



# Early childhood settings

## SunSmart Policy Guidelines



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# 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 accounts for around 80 per cent of all new cancers diagnosed each year in Australia.

Research indicates that childhood sun exposure is an important contributing factor to the development of skin cancer in later life. Given that children are in childcare during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) times throughout the day, early childhood environments play a major role in both minimising children's UVR exposure and providing an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence long-term behaviour.

Childhood skin damage from UVR cannot be reversed, but further damage can be prevented in adults. Part of the solution is to encourage organisations to implement and monitor their own SunSmart policies.

This resource has been designed to help your organisation develop its own SunSmart Policy, and to provide you with some ideas for implementing the policy. A formal, written SunSmart Policy is a clear statement about your organisation's commitment to SunSmart principles. It demonstrates your concern for the health of those under your care and supervision, by giving priority to the ever increasing problem of skin cancer.

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.

**SunSmart behaviour should be a habit that starts in childhood and continues throughout life, just like fastening your seat belt once in the car.**



## Duty of care

All child care services have a legal responsibility known as duty of care, to the children in their care as well as staff and visitors to their site. This duty of care extends to ensure that services develop and implement appropriate sun protection policies and practices to adequately protect children, staff and visitors from damage caused by the sun. Special attention may need to be given to address the particular language and cultural needs of parents of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background and their children, to ensure that duty of care obligations are met.

### Relevant rules/regulations

The *Child Care Act 2002* represents minimum quality standards for licensed child care services in Queensland. These services include child care centres, kindergartens, occasional care centres, limited hours care centres and family day care schemes. The relevant regulations from the *Child Care Act 2002* are outlined below.

### Child Care Regulation 2003

With regard to sun protection, the following minimum standards apply:

#### Home based services

##### Section 81

##### Outdoor play areas

A home must have an outdoor play area that is safe, has enough shade and is adequately fenced. Family day care schemes must comply with these regulations at all times.

##### Section 85

##### Health and hygiene

A carer must observe good health and hygiene practices while providing care in the course of the service.

#### Centre-based services

##### Section 13

Giving information about the program to parents and guardians.

- (1) A notice must be displayed at an appropriate place at the child care centre, accessible to parents and guardians which give general information about the program.
- (2) A parent or guardian of a child in care must be given, on request, information about the content or operation of the program so far as it relates to the child.

##### Section 56

##### Health and hygiene

Each staff member must observe good health and hygiene practices while providing care in the course of the service.

## Queensland Development Code part 22: Child Care Centres

The building standards for child care centres are located in the Queensland Development Code Part 22: Child Care Centres. This development code is called up by the Standard Building Regulation 1998.

### Outdoor play facilities

#### Performance criteria (P5)

Premises used for a child care centre other than a school age care service must be provided with an outdoor play area for each group, which -

- (d) Provide an environment suitable for a variety of play activities.
- (g) Are shaded to avoid excessive ground surface temperatures, and reduce exposure to UV radiation.

#### Acceptable solutions (A5)

- (a) A child care centre, other than a school age care service, has outdoor play facilities in accordance with the following:
  - (i) Outdoor play areas are orientated to take advantage of winter sun, summer shade and shelter from prevailing winds.
- (b) A child care centre, other than one that caters for 30 children or less at any one time for 20 hours or less per week, or for a school age care service, has outdoor play facilities that have:
  - (ii) Shaded area which is part of the total area not less than two m<sup>2</sup> for each child of the licensed capacity.
  - (iii) At least 50 per cent of the required shaded area is roofed with a material impervious to water and UV radiation.
- (c) A child care centre that caters for 30 children or less at any one time for 20 hours or less per week, other than a school age care service, has outdoor play facilities that have:
  - (ii) A shaded area which is part of the total area, which is not less than one m<sup>2</sup> for each child of the licensed capacity.

### Play pits

#### Performance criteria (P12)

If a child care centre has a play pit it must provide a safe environment in which children can play.

#### Acceptable solutions (A12)

Any play pit provided in a child care centre has:

- (c) At least 50 per cent of the required area is shaded with a roof that is impervious to water and has a UV radiation resistance of not less than 95 per cent.

SunSmart practices are complementary to these regulations and provide further guidance in regard to policy and procedures for sun protection for children in Queensland.



## Quality Assurance

In addition to services required to adhere to licensing standards under the *Child Care Act 2002*, centres must also meet Quality Assurance standards. Centre-based long day care are accredited through the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS). The Quality Assurance System is administered by the National Child Care Accreditation Council and is linked to Child Care Benefit (CCB). To be eligible for CCB, centres must meet at least minimum standards.

