

Question on Notice
No. 868
Asked on 21 November 2013

MR STEVENS asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

QUESTION:

Will the Minister detail what the government has implemented to reinforce the importance of sun safe messages to the community?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Mermaid Beach for his question.

As the Member of a coastal town with a lifestyle focussed around the beach and sun, you would be acutely aware of the impact the sun has on individuals, particularly in relation to sunburn.

Skin cancer continues to affect too many lives within Queensland. We have the highest rates of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer in the world. Our most recent data indicates that in 2010, there were over 3,000 new cases of melanoma and 365 deaths.

Given that ultraviolet radiation (UV) rates are high all year round, prevention is the key. There are five protective behaviours we should all adopt - seek shade, apply and reapply sunscreen, and wear a broad-brimmed hat, wear clothing that covers the majority of our body and use wrap-around sunglasses.

The Department of Health continues to seek new ways to motivate, educate and resource sun safe behaviours. I am pleased to announce that the Department of Health is investing over \$1.2 million this financial year in two new sun safety campaigns targeting young people aged 15-24 years. The first campaign will be publicly released in December and will feature the character Sun Mum who will deliver sun safe messages that are not easily ignored. It will include social media components such as twitter, facebook, tumblr and youtube; character appearances at outdoor entertainment events, as well as television advertising. The second, to be released in early 2014, will be public relations focussed strategy around skin care, beauty and fashion which is sun safe.

The Department of Health has also engaged with researchers, universities, IT companies, government agencies and Cancer Council Queensland to progress skin cancer prevention and reinforce sun safe messages in Queensland. Programs, initiatives and resources include:

- supporting sun safety initiatives in schools, early childhood centres and community organisations through the provision of 500 SunSmart® grants totalling \$290,000 this year and administered by the Cancer Council Queensland;
- developing a 'Sun Effects Booth App' which graphically depicts the detrimental effects of sun exposure on your face over time. The downloadable application has now been accessed by over 15,000 people;

- funding research to enhance sun safe practices in outdoor workplace settings through the Queensland University of Technology;
- providing Hospital and Health Services and Medicare Locals with resources to reinforce sun safe behaviours in their local communities;
- monitoring sunburn incidence and the five recommended sun protective behaviours;
- working with the tertiary education sector to influence fashion design curriculum as sun protective clothing is vital in preventing sunburn and skin cancer;
- funding skin cancer research initiatives as well as work to improve sun protection compliance in primary school communities in North Queensland through James Cook University; and
- introducing a ban on commercial solariums from 31 December 2014 with incentives to surrender machines in advance of this date.

The Department of Health, through the Workplaces for Wellness Program, also provides resources that encourage workplaces to introduce sun protection measures. Additionally, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland supports sun safe behaviours through its Managing the Work Environment and Facilities Code of Practice (2011) which identifies that employers have a duty of care to provide a safe working environment, which includes consideration of work schedules, protective clothing etc.

The Department of Health has also produced *Fallon's Quest*, an online game which is a fun and engaging way to teach primary school aged children about sun safety and is aligned with the curriculum. Additionally, all schools have a sun safety strategy that encourages outdoor activities which take into account the amount of time spent in the sun, as well as a student dress code that includes wearing hats, swim shirts and applying SPF 30+ sunscreen.

The early childhood education and care sector also has a key role to play given the specific risk of sun exposure to children. The sector is supported and guided by National Quality Standards that address the environmental and health and safety aspects of sun exposure and support staff training in a range of health topics including sun safety.

Reducing exposure to UV radiation is the most effective and modifiable risk factor for the prevention of all types of skin cancer and we can all play a role in reinforcing the importance of sun safe messages in our communities. Together we can make a difference.