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## MEDIA STATEMENT

### ASMI says consumers shouldn't be warned-off sunscreen

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) said today that concerns being expressed by Friends of the Earth about nanoparticles in some sunscreens were not supported by the weight of scientific evidence.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Dr Deon Schoombie, said that nano zinc oxide and titanium dioxide have been in use in sunscreens for more than a decade. Research to date has not demonstrated evidence of a link between nano-sized ingredients found in some sunscreens and serious health problems.

Some comments on the subject appeared to misrepresent findings of research undertaken by Professor Brian Gulson, from Macquarie University's Graduate School of the Environment by implying that the zinc found in blood and urine was proof that the zinc oxide, when formulated as nanoparticles, penetrated the skin and could cause harm.

Professor Gulson led the research using two sunscreens, one made with nanoparticle zinc oxide and one with larger particles, known as micronized zinc oxide. Both were labelled with a 'traceable' isotope of zinc oxide. Although Professor Gulson found that a small quantity of the traceable zinc was absorbed through the skin and detected in the blood, this was true for subjects treated with nano zinc oxide *and* with micronized zinc oxide. He concluded that the quantity was not significant and would not cause harm.

In discussing his research in 2010<sup>1</sup>, Professor Gulson stated clearly that his methodology did not allow him to determine whether the traceable zinc found in the blood was due to nano zinc oxide or from zinc penetrating the skin as 'dissolved' zinc molecules, which are very much smaller than nano particles. He even commented that he would continue to use sunscreen containing zinc oxide on his grandchildren.

The TGA reviewed the use of nanoparticles in sunscreen in 2009<sup>2</sup> and found that the evidence to date indicates that these nano-sized particles stay on the outer surface of the skin. There was also no evidence of toxicity to users of sunscreens, despite the known use of zinc oxide in nanoparticle form in sunscreens since 1999. It has not identified a requirement for specific safety warnings regarding nanoparticles of zinc oxide and titanium dioxide in sunscreen medicines. It concludes that there is no evidence, to date, to suggest that the

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<sup>1</sup> ABC, *PM* program, 25 February 2010, Audio [link](#).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tga.gov.au/pdf/review-sunscreens-060220.pdf>

safety profile of sunscreen containing nanoparticles is any different to sunscreen with larger particles.

Prior to entry on the TGA's Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG), a product must meet quality, safety and efficacy criteria. The TGA's post-market surveillance, quality audit and laboratory testing programs ensure that these products continue to meet these criteria.

Dr Schoombie said that Australia had one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, and the use of sunscreen was an important way to reduce the risk of developing skin cancer and premature skin ageing.

"All sunscreens marketed in Australia are safe when used as directed and should be incorporated as part of a range of sun protection measures to avoid excess sun exposure. These include wearing long-sleeved clothing, avoiding sun exposure during the hottest part of the day, staying in the shade and wearing a hat and sunglasses."

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About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy. [www.asmi.com.au](http://www.asmi.com.au)

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