



## National SunSmart Schools and Services Program (for ACT) A Sample Policy and Checklist.

### Background information to help develop your sun protection policy

#### The sun and UV radiation

Although our senses can easily detect visible (sunlight) and infrared radiation (heat), they cannot detect the level of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. UV radiation can't be seen or felt and can be damaging to our skin and eyes on cool, cloudy days as well as hot, sunny ones.

While UV radiation comes directly from the sun, it can also be scattered and reflected by surfaces such as buildings, concrete, sand, snow and water. It can also pass through certain cloud cover. Whenever UV radiation levels reach **3** (moderate) **or above** sun protection is required. At that level UV radiation is intense enough to damage our unprotected skin and eyes and contribute to our life-time risk of developing skin cancer. In Canberra from the beginning of August through to the end of May, daily UV radiation levels average **3** or above for part of or most of the day. Particular care should also be taken between 10am - 2pm (**including minimising outdoor activities between 11am - 3 pm during the daylight saving time of the year as much as practicably possible**) when daily UV levels reach their peak.

#### UV radiation and vitamin D

Some UV radiation exposure is important for Vitamin D production. Vitamin D is necessary for bone, joint, muscle and neurological function. To get enough vitamin D from August through to the end of May, you only need a few minutes of incidental sun exposure to the face, arms and hands outside the peak UV period on most days of the week. To get enough Vitamin D during June and July, when UV radiation levels are low (under 3), you need to expose your face, arms and hands to the sun for two to three hours over a week. For more info visit: [www.cancer.org.au/documents/RisksBenefitsSunExposure03May07.pdf](http://www.cancer.org.au/documents/RisksBenefitsSunExposure03May07.pdf)

During June and July in Canberra, UV radiation levels are low (below **3**). Therefore sun protection measures are not generally necessary during these months unless you are in alpine regions, near highly reflective surfaces like snow or water or have very sensitive skin and spend long hours outdoors.

Correct sun protection practices not only reduce a child's risk of skin and eye damage and skin cancer but also ensure they obtain enough vitamin D from the sun to allow for healthy bone development and maintenance. For more information on getting the balance right between Vitamin D and sun protection please visit the SunSmart section of the Cancer Council ACT website ([www.actcancer.org](http://www.actcancer.org))

**Occupational UVR Exposure** is also a serious OH&S hazard. Schools and services should be aware of their OH&S workplace responsibilities and duty of care to maintain a healthy and safe workplace. For more information on Occupational UVR Exposure visit the Cancer Council website.

### **The effect of UV radiation – skin cancer**

Too much exposure to UV radiation can cause sunburn, skin damage and skin cancer. Adolescence and childhood are critical periods during which over-exposure to UV radiation is more likely to contribute to skin cancer in later life developing skin cancer. Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world and one in two people living in Australia will develop skin cancer during their lifetime. However skin cancer is almost totally preventable.

### **The role of early childhood services and schools**

There is enormous potential for services and schools to prevent skin cancer in future generations. Childcare services and schools are central to protecting children's skin. This is because:

- Children are at centres/schools five days out of seven at times when ultraviolet (UV) radiation levels are high
- Most skin damage due to sun exposure occurs during the first 15 years.

Staff teachers and carers can play a significant role in changing behaviours through role modelling and education. Protecting children from foreseeable harm is part of a centre's/school's 'duty of care' to children. Early childhood services and schools are subject to guidelines and responsibilities that relate to the health and safety of children, staff and visitors. As part of an employer's general duty of care, the **Work Safety Act 2008** states that any staff working all or part of their day outside must be protected from the sun's UV radiation.

### **So remember:**

**The 1<sup>st</sup> of August is hats ON for all of us.**

### **And:**

**The 31st of May is hats OFF day.**

### **When UV levels reach 3 and above adopt a combination of the 5 sun protection measures to protect your skin.**

To protect against skin and eye damage including skin cancer, when the UV level is 3 and above simply adopt a combination of these 5 sun protection measures whenever you are outside and don't forget to take particular care between 10am - 2pm (including minimising outdoor activities between 11am - 3pm during daylight savings time).

## 1. SHADE

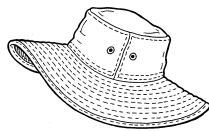
Try to use shade whenever possible. Even while in the shade, UV radiation can still reflect from surfaces such as water, sand and concrete so it is important that children continue to wear a hat, appropriate clothing, sunnies and sunscreen.

## 2. SUN PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

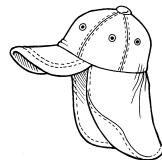
As well as hats, SunSmart recommends loose fitting, close weave clothing that covers as much skin as possible during outside activities. Make sure your service/school uniform or dress code includes tops with elbow length sleeves or longer, collars and knee length or longer style shorts and skirts. Chose dark and close knitted material that offers more protection.

