Australians see teens as group most at risk of UV harm
Cancer Council and eftpos to get more shade into high schools

Australians think secondary students should do more to protect themselves from the sun compared with adults and younger children, according to a new Galaxy poll commissioned by Cancer Council Australia.

The poll results, released today (18/12), coincide with new World Health Organisation data showing Australia and New Zealand continue to have the world’s highest rates of melanoma, the most common cancer in Australian adolescents and young adults.

The poll sought to gauge community perceptions of sun protection behaviour by age group, as Cancer Council commences a partnership with eftpos to encourage high schools to provide more shade to protect students from harmful UV radiation.

Cancer Council Australia CEO, Professor Ian Olver, said the poll reflected data from other studies showing that, even though today’s teens were more aware of the harms of UV than their predecessors, they were less likely to protect themselves than other age groups.

“Only eight per cent of Australians thought primary school children were the group at highest risk, which is an endorsement of how we protect younger children today,” Professor Olver said.

“While years of Cancer Council SunSmart have helped protect primary students, when they graduate to secondary school the behaviour changes.

“Kids become more autonomous and start to act as if they’re bulletproof. So it was no surprise that 47 per cent* of Australians think teenagers are the most poorly protected from UV.

“Australians recognise we need to do more to help our students reduce their skin cancer risk.”

To help tackle the problem, Cancer Council Australia is joining forces with eftpos to encourage high schools to improve the shade they provide to students through a unique grant program.

eftpos CEO, Bruce Mansfield, said eftpos would contribute up to $1 million to the initiative through its Giveback program.

“The public understands the need to help teens be safe from the sun,” Mr Mansfield said. “In choosing to pay by pressing CHQ or SAV this Christmas, Australians can help us contribute to Cancer Council’s shade for secondary schools program.”

Olympian Stephanie Rice also supports the program.

“Around 2000 Australians die from skin cancer each year and two in three Australians are diagnosed by the age of 70,” she said. “I remember my high school years – lots of swimming and lots of sun – I’m hoping this program will help reduce future generations’ skin cancer risk.”

*45 per cent were concerned adults weren’t doing enough to protect themselves.

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