



# Smart move, girls

## School takes the lead on sunshine danger

**RACHEL NORMAN**

ST Hilda's Anglican School for Girls is now the most sunsmart school in Australia.

The Mosman Park school has become the first in the country to install a meter that tracks ultraviolet radiation from the sun. If the meter hits level 3 or above, students have to cover up.

The move is an attempt to mitigate the prevalence of Australia's most common form of cancer.

The Cancer Council says almost 77,000 skin cancer cases are treated each year in WA alone. Mark Strickland, the Cancer Council of WA's SunSmart manager, said installation of the meter on the school's junior campus was a positive step towards reducing skin cancer in the community.

"It has been shown that reducing lifetime UV radiation goes a long way to reducing the risk of skin cancer," he said.

"A UV meter is another way of reminding people that the sun's radiation in WA is strong enough that they need sun protection.

"It's a silent but constant reminder of the ever-present need to cover up."

Andrea McNally, the head of Junior School at St Hilda's, said childhood was a particularly important time to recognise the need to seek shade and form good habits for the future.

"Having the visual prompt of the UV meter has taught the students that it's not the heat that determines danger, but the UV index; and hopefully that will create a lifelong awareness and a change in their attitudes," she said.

Data from the UV meter will also be used as part of the junior school curriculum, with students from year 1 currently monitoring and recording data every day.

Australia's first public UV meter was installed at Deep Water Point in Melville last year.

There is also a Cancer Council meter at the Surfing WA club house at Trigg Beach.

St Hilda's year 6 pupil Angelique Preau said she and her fellow students were paying close attention to the meter – regardless of the sort of day it was.

"When it gets to 7 or more it's bad and you have to go into the shade and/or put sunscreen on," the 11-year-old said.



Playing safe: Siobahn Collins, 11, and Cate Mead, 6, with the UV radiation meter. Picture: Stewart Allen