

Industry Statement

Everyday cosmetic products have an excellent safety record: ACCC mandatory reporting figures miss the point

As the representative body for the mainstream cosmetics and personal care products industry, Accord is concerned that, taken out of context, recent media statements that “*thousands of Australians are being injured*” and “*nearly 400 of the 1400 mandatory injury reports...were linked to cosmetics*” potentially mislead the Australian public about cosmetic product safety.

Such comments do not reflect the reality that the vast majority of products Australian consumers purchase from trusted cosmetic product manufacturers and retailers are being used both safely and effectively.

In the skincare product category, for example, more than 26 million product units are used each year according to annual sales data collated by market research firm bUaustralasia.

Based on this very large number of product units, the injury reports referred to would make up just 0.0015% of the product units (packs) sold.

This cannot be considered anything more than a resounding validation that the majority of everyday products supplied to Australians by the mainstream cosmetics industry do not pose any risk to safety.

Accord also notes that the ACCC took action late last year against three specific niche product brands which had been found “with dangerous levels of microbial contamination”, resulting in product recalls (<https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/cosmetics-recalled-after-failing-acc-testing>).

There is a legitimate concern amongst the mainstream industry members – all of whom place the highest value on product safety and quality – that failure to provide a proper numerical context to the media statements means that consumers will potentially now believe most cosmetic products are unsafe. There is also a concern that the statements have tarred the entire industry with the same brush, when instead they should have focussed more specifically on those incidents where the ACCC took action or those non-mainstream products which continue to snub the regulations, such as non-compliant imports and counterfeit product.

We have written to ACCC to express the industry’s disappointment at the way their mandatory reporting information was presented and the way this has been reported in the media.

Accord would like to work further with the ACCC to create a better common understanding regarding the 400 reports and the more precise nature of the ‘injury’ reported. If there are specific trends in the data for these reports, then it would be helpful for the industry and the regulator to jointly gain an insight into these, so that any appropriate remedial action can be most effectively targeted.

On relatively rare occasions allergic reactions can occur for some users of skin and haircare products. Consumers should immediately discontinue use of any product that causes irritation or allergy.

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