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## **10-year anniversary of sunbed ban a stark reminder that no tan is worth dying for**

This January marks the 10th anniversary of the commercial solarium ban in Australia, however, data shows many Australians are still suntanning and have poor sun protection behaviours.

Commercial solariums, also known as sunbeds or tanning beds, are classified by International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in the highest risk category, Group 1: carcinogenic to humans. Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation causes up to 95% of melanomas, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

Prior to the commercial solarium ban, it was estimated each year that more than 2800 skin cancer cases and 43 melanoma-related deaths were attributable to solarium use, costing the Australian health system around \$3 million.

While commercial solariums have been banned for the past decade, private ownership and personal use of solariums remained legal and unregulated. Recently, modified sunbeds have emerged, called collariums or collagen beds, which are promoted as a “healthy” alternative to solariums despite emitting UV radiation and thus increasing a person’s risk of developing skin cancer.

Professor Anne Cust, Chair of Cancer Council’s National Skin Cancer Committee, says the rise of collariums is concerning as it contributes to Australia’s culture of glamorising a suntan, and because Australians are continuing to put themselves at risk of developing skin cancer to get a suntan.

“Overexposure to UV radiation, whether it’s in a sunbed or outdoors, is the greatest risk factor for skin cancer. A suntan is an indication that you’re doing damage to your skin. There is no such thing as a safe suntan.”

“Collariums emit UV radiation, particularly UVA, which penetrates deep into the skin, causing DNA damage and contributing to skin ageing and skin cancer risk.”

Data from an Australian-first survey, funded by the Cancer Councils of Australia and conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showed that Australians are not being safe in the sun and aren’t doing enough to protect themselves.

- **Attempting to get a suntan:** Over 2 million Australians (9.4%) attempted to get a suntan in the last year. This was higher for young Australians (aged 15–24 years) as one in five (20.6%) tried to get a suntan in the last year, with more young women (26%) doing so than young men (15.3%).
- **Sunburn:** Almost 1.5 million Australians (6.4%) had been sunburned in the week before being surveyed.

- **Sun protection behaviours:** Only half (53.9%) of Australians used three or more forms when exposed to the sun during peak UV times, with young people being less likely to use adequate sun protection (39.4%) compared to Australians aged 45-54 years (61.6%) when outdoors during peak UV times.

Professor Cust says, “We have the highest rate of skin cancer in the world with two in three Australians expected to have skin cancer in their life. Fortunately, skin cancer is almost entirely preventable. We encourage Australians to embrace their natural skin tone and make sun protection a daily part of their routine.”

Cancer Council Australia encourages all Australians to be SunSmart and use all five forms of sun protection when the UV is 3 or above: slip on protective clothing, slop on broad-spectrum, water-resistant SPF50 or SPF50+ sunscreen, slap on a broad-brimmed hat, seek shade and slide on sunglasses.

-ENDS-

Read the full Australian Bureau of Statistics report here: [Sun protection behaviours \(2024\)](#)

#### **Contact details**

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact:

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#### **About Cancer Council Australia**

Cancer Council Australia is Australia’s leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

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