Heat Smart.

A GUIDE FOR BUILDING HEATWAVE PREPAREDNESS IN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

WSROC

TURN DOWN THE HEAT

WSROC acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of this place we now call Metropolitan Sydney. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and future of the Eora, Dharawal (Tharawal), Gundungurra, Dharug (Darug) and Guringai (Kuring-gai) peoples.

This Toolkit is part of the Heat Smart Western Sydney program which seeks to build Western Sydney's resilience to heatwaves with a focus on at-risk communities. The need for this work was identified in Action 11 of the Turn Down the Heat Strategy and Action Plan (2018). The Turn Down the Heat Strategy was developed by 55 organisations working together to create cooler, more resilient communities.

Heat Smart Western Sydney was delivered by the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) in partnership with Blacktown City Council, Cumberland City Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Liverpool City Council, City of Parramatta Council, Penrith City Council, the Western Sydney Local Health District, and consultancy Risk Frontiers. WSROC also thanks Resilient Sydney, South Western Sydney Local Health District, and Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District for their ongoing support.

Heat Smart Western Sydney has been funded under the State Government Natural Disaster Resilience Program.

Contents

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE HEAT? 4

Heatwaves in Western Sydney 5
Building resilience to heat 6
Heat preparedness and community organisations 6
The Heat Smart Guide 7

WHO IS AT RISK 8

Groups most at-risk from heatwaves 9
Challenges people face during heatwaves 10

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS 11

Dehydration 12
Heat cramps 12
Heat exhaustion 13
Heat stroke 14

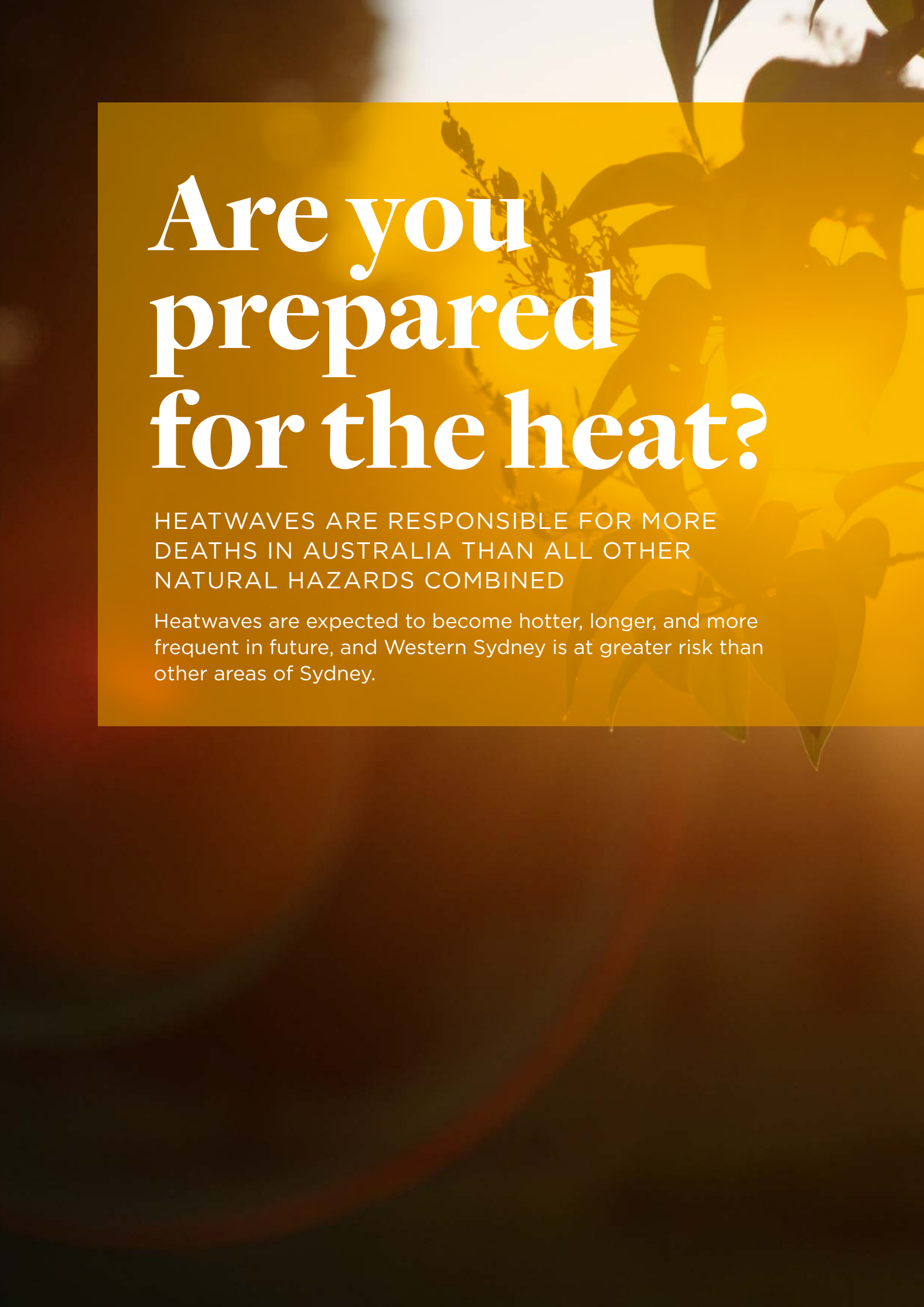
KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEAT SMART ORGANISATIONS 15