## 3. HATS

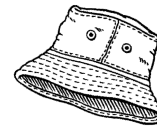
To protect the neck, ears, temples, face and nose, children (and workers) should wear a broad-brimmed, legionnaire or bucket style hat.



*broad-brimmed hat*



*legionnaire hat*



*bucket hat*

Broad-brimmed hats should have a brim of at least 7.5cm for adults and 6cm for children.

Legionnaire hats should have the front peak and the long, back flap meet at the sides to protect the side of the face, neck and ears

Bucket hats should have a deep crown and a brim of at least 5cm for younger children and 6cm for older kids going into primary school and adults. It is important that the hat design fits the child's head and offers adequate protection.

Baseball caps and visors offer little protection to the cheeks, ears and neck and are therefore NOT recommended.

## 4. SUNGLASSES

Eyes, like skin, can also be damaged by over-exposure to UV radiation. SunSmart recommends, where practical, wearing close fitting, wrap around sunglasses that cover as much of the eye area as possible. Sunglasses should meet **Australian Standard 1067** (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and preferably be marked EPF (eye protection factor) 10. There are also swimming goggles with EPF 10. A wrap-around style offers best protection from UV radiation.

Please remember that the colour or darkness of the lenses doesn't indicate the level of sun protection and you will need to check the label. It is also good to find sunglasses that are polarised as these reduce the glare (polarised sunglasses do not offer additional protection from UV radiation).

If your school or service prefers not to introduce the wearing of sunglasses, or a student is reluctant to wear them, you can still protect the eyes by taking particular care during peak UV times, wearing an appropriate hat and staying in the shade.

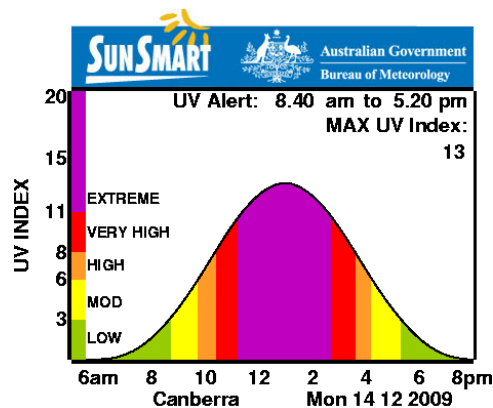
## 5. SUNSCREEN

It is good to teach children to apply a 30+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen 15-20 minutes before going outside *and* to reapply it every two hours. Sunscreen 'screens' out UV radiation but does not completely 'block' it out so some UV radiation still reaches our skin. Sunscreen should never be the only method of sun protection nor should it be used to stay out in the sun longer. Always check the expiry date. **As part of your 'duty of care' early childhood services and schools should make sunscreen easily accessible to children, students and staff**, we recommend that you inform families of the brand/type of sunscreen you use. Some children may be sensitive to some sunscreens, so families may wish to supply an alternative for their child. You may also like to include sunscreen on the schools booklist so that each child brings their own supply approved by their family. Schools are encouraged to remind, assist and reinforce the importance of sunscreen amongst students.

*(Cancer Council ACT provides schools and services that are a part of the SunSmart Program a discount on bulk sunscreen orders)*

### WHEN UV LEVELS REACH THREE AND ABOVE BE SUNSMART

Whenever UV radiation levels reach **3** and above, skin damage can occur. **The SunSmart UV Alert** is issued by the **Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)** when the UV Index is forecast to reach **3** and above. It is reported in most daily newspapers (ie The Canberra Times) and some television and radio weather forecasts across Australia.



In Canberra, from the beginning of August to the end of May, UV radiation levels are on average **3** and above for part or most of each day. Particular care should always be taken between 10am - 2pm (including minimising outdoor activities between 11am- 3pm during daylight savings time) when daily UV levels reach their peak.

To view today's UV Index for Canberra visit:

[http://www.bom.gov.au/products/UV/Canberra\\_NSW.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/products/UV/Canberra_NSW.shtml)

## ROLE MODELS

Children often copy those around them and learn by imitation. If you adopt sun protection behaviours the children in your care are more likely to do the same. It's important to use a *combination of the 5 sun protection measures during day care hours and at home and on the weekend*. Encourage parents and carers to also be SunSmart!

Sun exposure for staff is also an **Occupational Health & Safety** issue. For information on sun protection in the workplace visit [www.actcancer.org](http://www.actcancer.org)

## FAMILY INFORMATION

It is helpful if families understand the centre's/school's sun protection policy and are aware of how they can assist by supporting the dress code, providing appropriate hats, and possibly sunglasses and sun-screen, accessing the UV Alert on weekend, and being good role models themselves etc. Newsletters, assemblies and noticeboards are an ideal way of keeping parents and carers informed.

