



Media Release

Date: **Under embargo until 27 October 2021**

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Bronzed Aussies don't link tanning with skin cancer **Two in five adults report they like to get a suntan**

A national Cancer Council study assessing sun protection attitudes and behaviours of Australian adults showed an alarming number of adults still prefer a bronzed body.

The *2019 Summer Sun Protection Survey (Life in Australia™)*, examined the sun protection practices of 2,154 Australian adults over the summer months.ⁱ

Two in five adults (40%) reported they like to get a suntan, and 62% of respondents reported having tanned skin, with sun exposure being the most common method for achieving a suntan.

Head of SunSmart and Chair of Cancer Council's National Skin Cancer Committee, Heather Walker, said it was concerning to see so many adults still seeking a suntan.

"Australians need to be reminded that there is no such thing as a safe tan. When skin is exposed to UV radiation, more melanin is produced causing the skin to darken. This is what we know as a 'tan'. A tan is a sign that skin has been damaged by UV radiation," Ms Walker said.

The results weren't all grim. The research also showed that the majority of respondents (84%) protected their skin to avoid sunburn, and three in four (75%) respondents believed they could avoid skin cancer by regularly protecting themselves. Ms Walker said the data provides evidence that the sun protection messaging is resonating with Australians.

"We know our SunSmart campaigns are having an impact and we've seen a remarkable drop in skin cancer rates over the years. However, there is more work to be done – particularly in combatting the myths around tanning. People need to understand that tanning also increases your risk of skin cancer."

Alfred Hospital Victorian Melanoma Service Director Associate Professor, Victoria Mar, reiterated the dangers involved in tanning.

"Sun damage accumulates over time, so even if you're seeking a tan but not burning, the risks will be heightened and for some people this will result in skin cancer. That's



why it's so important for Australians to use adequate sun protection and avoid tanning," Associate Prof Mar said.

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. In 2021, it's estimated that 16,878 melanomas will be diagnosed across the country, and every year almost 2,000 Australians lose their lives to the disease.

In Australia, sun protection is advised when UV levels are 3 or higher. SunSmart recommends people:

- ✓ **Slip** on clothing that covers as much skin as possible
- ✓ **Slop** on SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen
- ✓ **Slap** on a Broad-brimmed hat that shades the face, ears and neck
- ✓ **Seek** Shade and
- ✓ **Slide** on sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard for UV protection

For more information visit: www.sunsmart.com.au

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Note to journalists:

- Head of SunSmart, Heather Walker, is available for interview.

ⁱ The 2019 Summer Sun Protection Survey was funded by Cancer Council Victoria and Cancer Council New South Wales and conducted through the Social Research Centre using Life in Australia™, a probability-based panel of adults recruited through random selected of landline and mobile numbers. Panel participants take part in regular surveys. 2,154 people completed the survey, including 959 adults aged 25-54, 401. All results have been weighted to be as representative as possible of the Australian population.