

SunSmart childcare

A guide for service providers



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About this guide

This booklet is a guide for childcare services that want to participate in the SunSmart Early Childhood Program. It outlines the reasons for protecting children from the effects of UV radiation, the benefits of the SunSmart program, and how to develop an effective sun protection policy that meets SunSmart criteria.

1

“If we start educating children about sun protection now, hopefully the lessons will continue through their schooling and lives, and the incidence of skin cancer will be reduced. We feel it is very important.”

Evelyn Harrington, Catherine Campbell Centre, Inverell

Sun protection for childcare



The SunSmart Early Childhood Program is a free and successful national program run by Cancer Councils in each state and territory.

It supports childcare services to develop and implement a sun protection policy that reduces children's exposure to UV radiation and reduces the risk of skin cancer.

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Around half of all people who spend their life here develop some form of skin cancer. Most skin cancers are caused by ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

Young children and babies have sensitive skin, which places them at particular risk of sunburn and skin damage. In fact, exposure during the first 15 years of life can greatly increase the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. Most skin cancers can be prevented by reducing exposure to UV radiation.

Childcare services have a responsibility and opportunity to reduce children's risk and to help establish effective long-term behaviours. A sun protection policy that is based on the latest research and best practice principles will help your service to achieve this.

Why become a SunSmart service?

Hundreds of childcare services across Australia have already become SunSmart. The SunSmart program can help your service to:

Develop a best-practice policy.

Many early childhood services have a sun protection policy, but may not be up to date with the latest recommendations or cover all the service's sun protection strategies. The SunSmart program can help you review your sun protection strategies and develop these into a comprehensive sun protection policy, so you can be confident you are providing a safe environment.

Meet licensing and accreditation requirements.

Being a SunSmart service helps your service to meet licensing requirements. The Department of Community Services and the National Childcare Accreditation Council refer childcare services to the Cancer Council for information and advice about their sun protection policy.

Show your commitment.

Families are increasingly becoming more informed and concerned about choosing a service that meets the health and learning needs of their child. Becoming SunSmart is a great way to show families and the community that you are committed to sun protection. SunSmart services receive a large metal sign to display at the front of the service, which recognises and promotes your work in sun protection.

Stay up to date.

SunSmart services receive quarterly newsletters, resources and information for staff, families and children, and ongoing support from the Cancer Council's SunSmart team.

Understanding UV radiation

UV radiation comes from the sun but it can't be seen or felt. Temperature does not affect UV radiation levels, which is why sunburn and skin damage can occur on cloudy, cooler days and even in winter.

To develop an effective sun protection policy, it is first important to understand UV radiation.

- There are three types of UV radiation: UVA, UVB and UVC. UVC doesn't reach the earth's surface, but UVA and UVB both contribute to sunburn, skin ageing and damage, and skin cancer.
- UV rays reach us directly, in a straight line from the sun, as well as indirectly, by bouncing off surfaces such as light-coloured reflective walls, concrete, sand, water and snow. (This is why you can get sunburnt in the shade by rays reflecting in from the side.)
- Many factors affect UV radiation levels, including time of day, time of year, geographical location and altitude.

How does UV radiation affect us?

Unprotected exposure to UV radiation damages the cells in the skin layers and can cause:

- sunburn
- early ageing of the skin
- damage to the skin that builds up over time and can lead to skin cancer
- eye damage and serious eye conditions, such as cataracts.

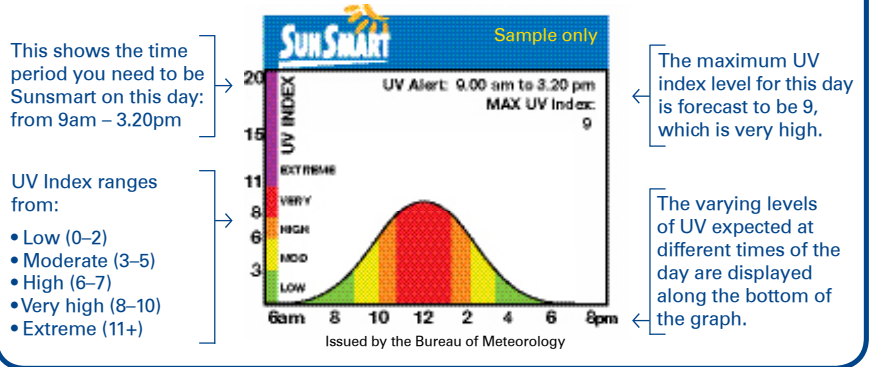
While skin cancer usually appears in older adults, the damage begins at an early age from exposure to UV radiation, especially sunburn. A person's risk of developing skin cancer is related to the amount of exposure to UV radiation over their lifetime, particularly in childhood.

