



Schools track UV

Linda Cann
Health Reporter

SCHOOLS would install specially designed UV meters to help to protect children from skin cancer under an Australian-first plan by the Cancer Council WA.

The council is developing a meter that will measure the extremely high UV index that WA regularly records.

Existing meters from overseas are only able to read the dangerous radiation from the sun up to a maximum value of 11, but WA levels regularly exceed 15 or more.

The plan comes as new figures from the council reveal that the number of teenagers regularly wearing hats has dropped 35 per

cent in the past 10 years.

SunSmart manager Kerry O'Hare said the council hoped schools would install the public display meters in well-used areas to help pupils and teachers protect themselves during the most dangerous periods.

"The problem is that you can't see or feel UV," Ms O'Hare said. "The UV index can be really high even if it's not that hot. The UV forecast is provided every day but these real-time meters will tell you what the UV index is at a particular place and time.

"The UV index varies in different places, depending on latitude and cloud cover and at different times of the day.

"It's also just a reminder about the dangers of UV. You can't see or feel it, so these meters will make it visible."

Education Minister Peter Collier said he supported the idea and schools were encouraged to follow the Cancer Council's recommendations. "It may also be possible for students to learn about the UV rating each day through a variety of means, such as via their teachers, rather than from a displayed meter," he said.

The council expects to complete development of the meters in a couple of months, and hopes that schools, workplaces and other organisations will install

the meters in outside areas.

One WA school will win \$10,000 worth of shade from the council if they are signed up to the SunSmart program.

For more information, go to
www.cancerwa.asn.au.



The WA UV meter.



Hats on: Leah Mulligan, 8, Ava Milankov, 8, Stella Milankov, 5, and Luke Mulligan, 5, know that wearing a hat outdoors is a sun-smart move.

Picture: Will Russell