



# **The Hon Robyn Parker MP**

## **Minister for the Environment**

## **Minister for Heritage**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Friday 3 February 2012

#### **State Government bans commercial tanning units**

The State Government is introducing tough new laws banning commercial ultraviolet (UV) solaria tanning units in NSW, the Environment Minister Robyn Parker said today.

Ms Parker, announcing the ban on World Cancer Day, said there was mounting evidence that the use of sunbeds was associated with an increased risk of melanoma at any age.

“Solaria use is associated with a range of skin cancers, including melanoma, which is the most life threatening form of skin cancer and the most common form of skin cancer among 15 to 39-year-olds,” Ms Parker said.

“The International Agency for research on Cancer has increased the classification for solaria to ‘carcinogenic to humans’ and this places solaria in the same category of risk of harm to humans as asbestos.

“Sadly, Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world and this ban is long overdue.”

Ms Parker said the new laws totally banning commercial solaria tanning units in NSW will be effective from 31 December 2014.

“The health risks associated with the use of tanning units are becoming increasingly well known, with increasing scientific research confirming a direct link between the use of tanning units and the increased early on-set of melanoma,” Ms Parker said.

“Today’s announcement is in direct response to that research and its aim is to actively reduce the amount of skin cancers and melanoma’s diagnosed in NSW each year.

“All the data shows that the Australian health system spends more money on the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer than on any other cancer.

“Obviously we can’t stop people going out in the sun but this ban will prevent them from being exposed to the harmful UV from tanning units.”

Ms Parker said that recent advice provided by health authorities indicated that the level of skin cancer risk associated with solaria use is higher than previously understood.

“The risk is particularly heightened when solarium users are younger than 35 years and using tanning units to obtain a cosmetic tan is just not worth the risk,” Ms Parker said.

Ms Parker said the introduction period to 31 December 2014 would give the solarium industry time to adjust to the changes, remove the tanning units and transition their business to safer alternatives.

“Until then Environment Protection Agency (EPA) will continue to ensure that the solarium industry is meeting its regulatory requirements and will be conducting audits of premises that own commercial tanning units to ensure that they are complying with current regulations,” Ms Parker said.

The Minister said the Government would look at ways to support the industry by helping with the safe disposal of tanning units and by assisting the industry reposition and diversify their businesses.

Ms Parker said the ban had the strong backing of the Melanoma Institute, Cancer Institute NSW, NSW Health, the Cancer Council, NSW Radiation Advisory Council, and the Medical Oncology Group of Australia, the peak representative body for cancer specialists in Australia,

Chief cancer officer and CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW, Professor David Currow, says the NSW Government had an important responsibility in reducing the risk of cancer in the community.

“This legislation sends a clear message to people across NSW – there is no safe level of solarium use to get a tan, for anyone, under any circumstances. Melanoma is a particularly aggressive form of skin cancer, which is associated with solarium use,” Professor Currow said.

Jay Allen, a melanoma survivor and founder of [SunbedBan.com](http://SunbedBan.com), has been campaigning for the past four years for a ban on sunbeds in NSW.

“My surgeon is adamant that my sunbed use contributed to my stage 3 melanoma diagnosis in February 2008 and to finally see a total ban means so much. I believe it will help save the lives of people years ahead,” Mr Allen said.

For more information about Solarium Regulation in NSW visit <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/radiation/solarium.htm>

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## Background information on Solaria

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- The Australian Melanoma Family Study has found the use of sun beds by young people aged 18 to 39 years increased their risk of developing melanoma by an average 41 per cent
- The study found that compared with participants who had never used a sun bed, those who had done so were 41 per cent more likely to develop melanoma
- The study estimated that 16 per cent of melanoma cases in patients aged 18-29 years and three per cent in those aged 30-39 years would be prevented by avoiding sunbed exposure
- In 2008, 3591 people were diagnosed with melanoma in New South Wales and 489 died because of the disease.
- A recent Australian study by Dr Anne Cust, Senior Lecturer, Public Health, School of Public Health and published in the International Journal of Cancer, concluded that the association of use of cosmetic UV tanning units and early onset melanoma was stronger in people who used a tanning unit from an earlier age.
- Using NSW cancer figures, Dr Cust estimates that 120 (79 females and 41 males) cases of melanoma could be avoided each year if current laws were extended so that all ages and skin types were barred from using solaria.
- Based on melanoma five-year survival rates of 93% in women and 88% in men, statistically, each year 5.5 of these cases in women and 4.9 cases in men would be fatal.
- Dr Cust's report reinforces the findings of a 2007 Queensland Institute for Medical Research study, which found that when people under the age of 35 used tanning units their risk of developing melanoma is doubled.
- The most recent available data shows that the Australian health system spends more money on the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer than on any other cancer, estimated at \$294 million in 2000-01.
- In 2009 the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified solaria as carcinogenic to humans.
- Most solaria businesses offer UV tanning as a sideline to their main business (gyms, beauty salons etc) and of the 26 specialist tanning businesses, most also offer spray tans already