

Working towards a SunSmart Queensland



# SunSmart Workplace Policy Guidelines

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# Introduction

**Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. In fact, of all new cancers diagnosed in Australia each year, 80 per cent are skin cancers. High levels of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) and an outdoor lifestyle have significantly contributed to Queensland's high skin cancer rate.**

Thousands of Queenslanders are involved in outdoor employment activities. This employment has many health benefits, but it also carries the risk of an increased exposure to UVR and therefore, an increased risk of skin cancer.

Work undertaken during peak UVR periods (10am-3pm) should be avoided. However, when this is not possible, organisations have the potential to minimise UVR exposure to their employees and provide an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence long-term SunSmart behaviour within their organisation.

Employers need to consider a range of strategies to reduce the risk of skin cancer in their employees. Whether employees work outdoors for all or only part of the day, their chance of UVR exposure poses a significant risk to their overall health and cancer risk.

You don't need to be experienced in policy planning to develop a SunSmart policy. This resource guides you step-by-step through the SunSmart policy development process to help your organisation and its people cut their cancer risk.



## Purpose of this resource

This resource has been designed to provide guidelines for organisations to develop, implement and evaluate a SunSmart policy. This resource will also support organisations that may have encountered obstacles when implementing and evaluating their existing SunSmart policies.

### Why is a SunSmart policy important?

A formal written policy is a clear statement about your organisation's commitment to SunSmart principles. It demonstrates your concern for the health of your employees by giving priority to the serious and preventable problem of skin cancer and links your organisation to a community-wide SunSmart effort.

A written policy is an easy reference point for employees and will help them adopt SunSmart behaviours, both during and outside of work hours.

Employees should be encouraged to participate in the decision making process. This includes being involved in raising awareness about the development, implementation and evaluation of the SunSmart policy. This approach will increase employee's commitment to the policy, raise awareness of SunSmart issues and assist with the adoption of the policy.

### What is skin cancer?

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia, and 80 per cent of all cancers diagnosed in Australia are skin cancer. Skin cancer is caused by a cumulation of exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun's rays penetrating the skin and damaging living cells.



## Ultraviolet radiation (UVR)

- Is powerful, invisible and cannot be felt.
- Can pass through clouds and loosely woven material.
- Can bounce off reflective surfaces such as sand, concrete, metal, grass, water and snow.
- Can also penetrate water up to a depth of one metre.

## Types of UVR

### There are three types of UVR:

1. UVA, along with UVB, contributes to the development of skin cancer. It is responsible for the damage which leads to premature ageing of the skin.
2. UVB causes sunburn and is the major cause of skin cancer.
3. UVC is scattered or absorbed by the ozone layer before it reaches the earth, however, it can be produced artificially, for example by arc welding machinery. Those who participate in such tasks should be fully protected.

## Types of skin cancer

### There are three types of skin cancer:

1. Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common type of skin cancer. BCCs account for approximately 75 per cent of skin cancers in Australia.
2. Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is not as dangerous as melanoma but may spread to other parts of the body if left untreated. SCCs account for approximately 20 per cent of all skin cancers in Australia.
3. Melanoma is the least common and the most dangerous type of skin cancer. Melanoma accounts for approximately 5 per cent of all skin cancers. Melanoma is often fast growing if left untreated and can spread to other parts of the body.

More information on skin cancer is available from the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, or visit [www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au).



# UVR protection

## – A workplace health and safety issue

Under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, relevant persons (employers) and workers have responsibilities in reducing the risk of all types of injuries and risks to health while at work. Over-exposure to the sun's UVR is one of these risks.

The Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 also 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 under their duty of care from the risk of skin cancer. For example, changing the time that a particular outdoor task is performed, providing employees with personal sun protection, and providing training and education on skin cancer prevention and early detection.

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 by:

- a. Identifying hazards;
- b. Assessing risks that may result because of the hazards;
- c. Deciding on control measures to prevent, or minimise the level of, the risks;
- d. Implementing control measures; and
- e. Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the measures.

