

# Stricter solarium laws to burn rogue operators

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Solarium operators face fines of up to \$1 million in Victoria for failing to display health warnings, register their businesses and turn away customers under the age of 16 under laws taking effect today.

Under the regulations, tanning salons are prohibited from allowing fair-skinned people and children under 16 to use a sunbed. Teenagers aged 16 to 18 require consent from their parents.

Teams of inspectors will carry out random checks on Victoria's 500 operators to ensure compliance and those found to have breached the laws face fines of up to \$660,720. Salons not licensed with the Department of Human Services face an even bigger fine of \$991,080.

State Health Minister Daniel Andrews yesterday said more than 100 operators had already received their licences and that he was expecting a flood of applications before today's deadline.

Mr Andrews said he believed some solarium operators would close as a result of the new laws.

The Cancer Council has welcomed the legislation but wants national regulations rolled out, recommending a ban for all people under the age of 18. A spokesman for federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon yesterday said the minister "would be prepared to look at the possibility of nationally consistent regulations".

Kylie Strong, the head of the council's Sunsmart program, said she was shocked that Victorian women were still ignorant about the dangers of solariums despite the campaigning of cancer sufferer Clare Oliver, who died in September last year.

Research conducted by the council, released yesterday, found that 29% of women surveyed had used a solarium at some time, with one in 10 intending to use a solarium in the next year.

The survey of 150 Victorian women aged 18-30 also showed that almost 25% failed to recognise that solarium use increased the risk of skin cancer.

A separate study released earlier this year found people under the age of 35 increased their risk of forming a dangerous melanoma skin cancer by 98% if they used solariums.

Saffron Styles, of St Kilda, partly blames a decade of solarium use for a melanoma she had cut out of her leg last year. The 31-year-old says she has used solariums irregularly since she was 18. "I did also sunbathe so I can't say categorically that solariums caused it, but because it was on the back of my leg, I think solariums did play some part."

Patrick Holly, of the Australian Solarium Association, said sunbed usage had dropped considerably since Clare Oliver's death.

Mr Holly said he believed there was still a market for solariums in the years ahead. "There is a place for solariums under stringent rules and I expect business to be back to normal by next year once people know solariums will be more stringent in their duty of care," he said.

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2008/01/31/1201714153338.html>