



**Cancer
Council**
Queensland

POLICY GUIDE

Schools and Early Childhood Sun Protection

Implementing an effective sun protection policy for your organisation is one of the most important steps you can take to protect children, staff and visitors from skin damage caused by harmful UV radiation from the sun.

This guide will assist you to create a comprehensive sun protection policy by outlining the benefits of a sun-safe organisation and providing a checklist on how to develop a policy. Further information and resources have been provided in this guide to support your organisation, along with advice on where to go for further information.



Sun protection policy checklist

Rationale

Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world, with over 4000 Queenslanders diagnosed with melanoma in 2021. About two in three Australians will be diagnosed with some form of skin cancer before the age of 70. Almost all skin cancers are caused by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Despite its prevalence, skin cancer is almost entirely preventable through effective sun protection when UV levels reach 3 or above. In Queensland, these levels are reached all year round, even on cool or cloudy days.

Skin can burn in as little as 10 minutes in the Queensland sun. Young children are especially vulnerable because their sensitive skin has less natural protection than adult skin. UV damage accumulated during childhood and adolescence is associated with an increased risk of skin cancer later in life.

As children and employees are typically at learning facilities during peak UV times, schools and early childhood services play a major role in providing an environment where policies and procedures can positively influence long term SunSmart behaviours. By teaching effective sun protection practices from an early age and implementing best-practice measures, schools and early childhood services can contribute to reducing the lifetime risk of skin cancer.

Benefits of a sun protection policy

There are many benefits to an organisation encouraging sun protection, including:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- A safe environment that provides shade and other sun protective measures for the entire organisation
- Increased knowledge and awareness of skin cancer and other damage caused by UV radiation
- Meeting duty of care and occupational health and safety (OHS) obligations to all children, employees and visitors

1

Consult your organisation and gain support

Before writing your policy, it is vital to ensure you have management support and consultation with employees.

Incorporating suggestions and feedback is essential to the success of the policy. This will allow you to assess attitudes towards the policy and address any concerns, leading to a more collaborative policy. We recommend your consultation includes these key points to start the process:

- If your organisation does not already have a health and safety committee, establish a working group to support the development of a sun protection policy
- Seek suggestions from your organisation regarding the development of a policy—this can be done through meetings, focus groups or a general survey
- Collate these findings and develop a sun protection policy proposal to be addressed at a committee or leadership meeting
- Make any necessary amendments to your proposal based on feedback, then dependent on your organisation's process, seek executive leadership approval

2

Formulate a written sun protection policy

Having a comprehensive sun protection policy will demonstrate that your organisation formally recognises the harms caused by UV radiation exposure, and the duty of care it has to promote and support the health and wellbeing of the entire organisation.

This will also clearly articulate the expectations your organisation has towards compliance of the policy's details and consequences for non-compliance. We recommend, **at minimum**, your policy includes the following key aspects:

- **Background and introduction** – as with the start of this policy guide, include a brief outline and reason for the policy, including the benefits to the organisation
- **Purpose** – outline the purpose of your policy, clearly stating what it aims to achieve
- **Involvement** – identify who was involved in the policy preparation and to who and where the policy applies—if your organisation has multiple locations, these should be included here
- **Expectations and commitment** – outline all expectations and commitments your organisation will make as part of the sun protection policy. This should include the following components:

PROCEDURES

- To support the implementation of this policy, employees are encouraged to check daily local sun protection times using the SunSmart widget or app at SunSmart.com.au/resources, or by visiting myUV.com.au or the Bureau of Meteorology website
- The sun protection measures listed are to be used for all outdoor activities when the UV index is 3 or above
- Whenever practical, outdoor activities are scheduled to minimise time outdoors during periods when the UV is high to extreme (UV 6 or above)
- If applicable, children under 12 months of age will not be exposed to direct sunlight when the UV index is 3 or above

SLIP ON SUN PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

- If applicable, make sure uniforms are SunSmart as per Cancer Council Queensland recommendations. This includes shirts with collars and elbow length sleeves, longer style dresses, shorts and pants, and rash vests or t-shirts for outdoor swimming

SLOP ON SUNSCREEN

- Make available SPF50 or SPF50+, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen or encourage children to supply their own
- Strategies are in place to encourage children to apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every 2 hours when outdoors for extended periods, or immediately after swimming, sweating or towel drying

* Sun protection times refer to the time during the day when UV levels reach 3 or above, meaning multiple forms of sun protection are required. In Queensland, UV levels typically reach 3 or above every day of the year. Therefore, an effective sun protection policy should be implemented all year round.

