Media Release

12 August 2011

Toowoomba parents forget the sun safety message in winter

A new survey has revealed less than a quarter of Toowoomba parents ensure their primary school aged children always wear sunscreen when playing sport in winter.

The results of the independent SunWise Winter Survey commissioned by Suncorp have been released to coincide with a series of regional school visits reminding kids of the dangers of the winter sun and how much sunscreen should be applied.

Suncorp Application Boot Camp will today visit primary students at Glenvale Christian School at 9:30am.

The SunWise Winter Survey found that 17% of Toowoomba parents admitted their children never wore sunscreen while playing winter sport, 2% admitted they didn’t know if their kids wore it or not, 33% wore it sometimes and 25% of parents said they relied on teachers or sport coaches to ensure their children applied it.

Suncorp Bank Regional General Manager Jim Curtis said the survey results were disappointing in a state which records more cases of skin cancer each year than any other.

“More than 250 Queenslanders are killed each year by melanoma so when it comes to sun protection there is a strong incentive to take precautions,” Mr Curtis said.

“Despite the fact that 75% of Toowoomba parents believe the risk of sunburn in winter is as great as it is in summer, less than a third (27%) admitted to always packing sunscreen in their children’s school bags.

“These figures show that while parents surveyed are aware of the risks they’re not always protecting their children’s delicate skin from the winter sun.

“Ensuring your kids always have access to sunscreen and are applying it regularly could literally save their lives.”

Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) Deputy Director and Head of the Cancer and Population Studies Group Professor Adele Green said winter was no time to be complacent about sun safety.

“Queenslanders need to protect themselves from the sun all year round. Although the ambient solar ultraviolet radiation (UV) is higher in summer, the difference in daily dose between summer and winter is actually quite small, and damage to our skin can still be done,” Professor Green said.

“Around 40 to 50% of total UV exposure actually occurs before we turn 20. Therefore we recommend daily application of sunscreen to exposed skin, remembering the best protection is sun avoidance and cover in the middle part of the day.

“Childhood is a susceptible window for sun damage that can lead to skin cancer in later life.

“When applying sunscreen to children, make sure there is smooth, even coverage where no parts of the body are missed.

Suncorp-Metway Ltd ABN 66 010 831 722 GPO Box 1453 BRISBANE QLD 4001
GROUP CORPORATE AFFAIRS BANKING TELEPHONE (07) 3836 1245 FACSIMILE (07) 3835 5614
“Small areas are often missed but if you reapply regularly you're unlikely to miss the same area.”

The SunWise Winter Survey found that 54% of Toowoomba parents admitted the number one body part their kids forgot to cover was their ears, closely followed by their lips (48%) and hands (30%).

Through its SunWise education program, Suncorp has launched an initiative known as Application Boot Camp, which is visiting primary schools in Toowoomba, Townsville, Cairns, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast.

Suncorp Application Boot Camp reminds children about the dangers of the sun, regardless of the season and provides advice on how to apply sunscreen.

Suncorp also supplies legionnaire’s hats and sunscreen to schools involved in the initiative.

Suncorp has supported skin cancer awareness and prevention through its SunWise program since 2004 and has raised $1.3 million for QIMR to fund vital skin cancer research.

For further information about the SunWise program or the Suncorp and QIMR partnership, visit www.suncorp.com.au/sunwise.

About Melanoma

The most dangerous form of skin cancer, Melanoma, affects more than 10,000 Australians each year and kills more than 1400. *

Melanoma of the skin is the fourth most common cancer in Australia. **

Queensland has the highest rate of melanoma in the world. **

Queensland accounts for 2500 melanoma cases and more than 250 deaths each year. **

*Cancer Council Australia figures

**Information provided by Queensland Institute of Medical Research

Media Contact: Christen Hill 3251 8125 or 0403 090 915

About Suncorp

Suncorp is committed to making sun protection part of the Queensland way of life. Since 2004, the Suncorp Group (which includes Australia’s fifth largest bank and second largest general insurance group) has been spearheading a community awareness campaign called SunWise to educate Australians about the potentially deadly effects of unsafe sun exposure. During that time the Group has helped raise more than $1.3 million for vital skin cancer research for its partners, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) and the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR).

QIMR

The Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) is a world leading transitional research institute. Our research focuses on cancer, infectious diseases, mental health and a range of complex
diseases. Working in close collaboration with clinicians and other research institutes, our aim is to improve health by developing new diagnostics, better treatments and prevention strategies.