

Millions of dollars gained, thousands of cancers avoided through skin cancer campaign

\$2.32 for every \$1 invested

The Australian Government's skin cancer awareness campaign would return \$2.32 for every \$1 invested and prevent around 69,000 skin cancer cases over the next two decades, according to new research commissioned by Cancer Council Australia and the Australasian College of Dermatologists.

Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, said the report, *Skin cancer prevention: a blue chip investment in public health*, made a "compelling case" for the Government to re-commit in the budget to an ongoing skin cancer prevention campaign.

Conducted by Melbourne's Deakin University, the study evaluated the results of previous campaigns against projected growth in Australia's skin cancer burden, showing returns to government through reduced health costs of \$2.32 for every \$1 invested and net gains to the general economy of \$90m over 20 years.

"Prevention is always better than cure – and in this case we have the evidence to put a dollar figure on the adage, particularly through reduced healthcare costs," Professor Olver said.

"An annual skin cancer prevention campaign is one of the best public health buys available to government – yet there is no funding commitment beyond this summer."

Report co-author, Professor Rob Carter, said the gains could be achieved through a relatively modest investment of around \$8m a year. "Set against an annual \$290m skin cancer medical bill, this is a strong government investment," he said.

Honorary Secretary of Australasian College of Dermatologists, Dr Stephen Shumack, said the analysis showed an ongoing skin prevention campaign could prevent 20,000 melanoma and 49,000 non-melanoma skin cancer cases over the next 20 years.

"As well as preventing thousands of Australians from developing potentially fatal skin cancers, the Government can save millions in taxpayers' money," he said.

Dr Shumack said skin cancer imposed the costliest burden on Australia's health system of any cancer, with most of the \$290m in annual costs incurred in GP consultations for non-melanoma skin cancer.

"On current trends, there will be one million annual GP consultations for non-melanoma skin cancer alone in Australia within a few years – an unacceptable burden on our health system for something that is almost entirely preventable through sun protection."

Full report/media materials/audio grabs: www.cancer.org.au/bluechipreport

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