

Introduction

Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. It is the most common form of cancer in Australia, affecting all age groups and accounting for around 80 per cent of all new cancers diagnosed each year.

Research indicates childhood sun exposure is an important contributing factor to the development of skin cancer in later life. Given students are at school during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) times throughout the day, schools play a major role in both minimising students' UVR exposure and providing an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence student behaviour.

This resource has been designed to help your school develop its own SunSmart policy and to provide you with some ideas for implementing the policy.

You don't need to be experienced in policy planning to develop a SunSmart policy; this resource takes you step-by-step through the policy development process.

Behaviour should be a habit that starts in childhood and continues throughout life, just like fastening your seat belt upon entering a car.





Relevant rules and recommendations

The Queensland Department of Education Manual outlines the Department's policy on the development of SunSmart sun protection strategies in Queensland schools in its 'Sun Safety Strategy' [HS-03 (1998)]. While this policy is only applicable to government schools, it is the yardstick for measuring sun protection standards and it is imperative all schools strive to meet these standards.

The Department of Education Policy states that:

- 1.1 Schools must consider the most practical and effective ways of further enhancing sun protection for students attending Queensland schools. All schools must develop and implement a sun protection strategy;
- 1.2 In view of the dangers of overexposure to the sun in Queensland, principals and teachers have been requested to curtail the length and number of assemblies; and
- 1.3 The Department of Education has included a special sub-program in the Department of Capital Works Program to enhance shade provisions in schools.

The Department's policy criteria have been incorporated into the model policies for both primary and secondary schools provided in this manual. Government schools are encouraged to use these when implementing the Department policy.

Schools are a workplace as well

Under the [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#), employers and employees have responsibilities in reducing the risk of all types of injuries and risks to health while at work. Overexposure to the sun is one of these risks.

The [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#) requires employers to provide and maintain a safe working environment and safe systems of work to ensure employees are safe from injury and risk to health.

A few simple measures can be taken by employers to protect employees from the risk of skin cancer, such as changing the time of particular outdoor activities, providing employees with personal protection from the sun and providing training and education.

Employees are required to comply with all instructions given by their employer aimed at ensuring health and safety in the workplace. They should take reasonable precautions to protect themselves and others at work.

Steps in developing a Sun Protection Policy

The process of developing a sun protection policy is as important as the policy itself. All sectors of the school community need to be consulted and given an opportunity to comment on a draft policy. The policy is more likely to be adhered to if all those affected have been involved in its development and agree and understand its intent.

These steps can be used as a guide:

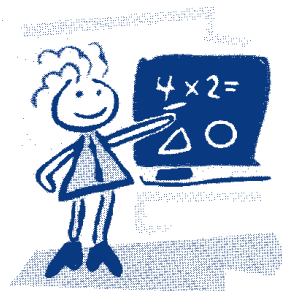
1. Form a committee

The committee may include any of the following members: principal, teachers, students, parents, school nurse or health and physical education co-ordinator.

The committee's role is to make recommendations about the content of the policy, to develop and circulate a draft and to prepare the final version of the document. They do this on behalf of the school community. Once a sun protection policy is in place, an existing committee, such as health or student welfare, could monitor its long-term implementation.

2. Conduct information sessions

The whole school community (parents, staff and students) needs to be aware of the dangers of overexposure to the sun, especially during childhood and adolescence. Education through the curriculum will raise students' awareness. Awareness-raising sessions for parents and staff will assist in gaining support for the implementation of a sun protection policy. The Cancer Council Queensland has a Community Speakers program, which you may like to use to assist with this step. Community Speakers are trained volunteers who are available free of charge to present skin cancer information to staff and parents. If your school requires educational information for students or is interested in the Community Speakers program, please contact The Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.





3. Identify sun protection measures that are already being undertaken.

This checklist can be used as a discussion document for improving sun protection at your school:

Sun Protection Strategy		How can we improve in this area?
100 per cent of students wear either legionnaire style, bucket or broad-brimmed hats.		
No hat, play in the shade rule is implemented.		
Teachers wear either legionnaire style, bucket or broad-brimmed hats.		
Parents are actively encouraged to wear hats when visiting the school.		
Students are actively encouraged to use shaded areas.		
All students eat lunch in full shade.		
Sun protection and skin cancer awareness is incorporated in the curriculum at all year levels.		
A plan is in place to increase/maintain the amount of shade at the school.		
Where possible, outdoor activities are conducted outside peak UVR times or held under cover.		
SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen is available for staff and students whenever they go outside.		
Students are encouraged to come to school wearing sunscreen.		
The design of the school uniform provides good protection from the sun, for example, shirts and collars, longer sleeves.		
Students attending outdoor swimming classes are required to wear t-shirts, rash-vests or swimwear which fully covers their trunk.		
There are regular sun protection reminders (for example through school newsletters).		
Sun protection is incorporated into the planning of all outdoor events.		

4. Write, review and finalise the policy.

The policy should contain defined goals, clear statements on the implementation of sun protection strategies and a monitoring and evaluation section. A sample policy has been included in this resource.

When the draft has been written, clearly label it as a draft and make it available for parents and staff to review. Present the final version of the policy to the appropriate decision making group for endorsement.

