

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION
STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NEW SOUTH WALES



2001 ↗ 2005

Skin Cancer Prevention Strategic Plan for NSW 2001–2005

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Development of the document

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The document was prepared in consultation with the NSW Health Department, NSW Sun Protection Network members, Health Promotion Coordinators and other key stakeholders in skin cancer prevention through a combination of meetings, workshops and written consultation.

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FOREWORD

Skin cancer is an important cancer in New South Wales, with melanoma of the skin the most common cancer in adult males (20–54 years) and females (15–34 years). Despite the fact that mortality from melanoma has stabilised in the decade between 1987 and 1997, the incidence of melanoma, especially amongst males is on the increase. Recent data suggest that sun protection behaviours are improving; however, the pace of progress has been modest at best whilst certain sections of the community continue to be at risk.

NSW has a strong record of achievement in sun protection initiatives, which is a testament to the partnership between NSW Health and The Cancer Council New South Wales. This jointly developed strategic plan provides a template for action, proposing practical strategies designed to ensure a reduction in exposure to solar ultraviolet radiation and a subsequent decline over the longer term in the incidence and mortality of skin cancer.

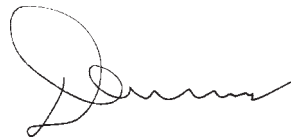
The plan takes a public health focus on prevention consistent with Healthy People 2005. The timeframes within which public health goals are achieved are long term. The action we take today to create lifelong habits of appropriate sun protection behaviour will pay dividends in twenty or thirty years time in the form of lower skin cancer rates in our population.

This plan highlights the value of collaboration and consultation. Numerous partners and stakeholders have worked together at all stages of the preparation and development of this plan, ensuring that the identified strategies are effective, feasible, sustainable and represent the best value for investment. Extensive consultation is the key to ongoing commitment and endorsement by key partners in NSW and underpins effective implementation.

Another major ingredient for success in preventing skin cancer is involvement of the community. 'Cancer Smart' communities are able to mount effective action when supported with the information and other resources needed to do the job. Accordingly, this plan has been developed in consultation with numerous community organisations and the strategies reflect their wisdom in no small measure. Implementation can likewise be sustainable when communities use this plan to devise their own action

strategies and work collaboratively with The Cancer Council and NSW Health to realise their vision.

The Skin Cancer Prevention Strategic Plan 2001–2005 provides a framework for the development of local action plans that will ensure skin cancer prevention is maintained as a high priority throughout the state. It is only with the commitment and involvement of everyone in the field of sun protection that this collective effort will result in a reduction in the burden of skin cancer in NSW.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia has the highest skin cancer rates in the world. New cases of skin cancer outnumber all other forms of cancer by three to one. Currently, there are around 1,300 deaths each year from the disease. The scientific and epidemiological rationale for skin cancer prevention programs is overwhelming. The health system spends more money on the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer than on any other cancer. In 1993–94, the estimated total direct health system costs of all cancers in Australia was \$1,905 million. Treatment of skin cancer was estimated to cost the Australian community around \$300 million each year - substantially more than any other cancer.

Unprotected exposure to solar ultraviolet radiation (UVR) continues to be the single most important modifiable risk factor for skin cancer. Consequently, there are substantial health, social and economic benefits in investing in coordinated and strategic skin cancer prevention programs that lead to reductions in population levels of UVR exposure. The evidence suggests that the most effective preventive programs are those which combine mass media campaigns with policy and environmental strategies which are integrated across state, regional and local levels.

Epidemiological evidence indicates that sun exposure during childhood and adolescence makes an important contribution to the lifelong risk of skin cancer. Strategies designed to reduce exposure of young people to UVR are considered to have the greatest potential to reduce skin cancer incidence rates in the long term. As a consequence, skin cancer prevention programs in NSW in recent years have focussed their attention on young people, their parents and carers and the settings in which young people spend time outdoors.

The **Skin Cancer Prevention Strategic Plan 2001–2005** is the second planning document jointly developed by The Cancer Council New South Wales and NSW Health through extensive consultation with the Health Promotion Branch, representatives from Area Health Services, Health Promotion Coordinators and key stakeholders in sun protection in New South Wales. It builds on the excellent platform established by the **Health Promotion Strategic Plan for Skin Cancer Control in New South Wales 1995–2000** which successfully guided the development and implementation of state and regional skin cancer prevention strategies.

This Strategic Plan has been developed in the context of the past achievements, current programs and existing capacity. It has incorporated the salient environmental, organisational and community issues relating to skin cancer control. The **Skin Cancer Prevention Strategic Plan 2001–2005** reflects an ongoing commitment to a coordinated and strategic approach to the prevention of skin cancer in NSW.

The development of the plan was underpinned by a number of guiding principles:

- Application of existing knowledge
- Consultation and collaboration
- Feasibility and sustainability
- Specificity, equity, access, flexibility
- Monitoring and review

The **Skin Cancer Prevention Strategic Plan 2001–2005** is designed to support the work of individuals and organisations involved in the planning and implementation of skin cancer prevention programs throughout the state. The goal of the plan is to reduce the incidence of skin cancer and associated morbidity and mortality amongst the population of NSW by employing strategies to reduce the exposure of the population to UVR. It aims to ensure a comprehensive skin cancer prevention program in New South Wales in which the activities conducted at state and regional level complement each other.

