

Palmerston North City Council

Sun Protection Policy

Aim

For the City Council to contribute to a reduction in the incidence of skin cancer within Palmerston North by improving shade and other sun protection measures throughout the City.

Drivers

By taking action in three key areas the City Council will minimise the incidence of excessive and harmful patterns of Ultraviolet Radiation (UVR) exposure to residents of Palmerston North.

- Council as a consent authority
- Parks, gardens and recreational facilities owned and operated by the City Council
- Promotion and education of sun protection.

Background

Palmerston North City Council acknowledges that skin cancer rates in New Zealand are the highest in the world and as a nation we have the highest death rates for both melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers in the world. Nationally, skin cancers are by far the most common type of cancer and accounts for just over 80 percent of all new cancers each year.

The high levels of ultraviolet radiation present throughout much of the year, and especially during the summer months, are related to the prevalence of skin cancer. The summer months extend from September through to March each year with peak UVR times between 11am – 4pm. Palmerston North has an annual average of 1700 sunshine hours.

For the Central Cancer Network region, (including Capital and Coast, Hutt Valley, Wairarapa, Mid-Central, Whanganui, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Tairāwhiti DHB districts), the incidence of melanoma was 3rd highest, with 1247 women being diagnosed during 2001-2005 and 1264 men being diagnosed with melanoma over this period.

There is no specific obligation on Councils to develop sun protection policies. However, the Local Government Act 2002 empowers local authorities to promote social, environmental, economic and cultural wellbeing for their communities for the present and in the future. The Palmerston North City Council recognises it has a role in providing safe and healthy environments for the people of Palmerston North and a sun protection policy will enhance the social and environmental wellbeing of the City.

The City Council recognises its role in providing safe and healthy environments for the people of Palmerston North. Where people are outdoors enjoying the many facilities that our City has to offer, exposure to the effects of ultraviolet radiation can be minimised through the provision of adequate shading. Whilst some exposure to ultraviolet light is important for the development of Vitamin D, overexposure can have negative effects on a person's health. There is also a personal responsibility role for people to minimise their own risks to ultraviolet radiation overexposure.

Drivers

Council as a consent authority

- The District Plan can provide rules about the development of outdoor areas that are used by the public. Demonstration that shade issues have been considered in planning processes will be encouraged.
- Through other legislation relevant to use of public space (The Reserves Act, The Conservation Act), the local authority can act as a consent authority. This role would require that this policy is taken into account when considering issues pertinent to legislative requirements.
- Newly built shade shelters should provide for protection from the sun as well as other elements throughout the year. Shade protection in summer should not hamper winter sun in the same places during cooler times of the year. Therefore a balance needs to be achieved about where shade is placed so as to have benefits in both summer and winter months.

Parks, gardens and recreational facilities owned and operated by the City Council

- The City Council's 'Tree Policy' covers residential planting, public parks and recreation reserves. It provides consistent procedures and approaches to the planting and removal of trees on Council owned land. Council will firstly consider use of natural shading options where new shading opportunities arise, as well as when replacing existing shade.

- Provision of shade for recreational users is important. Shade trees should be established in all areas especially where children's play areas are being provided.
- Shade audits of City Council owned parks, gardens and recreational facilities will be carried out every three years. Recommendations from the audits will be prioritised and incorporated into the triennial Asset Management Plan process.
- During the high ultraviolet radiation season, the City Council will encourage the scheduling of outdoor community events, parades and festivals (such as the Christmas Parade) to occur outside the hours of 11am-4pm in order to avoid the times of greatest harmful ultraviolet exposure.
- Events either hosted or held at City council owned facilities during the high ultraviolet radiation season will promote the SunSmart message. Information, appropriate personal sun protection such as sunscreen and temporary shade should also be provided. A SunSmart plan shall be a fundamental part of event planning.
- Where City Council facilities and events are hired or contracted out, the contractor will ensure that they align with this policy and work in conjunction with the Cancer Society, and this expectation will be documented in the relevant contracts with the City Council.

Promotion and education of sun protection

The City Council has a role in providing education about the effects of ultraviolet radiation and to promote the SunSmart message.

- Utilise the City Council website to provide information about personal sun protection measures. Links to appropriate websites such as the Cancer Society and SunSmart will be available.
- Make sun protection information available in the Council customer service area and at appropriate City Council owned facilities.
- At all outdoor facilities and events, actively promote SunSmart messages over loudspeaker systems throughout the duration of the event, and particularly during the high ultraviolet periods of the day.