

# Preface

Australia and New Zealand have the highest melanoma incidence rates in the world. Melanoma is therefore a major public health problem in both countries, with important social and economic implications. The high incidence rates are attributed to the high proportions of the population in both countries who are of Anglo-Celtic descent, and who are inevitably exposed to high levels of solar radiation from earliest childhood.

It is well known that in both Australia and New Zealand there are fairly wide variations in the treatment recommendations given to melanoma patients, and also in the quality of care that they receive. It is hoped that these Management Guidelines will assist in raising standards and producing greater uniformity of care by specifying evidence-based protocols for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of melanoma. The Guidelines were compiled by a multidisciplinary working party whose members devoted countless hours of their time to the task, mostly on a voluntary basis. All the available evidence was systematically collected and evaluated using a process approved by the Australian NHMRC and the New Zealand Guidelines Group, allowing levels of evidence to be documented and grades assigned for each recommendation that was made. Even when the available evidence had been carefully analysed, however, differing points of view were sometimes expressed by members of the working group. When this occurred an explanation of the reasoning that led to the recommendation through a consensus process was provided, as well as documentation of the level of evidence for the statement or recommendation.

The Guidelines are designed primarily to assist clinicians who care for patients with melanoma. However, it is expected that as well as being a best practice resource for doctors, they will also be useful for other health care professionals and for patients themselves, who may not only seek information but who may also require reassurance that the treatment they are receiving is evidence-based.

**John F Thompson** MD FRACS FACS

Chair, Melanoma Guidelines Working Party