MEDIA RELEASE

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10.00 am AEDT, FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2026

20 November 2026

Melanoma survival reaches record high, but non-melanoma skin cancer remains health system's biggest cancer cost burden

New data shows the financial cost of skin cancer as Cancer Council Australia urges the nation to build sun-safe habits this National Skin Cancer Action Week

Australia's five-year melanoma survival rate has reached an all-time high of 95%, according to new Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)[1] data released during National Skin Cancer Action Week.

But while melanoma outcomes are improving, another AIHW report[2] also released today (Friday 20 November) shows that non-melanoma skin cancers are the biggest cancer cost on our health system.

The AIHW Health system spending on disease and injury in Australia 2024–25 report found $2.14 billion was spent on non-melanoma skin cancer (NMCSC) in 2024–25. This was higher than spending on any other cancer, including breast cancer ($2.09 billion) and lung cancer ($2.04 billion).

Earlier this year data confirmed skin cancer is Australia's most prevalent cancer. Finding that around half a million Australians (535,000 people – 2% of the population) each year have at least one common non-melanoma skin cancer removed. Confirming previous research showing that NMCSC is around three times as common as all other cancers combined.

Cancer Council spokesperson Craig Sinclair welcomed the latest melanoma survival rates but said that the impact of non-melanoma cancers cannot be underestimated.

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[1] AIHW report Cancer Data in Australia

[2] AIHW report Health system spending on disease and injury in Australia 2024–25

"Reaching a 95% five-year survival rate for melanoma is a monumental achievement. Improvements in treatment, combined with increased awareness of skin cancer and earlier detection, are helping save lives. However, with two in three Australians expected to be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime, it's essential we continue to prioritise prevention, early detection and access to effective treatment.

"These figures are also a timely reminder that we should not overlook non-melanoma skin cancer. It is Australia's most common cancer and places a greater cost burden on the health system than any other cancer. Importantly, it is also one of the most preventable. That's why everyone should protect their skin whenever the UV Index is 3 or above by following all five forms of SunSmart protection: Slip on protective clothing, Slop on SPF50 or SPF50+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen, Slap on a broad-brim hat, Seek shade where possible, and Slide on sunglasses."

Chair of Cancer Council's National Skin Cancer Committee, Sally Blane said, "This National Skin Cancer Action Week, Cancer Council Australia's message is that the benefits of sun safe habits built today can last a lifetime and lower your skin cancer risk in the future. Children are 12 times more likely to use sunscreen, and three times more likely to wear a hat, when they see their parents do it first.[i] The habits we build today are the habits the next generation will follow."

The President of the Australasian College of Dermatologists, Dr Adrian Lim, said, "Melanomas are being detected earlier and that saves lives. For people with advanced melanoma, immunotherapy and targeted therapies have transformed outcomes.

"While largely preventable, non-melanoma skin cancer can also be deadly. For many patients, it means repeated procedures over a lifetime, often on the face, with major impact on quality of life and at great economic cost to the community.

"We can't emphasise enough, if you notice new, or changing spots, don't wait. See your GP who may refer you to a dermatologist. The earlier skin cancer is diagnosed, the better the outcome is likely to be."

This year's theme, Sun safe habits last a lifetime, marks 45 years since Sid Seagull first told Australians to Slip! Slop! Slap! Research shows 50% of lifetime UV exposure happens before age 20, so building habits early matters.

Two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime.

Cancer Council Australia encourages everyone to check the UV Index with the free SunSmart Global UV app, and to use all five forms of sun protection whenever it is 3 or above:

- Slip on sun-protective clothing
- Slop on SPF50 or SPF50+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen

- Slap on a broad-brimmed hat
- Seek shade
- Slide on sunglasses

For sun protection advice, visit cancer.org.au.

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Contact details

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About National Skin Cancer Action Week

National Skin Cancer Action Week (15 – 22 November) is an essential yearly reminder to everyone that whenever the UV Index is 3 or above to make sure you: Slip on sun protective clothing; Slop on broad-spectrum, water-resistant SPF50 or SPF50+ sunscreen; Slap on a broad-brimmed hat; Seek shade and Slide on Sunglasses. This year marks 45 years since Sid Seagull first introduced Slip! Slop! Slap!

- More information about National Skin Cancer Action Week is available on our website: National Skin Cancer Action Week 2026 | Combatting Australia's 'national cancer' | Cancer Council Australia
- Media assets are available here.

About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working with the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to reduce cancer's impact by:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

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[i] Suzanne Dobbinson, Melanie Wakefield, David Hill, Afaf Girgis, Joanne F. Aitken, Kerri Beckmann, Anthony I. Reeder, Natalie Herd, Matthew J. Spittal, Andrew Fairthorne, Kelly-Ann Bowles, Children's sun exposure and sun protection: Prevalence in Australia and related parental factors, Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology, Volume 66, Issue 6,2012.