All types of sunburn, whether severe or mild, can cause permanent skin damage. Even if exposure does not cause obvious sunburn, damage can still occur. Accumulated sun exposure increases the risk of developing skin cancer.

There are three main types of skin cancer:

- **Melanoma:** the least common but most dangerous form of skin cancer. It can spread to other parts of the body if it is not removed early enough and can be fatal.
- **Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC):** not as dangerous as melanoma but can spread to other parts of the body if not treated.
- **Basal cell carcinoma (BCC):** the most common but least dangerous type of skin cancer.

How to read the SunSmart UV Alert



The UV Index

To know how to stay safe from the sun, it helps to understand the UV Index, which is a simple way to show the intensity of the sun's UV radiation. The values of the Index range from zero upward; the higher the value, the greater the potential for skin damage.

When the UV forecast is 3 or above, you need to protect yourself from the sun because the UV rays are strong enough to damage your skin.

The UV Index is often presented in the shape of a bell curve (see above) to show how it changes throughout the day, peaking in the middle part of the day (when the UV radiation is strongest) and gradually dropping throughout the afternoon.



The SunSmart UV Alert

The Bureau of Meteorology issues the SunSmart UV Alert when the UV Index is forecast to reach 3 or above. The SunSmart UV Alert is reported in most newspapers and some television and radio weather forecasts across Australia.

The Bureau of Meteorology website (www.bom.gov.au/weather/UV) also forecasts the highest UV level for the following day. The figure above shows how to read the Alert.

Why do UV radiation levels fluctuate?

UV radiation levels vary around Australia because of a number of factors:

Time of year UV radiation is higher in summer for the same reasons it is higher in the middle of the day – the sun's rays have a shorter route through the atmosphere before getting to the earth's surface. In winter the sun is much lower in the sky and its rays have a long course through the atmosphere, so more UV radiation is absorbed and the levels are lower.

Time of day Generally, UV radiation levels peak around the middle of the day (10am to 2pm or 11am to 3pm during daylight saving). This is because the sun's rays take the shortest course through the atmosphere and so less UV radiation is absorbed before they get to the earth's surface. UV radiation levels are lowest at the beginning and end of the day.

Latitude The closer you live to the equator, the higher the UV radiation levels.

Altitude UV radiation is stronger at higher altitudes (which is why it's easy to get sunburnt at the snow).

Cloud cover Thick clouds block some UV radiation, but it can get through thin or scattered clouds. Some clouds can actually increase the UV intensity on the ground by reflecting the sun's rays.

Sun protection and childcare: the essentials

Here are five key ways to protect children and staff at your service from the effects of UV radiation.



1. Minimise time spent outdoors during peak UV periods.

- From October to March, minimise outdoor activity between 11am and 3pm. Sun protection is required at all times when outside.
- From April to September, outdoor activity can take place at any time during the day. Sun protection is required between 10am and 2pm (EST), except in June and July when the UV Index is mostly below 3.

In June and July, sun protection may still be needed if your service is in the far west and north of the state (where UV levels are higher) and for children who have very fair skin.

When the UV Index is 3 or above, skin damage can occur so sun protection is required. For most of NSW, UV levels are 3 or above throughout the year apart from June and July.



2. Use shade for outdoor play.

Staying in the shade is one of the most effective ways to reduce exposure to the sun because it blocks or filters UV rays. However, shade doesn't guarantee total protection so other sun protection – sunsafe clothing, hats and sunscreen – is still needed.



3. Wear SunSmart hats.

A well-designed hat can substantially reduce the amount of UV radiation reaching the face, neck, ears and head. Common sites of skin damage and skin cancer are the neck, ears, temples, lips, face and nose.

