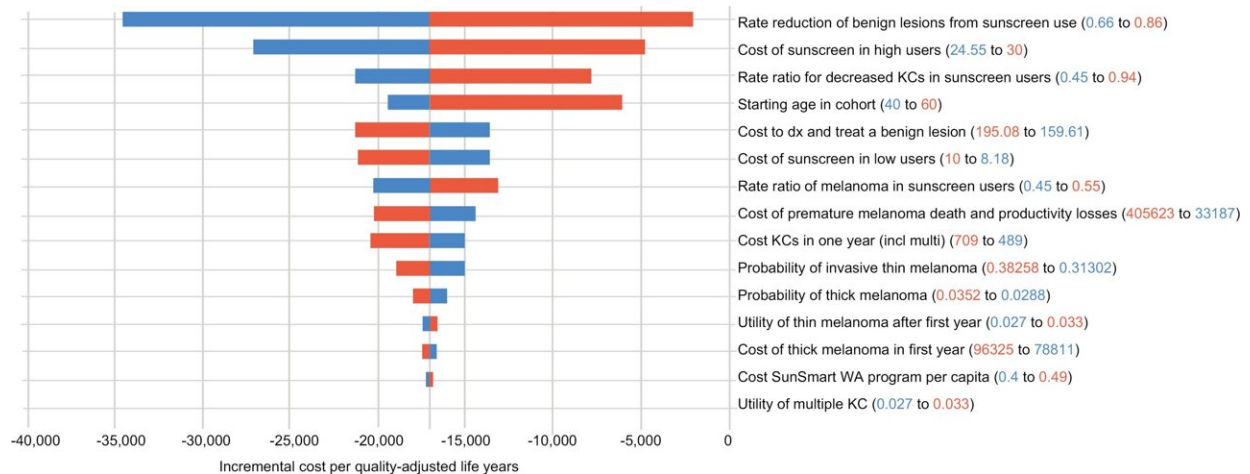


# Study shows Australian program could save nearly 1,000 lives over the next 20 years

August 26 2024



Tornado diagram of one-way sensitivity analysis comparing the WA SunSmart program with no program. Credit: *Health Promotion International* (2024). DOI: 10.1093/heapro/daae091

Cancer Council WA has welcomed a new study showing its SunSmart program is saving money as well as lives. Published in *Health Promotion International*, the [research](#) confirms the SunSmart program is expected to prevent 300,000 skin cancers, save 1,000 lives and return \$8.70 to the public purse for every dollar spent over the next 20 years.

Cancer Council WA Cancer Prevention and Research Director, Melissa Ledger, said we know [skin cancer prevention](#) programs work, and it was

reassuring after all these years of running skin cancer prevention programs in WA that we can now also measure the size of that effort.

"Today we stop and celebrate 20 years of success for WA's SunSmart program and the benefit our program will bring over the next 20 years with our funding partners Cancer Network WA and Healthway," Ledger said.

"For the WA Government, the estimated return on investment is \$8.70 gained for every \$1 invested. This equates to benefits of more than \$166 million over 20 years.

"The results also make the case for increased and ongoing investment in a skin cancer prevention strategy to ensure skin cancer prevention is given the priority it deserves.

"Such a strategy needs to include a commitment to public education campaigns, plus targeted messages for higher-risk groups such as [outdoor workers](#) and [young people](#), increased regulations for shade provision in [public spaces](#) and developments, and an investment in research and training for [health professionals](#) in early detection.

"We can't be complacent; we need to see a coordinated and comprehensive approach to decreasing overexposure to UV to reduce the impact of skin cancers."

Lead author Prof Louisa Collins said given the very high cost of therapies for advanced stage melanoma, around \$100,000 per patient, preventing a preventable cancer to begin with is critical for our health system.

"Skin cancer is the most common and expensive to treat of all cancers in our health system," Collins said.

"With increasing numbers of skin cancer, the health care costs of treating and managing [skin cancers](#) are expected to rise quickly."

**More information:** Louisa G Collins et al, Cost-effectiveness analysis and return on investment of SunSmart Western Australia to prevent skin cancer, *Health Promotion International* (2024). [DOI: 10.1093/heapro/daae091](#)

For more information on sun protection, visit [myuv.com.au](http://myuv.com.au).

Provided by Cancer Council Australia

Citation: Study shows Australian program could save nearly 1,000 lives over the next 20 years (2024, August 26) retrieved 3 September 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-08-australian-years.html>

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