

## **New research backs up calls for sunbeds ban 2 December 2016**

The Melanoma Network of New Zealand (MelNet) and Melanoma New Zealand are welcoming research showing that banning sunbed services in New Zealand would help reduce skin cancer rates and only have a minimal impact on businesses and jobs.

The findings, from the University of Otago's Cancer Society Behavioural Research Unit, were published in the *New Zealand Medical Journal* today.

MelNet and Melanoma New Zealand spokesperson Dr Ben Tallon says the findings come soon after findings from the European Commission that there is no safe exposure limit for UV radiation from sunbeds.

"Together they add weight to our position that sunbeds should be banned in New Zealand," he says.

Dr Tallon says despite the ever-increasing evidence of harm caused by sunbeds, New Zealand has no nationwide regulations governing sunbed use, unlike many other countries.

"New Zealand has a voluntary standard for sunbed operators that includes ensuring all sunbeds are supervised and not allowing people under the age of 18 or with the fairest skin types to use them. Surveys by Consumer NZ have found that many operators do not comply with these standards."

The *NZMJ* article details how researchers from the University's Cancer Society Behavioural Research Unit conducted a nationwide audit of businesses potentially providing sunbed services and found that a ban would only have a minor effect on a very small number of businesses.

Their results showed that for most businesses with sunbeds (92.4 per cent) - such as hairdressers, salons, gyms, and fitness centres - tanning services were supplementary to their other services.

The researchers, Bronwen McNoe and Tony Reeder (both members of MelNet), argue that New Zealand should follow Australia's lead in banning all commercial sunbeds while compensating for the loss of the equipment and arranging for its safe disposal.

For further information contact Dr Ben Tallon, 021 264 7507.

### **Background**

The European Commission and its Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks (SCHEER) concludes that exposure to UVR in the context of sunbed use is:

- strongly associated with skin melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma, especially when first exposure takes place at a younger age;
- moderately associated with basal cell carcinoma and ocular melanoma;
- responsible for a significant proportion of both melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer cases associated with early onset melanoma.

As there is no threshold level of UV-irradiance and UV-dose for the induction of skin cancer, the SCHEER concludes that there is no safe limit for exposure to UVR from sunbeds. Furthermore, as the risks outweigh the benefits, there is no need to use sunbeds to induce vitamin D production.

