

In Australia, UV radiation levels remain high throughout most of the year. Adequate shade in areas where children play outdoors will minimise unnecessary exposure to UV radiation, and create greater potential to reduce the risk of skin cancer later in life. Comfortable and effectively shaded play areas promote physical activity and can contribute to long term benefits in addressing a range of important health issues.

Shade is essential for all playspaces. If an area feels hot or is glary it may not be utilised. Shade provision should be made available for both users of the play equipment and carers visiting the playspace. Shade and sun protection may be achieved in a variety of ways:

- Locate playgrounds adjacent to the shade canopy of trees. Trees provide the best natural shade quality and assist with lowering the temperature of the area.
- Construct purpose built shade structures or sails over the equipment or erect shelters adjacent to equipment as a refuge for users or carers.
- Consideration should be given to the movement of the sun and its effect on the creation of shade. Equipment should be located or shelters constructed to maximise shade during the hottest part of the day



Built Shade

Constructed shade systems can be used when natural shade is not available or is being established. Structures may require the approval of local council prior to being constructed.

Built shade includes:

- Permanent structures that can be erected from a variety of materials. They need to be robust and well maintained.
- Adjustable shade systems such as louvered, cantilevered or retractable umbrellas allow a flexible use option by modifying the shade throughout the day or season. This type of system may not be suitable for public playspaces.

Natural Shade

The use of natural shade can be one of the most effective and aesthetically appealing ways of providing shade. The use of vegetation for shade has a number of environmental benefits including:

- less need to use non-renewable resources (used in many building materials)
- energy saved in comparison with built shade systems, which often have high embodied energy
- fewer disposal problems as plants generally act as nutrients during decomposition.

Other environmental benefits can be gained by using indigenous (or local native) plants for natural shade.

Conduct a Shade Audit

A shade audit is an essential step to ensure your site has adequate shade to protect children and adults from over-exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. A shade audit assesses the quality, location and amount of existing shade and compares that with the usage patterns at an outdoor site (the timing, duration and location of outdoor activities). It determines whether some activities could put people at risk of over-exposure to UV radiation and proposes ways in which any risk can be reduced.

By considering the specific needs of your site, a shade audit will allow you to ensure that children using your outdoor spaces are appropriately and cost effectively protected from UV radiation by:

- changing the way your site is used by rescheduling and/or relocating activities;
- making better use of your existing shade;
- only creating new shade if it is really necessary; locating shade structures and trees where they are really needed; and
- creating effective shade that really works.

Your shade audit can assist you to:

- demonstrate the need to improve the level of UV protection;
- seek support and funding to carry out a shade project; plan long-term landscaping and capital works to achieve improved shade; and
- prepare a development application, if required.

For more information on conducting a shade audit refer to the Cancer Council SA: The Shade Handbook or visit the Sunsmart website sunsmart.com.au. Alternatively, you can engage a professional shade planner or purchase shade audit software.

MUST DO'S FOR SUCCESSFUL SHADE OUTCOMES

- DO** a shade audit - make sure your shade is really needed and is in the correct position.
- DO** consider whether trees or a built structure will give you the best result.
- DO** make sure the shade will fall where and when you need it by mapping the shadow projections of the proposed shade structure.
- DO** ensure that the shading material used offers a minimum 94% UV blockout.
- DO** think of ways to reduce indirect UV radiation - reducing reflectivity or increasing the shaded area are both good strategies.
- DO** consider how comfortable your area will be in the cooler months and whether you need to consider 'warm' shade.

CONTACT KIDSAFE SA

Phone: (08) 7089 8554

Email: play@kidsafesa.com.au

Need more help? Kidsafe SA provides a playground inspection service. Contact us for a quote to organise an inspector to visit your playspace and provide specific advice.