

“The survey findings highlight that state educators need to do much more to reinforce the sun protection message in secondary schools and to introduce more creative measures to protect their young charges.

“Failure to reverse this trend away from appropriate sun protective behaviour will see us quickly reap a devastating and avoidable upsurge in skin cancers.

“Skin cancer is almost entirely preventable and prevention really is as simple as seeking shade and wearing a bucket hat, sun protective wrap-around sunglasses, SPF30+ sunscreen and sun protective clothing.

“An urgent campaign is needed in our secondary schools in the lead up to what is shaping as a dangerously hot summer,” Mrs Dalglish says.

For more information about skin cancer call The Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.

For comment please call Jean Dalglish on 0408 514 902

Ends

The full ASSAD *Prevalence of sun-related behaviours among Tasmanian secondary school students in 2005 and trends over time* survey is available at www.cancertas.org.au/pages/sunsmart.php

MEDIA RELEASE



17 November 2006

Heat on educators to reinforce uncool sun smart message

Tasmanian teenagers are ignoring sun smart messages and have become disturbingly complacent about skin cancer, according to a new survey.

The Cancer Council Tasmania survey shows that most students suffered sunburn the previous summer and are resistant to protective measures such as wearing hats, clothes that cover the body, sunscreen and sunglasses.

The 2005 Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey on sun-related behaviours also found that 80% of young people in the state desire a light tan at least and that increasing numbers of girls wear less clothing to deliberately expose their skin to the sun.

The Cancer Council Tasmania has released the survey results on the eve of a confronting federal government-funded skin cancer awareness campaign.

The Cancer Council Tasmania Director of Cancer Services Jean Dalglish has welcomed the campaign, which focuses on melanoma, saying it is essential to help change attitudes and behaviours of young Tasmanians on sun protection and their risks skin cancer.

"Adolescence is a high risk period for skin damage that can lead to skin cancer in later life," Mrs Dalglish says.

"Because young people have thinner and more sensitive skin they are at particular risk from the cumulative effects of sun exposure," she says.

Melanoma, the most serious and potentially deadly skin cancer, is the most common cancer in Australians aged between 15 and 39 years.

"Every year about 230 Tasmanians are diagnosed with melanoma; so it is far from being a just 'mainland' disease," Mrs Dalglish says.

While most students surveyed said they had received sun protection and skin cancer education in the previous school year, this was not the case for many 16 and 17-year-olds.