

February 2006



**Hello** and a very Happy New Year. Welcome to the first edition of the Primary Schools News Bulletin for 2006. Sadly, the summer holidays are over now and school is in and gearing up for another full year. This is a very necessary time for skin protection and for schools to have their skin protection policies fully implemented and in place.

If your skin protection policy hasn't been updated or reviewed in the past two years then it would be a very good idea to do so during this term and I have included a checklist later in this newsletter to help.

This is also a good time to become a registered SunSmart School and receive a large SunSmart sign for your fence. If you would like to join the program you can download an application form from our website [www.cancersa.org.au](http://www.cancersa.org.au) or contact me by email on [cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au](mailto:cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au) or on 8291 4149.

### **Need a new SunSmart School sign?**

If you are a SunSmart School and your SunSmart School sign is looking old and weather beaten, please send me a purchase order for \$20 and I will send you out a brand new sign to brighten up your fence or wall.

Carmel McNamara  
Early Childhood and Primary Schools Project Officer

## **Upper primary students and SunSmart bucket hats**

Schools often find that middle to upper year students (and many teachers) do not want to wear the broad brimmed style hat and many have now introduced the appropriate bucket styled hats, with good success. In 2003 The Cancer Council South Australia commissioned research into the sun protectiveness of bucket hats, which was conducted by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). ARPANSA is a Federal Government agency charged with the responsibility for protecting the health and safety of people, and the environment, from the harmful effects of radiation.

The results of this research showed that a bucket hat with a deep crown and a brim width of **6 cm** for primary school aged children and above or **5 cm** for children under the age of 5 years, provides good protection from the sun. Broad brimmed hats with a brim of 7 cm – 7.5 cm were tested as a comparison and were found to also provide good protection. As a result of these findings, bucket hats that have the appropriate brim width are now being recommended as SunSmart hats. They have also been included as part of the criteria to gain SunSmart School status.



I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that The Cancer Council does not recommend baseball caps or sun visors as appropriate school hats as they do not provide adequate protection from the sun.

## Sunglasses and schools

I have had a number of calls from schools asking whether they should include sunglasses as a component of their uniform. While many skin protection practices have become routine in most schools now, the importance of protecting eyes from over exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) is not so well imbedded within school communities, for a number of practical reasons including safety and cost which are important considerations.

### Why eye protection is important

Eyes, like skin, are susceptible to damage from exposure to UV radiation. Ultraviolet radiation from the sun or from a solarium is not seen or felt, but the damage it causes is cumulative. Repeated exposure of unprotected eyes can cause both short term and permanent damage. Short-term complaints include mild irritation, swelling or difficulty at looking at strong light. Long-term exposure can cause more serious damage such as:

- cataracts (cloudiness of the lens)
- pterygium (pronounced tur-rig-i-um) an overgrowth of the conjunctiva on to the cornea
- solar keratopathy (cloudiness of the cornea) and
- skin cancer of the eyelids and around the eyes

### Sunglasses and children

Since eye damage from ultraviolet radiation is cumulative it is important to protect children's eyes along with their skin – infants and toddlers should be protected by hats and where appropriate, hoods or sun umbrellas and older children should wear hats and sunglasses when outside for significant periods of time.

## Australian Standards for sunglasses

Wearing good quality sunglasses can substantially protect the eye against both short term and long term exposure in bright sunlight and every day outdoor situations. Sunglasses that comply with requirements of Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067:2003 should be labelled as such. Those labelled EPF (Eye Protection Factor rating 10) actually exceed the requirements of the AS/NZS 1067:2003 and may provide even greater protection.

### Some issues for schools to consider

While it is certainly important to protect eyes from over exposure to ultraviolet radiation, there are other issues that schools need to think about when considering the use of sunglasses. One is the issue of safety - for example a ball hitting a child in the face while they are wearing sunglasses. Another factor is the cost - many parents cannot afford to buy sunglasses particularly when they may get lost or broken regularly.

It is also important to note that wearing an appropriate sun protective hat, such as the recommended bucket or broad brimmed hat, will reduce the UV radiation to the eyes by around 50%.

Further information about sunglasses and eye protection can be found at The Cancer Council Australia's website [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au) or The Centre for Eye Research Australia, at <http://iris.medoph.unimelb.edu.au>.

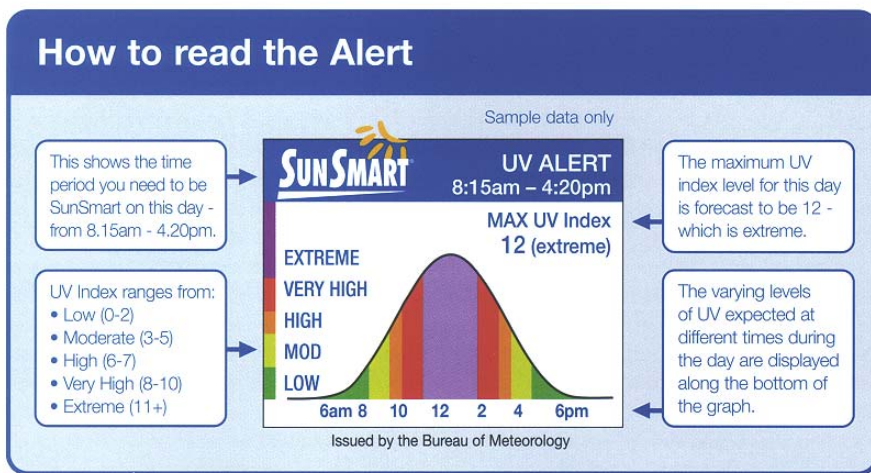
## SunSmart UV alert

The Cancer Council Australia, in partnership with the Bureau of Meteorology and ARPANSA, is pleased to announce the launch of the **SunSmart UV Alert**.