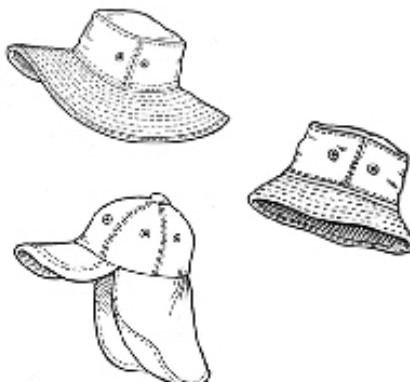
SunSmart hats for children are:

- broad-brimmed hats with a brim size of at least 6cm
- bucket-style hats with a brim size of at least 5cm with a deep crown
- Legionnaire hats

SunSmart hats for adults are:

- broad-brimmed hats with a brim size of at least 7.5cm
- bucket-style hats with a brim size of at least 6cm with a deep crown
- Legionnaire hats

Note: baseball caps and sun visors don't protect the neck, ears and cheeks and are not recommended.



4. Wear SunSmart clothing.

Clothing protects the skin by creating a barrier between the sun's UV radiation and the skin. To provide the best protection against UV radiation, staff and children should wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible, especially the shoulders and back.

Recommended clothing for both children and staff is:

- loose-fitting shirts or dresses, with collars and sleeves (no midriff or singlet tops)
- trousers or longer-style skirts and shorts



5. Apply SPF30+ broad-spectrum sunscreen before going outside.

Sunscreen protects exposed skin that can't be covered with clothing. Liberally apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours.

Use sunscreen that:

- has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30+. The SPF tells you the level of protection. SPF 30+ is the highest SPF available in Australia.
- is broad spectrum and water resistant. Broad-spectrum sunscreen blocks out UVA and UVB rays, both of which contribute to sunburn, skin ageing and skin cancer.

No sunscreen blocks 100% of UV radiation, so always use sunscreen in conjunction with clothing, hats, sunglasses and shade.

Frequently asked questions

What does it mean to “minimise” time spent outdoors?

From October to March, between 11am and 3pm, UV radiation levels are high to extreme, and the potential to cause skin damage is greatly increased. While it is best to avoid outdoor activities during this time, we recognise that early childhood services have to manage a range of needs for all their children. Therefore, it is safer to minimise both the frequency (how often you go outside) and duration (how long you stay outside) of outdoor activities between 11am and 3pm during these months.

If children are outside, always use shade and other sun protection measures (hats, clothing and sunscreen).

Can we spend more time outside if we have good shade?

Well-designed shade (natural or constructed) is one of the most effective ways to reduce exposure to UV radiation.

However, even with good shade children can still be exposed to UV radiation because:

- they are active and move in and out of shade
- UV radiation reflects in from the side, or from surfaces and walls – for example, UV radiation can reflect off the sand in sandpits
- even the best shade can't block out 100% of UV radiation.

Shade is just one component of a comprehensive sun protection strategy, which should also include personal protection measures – sunsafe clothing, hats and sunscreen – and minimising the time spent outdoors during peak UV times (10am–2pm and 11am–3pm daylight saving time).

How do I know if the children are getting enough Vitamin D?

Vitamin D, which is needed to develop and maintain strong and healthy bones, is made in the body when the skin is exposed to UV radiation. Almost all vitamin D comes from the sun's UV radiation. A small amount of vitamin D can be obtained from some foods, such as fish, meat and eggs, but usually this is not enough to keep us healthy.

In Australia most children can receive enough vitamin D through incidental sun exposure during their day-to-day activities outside of peak UV radiation periods.

Regular use of sunscreen when the UV Index is 3 or above will not stop you getting enough vitamin D.

Children who may be at risk of low vitamin D include those with mothers who have low levels, children with very dark skin, or those who cover their faces for cultural or religious reasons.

Parents who are concerned about their child's vitamin D levels should see their GP.

Why do children with very fair skin need more protection?

Skin type is genetically determined and ranges from very fair to dark. Children with very fair or fair skin that burns easily have a tendency to freckle and to tan poorly or not at all.

This is because skin that is white, fair or pale usually has little melanin. Melanin is the brown/black pigment that gives skin its colour and protects the body from UV radiation. When skin is exposed to UV radiation, melanin reacts by becoming darker and gives skin a tanned appearance.

