

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR INSTALLATION OF SHADE IN SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. The major cause of skin cancer is over-exposure to Ultra-Violet Radiation (UVR) especially during childhood or adolescence.

Research shows that regardless of temperature, skin damage can occur throughout the year with both long-term and intermittent sun exposure leading to skin cancer. Fair skinned people are at a greater risk, but no skin types are immune.

UVR is most intense between 10am and 3pm when children are at school. Students should wear protective clothing including hats and use sunscreen when they are outside of the school buildings.

SHADE CONSTRUCTION

A range of legislation, regulations and codes apply to the planning and construction of public buildings and infrastructure. Most construction works on school sites are 'public works' under the Public Works Act. The Department of Finance – Building Management and Works (BMW) has the charter to deliver public works.

Location

Position shade covers away from trees to minimise cleaning and maintenance costs associated with leaves and tree litter, and avoid damage from falling branches.

Building material

The selection of building materials should be carefully considered as the life expectancy of materials and finishes play a big role in general and ongoing maintenance costs:

- Metal roofs provide all year round 100% protection from sun and rain.
- Sail material although cooler than hard cover shade typically provides less UV protection than hard cover shade structures.
- Sail material life expectancies vary widely, often in proportion to the cost of the fabric and the UV rating.
- Steel structures should be hot dip galvanised or powder coated to minimise long term maintenance.
- Timber should be sealed or painted with exterior grade paint.

Shade Sails

In October 2004, the Department of Education banned the installation of shade sails in schools due to the significant costs experienced in repairing or replacing sails following acts of vandalism or storm damage.

Due to improvements in shade sail material and the increasing number of security fences and gated courtyards in schools, shade sails may now be installed.

Schools should note however that the cost of installation, maintenance and replacement of shade sails continue to be the responsibility of the school. This applies to all shade sails including those installed prior to October 2004.

Structure

Schools should seek professional advice on the design and location of a shade structure to avoid injury to children and damage to buildings. For example, wind ratings and structural stability must be considered and square poles, protruding brackets and bolts should be avoided.

Depending on the school's location it may be necessary for the school to gain planning approval before commencing any work.

Design and construction

Shade covers can be obtained from firms that make proprietary products often with considerable scope for customisation.

Contracts for supply of shade covers should have a liability period during which the supplier is responsible for any defects that become apparent.

If schools intend to use voluntary labour to build the shade cover, they should be careful that the volunteers have the commitment and level of competence to complete the project and produce a good quality product. Consideration to relevant codes and approvals, also needs to be considered. BMW is available to provide advice on these issues if required and can assist in arranging inspections by qualified parties, with the cost to be borne by the school.

Further advice and assistance

If you need further advice or assistance please call your school's BMW Program or Regional Manager.