Before summer 16
When the heatwave is forecast 17
During the heatwave 18
After the heatwave 18

HEATWAVE PLANNING CHECKLIST 20

CLIENT WELFARE CHECKLIST 24

RESOURCES 31



Are you prepared for the heat?

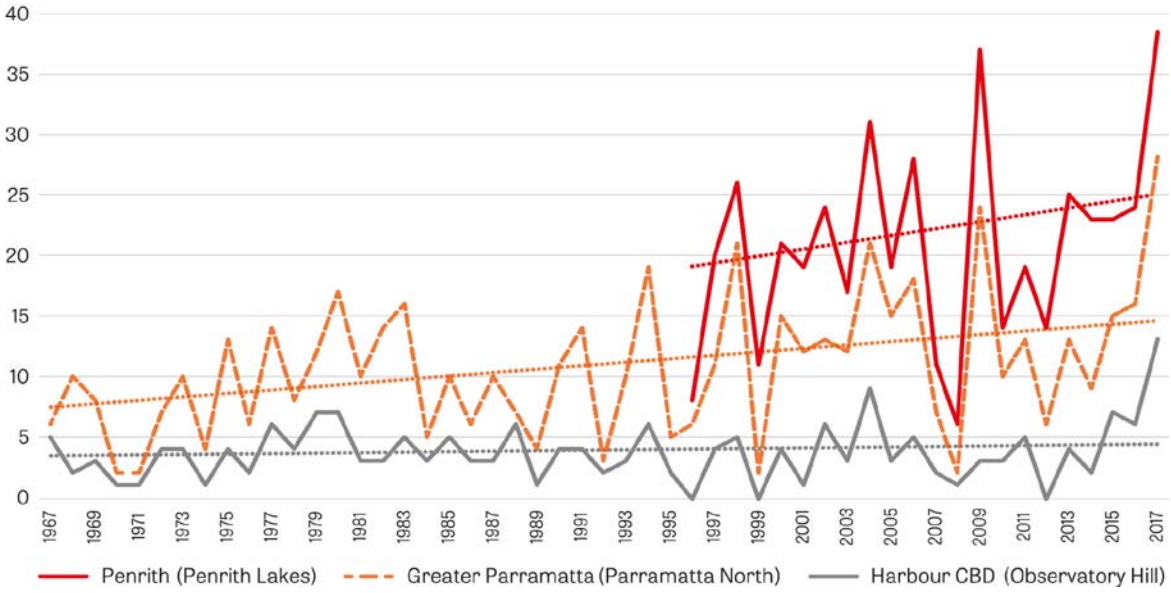
HEATWAVES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE DEATHS IN AUSTRALIA THAN ALL OTHER NATURAL HAZARDS COMBINED

Heatwaves are expected to become hotter, longer, and more frequent in future, and Western Sydney is at greater risk than other areas of Sydney.

Western Sydney is hot and getting hotter

Anyone who lives or works in Western Sydney knows that summers can be scorching hot. However it is getting hotter due to the combined effects of climate change and urban development.

