

# CORRECTED VERSION

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

### REFERENCES COMMITTEE

#### Subcommittee

#### **Inquiry into environmental design and public health**

Melbourne — 6 September 2011

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#### Witnesses

Ms S. Heward, manager, and

Ms D. Gannon, community and sports coordinator, SunSmart, Cancer Council Victoria.

**The CHAIR** — Welcome, Sue and Dimity. Thank you for coming here today and for your submission. This hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege. Comments you make outside of the hearing are not covered by parliamentary privilege. The transcript will be available to you in about a week or so. You just need to proofread that and check it. If there are any questions or problems that need to be resolved, you can liaise with Keir on that. Before we get into your presentation I need you to state your name, the organisation you represent and the address. If you could then give a 10-minute presentation and allow the maximum time for us to interact with you, that would be appreciated.

**Ms HEWARD** — My name is Sue Heward. I am the manager of SunSmart at Cancer Council Victoria.

**Ms GANNON** — My name is Dimity Gannon. I am the sports and community coordinator for SunSmart at Cancer Council Victoria at 100 Drummond Street, Carlton.

**Ms HEWARD** — We are here to address you on the inquiry into environmental design and public health. At the outset I am aware that we are in the second half of your submissions, so you have had a lot so far in terms of the link between public health and design. I would like to say that we fully support the submissions of some of our key partners: VicHealth, the Heart Foundation and the Planning Institute of Australia, which I think has not presented yet.

Our presentation today will go into something quite specific in terms of environmental design, and that is the planning, design and provision of shade and how that can have impact on a huge public health issue in Victoria and Australia and that is the risk of skin cancer.

#### **Overheads shown.**

**Ms HEWARD** — To give you an introduction, Slip, Slop, Slap has been around for 30 years. This slide is what lifesavers looked like in the 1980s; this one is what they look like now. This is what advertising looked like, for example, in the early 1980s; this is what it looks like now. We have seen quite a huge social change and cultural change. Obviously there is a long way to go.

The facts of the matter in terms of UV are that the sun's UV is a major cause of skin cancer and skin damage. It is also the best natural source of vitamin D, so there is a balance required in Victoria. Australia and New Zealand remain the skin cancer capitals. In Australia more than 1830 people die annually. What that equates to in Victoria in 2009 is 401 people. Both of those figures are more than the national and state road tolls. In terms of people treated annually, more than 440 000 Australians are treated annually, and that is 40 000 in Victoria. Two in three people will get some form of skin cancer before they are 70. In this room pretty much everyone will be touched by skin cancer in some way, whether it is one of us getting skin cancer or our family or friends.

Skin cancer is the most expensive cancer in Australia, with a conservative figure of \$300 million per year. If we take Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre here in Victoria, 25 per cent of the patients who walk through the door are there for skin cancer, and in terms of their direct cost annually, it is conservatively \$10 million. Obviously that is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the experience of the people who get skin cancer.

Ironically skin cancer is preventable — one of the most preventable cancers in Australia. The old adage that prevention is better than cure really holds true for skin cancer. If you look at between 1988 to 2003, more than 100 000 skin cancers were prevented and 1000 deaths averted. From a value-for-money perspective, every dollar we spend on the SunSmart program in Victoria returns to the health system a \$2.30 net saving. It has been assessed by the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance as the second most cost-effective and health-saving intervention in this state.

In terms of whether we have made a difference, we have seen an increase in the use of hats and sunscreen, a reduction in sunburn, a decreased desire for tans and decreased rates of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer in young people — the people who have grown up with skin cancer prevention strategies in this state, so people under 40, essentially. Above 40 we are still seeing skyrocketing rates. In terms of reach, the SunSmart program has 90 per cent of primary schools as members. That means we have the potential to reach more than 440 000 primary school children, and that is obviously just one sector that we work with.

To get more specific, why shade? The thing about prevention is that education and awareness are not enough. You need a mix of personal and environmental strategies in place to see change. That is where shade comes in.

Our key messages in terms of a call to action are obviously around ‘slip, slop, slap’, which everyone is pretty familiar with, plus seeking shade and sliding on sunglasses.

