



Botanic Gardens Festival gets SunSmart

A successful partnership between Auckland Council and the Health Sponsorship Council (HSC) provides a case study for other local authorities looking to build value, health and wellbeing into their events.

Making the Botanic Gardens Festival (festival) a SunSmart event was inexpensive, simple, effective and a win-win situation for all concerned.

It is increasingly recognised that public events need to take a responsible approach to the health and safety of all those attending them. By making this event SunSmart, the organisers demonstrated that they take their responsibility to the health, comfort and enjoyment of attendees seriously. For their part, participants enjoyed a more comfortable event and felt that their welfare had been considered.

Around 25,000 people attend the three day festival each year. Many of these are families with children: a key target audience for the SunSmart message.

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, with an estimated 67,000 new cases each year. Melanoma - the most serious type of skin cancer - is the fourth most common cancer in New Zealand, with approximately 2,250 cases a year. About 300 people die from melanoma each year in New Zealand.

The Health Sponsorship Council (HSC) SunSmart team is working to encourage the adoption of sun protection policies and practices at local government level.

This case study will show how simple and effective it was for the HSC and Auckland Council to work together to incorporate 'SunSmart' into the festival.

Why did you decide to make this event SunSmart?

Auckland Council is always looking for ways to add value to events, and improve the health of Auckland's citizens. We were keen to trial the SunSmart approach, to see if it was something we could incorporate into our event policies.

The Botanic Gardens Festival was the perfect event to do this: it attracts 25,000 people a year, including many families with children. In addition it takes place outside and over the summer. The SunSmart messages were therefore relevant and had potential to reach a large number of our key target audience.

How do you think Auckland Council benefited from making this event SunSmart?

Auckland Council is a forward-thinking, progressive council that is committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of its citizens. By making the Botanic Gardens Festival a SunSmart event, we demonstrated this commitment. Feedback from those who attended was extremely positive.

What was the benefit to the public?

Many people at the event told us they appreciated the shelter provided at the event. In addition, regular public announcements reminded people to protect themselves from the sun, and sunscreen was available for those who had forgotten their own and to encourage people to keep reapplying sunscreen during the event.

What did all this cost the Council?

Many of the SunSmart measures, such as rearranging the site plan and incorporating the SunSmart logo into the marketing materials, cost nothing.

The council did decide to hire a large marquee for the three-day event at a cost of \$12,000. This was considered a well-justified cost and was the subject of most of the positive feedback from the public. We are looking into purchasing our own marquee, that way it could be used across many events.

What do you think made it successful?

There were a few key factors that made this collaboration such a success.

1. **A key driver.** It was crucial that we had a person from within the council to champion and drive the project. In this case it was one of our event coordinators. Our event coordinator at the time, was a mother of three small children, and personally committed to SunSmart practices, so she completely understood how to make an event more comfortable for people attending the festival.

2. **Forward planning.** We considered SunSmart in all aspects of the event: timing (ensuring that the event was not held when the sun was at its hottest), site layout (including the provision of shade), right through to public announcements and the right SunSmart gear (such as hats) for all officials.
3. **Communication.** Our Auckland Council event coordinator worked closely with the HSC to plan and manage the event. This close working relationship ensured that all aspects were covered and the SunSmart message was firmly embedded in the event.

How did you go about making the Botanic Gardens Festival a SunSmart event?

After initial discussions with the HSC, our event coordinator worked with the HSC SunSmart team to factor sun safety considerations into the Festival. These included:

Site plan: Previously the site had been laid out to allow stallholders to be in the shade of the trees, with the public using a sunny area. This was rearranged so that stallholders were in the sunny part (most of them brought their own gazebos with them) and the public had plenty of shade to slip in to. According to our event coordinator, this was vital to the success of the event.

Logo and key messages: The SunSmart logo and key messages were included on the website and other promotional materials for the event. Public were given advice on being SunSmart before the event. The MC was briefed on SunSmart sound bites, so that he could use these over the public address system throughout the event.

Event organisers and volunteers: All those involved in running the event were briefed on being SunSmart and asked to wear appropriate clothing, hat and sunglasses.

Providing sun protection: In addition to rearranging the site to allow the public access to the shade of the trees, we hired a large marquee for the three days. We also provided sunscreen for those people who had forgotten to bring their own.

Taking this experience and applying it to other events, are there any other factors you think need considering?

Yes, **scheduling** and **location** are two other very important factors.

We suggest the organisers look at the time of year for their event. Or adjust the time in the day when they hold it. Music events, for example, might be arranged outside the time of day when the sun is at its hottest.

Is the location appropriate? Is there another location that provides better shade?

The Botanical Gardens Festival is firmly established in the event calendar and is intrinsically linked to the location, so we didn't make changes to either of these factors in this case. In fact the location is ideal for a SunSmart event, as it benefits from a large number of mature trees, which provide shade.

How would you approach other parties who have an interest in an event like this, such as local businesses and stallholders?

It's important that all stakeholders see the benefit of making an event SunSmart. For example, if we were proposing to move an event from a daytime to an evening one, we would need to let local businesses know that they have an opportunity to extend their opening hours and make more money.

For stallholders, by making the event more comfortable for the public we could potentially attract more people to the event and encourage them to stay longer, with the obvious benefit of generating more sales at the stalls.

Is there anything you learned from this experience that you would do differently next time?

There are not many things we would not repeat, but we might, for example, look at purchasing a marquee, for use at all our SunSmart events. This would be a large initial cost, but would be a good long-term investment.

What do you think is the future for SunSmart in Auckland City?

Auckland Council is committed to helping to ensure that its events take a responsible approach to the health and safety of those who attend them. It's a reality that skin cancer is a major concern for us in New Zealand, and there is no doubt that we will be incorporating SunSmart into our events in the future.

Some specifics we will be considering in the future include:

- Looking at the way our parks and open spaces are designed, to provide more shade
- Developing a sun protection policy for events held at council venues
- Offering advice to event holders on how to organise a SunSmart event
- Asking organisers to consider the timing of their event, to minimise sun exposure
- Requiring planners to allow for sun protection measures, such as shade, sunscreen (either for purchase or as a service) and hats
- Asking promoters to include the SunSmart logo and messages in all materials, such as websites, posters, tickets

- Creating resources for event organisers, to help them plan a SunSmart event
- Establishing a relationship with a sunscreen provider, to allow 'sale or return' of sunscreen
- Offering stalls to hat, sunglass, or sunscreen vendors.

What is your advice to other bodies considering making an event SunSmart?

Do it! It's so simple, effective and benefits everyone.

Plan ahead and use the resources available from the HSC to make sure you cover all aspects of the event.

To find out more contact the HSC on (04) 472 5777 and ask for their Sun Safety programme manager.