

He said research also showed that the current voluntary code was not working, with evidence of poor industry compliance in areas such as restricting solarium use for people aged under 18 and little understanding of the serious health risks posed by solarium use.

"In a nation that has for many years had the world's highest skin cancer incidence and mortality rates, it is unacceptable that we significantly increase our risk of a potentially deadly disease through artificial means in an unregulated environment," Professor Olver said.

"Solariums can produce UV radiation up to five times stronger than the midday summer sun and, when used before the age of 35, increase melanoma risk by up to 75 per cent.

"The Prime Minister should be commended for showing national leadership on this important public health issue."

Professor Olver said he looked forward to hearing more from the federal government, following Prime Minister Howard's discussion with Minister Abbott.

"The federal government has a strong record in cancer control, including its running last summer of Australia's first ever national skin cancer awareness campaign," he said.

"Addressing the escalating and unregulated proliferation of solariums is a good opportunity for the Government to complement its ongoing skin cancer prevention campaign with some evidence-based policy in an area that has not been addressed at any level of government."