The **SunSmart UV Alert** aims to raise public awareness about the risk of exposure to UV radiation and to encourage people to adopt appropriate sun protective behaviours. The Cancer Council South Australia recommends people protect their skin at times when the UV radiation level is 3 and above, strong enough to cause skin damage.

The Bureau of Meteorology forecast the UV Index daily. The UV Index, adapted from the World Health Organisation's Global UV Index, provides a measure of



teachers. The website, funded by Healthway, offers primary school teachers and school health nurses online information sessions on sun protection education and content delivery.

Log on and complete interactive 20-minute modules including:

- Skin Cancer
- Being SunSmart
- SunSmart Schools

<http://www.sunsmart.com.au>

solar UV radiation at the earth's surface. The values of the Index range from zero upward and the higher the Index value, the greater the potential for damage to your skin.

On days when the UV Index is forecast to reach 3 or above, the Bureau of Meteorology will issue the **SunSmart UV Alert** stating the times the UV will be at 3 and above during the day, the times when skin protection is most important. Currently the **SunSmart UV Alert** appears daily in The Advertiser and Sunday Mail.

For the best protection from the sun when the UV radiation levels are 3 and above use a combination of sun protection measures including:

- Rescheduling outdoor activities between 10am and 3pm when UV radiation levels are at their strongest
- Use shade as much as possible
- Wear clothing that protects your arms and legs
- Wear a hat that provides shade to your face, neck and ears
- Liberally apply a SPF 30+ broad spectrum sunscreen and reapply every two hours
- Wear wrap around sunglasses to protect your eyes.

#### Websites to visit for more information:

[www.bom.gov.au/products/uvindex\\_national.shtm](http://www.bom.gov.au/products/uvindex_national.shtm)

[www.arpana.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm](http://www.arpana.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm)

[www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs271/en](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs271/en)

### Useful SunSmart websites for teachers and students

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

In an exciting innovation The Cancer Council Western Australia has launched a new website especially for

This website is linked to The Cancer Council Victoria and has useful activities for both teachers and students.

<http://www.foundation.sdsu.edu/sunwisestampede/index.html>

The Sunwise Stampede website offers fun activities that teach children how animals protect themselves from the sun's harmful rays, and how children can do the same.

### The Cancer Council South Australia's Speakers' Bureau

Did you know that The Cancer Council South Australia can provide a speaker to come to your school to talk to staff and/or parent groups about skin cancer - ranging from prevention to early detection.

Skin cancer prevention is a very popular topic and assists school communities to remain up to date with information and available resources. Speakers are now also available to provide a presentation on nutrition and cancer.

Our Speakers' Bureau has provided well over 300 presentations on a range of topics, cancer prevention and early detection and the work of The Cancer Council. This free information service is available to all staff and parent groups.

To book a speaker on skin cancer prevention, nutrition and cancer prevention or any cancer-related topic, please contact the Speakers Bureau Coordinator on 8291 4111 or download the request forms from the Speakers Bureau section on the website [www.cancersa.org.au](http://www.cancersa.org.au)

Please note that the Speakers Bureau does not cater for student groups. Contact **The Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20** for information about student resources.



## SunSmart policy review checklist

Please use this checklist if you are reviewing or updating your SunSmart policy and practice.

	The policy is implemented from the beginning of September until the end of April.
	All students wear a broad brimmed, legionnaire or bucket hat (deep crown and minimum 6cm brim) whenever they are outside.
	Appropriate sun protective clothing is included in the school uniform / dress code.
	Students are encouraged to use available areas of shade for outdoor activities.
	Students who do not have appropriate hats with them are asked to play in an area protected from the sun.
	Staff act as positive role models by practising SunSmart behaviours including appropriate hat wearing when outdoors.
	The use of SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen is encouraged, with time for application of sunscreen allowed.
	Programs on skin cancer prevention are included in the curriculum of at least three year levels.
	SunSmart behaviour is regularly reinforced and promoted to the whole school community (eg. via newsletters, assemblies) and all new families and staff members are informed of the policy.
	The school has sufficient shade or is working towards increasing the number of trees and shade structures so as to provide adequate sun protected areas in the school grounds.
	The school reviews its sun protection policy regularly (at least every 2 years) by monitoring the school's compliance with its policy and making suggestions for improvement.
	The use of wrap-around sunglasses is encouraged. (optional)

### Evaluation

Strategies working well:

Plans for next 12 months:

If you have any questions or require further information please contact Carmel McNamara, SunSmart School's Program on (08) 8291 4149 or by email on [cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au](mailto:cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au).



For cancer information and support contact the **Cancer Helpline on 13 11 20.**

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