The Strategic Plan will:

- establish clear direction, goals and strategic priorities for programs at state and regional level
- provide guidelines for the development of regional action plans
- facilitate coordination of state and regional activities
- assist in establishing and maintaining partnerships supportive of skin cancer prevention
- disseminate best practice in skin cancer control interventions
- optimise use of available resources for skin cancer prevention
- provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation of programs
- maximise the impact of skin cancer initiatives undertaken
- attract commitment to and funding for skin cancer prevention programs in NSW.

The selection of strategies has been based on a combination of the current understanding of the aetiology of skin cancer, behavioural epidemiology, best practice in health promotion and skin cancer prevention and the knowledge and experience of health promotion planners and practitioners.

The Strategic Plan identifies strategic priorities in terms of target population groups, settings that provide the best opportunities for successful interventions, priority strategies and desirable partnerships to achieve success. The plan identifies three priority populations in order of public health importance:

- Children (0-11 years)
- Adolescents (12-19 years)
- Adults with high intermittent or cumulative exposure

In addition to highlighting the importance of the sun protection infrastructure in supporting skin cancer prevention programs, the plan also identifies five priority settings:

- Early Childhood services
- Schools
- Sport and Recreation
- Local Government
- Workplaces

Strategies proposed by the plan are organised according to their contribution to achieving favourable long term and intermediate outcomes to reducing sun exposure in three broad areas:

- Environmental outcomes (policy and structural support for sun protection)
- Organisational outcomes (support and capacity for effective sun protection programs)
- Community outcomes (knowledge, attitudes and practices supportive of effective sun protection)

Throughout the plan, recommendations for regional or area-based activities are accompanied by an outline of the proposed state level support for these approaches together with suggested partner agencies and organisations. In the final section, a proposed framework for monitoring and evaluation of skin cancer prevention in New South Wales is presented.

This Strategic Plan establishes priorities and nominates preferred strategies, partners and outcomes for skin cancer prevention in NSW based on current evidence and the results of the consultation processes. While it is acknowledged that all users should consider the specific local needs and opportunities for skin cancer prevention when formulating regional and local plans, it is important that the priorities and strategies of these plans are consistent with those outlined in the Strategic Plan. This will ensure that public health resources are employed in the most effective, equitable and sustainable sun protection activities and that they are complemented and supported by statewide public education campaigns, resources and programs.

CONTENTS

page	
9	1. Introduction
9	1.1 Background
9	1.2 Purpose
10	1.3 About this document
11	2. Rationale
11	2.1 Solar ultraviolet radiation and health
12	2.1.1 UVR and the skin
13	2.1.2 UVR and immune function
13	2.1.3 UVR and the eyes
13	2.1.4 UVR and Vitamin D
13	2.2 Skin cancer rates and trends
13	2.2.1 Melanoma
15	2.2.2 Non-melanocytic skin cancer
17	2.3 Cost to the community
18	2.4 Risk factors
18	2.4.1 Skin type and colouring
18	2.4.2 Naevi
18	2.4.3 Solar keratoses
18	2.4.4 Family history
18	2.4.5 Age
19	2.4.6 Exposure to UVR
23	3. Strategic directions
23	3.1 Policy context
24	3.2 Guiding principles
24	3.3 Determining priority populations
25	3.3.1 Children
26	3.3.2 Adolescents
28	3.3.3 Adults
29	3.3.4 Culturally diverse populations/ethnicity
29	3.3.5 Indigenous Australians
30	3.3.6 Socioeconomic groups
31	3.4 Determining priority sectors and settings
31	3.4.1 Sun Protection Infrastructure
33	3.4.2 Early Childhood Services
35	3.4.3 Schools
38	3.4.4 Outdoor Sport and Recreation
41	3.4.5 Local Government
44	3.4.6 Workplaces
46	3.4.7 Health settings
53	4. The Strategic Plan
53	4.1 A model for planning
53	4.1.1 Goal of the Strategic Plan
53	4.1.2 Long term outcomes
53	4.1.3 Intermediate outcomes (2001–2005)
55	4.1.4 Priority populations, settings and lead agencies
56	4.2 Overview of the Strategic Plan 2001–2005
57	4.3 Strategies for skin cancer prevention 2001–2005
57	4.3.1 Sun Protection Infrastructure
62	4.3.2 Early Childhood Services
66	4.3.3 Schools
71	4.3.4 Outdoor Sport and Recreation
77	4.3.5 Local Government
81	4.3.6 Workplaces
85	5. Monitoring
86	5.1 Proposed population and settings monitoring 2001–2005
86	5.1.1 Children
87	5.1.2 Adolescents
88	5.1.3 Adults
89	5.2 Summary: Monitoring
89	5.2.1 Proposed timeframe for statewide population and settings monitoring 2001–2005

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

page

11	Table 1	Factors affecting ambient solar UVR levels
14	Table 2	Number of new cases of melanoma in NSW 1997 by age and gender
15	Table 3	Projected age-standardised incidence rates of cancer for 2001 and 2006
15	Table 4	Projected number of new cases of cancer for 2001 and 2006
24	Table 5	Guiding principles for development and implementation of skin cancer prevention strategies
41	Table 6	Classification of councils in NSW
48	Table 7	Recommendations in relation to skin cancer screening
11	Figure 1	The electromagnetic spectrum
12	Figure 2	Structure of human skin
15	Figure 3	Australian NMSC rates 1985-1995
16	Figure 4	Change in national age specific BCC rates 1985-1995
16	Figure 5	NSW & Australian NMSC rates 1985-1995
16	Figure 6	NSW NMSC rates 1985-1995
17	Figure 7	NSW BCC rates 1985-1995
17	Figure 8	NSW SCC rates 1985-1995