



House Health Committee to inquire into skin cancer

The House of Representatives Health Committee announced today a new inquiry into skin cancer, which kills more than 2000 Australians every year.

According to Cancer Council Australia, two in three Australians will be diagnosed with a skin cancer by the time they turn 70 years of age. In 2011, 1544 people died from the melanoma skin cancer and 543 people died from non-melanoma cancers such as basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. More than 400,000 people in Australia are treated for one or more of these non-melanoma skin cancers each year. Melanoma remains the most common cancer in Australians aged 15 to 44 years.

In launching the inquiry, Committee Chair Steve Irons MP said the committee is “returning to the issue of skin cancer, because it is clearly a major issue for the community”.

“Australia has the world’s highest incidence of skin cancer. It is the terrible price that we pay for the lifestyle we love,” Mr Irons said.

Australians have more than 12 times the global average rate of melanoma of the skin—the highest recorded incidence in the world. However, global comparisons of survival rates for cancer patients show Australia is performing well in managing and treating skin cancer.

“This success shows that the Australian medical system is a great national asset, but we cannot become complacent. We must do what we can to ensure that the dangers of melanoma and various other skin cancers are confronted as vigorously as possible,” Mr Irons said.

The committee will investigate the awareness, early diagnosis and management of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers and report on:

- the need to increase levels of awareness in the community and among healthcare professionals;
- strategies to enhance early diagnosis; and
- options to improve implementation of evidence-based best practice treatment and management.

“The committee is keen to hear from the community, both medical experts and ordinary Australians, on what needs to be done to get the best outcome for us all,” Mr Irons said.

The inquiry will examine the issues raised at a skin cancer roundtable conducted in June 2013 by the health committee of the previous parliament.

Submissions from interested individuals and organisations should be received by COB 12 March 2014. The preferred form of submissions is in electronic format sent to health.reps@aph.gov.au. Hardcopy submissions can be sent to the House of Representatives Health Committee, Parliament House—they should be accompanied by an electronic version on disc.

Further information on the committee’s inquiry, including the full terms of reference and more details on how to lodge a submission are now available on the committee’s website: www.aph.gov.au/health

For media comment, please contact Mr Jonathan Martin from the office of Mr Steve Irons MP on 0439 412 855. **For all other enquiries**, please contact the committee secretariat by phone on (02) 6277 4145 or visit the committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/health.