

MEDIA STATEMENT

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It's time to outlaw sunburn on reality TV shows - enough is enough

It feels like groundhog day - another reality TV show, another batch of blatantly sunburnt contestants.

Earlier this year it was Cheryl on *Married At First Sight*. Last night it was *Australian Survivor's* turn - and its debut didn't disappoint in the sunburn stakes. Who else noticed the bare arms, backs, shoulders and legs exposed to the searing heat and elements? The painful glow of raw sunburn the inevitable result.

When will TV producers get with the program? Sunburn drastically increases your risk of melanoma, and melanoma kills. It's a sad reality for too many Australian families. One Australian dies from melanoma every five hours, and it kills more 20-39 year olds than any other cancer.

Surely TV executives have a responsibility to safeguard contestants from harm during the filming of what ultimately is a game. They wouldn't ask contestants to perform death defying stunts without full safety equipment and harnesses. So why do they ignore the very real and potentially deadly health risk that comes from sunburn?

Melanoma is not a game, and its greatest risk factor - sunburn - has no place on a reality TV game show.

But more than that, reality TV shows also have a responsibility not to normalise sunburn, and by doing so, portray it as a sign of strength and endurance. While network executives are no doubt this morning basking in the glory of *Australian Survivor's* ratings success, I'm lamenting the fact that thousands of impressionable young viewers are now even more desensitised to the dangers of sunburn.

It makes me frustrated. It makes me angry. But mostly it makes me sad. While we at Melanoma Institute Australia are trialling new melanoma treatments to save lives, and educating the community about the need to protect themselves from the sun, shows like *Australian Survivor* are doing the exact opposite during prime-time viewing.

My challenge to the networks is this: let's outlaw sunburn on reality TV shows, and treat it like the potential killer it is, just like smoking and drink driving. By forging an alliance, we can outwit, outplay and outlast melanoma. Only then will our children and grandchildren be the ultimate survivors.

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