

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Under my skin

**Dr Daniela Spanjaard, Dr Ann Dadich, Dr Nicole Stegemann and Ms Francine Garlin from the School of Business are developing a strategic plan to improve sun protection behaviour among youth. This project is funded by Cancer Council NSW.**

'Two thirds of Australians will be diagnosed with some form of skin cancer by the time they are 70', says Dr Spanjaard. 'Melanoma is the fourth most common cancer in Australia and is usually caused by skin damage from sunburn. This damage is often done in our youth and disturbingly teenagers in Australia spend longer periods in the sun, experience sunburn more often and are less likely to use sun protection methods compared to adults. Despite effective education strategies during the primary school years, sun protection reaches its lowest levels at around ages 15-17 years. During this time, tanning and sun-exposure increases as peer pressure and self-consciousness about appearance becomes more important. As a result, teenagers are not taking enough precautions to avoid damage to their skin and ultimately their health. Results from the National Sun Protection Survey 2010-2011 tell us that only three out of ten teens reported using sunscreen, two out of ten wear a hat, two out of ten use shade and only one out of ten wears sun-safe clothing.'

As part of a larger research project, in this phase the team will concentrate on analysing evidence of the success of previous campaigns and interventions. They will then use this information to develop an optimal strategy and evaluation framework for a multi-component sun protection campaign.



Melanoma is the most common cancer in young Australians aged 15-29 years. But given the strong desire for peer acceptance among teenagers, overcoming the perceived inconvenience of using sun protection and the opinion that skin cancer is "nothing too serious" is proving challenging. This project is part of a multi-phased campaign to improve sun protection behaviour of youth so that they may live a healthier, longer life.

**Project Title:** Planning and Evaluating a Youth Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy - Phase One.

**Funding has been set at:** \$50,000

**Contact Details:** [d.spanjaard@uws.edu.au](mailto:d.spanjaard@uws.edu.au)

<http://www.uws.edu.au/sob>

**April 2013**