

RADIATION SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Second Reading

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

I take pleasure in presenting the Radiation Safety Amendment Bill 2014. This bill has been introduced as a safety mechanism to ensure that if the Barnett government does not act urgently on the issue of banning commercial tanning beds, the WA Labor opposition will. This bill is designed to do two things. Firstly, as a public health strategy, it seeks to ban the provision of commercial tanning beds to stop a practice that we now know contributes to the incidence of skin cancers. Secondly, it provides for the payment of compensation at the discretion of the Minister for Health to those operators of commercial tanning beds who currently hold a licence for one or more beds.

We have known about the negative health impacts of tanning beds for some time. In September 2008, the then Minister for Health, Hon Jim McGinty, introduced regulations banning the use of commercial tanning beds for minors and people with fair skin, and introduced time limits for tanning sessions. This was in recognition of the clear need to protect those most vulnerable from the use of commercial tanning beds and that it was simply unacceptable for them to be exposing themselves to the harmful effects of tanning beds. In 2009, the World Health Organization declared that tanning beds, as a known carcinogen, were the highest skin cancer risk. At that time, Western Australia was a national leader in the regulation of commercial tanning beds—the envy of public health advocates and governments across the nation. As a state, we have one of the highest incidences of skin cancer and it was not surprising that we took an early stand to minimise the public's exposure to the harmful effects of tanning beds. It is disappointing that we are no longer a leader in public health but have become a follower, with all other states having acted on this issue to bring about a ban of commercial tanning beds while our government dithers. As of 1 January 2015, every other state in Australia will have bans in place. New South Wales announced its intention to ban tanning beds in February 2012, South Australia in October 2012, the Australian Capital Territory in June 2013, Tasmania in July 2013, Victoria in August 2013 and Queensland in October 2013.

The medical impact of using a tanning bed is well understood. According to the Cancer Council, a tanning bed user has a 20 per cent higher risk of developing skin cancer, but this jumps to 59 per cent if a sunbed is used by people younger than 35 years of age. Research published this year estimates that around 18 000 skin cancers in Australia are caused annually by solarium use. The Australian Medical Association and the Cancer Council claim that one in six melanomas in Australians aged 18 to 29 years of age would be prevented if tanning beds were shut down. In WA from 2008 to 2012, 81 cases of melanoma were diagnosed in people aged 15 to 19 years of age. Each year in Australia, about 281 melanoma cases, 43 melanoma deaths and 2 572 cases of squamous cell carcinoma due to solarium use could be prevented, saving the health system around \$3 million. It is based on this evidence that the AMA says the minister's lack of leadership on this issue is inexcusable.

This is not the first public health issue on which the Minister for Health has failed to show leadership. Among other things, the minister has reintroduced junk food into WA hospitals; failed to bring in a new public health act to replace the 103-year-old legislation, until just yesterday, after promising it in 2011, twice in 2012, and in 2013; sat on a 2011 review of the Tobacco Products Control Act, surrendering an opportunity to further tighten controls in WA and lower the incidence of tobacco use; and is now being dragged kicking and screaming to bring in regulations to undertake this uncontroversial but extremely important measure.

The WA Labor opposition is concerned that the principles of public health are not well understood either by the government or Liberal Party members and that the clear benefits of the measures in this legislation have to date been resisted. This legislation will save lives. WA Labor stands for saving lives and saving people from these harmful products. This bill will make it illegal for a person to provide, or offer to provide, the use of a sun-tanning unit or to operate a sun-tanning unit. Currently, 26 businesses with 76 tanning beds are registered for use in Western Australia. The WA Labor opposition accepts that, despite the clear indication that the days of sun-tanning beds were coming to an end, these sun-tanning units were bought under the impression that they could be used for the life of the units. That is why we have made provision in the bill for these owners to be compensated for their loss at the discretion of the minister. The bill provides that the Minister for Health may pay to a person in whose name the registration of a sun-tanning unit was effected before the commencement day of the bill to be compensated an amount determined by the minister for the early termination of the registration of the sun-tanning unit.

Ultimately, this bill may not be necessary. The minister may have caved in to the mountain of medical evidence and opinion that sun-tanning units should be banned. I hope that is the case because while this legislation would

technically take some time to pass through the Parliament, the minister could bring about the ban straightaway by way of regulation. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House)**.