In the case of outdoor employees, UVR would be identified as a hazard. It is therefore recognised that outdoor employees are at risk of skin cancer and skin damage due to UVR exposure. As such, sun protection policies should be developed and implemented in workplaces where employees are exposed to UVR.



The risk of developing skin cancer is directly related to the intensity and duration of exposure to UVR. In Queensland, examples of groups especially at risk include:

- Building and construction;
- Lifeguards;
- Police officers;
- Farming, agriculture and horticulture;
- Fishing;
- Forestry and logging;
- Landscaping and gardening services;
- Open-air minerals, oil and gas exploration and extraction;
- Outdoor sports;
- Other outdoor services; and
- Any employee who may be required to perform work involving exposure to UVR. This policy is also applicable to mobile employees.

Research conducted by the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) notes that even if a mobile employee is not in direct sunlight, UVA and UVB exposure through open windows can cause serious harm (Queensland Employee's Health Centre, 2003). Drivers who have side windows down are at particular risk and are advised to practise SunSmart behaviours, including:

- Taxi drivers;
- Bus drivers;
- Delivery and courier services;
- Truck drivers; and
- Any employees who spend prolonged periods in vehicles during the day.

## Claiming the cost of sun protection items

Employees can claim a tax deduction for the cost of the following items if they are required to work in the sun and have purchased and used these items at work:

- Sunscreen;
- Hat; and
- Sunglasses.

If employees work in an occupation or industry that requires exposure to the sun, but did not purchase any sun protection products or were not required to work in the sun, they are not entitled to claim a deduction.

For additional information, visit the Australian Taxation Office website [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au) or call the Business Tax Line on **13 28 66**.



# Steps to developing and implementing a successful SunSmart policy

**When developing and implementing your SunSmart policy, it is important you have an 'action plan'. To ensure all employees support the policy, they should be encouraged to actively the development and implementation of the policy.**

The following guidelines set out the steps involved in producing a written SunSmart policy, and give practical ideas for maintaining support and momentum for the policy.

*The thought of making changes in any organisation can be overwhelming, but remember creating and implementing a SunSmart policy is a positive decision.*

Keep in mind that motivation and persistence are important components of any successful policy campaign.

## **Step 1: Form a working party**

- A special committee or working party can be your most valuable tool. It will lighten individual workloads and, if representatives are chosen carefully, will assist in the smooth adoption of the SunSmart policy within your organisation. The executive/board/committee of your organisation should endorse the working party.
- Setting up a working party to develop the policy reduces the communication gap between other members of the organisation as they work together towards a common goal.
- The organiser should act as the facilitator at meetings of the working party. This role includes providing a meeting agenda and venue, delegating duties, producing minutes of meetings and ensuring decisions are made.
- The working party should be comprised of employees from a wide cross section of the organisation including management, union representatives, purchasing officers and human resources representatives.
- A working party should have no more than nine representatives.

**NB: There may be an existing committee that could take on this role.**

## Step 2: Be informed – Research and collect information

- Cancer Council Queensland has a wide range of information available regarding skin cancer prevention and early detection. For more information, please call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 or visit [www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au).
- Research widely to gather evidence for why it is essential to develop a SunSmart Policy and become a SunSmart organisation.
- Be aware of the obligations arising from any legislation or directive that is relevant to your organisation, or industry.
- Consider conducting a UVR risk assessment.
- Gather information on how many employees are exposed to UVR and if possible, collect information on the number of sun-related employees compensation claims and illnesses absentee days as a result of sun related illness within your organisation.
- Contact similar organisations to your own that have a successful SunSmart policy in place and discuss how their experiences can benefit your SunSmart initiatives, and visa versa.

