



## **POLICY STATEMENT**

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**DATE: MAY 2001**  
**SUBJECT: SUN SAFETY**  
**NUMBER: 2.1**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

**SURF LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA WILL ENSURE THAT ALL MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATE IN SLSA AND JUNIOR ACTIVITIES ARE BOTH INFORMED AND PROTECTED AGAINST THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF THE SUN'S ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION (UVR) WHENEVER THEY ARE OUTDOORS. SURF LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA WILL PROMOTE TO ALL PARTIES A KNOWLEDGE OF THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE NEED FOR PROTECTION FROM SKIN AND EYE DAMAGE CAUSED BY UVR. ALL MEMBERS MUST PARTICIPATE IN, AND PROMOTE ALL SUN SAFE POLICY SUGGESTIONS.**

Surf lifesaving is synonymous with surf, sun and sand. Therefore it is the responsibility of SLSA to have a sun safety policy in place that will provide members with guidelines to improve their own personal protection from the sun.

SLSA has a number of policies relating to the conduct of members to ensure certain standards are met. The sun safety policy is one of the most important policies developed, as it may directly affect the health of SLSA members. The following Policy is acknowledged as minimum standards for the volunteer lifesaver and SLSA professional lifeguards. They now closely correspond to the recommendations of Workcover and Cancer Councils in each State for skin protection for outside workers.

### **2 THE FACTS**

- i. Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Over two-thirds of Australians will develop some form of skin cancer during their lives.
- ii. About 1000 people in Australia die each year from skin cancer.
- iii. Too much exposure to UVR or repeated sunburn, especially in childhood, damages the skin increasing the risk of skin cancer in later life.

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**NOTE: BOTH CUMULATIVE EXPOSURE (WITHOUT ACTUAL 'SUNBURN') AND REPEATED SUNBURN (NOT NECESSARILY 'SEVERE') CONTRIBUTE TO INCREASING THE RISK.**

- iv. Severe sunburn, particularly in the young increases the later risk of skin damage and skin cancers.
- v. If we can protect people from birth to 17 years of age they have 75% less risk of developing skin cancer in later life.
- vi. A suntan is a sign of damaged and weakened skin.
- vii. School, recreation and sport may expose people to the sun for long periods.
- viii. The style, type and amount of clothing we wear often does not suit our intense sunshine with its high levels of UVR.
- ix. Lifelong participation in outdoor sport and recreation mean many Australians are exposed to dangerously high levels of UVR.
- x. 95% of skin cancer can be cured if detected and treated early.
- xi. UVR has been shown to cause eye damage, which includes cataracts and pterygium. This damage may start in childhood.
- xii. Reflected UVR may cause sunburn even under shelter, and other methods of sun protection are essential.
- xiii. UVR is present in high levels on cloudy days also, and all sun protection methods should be used on cloudy, as well as sunny days.
- xiv. There is no such thing as "windburn" – this is solar damage (the same as "sunburn") from UVR, usually in cloudy weather as UVR easily penetrates clouds.

### **3 SUN SAFETY FOR SLSA ACTIVITIES**

The health of participants in surf lifesaving activities is of a primary concern to Surf Life Saving Australia.

It is far better to prevent skin cancer by regularly practising simple protective measures. Skin cancer is preventable, and like any other medical condition is best dealt with by simple protective measures. It is also acknowledged that cataracts and other eye diseases are related to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) and that correct sunglasses will prevent or reduce these eye problems.

Surf Life Saving Australia strongly recommends sun protection during all SLSA activities. It is the responsibility of all SLSA members to use all protective equipment provided (hats, uniforms, sunscreen, shade structures, sunglasses etc), adopt sun safe practices (re-applying sunscreen, minimising time outdoors during peak UV times etc). As well as their own personal protection, SLSA members should also provide by example, a good role model for younger members and the community in general.

The following standards outlined in this Policy are acknowledged as minimum standards for the volunteer lifesaver and SLSA professional lifeguards.

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## 4 DEFINITIONS OF SUN SENSE PROTECTION

### 4.1 Shelter

- i. Materials used to provide shade should cast a dark shadow (i.e. block out UVR to a minimum of 50%)
- ii. Provision of either natural or artificial shade over the patrol arena or other patrolled areas, to give adequate shade for those on patrol
- iii. Protective covering over all patrol or observations towers
- iv. Specific shaded areas in carnivals to provide shade for both competitors and officials

**NOTE:** It is possible to get sunburn under shelter due to reflection of UVR from sand and water. Other precautions listed must still be used.