When developing policies and procedures relevant to sun protection, the following standards should be addressed:

### **Principle 7.4 Staff ensure that children are dressed appropriately for indoor and outdoor play**

#### **Satisfactory standard (relevant for sun safety)**

- The centre has policies on sun protection and clothing and implementation is consistent and routinely monitored.
- Staff ensure that children are appropriately dressed indoors and outdoors and, if necessary, they adjust each child's clothing during the day.
- Staff wear hats and use appropriate sun protection.
- Staff are consistent in their efforts to protect children from exposure to the sun.
- The centre maintains current information from recognised health and safety authorities on sun protection.
- The centre keeps a supply of clothing for weather changes.
- Staff discuss weather, seasons and appropriate clothing with children.
- The centre provides families with information about suitable clothing for play experiences, both indoors and outdoors.

#### **High standard (relevant for sun safety)**

- The centre consults actively and effectively with families on clothing, sun protection and dressing procedures.

## Early childhood settings are workplaces 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. Over exposure 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 risks of skin cancer. These include:

- Changing the time of particular outdoor activities.
- Providing employees with personal protection from the sun.
- Providing training and education.

Employees are required to comply with all instructions given by their employers 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 childcare 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 staff and parents. The role of the committee is to make recommendations about 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 centre community. Once a sun protection policy is in place, an existing committee could monitor its long-term implementation.

## 2. Conduct information sessions

The whole early childhood setting community (parents and staff) need to be aware of the dangers of over-exposure to the sun, especially during childhood and adolescence. Awareness raising sessions for parents and staff will assist in gaining support for the implementation of a sun protection policy.

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 early childhood setting requires educational information for children or is interested in the Community Speakers Program, please contact the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 (toll free) 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

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

The following checklist can be used as a discussion document for improving sun protection at your centre:

Sun protection strategy	✓	✗	How can we improve in this area? (examples)
100 per cent of children wear either legionnaire or broad-brimmed hats.			
No hat, play in the shade rule is implemented.			
Teachers/staff/carers wear either legionnaire or broad-brimmed hats.			

Sun protection strategy	✓	✗	How can we improve in this area? (examples)
Parents are actively encouraged to wear hats when visiting the childcare setting.			
Children are actively encouraged to use shaded areas.			
All children eat lunch in full shade.			
Children are provided with information and play experiences about sun safety.			
A plan is in place to increase/maintain the amount of shade at the early childhood setting.			
Where possible, outdoor activities are conducted outside peak UV times or held undercover.			
SPF 30+ sunscreen is available for staff and children whenever they go outside.			
Children are encouraged to come to the early childhood setting wearing sunscreen.			
Children are encouraged to wear sun protective clothing, for example, shirts with collars, longer sleeves to the centre.			
Children participating in outdoor water play are required to wear T-shirts, rash-vests or swimwear which fully covers their trunk.			
There are regular sun protection reminders. (for example, parent 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 on page 9.

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 that all members of the centre community are aware of its existence. This could take place on a special day (for example, during National Skin Cancer Action Week) 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 children.

#### **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, first staff meeting of the year
- Include information in your parent information booklet and brief all new families who join your childcare setting
- Use newsletters to promote sun protection

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

- Conducting a brief survey
- Making observations, for example, the number of children wearing hats
- Assessing shade provision

## Model SunSmart Policy

The following is a model SunSmart Policy for early childhood settings (childcare centres, kindergartens and crèches, pre-schools and family day care schemes).

This policy has been adapted from Cancer Council New South Wales publication, *SunSmart advice for schools: be wise after sunrise*. It is intended as a guide only, and directors/administrators should feel free to adapt or amend the model policy to suit the needs of their organisation.

### SunSmart Policy Statement

#### 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 that children in childcare are there during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) times throughout the day, early childhood settings play a major role in both minimising children's UVR exposure and providing an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence long-term behaviour.

Skin damage, including skin cancer, is the result of cumulative exposure to the sun. Research shows that 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 that children are at childcare settings. As children will spend a portion of their day outdoors, we are committed to protecting them from harmful effects of the sun.

With this in mind, .....  
(Name of organisation)  
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.
- Create awareness of the need to re-schedule work commitments and outdoor activities to support SunSmart practices.

#### Procedures

Our organisation 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 that all children attending our establishment are protected from the harmful effects of the sun throughout the year.



