



# Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **UNITED FRONT AGAINST SKIN CANCER IN NSW**

Health Minister Jillian Skinner has announced a new skin cancer prevention strategy which outlines how government, not-for-profit, health and community groups will unite to reduce the devastating impact of skin cancer.

A NSW Skin Cancer Prevention Advisory Committee has been established by the Cancer Institute NSW to advise on the development, implementation and monitoring of skin cancer prevention activities across NSW.

Mrs Skinner said this was the first time that the NSW Government has had a strategy that has involved multiple agencies, NGOs and the community coming together to address the burden of skin cancer.

“The strategy provides a whole of government approach aligned with the NSW Cancer Plan with an aim to reduce incidences of skin cancer, thus keeping people out of hospital and reducing the burden on the health system,” Mrs Skinner said.

“The cost of skin cancer in NSW is estimated to be \$215 million annually and accounts for 81 per cent of all new cases of cancer diagnosed in Australia every year.

“The NSW Government is spending \$2.4 million annually on skin prevention education campaigns and every dollar invested by the government returns an estimated \$2.30 by helping to reduce healthcare costs,” Mrs Skinner said.

“Many skin cancers are preventable and this plan focuses on protection behaviours and policy, shade provision and strategic research.

“You wouldn’t let your family or friends drive without a seatbelt – it is just too risky. So why risk skin cancer by not protecting yourself or your family from UV overexposure?”

“Up to 99 per cent of skin cancers in Australia are caused by exposure to the sun, which is why this comprehensive approach to skin cancer prevention is vital.”

The strategy aims to:

- Improve knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about risks associated with sun exposure and towards sun protection behaviours
- Increase the availability of shade provision
- Improve the consistency of skin cancer prevention messages

- Increase capacity to implement policies that promote the use of clothing, hats, sunglasses and sunscreen.

The chief cancer officer and CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW, Professor David Currow, said organisations and communities worked together to form this comprehensive strategy, which will ultimately save lives.

“Sun exposure during the first 12 years of life makes a disproportionately large contribution to lifetime risk of developing skin cancers,” Professor Currow said.

“For this reason, children are a focus of this strategy which will see parents, schools and early childhood centres all playing a part.

“Adolescents are also a focus of the strategy as they spend more time outdoors without adequate UV protection, therefore increasing their risk.

“We know sun exposure later in life continues to contribute to the risk of developing melanoma and males over 40 years of age have a higher incidence of this cancer.

Skin Cancer Action Week occurs from November 18 – 24.