

Slide 1 of 4

Overcoming barriers to membership in the SunSmart Schools Program: the South Australian experience

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Slide 2 of 4

Background and methodology

Background

Schools that are members of Cancer Council's SunSmart Schools Program tend to have more comprehensive sun protection policies and practices than schools that are not members.¹

In 2013, 50% of primary schools in South Australia were not members of the SunSmart Schools Program.

Methodology

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with 23 principals of South Australian primary schools that were not members of Cancer Council SA's SunSmart Schools Program in 2013 to investigate barriers to joining the program.

1. Dono J, Ettridge KA, Sharplin GR, Wilson CJ. (2013) The relationship between sun protection policies and practices in schools with primary-age students: the role of school demographics, policy comprehensiveness and SunSmart membership. *Health Education Research*, 29(1), pp1-12.



Slide 3 of 4

Results

Three main barriers to joining the SunSmart Schools Program were identified:

1. SunSmart policy requirements

Schools prefer Terms 1 and 4 over UV 3 and above

"It was an absolute nightmare with trying to enforce it, so we're pretty successful with doing the term things that we do"

2. Lack of awareness of SunSmart membership status

8/23 non-members believed they were already members

3. Joining and remaining in the program perceived as burdensome

"The SunSmart review processes, just, look "oh no, here it is again!" That would be how I would feel about it each time it came around again."



Slide 4 of 4

Implications

Cancer Council SA achieved increased program membership throughout 2014/15 by addressing each key barrier:

Barrier 1: SunSmart Policy requirements

Action: A sample policy template was developed emphasising importance of using UV instead of school terms to guide sun protection

Barrier 2: School unaware of own membership status

Action: An online search system was developed to allow schools to search for their membership status

Barrier 3: Burdensome application process

Action: An online membership application and renewal system was developed