## **Our commitment**

..... **will:**  
*(Name of organisation)*

- Inform parents of the SunSmart Policy when they enrol their child;
- Increase the amount of shade in the grounds, where possible, by building shelters
- and planting trees;
- Ensure that wherever practicable, outdoor activities take place before 10am and after 3pm;
- Provide a SunSmart education program for children and provide parents with up-to-date SunSmart information through newsletters and parent meetings;
- Encourage all staff to act as positive role models for children in all aspects of SunSmart behaviour by:
  - wearing broad-brimmed or legionnaire styled hats and appropriate clothing for all outdoor activities
  - using SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water resistant sunscreen
  - seeking shade whenever possible
  - wearing sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard (AS/NZS1067:2003)
- Ensure that children not wearing hats play in the shaded areas
- Supply or organise the purchase of communal sunscreen; and
- Review the SunSmart Policy annually.

Staff will:

- Practise SunSmart behaviour, as described above
- Enforce a 'no hat, no play' rule
- Supervise children's application of sunscreen (SPF 30+ 20 mins prior to outdoor activity)
- Direct children to play in shaded areas where possible.

## **Our expectations**

Parents/carers will:

- Provide a well-fitting hat for use in all outdoor activities.
- Cancer Council Queensland recommends the following hats:
  - 7.5cm broad-brimmed
  - legionnaire-style
- Ensure that their child's clothing provides adequate protection from UVR. Cancer Council Queensland recommends clothing with the following features:
  - dark-coloured
  - collars and sleeves
  - closely woven fabric
  - natural fibre

- Provide SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreens for their child's use
- Act as positive role models by practising SunSmart behaviour.

Considered and accepted by the Director.....

Considered and accepted by staff/caregivers .....

Considered and accepted by parent representatives.....



## Potential issues

### Parents not actively supporting the policy

There are a number of strategies you can do to address the issue of parents not actively supporting the policy.

- Ensure that parents are made aware of the policy when enrolling their child, and seek parental endorsement.
- Produce and distribute a document that clearly outlines parents' role and responsibilities with regard to their child's sun protection. It is suggested that this document be circulated twice a year during the main enrolment period, and at the start of summer.
- Educate parents about skin cancer and SunSmart practices. Cancer Council Queensland provides Community Speakers free of charge to conduct SunSmart education programs for staff and parents. Posters, fact sheets, pamphlets are also available free of charge from Cancer Council Queensland. To order, contact our Helpline on 13 11 20 (toll free) 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday. A number of SunSmart videos are available on a free two week loan by contacting the Cancer Council Helpline.
- Involve parents in designing and updating the SunSmart Policy. This can be done through the parents' representative group. Encourage parents to express their views about the policy.
- Emphasise the importance of parents as role models for SunSmart behaviour through newsletters, education days etc.
- Parents who fail to supply their child with suitable hats and clothing, over extended periods of time, should be sent a note reminding them of the SunSmart Policy.
- Parents should be encouraged to reinforce a 'no hat, no play' rule at home.

### Disruption of routine

- Make SunSmart practices an integral part of the daily routine. Reschedule activities to allow sufficient time to prepare children for outdoor play.
- Educate parents about SunSmart practices so they ensure their children have appropriate clothing for outdoor play, and sunscreen is applied prior to children's arrival. This will cut down on the time required to prepare children for outdoor play.

### Hats don't stay on

- Ensure that parents are informed when their child's clothing or hat is ill-fitting or does not meet the SunSmart requirements. Hats with an elastic chinstrap or toggle are recommended for young children.
- Reschedule outdoor activity to avoid sun exposure between 10am and 3pm.
- Very young children should remain in shaded play areas at all times.

### Resistance from children

- Enforce a 'no hat, no play' rule.

## For more information

Cancer Council Queensland has a number of resources available for organisations free of charge.

If you would like further information on skin cancer or SunSmart issues, please contact the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 or visit our website [www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au)



## Your nearest Cancer Council Queensland office

### **Brisbane**

553 Gregory Terrace  
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Ph: (07) 3258 2200  
Email: [helpline@cancerqld.org.au](mailto:helpline@cancerqld.org.au)

### **Cairns**

169 Aumuller Street  
Bungalow Qld 4870  
Ph: (07) 4031 1555

### **Townsville**

24 Warburton Street  
North Ward Qld 4810  
Ph: (07) 4721 1644

### **Rockhampton**

43 Upper Dawson Road  
Rockhampton Qld 4700  
Ph: (07) 4927 7088

### **Sunshine Coast**

Shop 4, Credit Union Australia Plaza  
Corner Maroochydore Road and Baden Powell Street  
Maroochydore Qld 4558  
Ph: (07) 5443 6300

### **Gold Coast**

Corner Short Street and Marine Parade  
Southport Qld 4215  
Ph: (07) 5591 1500

### **Toowoomba**

137 Herries Street  
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