## Step 3: Identify current sun protection behaviours and attitudes

- Conduct a survey of employee attitudes towards the organisation adopting a SunSmart policy. This process will assist in identifying potential strategies to implement the policy and highlighting any obstacles that may need to be overcome at a later stage.
- Document your organisation's current practices with regard to sun exposure.

The checklist overleaf can be used as the basis for discussion on improving sun protection at your organisation. Please see page 9.



# SunSmart Policy Guidelines

## Focus on your organisation

### Steps to developing and implementing a successful SunSmart policy continued

Sun protection strategy	✓	✗	How can we improve in this area? (examples)
<b>Shade</b> Is there any shade provided? How much shade is provided? Is the shade provided of a high quality? Do employees make use of available shade?			Plan to increase amount of available shade.
<b>UVR exposure</b> Do employees spend time in the sun? How long? At what time of the day?			Encourage employees to avoid peak UVR times (10am – 3pm). Encourage use of shade during breaks and lunch. Reschedule outdoor tasks to before 10am and after 3pm where possible. Encourage employees to wear sun protective hats, protective clothing, sunglasses and SPF 30+ water-resistant broad-spectrum sunscreen.
<b>Clothing</b> What type of clothing do employees wear? Is the uniform designed to provide good protection from the sun? For example, shirts with collars and long sleeves.			Encourage employees to wear appropriate clothing for sun protection. The design of new uniforms should incorporate principles of sun protection. For example, shirts with longer sleeves, collars, close weave and dark colours.
<b>Hats</b> Do employees wear hats? What types of hats are worn?			Endorse a SunSmart hat in a legionnaire or broad-brimmed style. Make a SunSmart hat part of the employee uniform. Make available Sun flaps and covers for hard hats.
<b>Sunscreen</b> Is broad-spectrum, SPF 30+, water-resistant sunscreen available for employees to use? Are employees encouraged to wear/use sunscreen?			Purchase sunscreen and sunscreen dispensers. Place sunscreen in easily accessible places for employees such as lunch/crib rooms. Make sunscreen available for use/sale in the canteen. Subsidise the cost of sunscreen.
<b>Timetabling</b> Where possible are outdoor activities conducted outside peak UVR times or held under cover?			Timetable outdoor tasks to avoid peak UVR times (10am – 3pm). Utilise indoor or shaded facilities for work training sessions, breaks, lunch and meetings.
<b>Special events</b> Is sun protection incorporated in the planning of all workplace events?			Provide artificial shade as designated rest areas for employees and others.
<b>Role modelling</b> Are there appropriate SunSmart role models in the workplaces? Are individuals encouraged to be SunSmart?			Use supervisors and managers of organisations as role models. Encourage employees to be SunSmart. Offer incentives to SunSmart individuals.
<b>Education</b> Is sun protection education incorporated into employee development programs and events? Are there regular sun protection reminders? Is there access to and provision of skin cancer information in the workplace or on the organisation's website?			Contact Cancer Council Queensland to arrange a workplace education session. Include sun protection education as a component of employee development programs. Articles in a staff newsletter and/or announcements in payslips can serve as a reminder for employees. Display brochures and posters and include SunSmart information with new staff orientation materials. Add an internet link to Cancer Council Queensland <a href="http://www.cancerqld.org.au">www.cancerqld.org.au</a> . Inform staff of claiming a tax deduction on sun protection products (see page 6).

## Step 4: Design the policy

### - Write, review, finalise

#### Write

- The policy should contain defined goals, a clear statement on the implementation of sun protection strategies, and a monitoring and evaluation section. Use the model SunSmart policy for workplaces (see page 13) as a guide to assist in developing a SunSmart policy for your organisation.
- Refer to the information gathered by the working party during step 3. Consider suggestions made by employees. Consider the experiences of other organisations that have already gone through this process.

#### Review

- When the draft has been written, clearly label it as a draft, circulate it to key stakeholders and make it available for employees to review and comment on.
- Provide up-to-date information on the policy's development at staff meetings or in staff communications.