5. Implement the policy.

Officially launch the sun protection policy so all members of the school community are aware of its existence. This could take place on a special day (for example during National Skin Cancer Action Week), at an assembly or at a relevant meeting.

Publicise the policy as widely as possible. Consider giving a copy to all staff, including the policy in a newsletter and distributing information regarding the implications of the policy for parents and students.

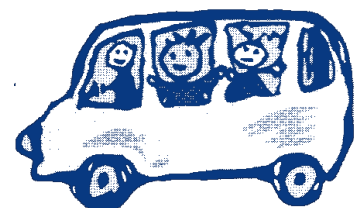
6. Monitor and evaluate your Sun Protection Policy.

A policy is only as good as its implementation. Routinely promote your policy by:

- Briefing all new staff;
- Including sun protection as a set agenda item on relevant committee meetings at appropriate times, for example at the first staff meeting of the year;
- Including information in your parent information booklet;
- Using newsletters and assemblies to promote sun protection; and
- Notifying all new students of the policy.

Review the effectiveness of the policy after a set time period. Involve students where possible. Evaluation strategies could include:

- Conducting a brief survey;
- Making observations such as the number of students wearing hats;
- Assessing shade provision; and
- Conducting a curriculum audit.





Model SunSmart Policies

The following are model SunSmart policies for primary schools, school age care and secondary schools. These policies have been adapted from The Cancer Council New South Wales' publication 'SunSmart Advice for Schools: Be Wise After Sunrise'. They are intended as a guide only and principals/administrators should feel free to adapt or amend the model policies to suit the needs of their school.

SunSmart Policy Statement (Primary Schools)

Rationale

Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Of all new cancers diagnosed in Australia each year, 80 per cent are skin cancers. Research indicates childhood sun exposure is an important contributing factor to the development of skin cancer in later life. Given students are at school during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) times throughout the day, between 10am and 3pm, schools play a major role in both minimising a student's UVR exposure and providing an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence student behaviour.

Skin damage, including skin cancer, is the result of cumulative exposure to the sun. Research shows severe sunburn contributes to skin cancer and other forms of skin damage such as sunspots, blemishes and premature ageing. Most skin damage and skin cancer is therefore preventable.

Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) levels are highest during the hours children are at school. As children will spend a portion of their day outdoors, we are committed to protecting them from the harmful effects of the sun.

With this in mind

(Name of school)

realises the need to protect children's skin and educate them about SunSmart behaviour, thus reducing the risk of skin damage from exposure to the sun.

Aims

The policy aims to:

- Provide ongoing education that promotes personal responsibility for skin cancer prevention and early detection;
- Provide environments that support SunSmart practices; and
- Create an awareness of the need to reschedule outdoor activities to support SunSmart practices.

Procedures

Our school recognises that winter sun also contributes to skin damage. This policy will therefore be implemented throughout the year.

The purpose of this SunSmart policy is to ensure all children attending our establishment are protected from the harmful effects of the sun throughout the year.

Our Commitment

..... will:
(Name of school)

- Inform parents of the SunSmart policy when they enrol their child;
- Include the SunSmart policy statement in the school prospectus;
- Increase the amount of shade in the school grounds, where possible, by building shelters and planting trees;
- Incorporate education programs that focus on skin cancer prevention into the school curriculum;
- Encourage all teachers and staff to act as positive role models for children in all aspects of SunSmart behaviour;
- Seek ongoing support from parents and the school community for the SunSmart policy and its implementation, through newsletters and parent meetings;
- Ensure all students and staff wear hats that protect the face, neck and ears and SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen when involved in outdoor activities;
- Encourage students without adequate sun protection to use shaded or covered areas at recess and lunch times;
- Review the school dress code to conform with The Cancer Council Queensland SunSmart clothing guidelines;
- Incorporate a SunSmart swimsuit into the school uniform;
- Ensure wherever practicable that outdoor activities take place before 10am and after 3pm;
- Ensure adequate shade is provided at sporting carnivals and other outdoor events;
- Ensure SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen is included in the school sports kit;
- Have SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen listed with other items students are required to buy for the school year; and
- Review the SunSmart policy annually.



Our Expectations

Parents/carers will:

- Provide a SunSmart hat for their child and ensure they wear it to and from school.
The Cancer Council Queensland recommends hats with a 7.5cm brim, legionnaire-style or bucket (minimum of 6cm brim) hats;
- Ensure their child applies SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before leaving for school;
- Ensure their child's clothing provides adequate protection from UVR. The Cancer Council Queensland recommends clothing with the following features:
 - dark coloured;
 - collars and sleeves; and
 - closely woven fabric - natural fibre.
- Act as positive role models by practising SunSmart behaviour; and
- Support the school's SunSmart policy and help to design and regularly update the policy.

Students will:

- Be aware of the school's SunSmart policy;
- Take responsibility for their own health and safety by being SunSmart;
- Comply with SunSmart rules and guidelines by wearing suitable hats, clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses;
- Apply SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors;
- Use shaded or covered areas when outdoors;
- Act as positive role models for other students in all aspects of SunSmart behaviour;
- Help to design and regularly update the SunSmart policy; and
- Participate in SunSmart education programs.

