



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Growth in solariums alarms skin cancer experts**

Skin cancer experts have expressed alarm at new Cancer Council research showing an explosion in solarium numbers across Australia, with one capital city recording a 1000 per cent increase over the past decade.

The new figures, published today in the *Australian New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, show the number of solariums advertised in the Yellow Pages™ in Australian capital cities increased four fold between 1996 and 2006 (see overleaf for details).

The startling rise has prompted a call for tighter regulation of the industry, which currently operates under a voluntary code.

The Cancer Council Australia's Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, said the figures were staggering, yet understated as the research did not cover solariums in beauty salons or fitness centres.

"This study backs existing research showing that hundreds of thousands of Australians are being needlessly exposed to excessive UV radiation and an increased risk of skin cancer,"

Professor Olver said. "Solariums emit ultraviolet radiation up to five times as strong as the sun and there is clear evidence of the link between solariums and skin cancer."

Professor Olver said the findings were especially worrying in light of a recently published international study, which found a 75 per cent increased risk of melanoma for people using solariums before the age of 35.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Chair of The Cancer Council's National Skin Cancer Committee, Craig Sinclair, more than 1500 Australians lose their lives each year to skin cancer and the revelation that solariums were increasing at such a rapid rate would be of enormous concern to skin cancer and public health experts.

"We are particularly worried about the risk to young Australians," Mr Sinclair said. "We already know the voluntary code is not working and our own studies show poor compliance in restricting solarium access to those under 16.

"This demonstrates the urgent need for legislation, which is already in place in many parts of Europe and the United States. Australia has the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, yet we lag behind other countries in tackling this problem."

Mr Sinclair said that anyone who thought solariums offered a "safe way of tanning" should think again.

<sup>1</sup>International Agency for the Research on Cancer. The association of use of sunbeds with cutaneous malignant melanoma and other skin cancers: A systematic review. *Int. J. Cancer*: 120, 1116-1122 (2006).