



Shade policy background information

This document provides background information to assist Local Government Authorities in Victoria to develop a shade policy.

Local government is in a unique position to help prevent skin cancer at the community level by ensuring access to facilities and services that provide ultraviolet (UV) radiation protection and information that encourages personal sun protection measures.

UV radiation and shade

We can see sunlight and feel infrared radiation (heat) but we cannot see or feel UV radiation. UV can be damaging on warm, sunny days and cool, cloudy days.

While UV radiation comes directly from the sun, it can also be scattered and reflected by surfaces such as buildings, concrete, sand, snow and water. This is known as indirect UV radiation.

Creating effective shade can be complex. Even if you are shaded from direct UV, you can still be exposed to considerable indirect UV radiation.

Good quality shade provides protection from both direct and indirect UV radiation and can reduce overall exposure to UV by up to 75%. Shade is easy to use and when combined with sun protective clothing, hats, sunglasses and sunscreen, maximum UV protection can be achieved.

An increasing number of organisations are recognising the need to provide shade. As the community's knowledge about sun protection improves, so does their demand for public

facilities with adequate shade.

Well-designed shade should ensure that:

- The outdoor space is comfortable to use in all seasons.
- Maximum UV protection is available during peak UV periods and high-use times
- The area is attractive, sustainable, safe, practical and environmentally friendly.

A study examining the health-related effects of refurbishment to parks in lower socioeconomic areas recently published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (Aug 2020) showed improvement of the quality, number and type of amenities at degraded parks in low socioeconomic areas may have substantial benefits for improving participation in recreation at parks, contact with green space and social interaction in these communities.

Amenities promoting physical activity and sun protection included walking paths, playground equipment and built shade.

Provision of shade in refurbishments at parks, particularly in jurisdictions with high skin cancer rates, may assist in reducing potential harm from increased exposure to UV during outdoor recreation.

Further findings support provision of shade over well-designed playgrounds in future park refurbishments to enhance engagement and sun protection behaviour.

Natural shade

People intuitively associate trees with shade. It therefore makes sense to place a high priority on using trees and plants to provide shaded areas. More natural outdoor spaces also have

less UV reflectance than built areas. Trees and other plants provide co-benefits including spaces that are aesthetically appealing, inviting to use and cooler. Natural shade is particularly well suited to large recreational areas such as parks and beach reserves.

Some trees are inclined to drop branches or seeds/cones. Trees should be selected to minimise this risk. Appropriate species should be used to provide shade at the required location at times of peak UV, particularly between mid-August to the end of April in Victoria. Low maintenance varieties should be selected. Planting of tall-trunk, broad-leaf and broad-canopy trees will provide useful shade for park users and clear sightlines.

Built shade

Built shade can be stand-alone or part of existing buildings or structures. Built shade provides a predictable shadow and protection from UV, heat and rain.

Always consider the location of supporting infrastructure to ensure adequate distance from equipment and walking paths. This will minimise trip hazards, misuse or fall risks (if people have easy access to climb the structure). The effects of high winds and vandalism should also be considered with a regular maintenance program developed and implemented.

SunSmart message

Check the local sun protection times each day to make sure you are protected from UV when you need to be. The free SunSmart app and widget provide forecast UV levels and sun protection times for various locations across Victoria.

During the sun protection times (when UV levels are forecast to be three and above), use a combination of these five sun protection measures:

1. Slip on clothing that covers as much skin as possible
2. Slop on SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen
3. Slap on a broad-brimmed hat
4. Seek shade
5. Slide on sunglasses – make sure they meet Australian Standards.

From May to mid-August, UV levels in Victoria are usually low (below 3) so sun protection measures are not necessary during these months unless you are in alpine regions, near highly reflective surfaces (e.g. snow or water) or outdoors for extended periods.

Resources

SunSmart has a number of resources available including information sheets, policy templates, posters and videos. See www.sunsmart.com.au/resources

Local government information:

www.sunsmart.com.au/advice-for/local-government

This information is based on current available evidence at the time of review. It can be photocopied for distribution.

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