#### Finalise

- Present a final copy of the policy to the appropriate decision making group for endorsement, implementation and regular evaluation.

## Step 5: Educate employees about the policy

- Raising awareness about skin cancer prevention is a critical step in implementing the SunSmart policy.
- Conduct training sessions and provide adequate resources to staff about skin cancer prevention.
- Provide information to staff about supervision and enforcement of the policy, and procedures for non-compliance.
- Inform staff of the current SunSmart policy and provide regular updates.
- Incorporate the SunSmart policy into new staff orientation materials.
- Inform staff of claiming a tax deduction on sun protection products (see page 6).
- Contact Cancer Council Queensland to find out more about skin cancer prevention resources and workplace education programs.



# SunSmart Policy Guidelines

## Focus on your organisation

### Steps to developing and implementing a successful SunSmart policy continued

#### Step 6: Implement the policy

- Officially launch the SunSmart policy so all employees of the organisation are aware of its existence. Publicise the policy as wide as possible, for example through newsletters or on the organisation's website.
- Include the policy with official organisational policy guidelines.
- Be prepared to address all the SunSmart issues set out in your written policy, for example:
  - In what ways can your organisation be actively involved in SunSmart initiatives?
  - How can management reorganise activities so employees' UVR exposure is reduced?
  - What purchasing systems are available for the maintenance of the policy?
  - How will the effectiveness of the policy be evaluated, and how often will evaluation take place?
- The working party may decide to give each representative a specific role in implementing the policy, or to prioritise strategies or activities and work on each as a group.
- Consider budget constraints when preparing the timeframe for implementing the policy. Funds may only become available gradually, so it may not be possible to achieve everything at once. If this is the case, it is important that you prioritise activities.
- The working party should organise detailed education/orientation programs for employees at all levels of the organisation.
- Communication within your organisation is vital. Each employee must be fully informed about the policy and their role in making it a success.

#### Implementation guidelines

These guidelines have been included to help you to transfer your written policy into effective action.

##### A. What do you want to achieve?

Address each of your SunSmart issues:

- Limit exposure to UVR;
- Shade;
- Clothing/uniforms;
- Hats and sunglasses;
- Sunscreen; and
- Role-modelling SunSmart behaviour.

##### B. Have you identified your needs?

- Measure your employees' current level of UVR exposure.
- Assess current behaviours with regards to sun protection.

##### C. Are you aware of the obstacles to implementing your policy?

- Use the working party to brainstorm and identify obstacles to SunSmart behaviour.
- Consult employees about reasons for current behaviours, where possible.

##### D. What methods will be most effective in changing employees behaviour?

- Decide on the best methods of encouraging positive changes in behaviour. These may include environmental, organisational and educational methods.
- Consult employees about which methods they think will be most effective.

### E. Who can help?

- Identify groups in your organisation who can assist in the implementation of these methods.
- Cancer Council Queensland can assist with the provision of skin cancer prevention resources and education programs community speakers to deliver presentations on skin cancer prevention and early detection to your employees.

### F. What are you going to do?

- Decide on appropriate activities and delegate roles to key members, for example, plant trees, build shelters, conduct education programs, purchase and install sunscreen dispensers.



## Step 7: Monitor compliance

- Where possible, incorporate monitoring of UVR into existing monitoring tools. For example, OHS inspections, on-site supervisor reports and observation.
- Non-compliance of the SunSmart policy should be managed as any other non-compliance issue would be, by using the organisation's standard disciplinary procedures.

## Step 8: Monitor and evaluate the policy

- The policy should be reviewed annually to ensure the needs of your employees are met.
- Employee feedback should be documented and considered when making changes to the policy.
- Employees' SunSmart behaviours should be reassessed on an annual basis. This will help to identify which areas of the policy require further support or enforcement.
- Continually update the information made available to employees regarding personal sun protection equipment and other SunSmart ideas.
- Keep abreast of new developments in skin cancer research and update key messages.
- Provide employees with the latest SunSmart information through employee meetings, payslips and newsletters. This will make employees aware that SunSmart issues remain a priority within your organisation.