Victorians, like most Australians, love the outdoors. They love going to the beach, going to the pool, playing sport and watching sport. Not surprisingly that is where most people experience the most damage and the most sunburn. We know that shade is one intervention that just on its own can reduce a person’s individual exposure to UV by 75 per cent. Put that together with behavioural responses, and you can just about prevent overexposure to UV.

In terms of the key settings — and obviously that is why we put this submission together — it is very much about public outdoor spaces and key settings like parks, playgrounds, schools, early childhood facilities, sport and recreation, pools, beaches, outdoor events and festivals. That is where people get overexposed to UV. Not all shade is shady; there is definitely good and bad shade. If you look at the top left-hand corner, that is a really nice shade structure, but where people actually sit there is no shade, so there has clearly not been good design put in place in terms of thinking about shade. The second one is natural shade at the top there in the middle, but again there is just not much space under that tree for people to sit. The third one is portable shade. Again the placement of the portable shade means that the shade is behind the structure, not where people would actually stand.

One of the biggest issues with shade is that there is confusion. There are multiple stakeholders, first up, and there is confusion about whose responsibility shade is: who plans, who designs and who provides shade. From a community perspective the expectation is definitely that local government is responsible for shade in terms of public outdoor spaces. In a study that the Cancer Council Victoria did in 2007, 83 per cent of people said they thought local government was responsible. When we then asked them about their experience with shade where they live, 45 per cent of adults said that shade was hard to find in their local playgrounds or parks. When we asked them about sporting grounds those figures were much higher. In non-metropolitan areas it was the highest: 62 per cent said that they found it very difficult to find shade when they were playing or watching sport.

One point around shade is that we are definitely seeing inequalities in the provision of shade across Victoria — non-metro versus metro. Non-metro is where we see worse outcomes around the provision of shade, and also we are seeing inequality around socioeconomic status. Low socioeconomic status areas are where we see people responding that they find it harder to access shade.

One of the key points of our recommendations is that shade needs to be prioritised. Currently across Victoria in terms of planning guidelines for public outdoor spaces there is no mention of shade anywhere, either in state or local government. Whilst on one hand we know shade can prevent overexposure — 75 per cent of an individual’s overexposure and we have a community expectation that shade will be provided (and that they will use it) on the other hand this does not translate into planning guidelines it does not get mentioned anywhere. Obviously a key stakeholder is local government. It governs outdoor public spaces and influences the planning of physical environments. On the one hand we have 83 per cent of people saying they expect local government to provide shade. When we reviewed the 2009 municipal public health plans, only 20 per cent of those plans made any mention of shade or sun protection more broadly. They did not even have to action them, just make mention of them. There is a huge disparity between community expectation and what is actually happening.

One point that we have certainly noticed in the last few years is that it is not just about local government; it is about state and local government working together to prioritise shade. We have seen with climate change action, for example, that there was a directive from the Department of Human Services at the time — it is now the Department of Health — that climate change be actioned at the local government level. We have seen that translated into municipal public health plans where 80 per cent of municipal public health plans have some response or some quite detailed action against climate change at the local level. We have not seen that change in terms of shade, because there has been no prioritisation of it.

One last case study, before I wrap up, is around secondary and primary schools. We have a situation in Australia where Australian adolescents have the highest rates of malignant melanoma in the world, by far outstripping Canada, the US and the UK. We know that in the 12–24 year age range melanoma is the most common cancer; it doubles the rates of all the other cancers put together. Cancer is perceived as an older person’s disease, but skin cancer is not. We have the epidemiology of this impact. We have people expecting shade. In fact we have internationally published research that shows that if you build shade, kids will use it.

(The worry we had was that if you spent all this money on shade and built all natural — young people would just avoid it because it was not cool, but we have evidence to show that is not true.) Again, at the school level, or at the education department level, there is no mention of shade in the facilities schedule across Victoria. In fact the only state that mentions shade at the school level is South Australia.

Again, we see this dichotomy, because what is happening with the health perspective is not translated into any guidelines. Probably the only other thing to say is that there is explicit mention of shade for early childhood facilities. It is the only explicit mention we have in this state. In the children's services regulations there is mention of outdoor spaces and the provision of shade.

