

Doctors warn of lip service

Fillers leave hundreds blind

CHRISTOPHER HARRIS

WOMEN seeking plumper cheeks and fuller lips from dermal fillers are being warned to seek out a qualified doctor after almost 200 people reported suffering blindness from the popular procedure over the past year.

The number of cases of blindness increased by 94 per cent across the world last year, according to a review in the journal of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

The figures have prompted Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery president Dr Irene Kushelew to urge people to avoid beauticians and backyard operators

"Many Australians incorrectly believe that procedures involving dermal fillers are beauty treatments, in the

same category as facials," Dr Kushelew said.

"Complications can and do take place but reports of botched procedures and the use of imported, illegal products are on the rise in Australia."

Dr Kushelew said unqualified operators had botched procedures because they were mistakenly sticking needles into veins and arteries, which blocked blood supply and caused blindness.

Australians spent \$1 billion on cosmetic procedures in the past year — 40 per cent more per capita than in the US.

Last April a Sydney woman went blind in one eye after a nurse injected the dermal filler in an artery.

She sought help at Prince of Wales Hospital but doctors could not reverse the damage.

And in a disturbing trend

Dr Kushelew said thrifty women were now injecting themselves to save money.

Others are turning to the internet to save money with some offering the procedure over online classifieds.

The Daily Telegraph searched Gumtree yesterday and found a number of operators offering dermal fillers.

One woman was advertising that she was a registered nurse with "an artist's eye and hands to mould your features". "More affordable prices as I work independently," she said.

To protect themselves, patients should make sure the product they are receiving has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

They should also ensure they ask about a practitioner's experience and training.