# A model SunSmart policy for workplaces

**The following is a model SunSmart policy for workplaces. It is intended as a guide only and organisations should feel free to adapt the model policy to suit the needs of their workplaces.**

## 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 outdoor work takes place during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) times throughout the day, workplaces play a major role in both minimising UVR exposure and providing an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence long-term SunSmart behaviour.

Skin damage and skin cancer is the result of cumulative exposure to UVR. Research shows that over exposure to UVR 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.

With this in mind, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of organisation)

realises the need to protect employees from the sun and educate them about SunSmart behaviours, thereby reducing the risk of skin damage from over exposure to the sun.

### Aims

This policy aims to:

- Provide ongoing education that promotes personal responsibility for skin cancer prevention and early detection.
- Provide working environments that support SunSmart practices.
- Create an awareness of the need to reschedule workplace events, where possible, to support SunSmart practices.

### Procedures

Our organisation recognises winter sun also contributes to skin damage. The implementation of this policy will continue throughout the year.

The purpose of this SunSmart policy is to ensure all employees of this organisation are protected from the harmful effects of the sun throughout the year.

## Our commitment

Employees who work outdoors will be provided with the following personal protective equipment, which must be worn when working outdoors:

- Shirts with a collar and longer style sleeves made from close weave, breathable fabric with a UPF rating of at least 40.
- Loose-fitting longer style pants made from close weave, breathable fabric with a UPF of at least 40.
- Broad-brimmed or legionnaire style hat with a brim of at least 7.5cm (bucket style and/or brim attachment with neck flaps for hard hats).
- Wrap-around close-fitting sunglasses that comply with AS/NZS1067:2003 (or clip-ons for employees who wear prescription glasses) and/or safety glasses that comply with AS1337.
- Broad-spectrum, SPF 30+, water-resistant, sunscreen which should be applied generously 20 minutes before going outdoors, and reapplied every two hours. As sunscreen does not provide 100 per cent protection, it must be used in conjunction with other sun protective measures.

## Our organisation will:

- Inform individuals about the organisation's SunSmart policy when they apply for work.
- Follow Cancer Council Queensland's guidelines for SunSmart clothing when choosing, designing or redesigning uniforms.
- Where possible, hold employee training sessions and events at venues that provide adequate shade for all employees.
- Provide suitable shade structures for events where existing shade is not adequate for employees.
- Ensure wherever practical, outdoor work-related activities take place before 10am or after 3pm and investigate the feasibility of rescheduling the work hours.
- Promote SunSmart behaviour through posters and information brochures.
- Provide ongoing education and training about skin cancer prevention and early detection.
- Encourage all supervisors, managers and employees of the organisation to act as positive role models in all aspects of SunSmart behaviour by:
  - Wearing appropriate hats and clothing for all outdoor activities;
  - Using broad-spectrum, SPF 30+, water-resistant, sunscreen;
  - Seeking shade wherever possible;
  - Wearing sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 1067:2003).
- Regularly reinforce the SunSmart policy through newsletters, payslips, meetings and other activities.
- Review the SunSmart policy annually.



# SunSmart Policy Guidelines

## Focus on your organisation

### A model SunSmart policy for workplaces continued

#### Our expectations

##### Employees will:

- Be aware of the organisation's SunSmart policy, having been informed about it upon employment, through newsletters, organisational website, meetings and other activities.
- Take responsibility for their own health and safety by practicing SunSmart behaviours.
- Comply with SunSmart policy guidelines by wearing suitable hats, clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses.
- Apply broad-spectrum, SPF 30+, water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every two hours.
- Utilise shaded or covered areas, where possible, when engaging in outdoor activities and during breaks.
- Help to design and regularly update the SunSmart policy.
- Act as positive role models for other employees in all aspects of SunSmart behaviour, including casual employees and contractors.
- This policy covers all employees, including casual and temporary employees.
- Contractors are required to meet the minimum personal protective clothing and equipment requirements at their own cost.

