



## Media Release

Date: Wednesday 21 September, 2016

Contact: Laura Wakely, Media & Communications Adviser, 9514 6356 or 0429 406 423

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### **'Black-market' fears quashed as study finds Victorian solarium ban a success**

Today's first successful prosecution of illegal tanning operations follows the publication of a new study that shows the ban on commercial solariums has led to a dramatic reduction in the availability of tanning machines in Victoria.

Published in the latest issue of the *British Journal of Dermatology*, the study by Cancer Council Victoria examined the impact of the ban on commercial solariums, which came into effect on 1 January 2015.

Researchers monitored the number of sunbeds advertised on leading online trading sites Gumtree and eBay between October 2012 and April 2015, four months after the ban had taken effect.

They found advertisements declined over time, from a peak of 115 sunbeds advertised in May 2014, to 50 or less each month from February 2015.

Meanwhile, Gumtree advertisements from Victorians wanting access to a solarium increased from isolated instances before the ban, to up to 77 per month after the ban came into effect.

Cancer Council Victoria Prevention Director and study lead author Craig Sinclair said several Gumtree advertisers wanting access to solariums repeatedly posted their ads, indicating their lack of success in finding an available service.

"The solarium industry proposed that this ban would lead to a black market boom in solariums – but nothing could be further from the truth," Mr Sinclair said.

"Victorians are clearly finding it hard to access solariums and this will only become harder now that all Australian states have similar bans in place."

Commercial solariums are now banned in all Australian jurisdictions, except the Northern Territory where there are no solarium operators.

Today the Department of Health and Human Services successfully prosecuted the first case against illegal commercial solarium operations in the Heidelberg Magistrates Court.

"We're pleased to see action being taken against those people who continue to cash in on these cancer-causing machines," Mr Sinclair said.

"There is absolutely nothing healthy about a tan. You may think it looks good, but what you can't see is the permanent damage to your DNA.

At best this will prematurely age your skin. But for many solarium users, this damage will significantly increase their risk of melanoma. It's just not worth the risk."

A solarium can emit levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation up to six times as strong as the summer sun at its peak and had been estimated to cause 281 new melanoma cases, 43 melanoma-related deaths and 2,572 new cases of squamous cell carcinomas in Australia each year.





Brazil has also banned solariums and tougher regulation is underway in New Zealand, the USA, the UK, France, Spain and the Netherlands.

"We're proud that these countries are looking to us as world leaders in reducing harms from these cancer-causing machines," Mr Sinclair said.

"Importantly, those who were seeking a tan from a solarium have obviously moved on very quickly to possibly much safer alternatives such as spray tans or have given up the idea of wanting a tan altogether.

For those few individuals who still continue to use sunbeds or UV-emitting devices in their homes should re-think their tanning habits. You increase your risk of cancer every time you use these machines. It is just not worth the cost to you or your loved ones."

Anyone who has used a solarium previously should keep a close eye on their skin to monitor any changes in the shape, size or colour of existing spots or appearance of a new spot. If you notice any changes, see a doctor as soon as possible. Former solarium users may want to develop a surveillance plan because of their increased skin cancer risk.

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