Cancer Council ACT can provide materials (posters, brochures and information sheets) for this purpose. Alternatively families should be encouraged to visit the SunSmart section of the Council's website at [www.actcancer.org](http://www.actcancer.org)

## POLICY REVIEW

It is important to have a review date on your policy so that reviewing your sun protection policy becomes a regular part of your centre's/ school's review program. This makes sure everything is working well and the policy includes the most current information.

A SunSmart Policy Review Form will be forwarded to your service/school every three (3) years. Please complete this and return to Cancer Council with an electronic copy of your sun protection policy so your SunSmart status can remain updated and current. If your policy

## A Sample Policy

*SERVICES AND SCHOOLS ARE WELCOME TO COPY FROM THIS SUNSMART SUN PROTECTION POLICY DIRECTLY AND USE IT AS THEIR OWN OR INCORPORATE ALL OF THE MAIN POINTS INTO THEIR OWN SUN PROTECTION POLICY.*

### **(enter name of service/school) sun protection policy**

#### **RATIONALE**

Too much exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun causes sunburn, skin and eye damage and increases the risk of skin cancer including melanoma. Sun exposure in the first 15 years of life contributes significantly to the lifetime risk of developing skin cancer. Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.

Too little exposure to the sun's UVR can lead to vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D is important as it regulates calcium levels in the blood. It is also necessary for the development and maintenance of healthy bones, muscles and teeth.

To ensure a health balance between too much and too little UVR this policy will be implemented from the beginning of August until the end of May when daily UV radiation levels reach 3 and above (which is for part of or most of the day during this period in Canberra) and is strong enough to damage unprotected skin and eyes. The following statement should be acknowledged in your policy.

*'Most Australians receive the bulk of their vitamin D supply from exposing their skin to small amounts of ultraviolet radiation in sunlight. Due to low levels of ultraviolet radiation in Canberra during the winter months, The Cancer Council ACT does not generally recommend sun protection in June and July. This is to reduce the risk of vitamin D deficiency in the ACT region.'*

#### **OBJECTIVES**

The goals of the SunSmart Policy are to;

- Increase children's and the community's awareness about skin cancer and sun protection,
- Protect students/children and workers from over exposure to UV radiation
- Encourage all workers and teachers of the service/school to act as positive SunSmart role models by using a combination of the 5 sun protection measures when UV levels reach 3 and above
- Work towards developing the safest environment that provides adequate shade for children, workers and visitors to the centre or school
- Assist and educate children to be responsible for their own sun protection behaviour
- Incorporate educational activities about sun protection and skin damage
- Actively promote the policy to all members of the service/ school.

## OUR SUN PROTECTION STRATEGIES

All children/students and workers will adopt a combination of the 5 sun protection measures when UV levels reach **3 and above**. Particular care will be taken between 10am - 2pm (including minimising outdoor activities between 11am-3 pm during daylight savings time) when daily UV levels reach their peak.

Our SunSmart policy is considered when planning ALL outdoor events eg. assemblies, camps, excursions and sporting events. Outdoor activities should be minimised when possible during the daylight saving period of the year.

### 1. Shade

Children are encouraged to use available areas of shade when outside. Children who do not have appropriate hats or outdoor clothing are asked to play in the shade or to remain inside if shade is not adequate.

The availability of shade is considered when planning excursions and all outdoor activities.

The centre/school will make sure there is a sufficient number of shelters and trees providing shade in the play ground, particularly in areas where children congregate. Eg play areas, sand pits and grass etc. If there is not sufficient shade the service/school is committed to work toward increasing shade for future use.

### 2. Clothing

Sun protective clothing is included in our school/centre's dress code. This will include shirts with collars and longer sleeves, longer style dresses and shorts and rash vests or t-shirts for outdoor swimming. Clothing should be loose fitting and be made from a closely woven fabric. Parents are encouraged to chose a fabric with a UPF rating of 50+.

### 3. Hats

Children/students and workers are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears, i.e. legionnaire, broad-brimmed or bucket hats whenever they are outside. Baseball hats are NOT recommended and should not be worn as a form of sun protection.

### 4. Sunglasses [SUGGESTED]

Children/students and workers are also *encouraged* where possible to wear close fitting, wrap around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

### 5. Sunscreen

SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen is made available and easily accessible to all students/children and workers to apply. Sunscreen is applied at least 15-20 minutes before going outdoors *and* reapplied every two hours if outside for long periods. It is preferable that babies are kept out of direct sun exposure. Whilst there is no evidence that suggest that sunscreen is harmful to babies, it need only be used occasionally and on very small areas of exposed skin not already protected.

