

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*Media embargo 13 June 2006*

### **On dangerous ground: Australians flirting with disaster in the workplace**

Every day 1.5 million Australians are exposed to carcinogens at work and about 5,000 people a year develop some form of cancer due to occupation.

Dr Lin Fritschi of the Queensland Cancer Fund, in a study published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, found that the rate of occupational cancer in Australia was much higher than the 2% generally accepted in the past.

The study found that one in ten male workers and one in fifty female workers developed cancer every year due to workplace exposure to carcinogens.

Lung cancer was one of the cancers most often caused by occupation, affecting heavy industry workers exposed to airborne chemical particles and hospitality workers exposed to passive cigarette smoke.

Dr Fritschi pointed to the lack of research in the area of occupational health as a serious failure on the part of research bodies and the government.

“People are not particularly interested in occupation as the cause of cancer. It’s not in the national cancer prevention plan, and there doesn’t seem to be any acknowledgement out there that cancer and work are related,” Dr Fritschi said.

“There are thousands of chemicals being used in industry today, and most of them have not been evaluated properly. In addition, most people exposed to carcinogens in the workplace don’t develop cancer until much later in life.

“I admit that occupational cancer is a difficult area to research. Cancer is much more difficult to study and attribute than injuries, but it deserves our full attention.”

Dr Fritschi said she hoped this research would elevate the issue of occupational cancers in the minds of regulators, the government and the general public.

“We would like more research, interest and support for this area of cancer studies. We want new regulations to help Australians who are routinely exposed to carcinogens in their workplace,” she said.

ENDS

### **For more information about this research, contact the research author:**

Dr Lin Fritschi, Epidemiology Unit, Viertel Centre in Cancer Control, Queensland Cancer Fund, (07) 3258 2307, [linfritschi@qldcancer.com.au](mailto:linfritschi@qldcancer.com.au).

**MEDIA ONLY:** To receive a PDF of the paper or for more information about ANZJPH, contact:

Irina Fainberg

ANZJPH Administration

Ph: (03) 9329 3535

E-mail: [irina.fainberg@substitution.com.au](mailto:irina.fainberg@substitution.com.au)