Exposure to UV radiation can damage all skin types, including olive and dark skins and those that tan easily. However, the risk of long-term skin damage, sunburn and skin cancer is highest for children with fair skin, blond or red hair, and blue or green eyes.

Sunburn, especially during childhood, is a significant risk factor for melanoma and other skin cancers. It is also important to protect fair-skinned children from cumulative, long-term exposure to UV radiation.

2

“We joined SunSmart because we wanted to be as up to date as possible in our approach to the children’s safety and well being. We also saw that the program would help us with accreditation.”

Jean Sylvester, Three Bears Kindergarten, Hornsby

Developing a sun protection policy



Every service that wants to apply to become SunSmart needs to have a sun protection policy, which outlines your key strategies for protecting children and staff from UV radiation.

This section shows you how to develop an effective sun protection policy that meets the Cancer Council guidelines.

What is a sun protection policy?

A sun protection policy is a document that outlines why and how your service protects children and staff from UV radiation. Anyone who reads the policy should understand your service's commitment to sun protection.

A sun protection policy should detail a service's key strategies for protecting children and staff from UV radiation, including:

- minimising outdoor play during peak UV times
- using shade for outdoor play
- use of sunsafe hats and clothing
- use of sunscreen
- education about sun protection
- role modelling.

Why have a sun protection policy?

Exposure to sunlight in the first 15 years of life is a significant risk factor for the development of any type of skin cancer.

Early childhood services can therefore play an important role in the prevention of skin cancer.

There are four main reasons to have a sun protection policy:

- Children attend childcare services up to five days a week, often during the high UV radiation period of each day.
- Children in childcare are frequently involved in outdoor activities.
- Services have the opportunity and responsibility to educate children and families about the importance of sun protection and help establish life-long behaviours.
- The sun protection policy can help services to fulfil their licensing and accreditation requirements (see box).

Licensing and accreditation

Services are required to meet sun protection requirements to fulfil their licensing and accreditation standards. Please contact the National Childcare Accreditation Council and the NSW Department of Community Services for more information.

State childcare regulations

Licensed services in NSW are required to have policies and procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of the children in their care and to provide adequate shade for their outdoor play spaces.

National Childcare Accreditation Council

In order to be accredited with the National Childcare Accreditation Council, services must meet minimum standards in all quality areas. This includes sun protection.

Duty of care

All childcare services have a legal responsibility, known as duty of care, to the children in their care, as well as to staff and visitors to their site. This duty of care extends to ensuring that appropriate sun protection policies and practices are developed and implemented.

Occupational health and safety guidelines

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004), employers have a duty of care towards their employees, which includes sun protection.

How to become a SunSmart service

There are a few simple steps to becoming SunSmart:

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|---------------|--|---|
| STEP 1 | Develop a sun protection policy or review your existing policy. | See pages 17–20 for a list of recommendations that your policy should cover, and suggested strategies for achieving those objectives. |
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|---------------|--|---|
| STEP 2 | Complete the application form on the last page. | For extra copies, call or email the SunSmart team (contacts below). |
|---------------|--|---|
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- | | | |
|---------------|--|--|
| STEP 3 | Post, fax or email your policy and application form to: | SunSmart Early Childhood Program
The Cancer Council NSW
PO Box 572, Kings Cross NSW 1340
fax: (02) 9356 3866
email: sunsmartchildcare@nswcc.org.au |
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| STEP 4 | The SunSmart team will review your policy and if necessary, will offer some suggestions to ensure your service's policy follows the SunSmart recommendations. | Our feedback to you will look at how your policy should be modified to be consistent with best-practice sun protection recommendations and to qualify as SunSmart. We may also include other suggestions for you to consider. This part of the process can sometimes take a little time. Once the application and policy are finalised, you can be confident your service is providing comprehensive sun protection for the children in your care. We will then send you a SunSmart agreement to sign. The Cancer Council requires services to sign the agreement to acknowledge your commitment to SunSmart standards. |
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| STEP 5 | Congratulations on becoming SunSmart. | Once the SunSmart team has received your signed agreement, your service will receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a certificate, posters and a large metal sign• quarterly newsletters, which include an update for families• resources and information for staff, families and children• access to ongoing support from the SunSmart team. SunSmart service status is valid for two years, after which you will be asked to review your sun protection policy. |
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-

Ask for help

Remember, you can ask the SunSmart team for help at any time – whether you're developing a new policy or finetuning a policy that the team has sent back.