**Note: Sunscreen should never be used to extend time in the sun and should always be used in combination with the other sun protection measures.**

## Role Modelling and OH&S

Workers and teachers are required to, parents and visitors to the school/service act as positive role models by:

- wearing sun protective hats, clothing and sunglasses (if possible) outside
- applying SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen and seeking shade whenever possible.

Families are encouraged to use sun protective measures (sun protective clothing, hats and sunscreen) when participating in and attending outdoor school activities.

Occupational UVR Exposure is a series OH&S hazard for any person who works part of or most of the day outdoors. Our schools/service is aware of its OH&S obligations, responsibilities and duties of care under the ACT Work Safety Act 2008. For more information view the school's/ service's OH&S policy.

## Babies under 12 months. (early childhood service only)

Regardless of UV levels it is advisable not to purposely expose babies to direct UV from sunlight. When UV levels reach 3 and above it is recommended that babies are well protected by adopting a combination of sun protection measures.

Always take particular care when outdoors during the middle hours of the day (say between 10am to 3pm) and aim to minimise/avoid outdoor activities and events between 11am and 3 pm during the daylight saving period in Canberra when UV levels are at their strongest.

Because babies should not be exposed to direct sunlight, and should be covered with adequate clothing or cloths sunscreen is generally not necessary. However if direct sun exposure is unavoidable then small amounts of sunscreen to exposed skin is safe to use.

## Curriculum

SunSmart messages are incorporated into the curriculum.

SunSmart behaviour is regularly reinforced and promoted to the community through newsletters, centre's homepage, parent meetings, staff meetings, fun days, concerts, assemblies, student and teacher activities and on student enrolment etc

The school/service is aware of the resources available through Cancer Council ACT. [www.actcancer.org](http://www.actcancer.org)

## Review

The Cancer Council ACT will forward all centres and schools that have received a national SunSmart status a **SunSmart Review Form** every 3 years. By assessing and recommending any necessary changes to your policy, your service or school will be assured it has the most comprehensive, updated and effective sun protection policy in place to protect the children, students and workers in your care. It also adds consistency and integrity to the Cancer Council's National SunSmart School and Early Child-care Program.

---

**For further information call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20**

Cancer Council ACT · 5 Richmond Avenue, Fairbairn ACT 2609 ·

PO BOX 143, Fyshwick ACT 2609

Tel: 02 6257 9999 · Fax: 02 6257 5055 · [www.actcancer.org](http://www.actcancer.org)



## Policy objectives –Checklist

- ✓ Implemented from the **1<sup>st</sup> August until the 31<sup>st</sup> May**, with particular care taken between 10am and 2 pm (minimise outdoor activities between 11am and 3pm daylight saving time). Due to Canberra’s low UV levels during June and July (under 3) sun protection is not recommended. This is to reduce the risk of Vitamin D deficiency in the ACT region
- ✓ Protect **children and staff** alike from over-exposure to UVR
- ✓ Reflected in the planning of **ALL** outdoor events / activities, camps and carnivals.
- ✓ Babies (under 12 months) should be kept out of direct sunlight regardless of UV levels. Sunscreen need only be applied to exposed skin not protected by clothing or hats, where necessary (applies only to early childhood services and schools)
- ✓ Broad-brimmed, legionnaire or bucket **hats** *only* are required to be worn outdoors
- ✓ Sun protective **clothing** is included in the dress code
- ✓ Children without hats or adequate clothing will be directed to **play in shaded**/inside areas
- ✓ Children are encouraged to **use shaded areas** for outdoor activities
- ✓ A **combination of the 5 sun protection measures** are considered when planning ALL outdoor experiences reach UV levels are 3 and above.
- ✓ Acknowledges your schools/services **OH&S responsibilities** and duty of care
- ✓ The staff/ committee will ensure there is appropriate **shade** at the centre
- ✓ The application of SPF 30+, broad-spectrum, water-resistant **sunscreen** is included, children and staff have access to sunscreen
- ✓ Staff and parents are encouraged to act as **positive SunSmart role-models**
- ✓ **Education** on sun protection is included in games, stories and the curriculum etc
- ✓ The SunSmart message is **promoted** to all staff and families
- ✓ Policy **review points** are included. Your policy is reviewed every 3 years and updated if necessary.
- ✓ **Sunglasses** are acknowledged in the policy. (meet AS 1067)

## YOUR APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Please make sure your application includes:

- ✓ SunSmart Program Application Form
- ✓ Signed SunSmart Program Agreement
- ✓ Copy of your centre’s/school’s current sun protection policy (email in doc format)