SLAP ON A HAT

- Ensure all hats worn by children cover the face, neck and ears, such as broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style

SEEK SHADE

- Provide a variety of shade (i.e. built, natural and portable) in all areas where children congregate including areas for lunch, outdoor teaching and sport
- Encourage children to use available shade
- Consider shade availability when planning all outdoor events and excursions
- Conduct regular shade assessments to determine future needs by using tools like SunSmart's shade comparison check, available at SunSmart.com.au/resources

SLIDE ON SUNGLASSES

- Where practical, children are encouraged to wear close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard AS1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

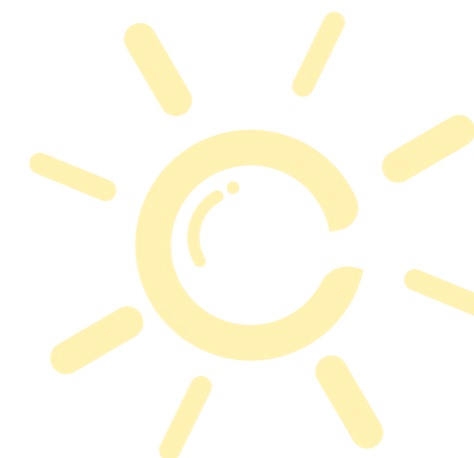
- Include learning activities that promote sun protection in the curriculum for all children
- Teachers and staff are encouraged to complete Cancer Council's free online learning modules, available at GenerationSunSmart.com.au

ROLE MODELLING BY EMPLOYEES

- Ask employees to role model good sun protection behaviours when outdoors, including:
 - Wearing SunSmart hats, clothing and sunglasses
 - Applying SPF50 or SPF50+, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen
 - Seeking shade wherever possible

ENGAGING THE BROADER ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Regularly reinforce and promote SunSmart behaviour to the whole organisational community (children, employees, families and visitors), and if applicable, via newsletters, website/intranet posts, social media posts, assemblies, parent/teacher meetings or through enrolment/employee orientations
- Encourage families and visitors to role model sun protection behaviours when involved in outdoor organisational activities
- **Support** – outline your organisation's commitment to support sun protection. For further information about what to offer as support, please refer to step 4 of the policy checklist
- **Compliance** – outline a procedure for, and the consequences of non-compliance of the expectations listed in your policy
- **Timing and review** – provide a date from when the policy is effective and outline when it will be reviewed. Cancer Council Queensland recommends a review six months after implementation and annually thereafter; SunSmart membership renewal is required every 3 years



3 Communicate, support and promote the policy

Following the development of your policy, communication should be disseminated to your organisation and the policy should be made easily accessible.

To help support and promote your policy, we recommend the following key points:

- Nominate a person responsible for responding to questions and issues that may arise
- Create a process to inform all new starters of the sun protection policy

4 Provide support

Create a supportive environment that encourages sun protection.

There are a range of support resources and tools which you can use to assist. As part of your policy, your organisation could:

- Access and display the daily local sun protection times using the SunSmart widget or app at [SunSmart.com.au/resources](https://sunsmart.com.au/resources), or by visiting [myUV.com.au](https://myuv.com.au) or the Bureau of Meteorology website
- Utilise curriculum resources to educate children
- Encourage students and staff to complete Cancer Council's free online learning modules, available at [GenerationSunSmart.com.au](https://generation.sunsmart.com.au)
- Utilise sun protection posters and resources as outlined in Additional Information and Support
- Organise workshops or seminars to upskill employees in sun protection practices

5 Evaluate and monitor implementation

Following the implementation of your policy, it is important to regularly monitor compliance and evaluate if the policy is meeting the desired objectives, e.g. six months after implementation and annually thereafter.

Some useful points to consider when monitoring and evaluating your policy include your organisation's:

- Awareness of the policy and where it can be accessed
- Uptake and implementation of the support resources and tools
- Awareness of the policy's expectations
- Compliance with the policy

Additional information and support

Government Guidelines

- Under the National Quality Framework, early childhood education and care services are required to have a sun protection policy: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/national-law>
- Department of Education sun protection strategy for schools: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/schools/sun/protection>
- Department of Education School Dress Code: <https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/student-dress-code-procedure>

Sun protection resources

- Cancer Council's SunSmart information and resources: <https://cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/sun-safety/be-sunsmart>
- SunSmart resources for schools and early childhood centres: <https://sunsmart.com.au/>
- Cancer Council Queensland's Lifestyle 6 resources: <https://cancerqld.org.au/lifestyle6>
- Order Cancer Council Queensland's prevention resources: <https://resources.cancerqld.org.au/collections/prevention>
- Daily local sun protection times can be accessed via the SunSmart widget or app at [SunSmart.com.au/resources](https://sunsmart.com.au/resources), or by visiting [myUV.com.au](https://myuv.com.au) or the Bureau of Meteorology website
- Online learning modules for students and staff available at [GenerationSunSmart.com.au](https://generation.sunsmart.com.au)
- Assess the quality and need for shade at specific sites using SunSmart's shade comparison check available at [SunSmart.com.au/resources](https://sunsmart.com.au/resources)
- Queensland Health sun safety at school and early childhood settings: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/schools/sun-safety>

Policy support

If you require further assistance with developing or implementing your sun protection policy, please contact Cancer Council Queensland at: SunSmartApplications@cancerqld.org.au

Last updated October 2024