For more information:
phone: SunSmart Info Line (02) 9334 1761
email: sunsmartchildcare@nswcc.org.au
www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart

Policy implementation guide

The following guide can help your service to develop and implement your sun protection policy.

We have provided suggested strategies for each policy recommendation.

It is vital that you provide us with detailed information about your service's strategies to achieve the key policy recommendations. For example, please provide full descriptions of the type of hats and clothing that children are required to wear when outside.

Remember, we are looking for a comprehensive policy, which covers ALL of our recommendations and your strategies in detail. The strategy options are a guide only and should be tailored to suit your service.

1

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

From October to March, the service will minimise outdoor activity between 11am and 3pm.

Sun protection is required at all times when outside.

From April to September, outdoor activity can take place at any time during the day. Sun protection is required between 10am and 2pm (EST), except in June and July when the UV Index is mostly below 3.



SEE PAGE 10

STRATEGY OPTIONS

From October to March most outdoor activities will be scheduled before and after peak UV times.

Minimising outdoor activities means planning towards decreasing the number of times children and staff are outside (frequency) and the length of time they are outside (duration).

Sun protection includes shade, hats, protective clothing and sunscreen.

In June and July when the UV index is mostly below 3, hats and sunscreen are not required. For consistency some services choose to continue wearing hats, such as beanies.

In June and July, sun protection may still be needed at services in the far west and north of the state (where UV levels are higher) and for children who have very fair skin.

The UV levels can be checked daily at the Bureau of Meteorology website (www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv) and in many newspapers.

2

SHADE

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Outdoor activities will be planned to occur in shaded areas.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Activities are set up in the shade.

Activities and portable equipment are moved as the shade moves throughout the day.

3

SHADE

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The service will provide and maintain adequate shade for outdoor play.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

The service will:

- assess where and when shade falls throughout the day and year, to plan outdoor activity
- use both natural and built shade, or a mixture of built shade
- use portable shade options
- regularly review and monitor the quality and condition of all shade options
- conduct a shade audit (a process that assesses how existing shade is used at a centre and makes recommendations for additional shade or better use of existing shade)
- develop plans to address any shade deficits
- give priority for shade development to areas where children play for extended periods.

4 HATS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

All children will wear a SunSmart hat that protects the face, neck, ears and crown of the head whenever they are outside or on an excursion.



SEE PAGE 10

STRATEGY OPTIONS

The service or parents will provide SunSmart hats for children.

Staff will ensure children are wearing a SunSmart hat when outdoors or the 'no hat, play restrictions' policy (Rec 5) apply.

A reminder note will be given to parents if their child doesn't bring a SunSmart hat.

Hats are stored at the service.

Spare SunSmart hats will be available at the service for children to borrow.

5 HATS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Children without hats will remain protected from the sun.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Children who have left their hat at home, bring a baseball cap or refuse to wear a hat may:

- play indoors if staff ratios allow
- play on a veranda
- play in a shaded area
- wear spare hats available at the service.

6 CLOTHING

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

When outdoors, all children will wear SunSmart clothing that protects as much of the skin as possible, especially the shoulders, back and stomach.



SEE PAGE 10

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Spare SunSmart clothing will be available at the service for children to borrow.

A reminder note about clothing requirements will be given to parents of children who attend the service in non-SunSmart clothing.

SunSmart hats for children:

- broad-brimmed hats with a brim size of at least 6cm
- bucket-style hats with a brim size of at least 5cm with a deep crown
- Legionnaire hats

Note: Baseball caps and sun visors do not protect the neck, ears and cheeks and are not recommended.



SunSmart hats for adults:

- broad-brimmed hats with a brim size of at least 7.5cm
- bucket-style hat with a brim size of at least 6cm and a deep crown.
- Legionnaire hats



SunSmart clothing for children and adults:

- loose-fitting shirts or dresses, with collars and sleeves, which cover the shoulders and chest
- no midriff or singlet tops
- trousers or longer-style skirts and shorts



7 SUNSCREEN

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

All children and staff will apply SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors.



SEE PAGE 10

STRATEGY OPTIONS

The service or the parents will provide SPF 30+, broad-spectrum and water-resistant sunscreen.

