

Australian solarium industry fizzles by 32%

Franchises and spray tanning salons lose their golden glow

New research by Cancer Council has found that the number of solariums across Australian capital cities has declined by 32% over the past three years, with franchises taking the biggest hit.

The research, published today (7 Oct) in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, shows Yellow Pages listings of solariums across the country have fallen from 406 to 278 since 2006. Melbourne (-51%) had the biggest fall ahead of Hobart (-42%), Adelaide (-33%), Perth (-25%), Sydney (-14%) and Brisbane (-4%).

“Looking at the figures, there is a link between legislation and reductions in solarium numbers – Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia were the first three states to introduce legislation in 2008,” said the Chair of Cancer Council Australia’s National Skin Cancer Committee, Craig Sinclair.

“In Queensland, where regulation is still not comprehensive, the number of solariums barely changed - despite the higher-than-average density of solarium listings for the Brisbane population.

“In Canberra, where legislation is still under consideration, the study actually showed a small increase in solarium listings (+10%). Canberra also has the highest density of salons for its population.”

Contrary to popular belief, the research found no evidence that people are switching from solariums to spray tans, with the number of operators advertising spray tanning services in capital city directories decreasing by 55% from 128 to 58.

“We take this as a very positive sign that Australians are beginning to feel comfortable in their own skin and not feel pressured to live up to some tanned ideal as constantly portrayed by the fashion industry,” Mr Sinclair said.

Tanning franchises saw their numbers dwindle dramatically. In 2006, 38% of all operators were identified as affiliated with franchise networks, whereas in 2008/09 this number had fallen to 25%. Melbourne franchises experienced the greatest fall with the number of businesses listed as affiliated with the three major franchises plummeting from 74 to just seven.

About the study

The study aimed to monitor changes in the number of solariums in Australia’s capital cities following widespread negative publicity surrounding the death of Clare Oliver, and the introduction of legislation in some states and territories.

An audit of listings under the category ‘Solarium/Tanning Centres’ in the most recent hard copy Yellow Pages for Australia’s capital cities was conducted, and results were compared with those from a previous audit from 2006.

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