

Melanoma awareness programs and their impact on the life of Australian Queenslanders: A concise analysis

Naila Rasheed*

Mornington Court, Calamvale, Queensland, Australia.

Address for correspondence:

Naila Rasheed, PhD.,
Mornington Court, Calamvale, QLD-4116,
Australia.
E-mail: naila1381@gmail.com

WEBSITE: ijhs.org.sa

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Skin cancer, specifically melanoma, remains a significant public health concern globally. Melanoma has one of the highest prevalence rates in Australia compared to other countries worldwide. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, an estimated 16,000 new melanoma cases were diagnosed in Australia in 2020 alone.^[1] Moreover, keep on increasing over the time, in 2022, nearly 20,000 Australians were diagnosed and more than 1000 died were reported and most importantly, the treatment cost of melanoma is about \$1.5 billion annually.^[2] Most alarming, it is the most common cancer in young Australians aged 15–40 years and sorrowfully, this takes the life of five Australians each day, making it a formidable health challenge.^[3] Several risk factors contribute to melanoma onset such as exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is a leading cause, with Australia having high levels of UV radiation due to its geographical location,^[4] fair-skinned individuals, those with a history of sunburns, and people with a family history of melanoma are at an increased risk and other factors include the number of moles on the body, immune system suppression, and genetic mutations such as the CDKN2A gene mutation.^[5,6] Interestingly, melanoma rates are far lower in Aboriginal people as their skin is highly pigmented with melanin, the pigment that provides protection against UV radiation.^[7] In Australia, where residents have one of the highest rates of skin cancer worldwide, melanoma prevention and early detection campaigns have gained tremendous attention.^[8,9] With Queensland having the highest incidence of skin cancer in Australia, awareness programs play a crucial role in educating the public about the risks, prevention, and early detection of melanoma.^[10] This editorial examines the impact of melanoma awareness programs on the lives of Queenslanders, shedding light on their effectiveness in reducing the burden of this potentially deadly disease.

In Australia, there are several awareness programs and initiatives aimed at reducing and promoting strategies for prevention of the melanoma. One notable program is the *SunSmart campaign*, run by Cancer Council Australia.^[11,12] SunSmart focuses on raising awareness about the importance of sun protection and encourages individuals to adopt the

“Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, and Slide” approach. This involves slipping on protective clothing, slopping on sunscreen, slapping on a hat, seeking shade, and sliding on sunglasses. The Palaszczuk Government is introducing a fresh sun safety advertising campaign with the objective of urging Queenslanders to maintain the five sunsmart practices, as mentioned earlier, throughout the entire year, including the cooler winter months.^[13] In Queensland, melanoma awareness programs often employ public education campaigns as a primary strategy for disseminating vital information. These campaigns utilize various media platforms, such as print, television, radio, and social media, to reach a wide audience. The Cancer Council Queensland’s SunSmart campaign is one such example.^[14] Research has shown that such sun safety behaviors, when consistently practiced, significantly reduce the risk of melanoma development.^[15-17] Another vital initiative is the *Community Engagement and Partnerships*. Melanoma awareness programs establish partnerships with local communities, schools, workplaces, health-care providers, and government agencies to enhance their effectiveness. These collaborations promote the integration of sun-safe behaviors into everyday life, creating environments that support and reinforce positive habits.^[14-17] Through community events, interactive workshops, and campaigns tailored to specific demographics, awareness programs encourage widespread participation and behavior change. Another important melanoma awareness programs are *Skin Checks and Early Detection*. Early detection is crucial in ensuring favorable outcomes for melanoma patients. Melanoma awareness programs in Queensland emphasize the importance of regular skin checks and promote their availability through various avenues, including educational materials, community outreach programs, and partnerships with health-care providers.^[18,19] These programs empower individuals to monitor changes in their skin and seek medical attention promptly when suspicious lesions are identified. To facilitate early detection and diagnosis, melanoma awareness programs focus on improving access to skin cancer clinics in Queensland, the initiative program named “*Improving Access to Skin Cancer Clinics*” has also been implemented. This

initiative aims to reduce waiting times, increase the number of trained specialists, and expand screening programs.^[18-20] By ensuring that Queenslanders have timely access to skin cancer examinations, awareness programs contribute to the early identification and treatment of melanoma cases, potentially saving lives. Finally, “*Measuring the Impact of Melanoma Awareness Programs*” is also vital in reducing melanoma. Evaluating the effectiveness of melanoma awareness programs is essential for understanding their impact on Queenslanders’ lives. Tracking key indicators, such as changes in sun-safe behaviors, melanoma diagnosis rates, and public awareness levels, provides valuable insights for program refinement. Moreover, assessing the cost-effectiveness of these programs helps allocate resources efficiently and maximize their reach.^[21,22] In combination of these program initiatives, the *National Skin Cancer Action Week* is one of example which take place annually in November.^[23] During this week, various organizations collaborate to promote skin cancer prevention and early detection and provide information on how to check your skin for any suspicious changes. Activities such as free skin checks, educational campaigns, and community events are held to engage communities and raise awareness. Moreover, many schools and workplaces implement sun safety policies and activities to educate students and employees about sun protection. Moreover, health-care professionals play a crucial role in educating patients about the risks of melanoma and the importance of regular skin checks and educating the community about the importance of protective measures, such as wearing hats, applying sunscreen, and seeking shade during peak sun hours. They often provide advice on sun protection strategies and encourage early detection through self-examinations and professional screenings. In short, melanoma awareness programs have made substantial strides in Australia, particularly in Queensland, where the incidence of melanoma remains alarmingly high. By fostering sun-safe behaviors, promoting early detection, and improving access to skin cancer clinics, these programs aim to reduce the burden of melanoma on Queenslanders. However, continued efforts and collaborations between governments, health-care providers, and communities are essential to sustain the impact of these programs and ultimately reduce the incidence and mortality associated with melanoma in Australian society.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

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