Staff, children and visitors will use sunscreen.

Staff will ensure that sunscreen is reapplied to the children and themselves every two hours or more frequently if it is washed or wiped off.

Sunscreen will be applied by smearing over clean, dry skin, leaving a visible film, so it is clear which areas have been missed.

Parents will be encouraged to apply sunscreen to their children before they attend the service.

Sunscreen will be stored in a cool place, out of the sun.

Staff will monitor the expiry date of sunscreen and discard when out of date.

8 BABIES

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Children under 12 months of age will not be exposed to direct sunlight.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Staff will ensure that babies remain in dense shade when outside.

Care will be taken to avoid babies' exposure to indirect or reflected UV radiation when they are in shaded areas by using SunSmart clothing and a hat, and placing them in the middle of the shade.

SPF30+, broad-spectrum and water-resistant sunscreen can be used on small areas of skin not covered by clothing (eg, feet and hands).

9 ROLE MODELLING

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff, students, families and visitors will act as positive role models and demonstrate SunSmart behaviour when attending the service by:

- wearing a SunSmart hat
- applying SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen
- using and promoting shade
- wearing SunSmart clothing
- wearing sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067.



SEE PAGE 10

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Staff job descriptions will include SunSmart behaviour.

The service will provide or subsidise SunSmart hats for staff, or staff will provide their own SunSmart hats.

Hats will be available for families and visitors to borrow.

Sunscreen will be available for families and visitors.

Invitations to families to attend an event at the service will include reminders of the sun protection policy and its requirements.

10 EXCURSIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Sun protection will be considered when excursions are planned.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Time of day and availability of shade will be considered.

Families will be reminded in notices and newsletters of specific sun protection requirements for excursions.

Volunteers accompanying children on excursions will be given information on sun protection requirements.

11 EDUCATION

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Sun protection is part of the learning program.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Sun protection will be incorporated regularly into the learning program.

SunSmart theme days will be held throughout the year.

12 INFORMATION

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Sun protection information will be promoted to staff, families and visitors.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Posters will be displayed and brochures will be available to staff, families and visitors.

Sun protection information will be included in newsletters and excursion notes.

Information and resources can be accessed through the Cancer Council.

13 POLICY AVAILABILITY

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The SunSmart policy will be made available to staff, families and visitors.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

The SunSmart policy will be displayed at the service.

When enrolling their child, parents will be informed of the sun protection policy, including clothing and sunscreen requirements.

Staff will be familiar with all aspects of the sun protection policy.

14 REVIEW

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The policy is monitored and reviewed annually.

STRATEGY OPTIONS

A date will be planned for the next policy review.

The Cancer Council NSW's guidelines will be referred to when the policy is reviewed. Refer to: www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart

Dates of previous reviews will be listed on policies.

SunSmart Early Childhood Program Application form

For more information:
email sunsmatchildcare@nswcc.org.au
phone the SunSmart Info Line on (02) 9334 1761
or go to www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart



Name of service

Management name (if different to service)

Contact name

Position

Street address

Postcode

Telephone

Fax

Email

Tick if postal address is the same YES

Postal address (if different)

Service type (long day care, pre-school, etc)

Management type (community, council, private, corporate)

Age group attending centre Birth–3 years 3–6 years Birth–6 years

Number of children service is licensed for

Hours of operation

Does the service organise excursions? YES NO

Please post, fax or email this completed application form
AND your sun protection policy to:

SunSmart Program Co-ordinator
The Cancer Council NSW
PO Box 572
Kings Cross NSW 1340

fax: (02) 9356 3866
email: sunsmatchildcare@nswcc.org.au

Your privacy:

Your centre's contact details will be used to provide you with information and resources relating to the SunSmart Early Childhood Program. All centre information will be kept private and confidential. If you wish to discuss the storage and use of your details, please contact The Cancer Council NSW.

For more information

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20
www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart

Sun protection products

To buy Cancer Council sun protection products and help fund cancer research, education and patient support, call 1300 760 535 or go to www.cancercouncil.com.au/shop to find a store near you or to shop online.

“Sun protection is a key priority for our centre. We want to stay up to date on sun protection issues and the SunSmart program helps us to do that.”

Fran Neil, Kanwal Preschool and Children’s Centre

