

Media Release

27 November 2023

Skin check program saving lives in Queensland gas fields

A vital skin check program rolled out to Santos workers and contractors in eastern Queensland has been credited with saving lives, including a Roma construction manager who was detected with potentially deadly melanomas during a routine check.

Speaking during National Skin Cancer Action Week, Santos contractor Frank Radandt said without the Skin Patrol program implemented by Santos, he would have been oblivious to the cancers on his back and chest.

“I have worked outdoors throughout my 40-year career but have never thought to get a preventative skin check. I am the type of person who if I can’t feel there is something wrong with me then I assume it must be all good,” Mr Radandt said.

“If it wasn’t for the Skin Patrol team and Santos, I wouldn’t have known I had melanomas. The Skin Patrol team identified two potential melanomas, which have since been biopsied and tested positive.

“Both melanomas in my back and chest have since been cut out. I will now be having skin checks every six months and will be making sure my team mates also get regular checks.”

Brett Darley, Executive Vice President Eastern Australia and PNG, said the Skin Patrol program was a critical health and safety project that Santos started last year as part of its health and wellbeing program.

“Investing in health and wellbeing is not only good for ourselves – it’s also good for our business,” Mr Darley said.

“Our teams work in remote areas of the state and are consistently exposed to extreme UV and temperatures throughout the Australian summer.

“Our field team came up with the idea of a skin check program for employees and contractors to better screen for potential skin issues.

“Between 2022 and 2023, nearly 450 employees and contractors had skin checks, where 13 were identified to have lesions suspicious of melanoma and booked for urgent follow up treatment.

“The program continues to expand and we have growing numbers participating, with additional clinics scheduled throughout the upcoming summer.”

The initiative recently was recognised with a commendation at the South Australian Premier’s Energy and Mining Awards.

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BACKGROUND

Often called our 'national cancer', Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world, with approximately two in three Australians diagnosed with skin cancer during their lifetime.

According to the Cancer Council, around 2,000 Australians will die from this disease in 2023, and it is estimated that almost twice as many men as women will die from melanoma this year alone.

Yet research shows that many Australians, particularly men, aren't regularly using all five forms of sun protection as recommended by Cancer Council:

- Slip on sun protective clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
- Slap on broad spectrum, water resistant SPF30 (or higher) sunscreen. Apply 20 minutes before going outdoors and every two hours afterwards.
- Slap on a hat – broad brim or legionnaire style to protect your face, head, neck and ears.
- Seek shade.
- Slide on sunglasses – make sure they meet Australian Standards

Over-exposure to UV radiation causes 95 per cent of melanomas. In every region across Australia, it is likely to reach extreme levels of UV over the summer months.

For more information about National Skin Cancer Action Week, please visit:

<https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/sun-safety/campaigns-and-events/national-skin-cancer-action-week>