



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Cancer Council calls on workplaces to do more to help prevent skin cancers**

*Cancer Council resource "Skin cancer and outdoor work" provides latest advice for employers*

Cancer Council Australia is calling on more Australian workplaces to implement sun protection policies, following new research that shows that 38 percent of outdoor workers aren't properly protected on the job.

The data from Cancer Council's National Sun Protection Survey reveals that 62 percent of workplaces have a sun protection policy in place, up just 11 percentage points since Cancer Council began its survey in 2003/2004.

Following the release of the new data at the end of Safe Work Month, Cancer Council is encouraging more employers to seek guidance from Cancer Council's latest sun protection for outdoor workers resource, "Skin Cancer and Outdoor work – a health and safety guide".

The guide provides employers with the resources to ensure employees are not being exposed to harmful UV radiation whilst at work and help them meet their health and safety obligations.

Heather Walker, Chair of Cancer Council Australia's National Skin Cancer Committee said the latest Cancer Council National Sun Protection Survey results showed a clear need for employers to do more.

"Employers have a duty of care to protect their staff from health risks, including UV radiation. If every employer implemented a sun protection policy, according to previous research it could help prevent an estimated 200 melanomas and 34,000 other skin cancers that are diagnosed each year as the result of UV damage in the workplace.

"Whilst most people need to use sun protection only when the UV index is three or above, it is recommended that outdoor workers use sun protection year-round, even when the UV Index is below three. This is because extended exposure to UV – even at low levels - adds up over time to increase your skin cancer risk.

"What this research is showing is that Australians are working unprotected placing them at risk of developing a potentially deadly skin cancer. We have seen some improvements with an increase in the number of workplaces providing sunscreen from 44 percent in 2003/04 to 59 percent in 2016/2017.

"This year's theme for National Safe Work Month encourages Australians to 'Be a Safety Champion', and we want outdoor workplaces to champion safety all year round.

"If you work outdoors, and your workplace does not offer any sun protection measures, raise the issue with your health and safety representative or manager. Work health and safety legislation in each Australian state requires employers to provide a safe working environment."

The guide was developed in collaboration with the Federal Government's Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA).

Dr Rick Tinker, Director of Assessment and Advice at ARPANSA said outdoor workers need to be conscious that exposure to UV radiation causes permanent and irreversible damage, that continues to add up.

“Each year in Australia 1.2 million Australian workers are exposed to UV radiation at levels five to 10 times higher than that of indoor workers. As a result, outdoor workers are at a greater risk of developing skin cancer.”

“ARPANSA have recognised the importance of protecting workers from harmful UV rays and we are the first federal government agency to be recognised as a SunSmart workplace.”

National Safe Work Month is an initiative of Safe Work Australia.

For outdoor workers, Cancer Council recommends employers implement a UV policy which promotes sun protection all year round:

- Slip on protective clothing that covers as much skin as possible
- Slop on SPF30 or higher, broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen. Apply every morning as part of your morning routine and reapply every two hours or after sweating or towel drying.
- Slap on a broadbrim hat
- Seek shade
- Slide on sunglasses

**– ENDS –**

For media enquiries contact Domenica Lattari, Cancer Council Australia via our media hotline (02) 8063 4109 (diverts to mobile outside hours) or [media@cancer.org.au](mailto:media@cancer.org.au)

For information on UV radiation and working outdoors, download our brochure, [Work outdoors? Use UV protection every day.](#)

Information for employers on UV radiation and working outdoors can be found in our booklet, [Skin cancer and outdoor work. A work health and safety guide.](#)

#### **About the National Sun Protection Survey:**

The National Sun Protection Survey was conducted via phone over the summer of 2016 - 17. Over 4,500 Australians were interviewed. Conducted every three to four years by Cancer Council, the survey provides a perspective on changing trends in Australians' sun protection behaviours and rates of sunburn over the past decade.

#### **About National Safe Work Month:**

National Safe Work Month is an initiative of Safe Work Australia. During October each year, Safe Work Australia asks workers and employers across Australia to commit to building safe and healthy workplaces for all Australians. For more information, visit Safe Work Australia's Website [here](#)