**4.2 “Protective clothing”** mentioned below in this policy means the use of :

- i. hats - wide-brimmed (minimum brim width of 8cm.) with dark (non-reflecting) underside of the brim, or “legionnaire style” hats - those having side pieces protecting the ears and neck
- ii. long-sleeved shirts with high neck collars – made of UPF 50+ material (close-weave material that blocks UVR)
- iii. shorts - loose and long-legged

### 4.3 Sunscreen

- i. Use broad spectrum, water resistant SPF 30+ sunscreen
- ii. Apply at least 20 minutes before exposure so that cream can be “absorbed” into the skin, for effective protection.
- iii. Reapply every 2-3 hours, or more often after swimming, or sweating heavily.

**Note:** With higher SPF sunscreens a small number of people may be sensitive to some types of sunscreens. If skin rashes occur, choose a brand designed for sensitive skin. (It is important for people who spend as much time outdoors as lifesavers to maintain the highest SPF).

**4.4 Sunglasses** – 100% UV resistant conforming to Australian Standard 1067 (as labelled on the swing tag) - having side protection from the sun’s rays, but which do NOT obscure peripheral vision.

## 5 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 5.1 Section 1 - All levels of SLSA

Taking into consideration the harmful effects from the ineffective protection of open weave clothing, when choosing uniforms SLSA and affiliates will conform to guidelines for sun safe clothing with tightly woven material with a UVR protection factor (UPF) of 50 or 50+.

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SLSA and affiliates will strongly encourage the use of:-

- i. sufficient shelter for patrols using either natural, or artificial shelters
- ii. patrol hats, shirts and shorts to conform with the standards above
- iii. broad-spectrum water-resistant SPF 30+ sunscreen and sunglasses for all activities.

On patrol, maximum use will be made of existing natural shade – Patrol and Club Captains must enforce this. Where natural shade is not adequate SLSA and affiliates will ensure suitable structures or provide portable shade structures for members wherever.

In accordance with SLSA's Patrol Uniform Policy, it is mandatory that patrol members wear the patrol uniforms provided at all times, except in a rescue situation or where conditions do not permit.

Surf Life Saving Australia and affiliates (States, Branches, Clubs) will endeavor to schedule outdoor activities outside the hours of 10.00 am to 2.00pm (11.00 am and 3.00 pm Daylight Saving Time). This is especially important with Junior carnivals, or combined events.

Carnival Referees and Sectional Referees will promote officials' use of broad-spectrum water-resistant SPF 30+ sunscreen (with zinc cream on specific areas, if necessary), at all times during SLSA surf carnivals.

**Note:** Given the nature of surf lifesaving carnivals, which may run all day, SLSA strongly promotes it's officials and competitors and observers to maintain high standards of sun safe including protective clothing, sunscreen and shelter.

Whilst participating in SLSA activities on the beach, or waiting for water events, members will be strongly encouraged to wear a wide brim hat or similar (see above) that protects the face, ears, neck, shoulders and crown of the head.

SLSA will promote sun safety in a positive way, through a variety of public relation tools, including written literature and education programs.

SLSA will strongly encourage trainers, coaches, officials and members in prominent positions to act as strong role models, to promote and use all sun protection available.

SLSA Officials and carers will revise sun protection measures on a yearly basis.

Competitors are encouraged to wear sun protective clothing up to the start line of their event.

On completion of the race/event hats and T-shirts should be replaced.

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March Past teams are encouraged to wear hats, T-shirts and shorts while competing. These should be wide-brimmed hats and long sleeved shirts with high collars and a UPF rating of 50 or higher, and shorts.

## **5.2 Section 2 - Parents and Guardians - Junior Activities**

Club officials, parents and carers must apply the above standards wherever possible.

THESE SUN SENSE RULES ARE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED: -

- i. Literature on prevention of skin and eye damage should be given to all parents when their child/children are signed on each season.
- ii. Parents / guardians of children participating in surf lifesaving activities should be provided with the SLSA sun safety policy and encouraged to comply with it.
- iii. All Junior Activities Officials parents and guardians are to promote the use of these protective measures by example.
- iv. Parents should be strongly encouraged to purchase sun safe hats and protective uniforms for their child's / children's use and provide SPF 30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen for their child / children during SLSA activities.
- v. Parents should promote sun protective behaviour to their child / children by personal example.
- vi. Parents should provide Australian Standard (labeled as AS1067) sunglasses that filter 100% of UV rays for their child/children.

## **6 IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS TO REMEMBER**

The six Ss'

- i. SHADE – natural or man-made
- ii. SLIP! – on a T-shirt
- iii. SLOP! – on a Sunscreen
- iv. SLAP! – on a Hat
- v. SUNGLASSES – to Australian Standards
- vi. SUNSHINE - awareness of times of the day especially around midday

## **7 REFERENCE MATERIALS**

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## **8 FURTHER READING**

for training and information on skin protection for outdoor workers

WorkCover - State Departments

Cancer Council - States