Considered and accepted by the Principal

Considered and accepted by Parents and Friends Committee

Considered and accepted by Student Council

SunSmart Policy Statement (Secondary Schools)

Rationale

Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Of all new cancers diagnosed in Australia each year, 80 per cent are skin cancers. Given students are at school during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) times throughout the day, between 10am and 3pm, schools play a major role in both minimising a student's UVR exposure and providing an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence student behaviour.

Skin damage, including skin cancer, is the result of cumulative exposure to the sun. Research shows severe sunburn contributes to skin cancer and other forms of skin damage such as sunspots, blemishes and premature ageing. Most skin damage and skin cancer is therefore preventable.

Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) levels are highest during the hours children are at school. As children will spend a portion of their day outdoors, we are committed to protecting them from the harmful effects of the sun.

With this in mind

(Name of school)

realises the need to protect children's skin and educate them about SunSmart behaviour, thus reducing the risk of skin damage from exposure to the sun.

Aims

The policy aims to:

- Provide ongoing education that promotes personal responsibility for skin cancer prevention and early detection;
- Provide environments that support SunSmart practices; and
- Create an awareness of the need to reschedule work commitments and outdoor activities to support SunSmart practices.





Procedures

Our school recognises that winter sun also contributes to skin damage. This policy will therefore be implemented throughout the year.

The purpose of this SunSmart policy is to ensure all children attending our establishment are protected from the harmful effects of the sun throughout the year.

Our Commitment

..... will:
(Name of school)

- Inform parents of the school's SunSmart policy when they enrol their child;
- Include the SunSmart policy statement in the school prospectus;
- Increase the amount of shade in the school grounds, where possible, by building shelters and planting trees;
- Incorporate education programs that focus on skin cancer prevention into the school curriculum;
- Encourage all teachers and staff to act as positive role models of SunSmart behaviour;
- Seek ongoing support from parents and the school community for the SunSmart policy and its implementation, through newsletters and parent meetings;
- Ensure all students and staff wear hats that protect the face, neck and ears and SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen, when involved in outdoor activities;
- Encourage students without adequate sun protection to use shaded or covered areas at recess and lunch times;
- Review the school dress code to conform with The Cancer Council Queensland SunSmart clothing guidelines;
- Incorporate a SunSmart swimsuit into the school uniform;
- Ensure wherever practicable that outdoor activities take place before 10am and after 3pm;
- Ensure adequate shade is provided at sporting carnivals and other outdoor events;
- Encourage the wearing of sunglasses for outdoor lessons;
- Ensure SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen is included in the school sports kit;
- Have SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen listed with other items students are required to buy for the school year; and
- Review the SunSmart policy annually.

Our Expectations

Students will:

- Be aware of the school's SunSmart policy;
- Use shaded or covered areas when outdoors;
- Take responsibility for their own health and safety by being SunSmart;
- Comply with SunSmart rules and guidelines by wearing suitable hats, clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses;
- Act as positive role models for other students in all aspects of SunSmart behaviour;
- Help to design and regularly update the SunSmart policy; and
- Participate in initiatives to protect the school population from excessive exposure to the sun.

Considered and accepted by the Staff

Considered and accepted by Parents and Friends Committee

Considered and accepted by Student Council





Questions & answers

What can I do about complacency?

There are a number of things you can do to address the complacency in students:

- Involve the student body or Student Council in both the development and implementation processes; and
- Incorporate SunSmart education programs into the school curriculum. An education pack currently available is the 'SunSmart Teachers Resource Kit' (Years 1-7). Resources, in the form of posters, information sheets, pamphlets, brochures and stickers are available free of charge from The Cancer Council Queensland. A number of SunSmart videos are available for a two week loan. Contact The Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 for more information or to order resources.

What can I do if students resist wearing hats, sunscreen and other items?

- Ensure SunSmart hats are incorporated into the school uniform;
- Involve students in the design of the school hat;
- Involve students in the launch of the new policy. Hold a novelty sun hat day, a poster competition, a SunSmart fashion parade with students as models, a tree planting ceremony - any novelty idea that encourages SunSmart behaviour and gets students actively involved;
- Consider the different types of sunscreen available. Ask students which type they prefer. Alcohol-based sunscreens, for example, tend to be less greasy than some creams. The important qualities to consider when choosing a sunscreen are that it is SPF 30+, broad-spectrum and water-resistant; and
- Encourage staff to act as positive role models in SunSmart behaviour by wearing appropriate hats, sunscreen, clothing and sunglasses whenever outdoors.

Financial burden on the school

- Involve students and parents in SunSmart fundraising projects;
- Invite local businesses to advertise on existing shade structures, for a small fee, especially for big events and on special sports days. This is one way of raising funds to cover the expenses involved in implementing the policy, such as building shade structures;
- Approach your local council about the possibility of obtaining free trees. Most councils will provide young trees to private, individual and community organisations free of charge. Ensure the species chosen will provide adequate shade; and
- Organise working bees to reduce labour costs in erecting shade structures and planting trees.