Considered and accepted by the Committee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Considered and accepted by the Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Considered and accepted by the Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Suggestions for overcoming obstacles

## **Obstacle: Complacency of employees towards the policy**

### **Strategies**

- Inform individuals about the organisation's SunSmart policy when they apply for employment or during orientation of new employees.
- Encourage employees to become involved in developing and implementing the policy.
- Provide information to employees on skin cancer and the importance of SunSmart behaviour. Resources including posters, information sheets, pamphlets, brochures, stickers and DVD's are available free from Cancer Council Queensland. Contact the Cancer Council Helpline on **13 11 20** or visit: [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au) for further information.
- Contact the Cancer Council Helpline on **13 11 20** to arrange an education session for your organisation on the prevention and early detection of skin cancer.

## **Obstacle: Resistance from employees to wear hats, protective clothing, sunscreen etc**

### **Strategies**

- Involve employees in designing and/or selecting a suitable hat, and incorporate this hat into the workplace uniform.
- Involve employees in redesigning the workplace uniform to make it SunSmart, and phase in the new uniforms as the old ones become worn or faded.
- Consider the different types of sunscreen available. Ask employees which type they prefer. For example, alcohol-based sunscreens tend to be less greasy than some creams. The important qualities to consider when choosing a sunscreen are that it is broad-spectrum, SPF 30+ and water-resistant.
- Encourage employees, managers and supervisors to act as positive role models in SunSmart behaviour for other employees by wearing appropriate hats, sunscreen and clothing.



# SunSmart Policy Guidelines

## Focus on your organisation

### Suggestions for overcoming obstacles continued

#### **Obstacle: Financial burden on organisation**

##### **Strategies**

- Approach the local council about the possibility of obtaining free trees. Most councils will provide young trees to community organisations free of charge. Ensure the species chosen will provide adequate shade.
- Involve employees in SunSmart fundraising projects.

#### **Obstacle: Disruption of routine**

##### **Strategies**

- Incorporate SunSmart practices as an integral part of routine. Allow time for employees to apply sunscreen in workplaces.
- Encourage employees to think of SunSmart behaviour as being just as important as wearing a seatbelt when driving a car.

#### **Obstacle: Resistance from management**

##### **Strategies**

- Educate management about SunSmart issues and about their obligations under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995.
- Involve management in the development of the SunSmart policy.



# 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 **[www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au)**.

## **Brisbane**

553 Gregory Terrace  
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006  
T: 07 3634 5100  
F: 07 3257 1306

## **Bundaberg**

Ground floor,  
312 Bourbong Street  
Bundaberg West QLD 4670  
T: 07 4150 4500  
F: 07 3259 8401

## **Cairns**

169 Aumuller Street  
Bungalow QLD 4870  
T: 07 4047 5500  
F: 07 3259 8478

## **Gold Coast**

Cnr Short Street & Marine Pde  
Southport QLD 4215  
T: 07 5503 3700  
F: 07 3259 8457

## **Mackay**

Level 3, 45 Victoria Street  
Mackay QLD 4740  
T: 07 4842 2000  
F: 07 3259 8371

## **Rockhampton**

43 Upper Dawson Road  
Rockhampton QLD 4700  
T: 07 4932 8600  
F: 07 3259 8480

## **Sunshine Coast**

Shop 4, Credit Union Australia  
Plaza, Cnr Maroochydore Rd &  
Baden Powell Street  
Maroochydore QLD 4558  
T: 07 5451 6000  
F: 07 3259 8479

## **Toowoomba**

137 Herries Street  
Toowoomba QLD 4350  
T: 07 4690 5800  
F: 07 3259 8481





For information and support call  
Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

[www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au)

Photos courtesy of Queensland Health