Just to finish, and these recommendations are obviously more detailed in our submission, built and natural shade should be mandatory in the initial planning, budget and overall design of new public outdoor facilities and master-planned communities and particularly those spaces that cater for children and adolescents and where a lot of people congregate such as schools, sport, recreation facilities, pools, parks and playgrounds. The second point is that shade should be a priority in the consideration of new funding especially in urban renewal projects and facility upgrades where we are seeing those inequalities, so in non-metropolitan areas and low SES areas.

Just to finish for today, there is an opportunity for state and local governments to work together to prioritise shade. We have seen the activity with climate change, and we wait to see the response at a local government level where we can see shade explicitly in open-space planning, in municipal public health planning or as a stand-alone shade strategy. We would probably see it as being more effective if it was integrated into existing planning processes across Victoria. That is our submission for today.

**The CHAIR** — That is great. Can I just kick off and ask what your interaction and experiences have been with developers in trying to get this message through?

**Ms GANNON** — We have not had a lot of interaction with developers specifically, but in 2009 we did a literature review of all shade guidelines and also an industry consultation. That was done by a contractor to the Cancer Council, John Greenwood, who is an expert on shade. Based on the feedback he got from developers and from people working in the shade industry, he helped us to develop a new resource that is about to go live shortly. That resource takes all those recommendations from developers and shade experts and puts them into a practical tool that people can use to develop quality shade.

**Ms HEWARD** — I think we find not much leverage with developers. Because shade is not mentioned explicitly anywhere, it is just not a consideration in initial design and especially not in the initial funding.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — But overshadowing is, is it not? The preoccupation is always with overshadowing. If you say, 'I love shadow. Build it tall. I want the shadow on my yard', you are not allowed to do it because it has to have lots of light.

**Ms HEWARD** — That works against what we are trying to put here in terms of outdoor space.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — That is exactly my point.

**Ms HEWARD** — The thing about shade is that it can be perceived as being very expensive. To retrofit shade is much more expensive than to plan for it at the start. The experience we have with schools is that there is money that comes out annually for upgrades or for new schools, but schools use it up very quickly. If they are not thinking about shade to start with, there is no money. Often we get requests at the Cancer Council that say, 'Can you give us a shade grant?'. We just do not have those kinds of resources, and, again, to retrofit shade is much more expensive than to do it at the start.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — You mentioned a range of locations where people are particularly susceptible to — —

**Ms HEWARD** — Getting sunburnt.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — At parks and sports fixtures and so forth. I want to just come to the urban environment — the streetscape. This is a conversation we have had here previously. We ask for setbacks in upper storeys, which lets more light into the street, and then we put in trees or we put in umbrellas or whatever it is. The options would be not to have setbacks and to use awnings over footpaths like in earlier times, or cantilevered buildings where the upper storeys go in to protect the street and the walking areas from hot sun.

Have you had any conversations around alternative streetscape design like that that might make people's shade access and amenity a bit better?

**Ms HEWARD** — It is probably fair to say that trying to have a conversation about shade goes nowhere at this point because there is no obligation for shade to even be thought about. If you asking which one we think would be better, really what we know is that aesthetically people will be more physically active where there is shade. They like the look and feel of shade. They know it is not going to be too hot even though it is actually not the heat that burns you; it is UV. But we struggle to even get shade talked about at any point; it is just not a consideration. It is so far down the track that it does not even get discussed. To be honest I probably cannot answer your question very clearly because we do not even get a look-in; people are just not interested.

**Ms GANNON** — From our perspective, I guess the urban streetscape is not our priority — —

**Mr SCHEFFER** — I understand that.

**Ms GANNON** — It is probably an area where we have not done a lot of research. I do not know too much about shade in that setting.

**Ms HEWARD** — Except we know people like to walk where they are going to stay cool. Again, often people do not get the difference between heat and UV. So long as they are able to stay cool, they are going to go out and be active. They could be on the street.

**Mr ELSBURY** — We are talking about having a requirement for shade to be provided in new outdoor facilities whether or not there is an optimum amount of shade. How much shade should there be for every 100 square metres? Have any studies been done on that?

**Ms GANNON** — We do not give any recommendations in terms of square metres; it is more just making sure that there is enough shade to cater for the number of people using that space. We recommend that people conduct a shade audit. That involves observing the space, observing the people using that space at peak times and, from that, gauging how much shade would be required. There is no magic number.

