



**Cancer  
Council**  
Queensland

POLICY GUIDE

# **Schools and Early Childhood Sun Protection**



# Creating a sun protection policy for your organisation is one of the most important things you can do to improve the health of children, employees and protect visitors and benefit your overall organisation.

*This guide will assist you to create a comprehensive sun protection policy 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.*

## Rationale

Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Skin cancers account for 80 per cent of all new cancers diagnosed each year in Australia, making it the most common type of cancer. Skin damage, including skin cancer, is typically the result of over-exposure to the sun. Ultraviolet (UV) damage accumulates over time, resulting in an increased risk of skin cancer later in life. UV exposure causes over 95 per cent of skin cancers including melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer. Ultraviolet (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 behaviour. By teaching effective sun protection practices from an early age and implementing best-practice sun protection measures, schools and early childhood services can play a significant role in reducing the lifetime risk of skin cancer.

*The sun protection times relate to the time of day UV levels reach 3 or above, and subsequently multiple forms of sun protection is required. In Queensland, UV levels are typically above 3 every day of the year, therefore an effective sun protection policy is required to be implemented all year round.*

## Benefits of a sun protection policy

There are many benefits to an organisation encouraging sun protection, some of these include:

- 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
- Create a healthy and safe organisation image





# Sun protection policy checklist



## 1. Consult your organisation and gain support

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

Incorporating suggestions is an essential factor to the success of the policy. This will allow you to assess attitudes towards the policy and allow you to 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 holds 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 assist with implementation of this policy, employees are encouraged to access daily local sun protection times
    - The sun protection measures listed are to be used for all outdoor activities when the UV index is 3 and above
    - Outdoor activities should be minimized between 10am–3pm where possible
    - Children under 12 months of age will not be exposed to direct sunlight, when the UV Index is 3 or above
  - **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
  - **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 and shorts, and long pants
  - Encourage rash vests or t-shirts for outdoor swimming
  - **Slap on a hat**
    - Ensure all hats worn by children cover the face, neck and ears such as broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style. Peak caps and visors are not considered a suitable alternative
  - **Slop on sunscreen**
    - Make available SPF30 or higher 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 to reapply every 2 hours when outdoors for extended periods
  - **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
  - **Role modelling by employees**
    - Ask employees to role model good sun protection behaviours when outdoors, including:
      - Wearing SunSmart hats, clothing and sunglasses
      - Applying SPF30 or higher 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 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 e.g. six months after introduction and then on an annual basis thereafter



### 3. Communicate, support and promote the policy

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

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

- Ensure the policy is made easily accessible to your organisation
- 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

*Creating a supportive environment that encourages sun protection is one of the most important things your policy can achieve.*

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

- Promote the free [SunSmart app](#)
- Utilise curriculum resources to educate children
- Utilise sun protection posters and resources as outlined in *Additional Information and Support*
- Organise workshops or seminars to upskill employees in sun protection practices



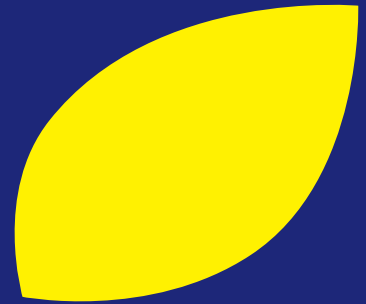
### 5. Evaluate and monitor implementation

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

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

- How aware is your organisation of the policy details and where to find it?
- What is the uptake of support offered to your organisation?
- How aware is your organisation of the expectations of this policy?
- How widespread is compliance with the policy?





## Additional information and support

### National Guidelines

- Cancer Council's SunSmart Position Statements: <https://www.cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/sun-protection/sunsmart-position-statements.html>
- 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 recommendations for sun safety within schools: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/schools/sun/protection>
- Department of Education School Dress Code: <http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/management/Procedure%20Attachments/Student%20Dress%20Code/student-dress-code.pdf>

### Sun protection resources

- Cancer prevention resources: [quest.org.au](http://quest.org.au)
- Monitor your areas daily UV: <http://www.myuv.com.au/>
- National SunSmart Program: <http://sunsmart.com.au/>
- Professional Development at Generation SunSmart: <https://www.generationsunsmart.com.au/>
- Department of Education sun safety educational materials: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/schools/sun/resources>

### Policy support

If you require further assistance with developing or implementing your sun protection policy, please contact Cancer Council Queensland at: [cancerprevention@cancerqld.org.au](mailto:cancerprevention@cancerqld.org.au)

*Last updated July 2019*