

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 27 May 2026

Stronger sunscreen rules needed to restore confidence and protect Australians

The Australian Medical Association is calling for stricter sunscreen regulations, warning that public confidence in its effectiveness is essential in a country with one of the highest skin-cancer rates in the world.

In its submission to the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the AMA argues that reliability, clarity, and transparency must sit at the heart of sunscreen regulation to ensure Australians can trust the products they rely on every day.

AMA Vice President Associate Professor Julian Rait said recent scrutiny of sunscreen performance has highlighted the need for stronger oversight.

"Australians rely on sunscreen every day to protect themselves and their families," Associate Professor Rait said. "Maintaining confidence in its effectiveness is essential for public health. We must ensure testing is robust, labelling is clear, and regulatory standards are strong and transparent."

The AMA is calling for more reliable and transparent SPF testing, warning any perceived weakening of standards risks further eroding public trust.

"Strengthening SPF testing frameworks is fundamental to ensuring that the protection people think they are getting is the protection they actually receive," Associate Professor Rait said.

The AMA also emphasises the importance of robust and consistent water-resistance standards, noting water resistance is a critical factor in sunscreen performance, particularly for Australians who spend significant time outdoors and in the water.

To support clearer consumer understanding, the AMA backs simplified SPF labelling, using descriptors such as low, medium, high and very high protection. It also recommends including skin-check prompts to encourage the early detection of skin cancer.

The submission further supports a consistent SPF cap for secondary (cosmetic) sunscreens to reduce consumer confusion and ensure these products are not mistaken for primary therapeutic sunscreens.

Associate Professor Rait warned sunscreen must also remain affordable and accessible, cautioning that regulation changes must not inadvertently reduce its use.

"Sunscreen is not a luxury," Associate Professor Rait said.

"It is an essential preventative health tool, and regulations must not make it harder for people to protect themselves.

"Australia has one of the highest skin cancer rates in the world, and strong, clear and consistent regulation is vital to ensuring sunscreens remain safe, effective and trusted. This is about protecting lives and supporting the health of all Australians."

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