**Ms HEWARD** — We would like there to be a magic number, but because space is used so variably that number could be quite incorrect for an early child-care centre for example versus a big, wide-open oval.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Another thing I was thinking is: are we talking about immediate shade or future shade? I know that if you are talking about immediate shade, you are talking about building structures that provide the shade, but if you are talking about future shade, it is about planting trees, being able to think into the future and what is going to happen.

**Ms HEWARD** — It is kind of all of the above.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Trees are preferable of course. They are much better to look at than a shade sail.

**Ms GANNON** — For new spaces — for example, a new park that is being erected — if there is no shade in the vicinity it is fine to plant, and it is great to be planting trees and planning for the future growth of those trees, but in the interim perhaps a shade sail might be required. It is looking at a combination of both built and natural shade for now and into the future.

**Ms HEWARD** — In terms of existing spaces, though, I probably cannot emphasise enough that a shade audit is quite crucial, because it might actually not require new resources, new building or even new planting. You might be looking at how the activities that happen, say, for a sporting club could be changed or how there might be existing shade used. While there is an existing outlay of time to do a shade audit, it might save quite a lot of money from the resources perspective just by reorganising how the activity is done. You should not have kids cricket in the middle of the day when UV is the highest. You would look at having a pitch that is maybe already covered somewhere else by natural shade. It does not just have to be about building or planting new shade.

**Mr TEE** — Thank you. It is a very simple argument that you make in a very compelling manner.

**Ms HEWARD** — I am sure it is quite different from some of the other presentations!

**Mr TEE** — I just wanted to touch briefly on the municipal plans. We have had some evidence around the fact that they are not properly utilised, but they are probably the easiest way for us to have impact on council behaviour. You made a point about the municipal plans not mentioning shade. I suppose my question would be: is there resistance from councils, or is it just simply a lack of knowledge?

**Ms GANNON** — Just on the plans, when we did the audit plans we were looking not just for a mention of shade but also for mention of UV protection and other sun protection as well. There was very little of that. From a local government perspective there are so many other competing health priorities that it is difficult without some kind of directive or push from the state government level to include shade and UV protection. It is difficult to get it in there as a priority.

**Mr TEE** — I suppose the question is: if we were of a mind to recommend it — —

**Ms HEWARD** — Would they be able to do it?

**Mr TEE** — What essentially would be their response? Would they go, 'That's outrageous!', or would they go, 'Oh, gosh, we just hadn't thought about it?'. Or is it somewhere in between?

**Ms HEWARD** — Probably somewhere in between. It is fair to say that there are some local governments that do have quite good policies on the ground, even though there are no planning requirements to have some perspective on shade. Usually that has probably come from their local constituents.

**Ms GANNON** — For example, I think Whittlesea has a good shade policy. You might have heard from them earlier.

**Ms HEWARD** — I think it will come down to some of the barriers. There are definitely two barriers: one is multiple stakeholders — that is, whose responsibility it is and passing the buck — and the other is the perceived cost of shade. Again, it does not necessarily have to cost, but if you have not got someone with primary responsibility, it is just going to be passed around. In terms of support for local government, I think that is where we can step in to provide some support. As Dimity said, we have got a new shade audit tool which is being planned and piloted with local government and sporting clubs as a useful tool for them to work through — 'Do we need more shade, or can we do something better than what we've already got?'. That is probably something we can provide in terms of support.

**Mr TEE** — And then as part of that you could develop a model municipal plan which then could be used by other councils.

**Ms HEWARD** — Absolutely. I think there are probably some councils out there that are already leading the way and may have good models we could use.

**The CHAIR** — What is the time line of this resource being available?

**Ms GANNON** — It will be available in September. It is pretty much ready to go now.

**The CHAIR** — Could we get a copy of that as soon as it is released?

**Ms HEWARD** — Yes. I can send it through. It will be on our website. It is an online resource, a PDF, that will take people through the plan, but I can send that to you.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much. That was a really important presentation about a very important health issue that confronts all of our generations. So we thank you for that, and we will see what we might be able to do to make it a priority in our report as well.

**Ms HEWARD** — Thank you. Thanks for your time.

**Witnesses withdrew.**