

# A guide to updating school uniform requirements to support SunSmart hat use.

This guide is to help schools that currently allow students to wear baseball caps that would like to remove them from the school environment and implement 100% SunSmart hat wearing. To achieve this, changes may need to be made to both school 'policy' and 'practice.'<sup>1</sup>

## Policy

- Amending the school's uniform requirements to remove baseball caps from the uniform.
- Ensuring the uniform shop sells and communicates the rules regarding SunSmart hats to the school community.

## Practice

- Creating and consistently applying rules regarding SunSmart hat wearing with students.

## Why SunSmart hats?

The [NSW Department of Education Uniform Policy](#) states that school uniform requirements should promote the health and safety of students, and that students should be encouraged to wear SunSmart hats for outside activities wherever possible. Having all students wearing the same SunSmart hat also reinforces a sense of belonging and pride and helps eliminate any risk of peer pressure that could exist if non-SunSmart hats are allowed.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia. Two in three people who grow up in Australia will be diagnosed with skin cancer. Overexposure to solar UV radiation causes at least 95% of all skin cancers in Australia. This means that when you protect your skin, you reduce your risk.

The good news is that the number of young people diagnosed with melanoma is decreasing, and this reduction has been attributed to our sun protection efforts including the SunSmart program in primary schools. However, more can be done to enhance sun protection and normalise SunSmart hat wearing in schools. Broad-brimmed, bucket and legionnaire style hats protect the face, back of the neck, ears and eyes. Baseball caps are not SunSmart because they don't protect the ears, cheeks or back of the neck.

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<sup>1</sup> Information relating to balancing the ideal wearing of SunSmart hats with school's sport requirements or culture is outlined at the end of this information sheet.

## Policy

### Amending the school's uniform requirements to remove baseball caps from the uniform

If your school's uniform includes a baseball cap or allows the wearing of generic baseball caps (other than specifically for sport, see box below) an essential step in removing baseball caps from school practice and working towards 100% SunSmart hat wearing is to remove baseball caps from the uniform policy and ensure that only SunSmart hats are available for students to wear.

When updating the school uniform, the [NSW Department of Education](#) recommends that schools formally consult with students, teachers and other staff, parents/carers and the school community, including the Parents and Citizens' Association. How the consultation is conducted will depend on many factors including the style of your school's leadership and how involved the community are, or would like to be.

Educating the community about UV radiation, skin cancer prevention and sun protection should help increase their motivation for the uniform changes you would like to make. Use the resources available via the **SunSmart Action Plan Template** to educate the community, as part of your consultation process.

The [NSW Department of Education](#) also states that schools that change their school uniform requirements should announce the decision early in the school year preceding the change to enable students, parents and the uniform shop to have sufficient time to prepare for the change. Some schools may be able to implement changes more quickly if there is buy-in and agreement from the community and there is time for systems to be set up to help ensure every student has access to a SunSmart hat.

### Ensuring the uniform shop sells and communicates the rules regarding SunSmart hats

The uniform shop can play a role in reinforcing the school's uniform requirements and supporting 100% SunSmart hat wearing. Ideally, the uniform shop will:

- Only sell SunSmart hats.
- Be able to share information about the school rules regarding SunSmart hat wearing.
- Explain why only SunSmart hats are part of the uniform.
- Explain the rules around wearing a baseball cap if one is available for wearing during sport.

If the school uniform doesn't currently include a SunSmart hat you will need to select one. You may consult with the school community to help choose a new hat. For example: senior students may run a survey of students or the whole community; senior students may choose the new hat; or the Parents and Citizens' Committee may choose, or run a process to choose the new hat.

Broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style hats are all SunSmart. Most uniform suppliers carry a range of SunSmart hats so there is plenty of choice. Other considerations to take into account include: fabric choice including ultraviolet protection factor (UPF), colour, price, comfort, size and ability to adjust hat size (e.g. an adjustable crown cord).

## Practice

### Creating and consistently applying rules regarding SunSmart hat wearing

Embedding SunSmart hat wearing into school culture so that it becomes 'just what everyone does' can take time and effort. A clear and consistent approach will give your school the best chance of success.

1. **Establish simple rules.** For example, ensuring everyone (i.e. students and teachers) always wears a SunSmart hat when they are outside; if a student is outside and doesn't have a SunSmart hat on their head, they need to play in the shade.
2. **Clearly communicate the rules to students and the whole school community.** Think about how you will communicate good SunSmart practices and behaviours to the school community, and try to think of the various ways you could keep this top of mind, such as by using reminders at school and including information in school communications.
3. **Ensure consistent application of the rules by all teachers.** How will you ensure that all teachers apply the rules the same way? How will you encourage and keep good SunSmart practices by teachers on the agenda at your school?

The [NSW Department of Education](#) advises that schools should positively encourage the wearing of school uniform and that a school's response to a student not wearing uniform should be appropriate, fair and consistent. A student cannot be suspended or expelled for not wearing their school uniform.

### Support for rolling out SunSmart hats

This guide can be used as part of a SunSmart Action Plan, or as a stand-alone resource for schools that would like to address only this specific area. Use the **Action Plan Template** to plan what your school will put in place to help students achieve 100% SunSmart hat wearing. For example: creating systems to ensure all students have access to a SunSmart hat when they need one; educating and sharing information with parents/carers to motivate and support parental/carer involvement; posters at school to remind and reinforce the message with students; and encouraging teachers to role model SunSmart hat wearing.

#### Being SunSmart while playing sport

Ideally, students will wear their SunSmart hat while participating in sport. Bucket or legionnaire style hats may be more practical SunSmart options for sport compared to broad brimmed hats. However, we realise it isn't always practical to wear a SunSmart hat, particularly when playing sport at a competitive level. It is the decision of each school to define rules around SunSmart practices while participating in sport. Your school may decide to allow students to wear a baseball hat or no hat during sport, or only during competitive sport, but at no other times. In that situation, the rules should be clearly communicated to students and the school community, including via the uniform shop. Plus, other sun protection recommendations should also be practiced (e.g. sunscreen) to maximise protection from harmful UV radiation. Baseball caps don't offer good sun protection but provide more protection than no hat. Sun safety should be considered in planning for all activities; think about all of the 10 SunSmart recommendations for primary schools and the five SunSmart behaviours (slip, slop, slap, seek, slide).