



Australian Government

Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency

Dear Steven,

The ARPANSA web site receives more than thirty thousand visitors each year, many seeking information about sun protection and where to buy sun protective clothing.

Why is ARPANSA interested in sun protection?

ARPANSA is an Australian Government Agency established under the [ARPANS Act 1998](#) to protect the health and safety of people, and the environment, from the harmful effects of radiation.

Overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from sunlight is a major health problem for the skin and eyes of people living in Australia. Prolonged exposure to ultraviolet radiation can cause sunburn, skin cancers and cataracts.

Some brief statistics from [SunSmart](#) highlight the problem:

- Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world and 2 in every 3 Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70.
- More than 2,000 Australians die from skin cancer each year and skin cancers account for almost 80% of all new cancers diagnosed each year in Australia.
- There were 974,767 treatments for skin cancers in 2015 – that’s more than 2,500 skin cancer treatments every day.
- The cost to the health system of these skin cancers alone is estimated to be more than \$500 million annually.
- Melanoma is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in young Australians aged 15–29 years.

ARPANSA, along the Cancer Council Australia, SunSmart and other organisations, is involved in the challenging task of raising awareness of the dangers of sun exposure and offering information about solutions.



What is ARPANSA doing?

To promote awareness of UVR protection issues, ARPANSA developed the [Ultraviolet Protection Factor \(UPF\) rating system for fabrics](#), which was used in 1996 to form the basis of the joint Australian and New Zealand Standard for sun protective clothing (AS/NZS 4399). Manufacturers and suppliers who participate in the UPF rating system have [fabrics tested](#) to determine the level of UV protection, their products can then be labelled with a UPF rating label to allow purchasers to make informed decisions about how effective the clothing is for sun protection. UPF ratings have been applied to various products including swimwear, rash vests, work shirts, school wear and hats.

Companies interested in having clothing, hats, shade cloth, sunglasses and other products tested for sun protection can visit the ARPANSA [Ultraviolet Radiation Services](#) web page for more information.

Many companies label their products with a UPF rating label. AS/NZS 4399 specifies appropriate wording to appear on these labels. Since 1992 ARPANSA has supplied 80 million UPF rating labels to clothing companies. ARPANSA's own swing tags contain sun protection messages and feature the Australian Government's [UPF Certification Trade Mark](#) which ensures that the products have been tested and are correctly labelled for sun protection.

The highly visible ARPANSA swing tag helps promote community awareness of the dangers of overexposure to ultraviolet radiation and gives consumers confidence that the product they purchase will reduce their UVR exposure.

To keep the public informed about UV exposure ARPANSA also issues [real time reports](#) of UV levels in all the capital cities.