Number of days above 35ºC in Harbour CBD, Greater Parramatta and Penrith



Source: Greater Sydney Commission (2018) using data from the Bureau of Meteorology.

Heat has major impacts across the community. As the heat impact grows, there is an urgent need to ensure that everyone in the community is aware, prepared and supported to stay safe during extreme heat events.

In a 2020 survey of Western Sydney residents, the following heatwave impacts were reported

80% suffered loss of sleep

58% worried about electricity costs

34% felt distressed or mentally stressed

32% lost power to their home

28% felt unwell or sought medical advice

24% had transport disrupted

Survey conducted by WSROC in May 2020. Respondents were from the general population, and most were not considered at-risk individuals.

Building resilience to heat

There is a real need to ensure we understand and plan for the significant and growing heatwave risk. There are many ways we can work to reduce heat in the environment including:

- Taking action on climate change
- Planting more trees for shade and increasing greenspaces
- Designing new buildings with 'cool materials' that hold less heat
- Upgrading older buildings to better protect people during hot weather.

However, even with these actions, major heatwaves will still occur. As a result, we need to be prepared to respond to extreme heat events by:

- Understanding heat related illness
- Having a heatwave plan – organisation, household or individual
- Taking action during a heatwave to:
  - Keep your body cool
  - Keep your home cool
  - Check on others and offer help where needed.

Fortunately, these actions are mostly people-centred and low-cost. With the right information and support in place, everyone can be better prepared for heatwaves.

Heat preparedness and community organisations

Being prepared and having a plan can save lives, particularly amongst at-risk communities.

Community organisations are uniquely placed to contribute to heatwave preparedness, response and resilience.

Local knowledge, community connections and trust allow local organisations to have meaningful conversations about heat safety and, where possible, offer practical advice and support.

This guide will help your organisation develop a basic heatwave plan and identify ways to support staff and clients to ensure they are safe.

KNOWLEDGE → **DIRECT COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS** → **TRUST** → **ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIPS**

The Heat Smart Guide

This Heat Smart Guide has been developed with the input of over 50 Western Sydney community organisations and sector partners such as the Local Health Districts, NSW Council of Social Services and NSW Council for the Aged.

Most community organisations told us they would like to improve their heatwave preparedness and would like further guidance on what to do before, during and after a heatwave, as well as how to assist a person experiencing heat stress.

This Guide is designed to help local organisations and community groups develop a basic heatwave plan and identify ways to support staff, volunteers and clients, to ensure they are prepared to stay safe during extreme heat.

THE GUIDE INCLUDES INFORMATION ON:

- Who is at risk
- Key challenges people face
- Signs and symptoms of heat-related illness
- Key planning considerations for organisations
- A heatwave planning checklist (for all organisations)
- A client welfare checklist (for home care service providers)

The following information is designed as a guide, and each organisation will need to make decisions based on their capacity, skills and resources.

The last page of the document includes a list of additional resources for further information on specific issues raised in this document.

Who is at risk?

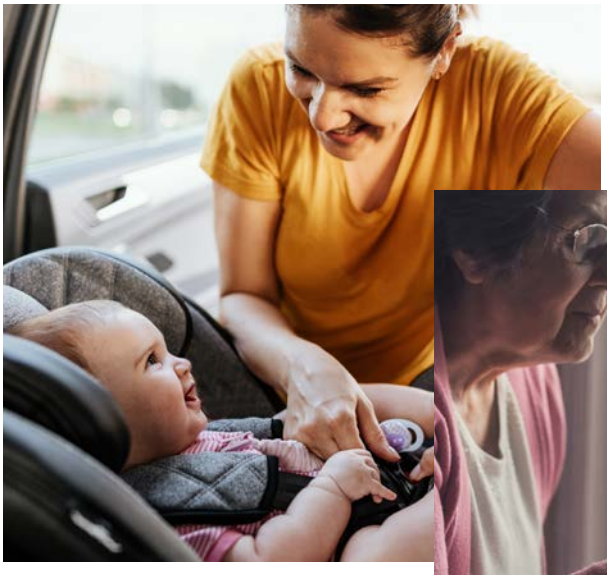
HEATWAVES POSE AN EXTREME RISK IN WESTERN SYDNEY.

30 per cent of people living in Western Sydney have felt unwell or sought medical treatment during previous heatwaves.

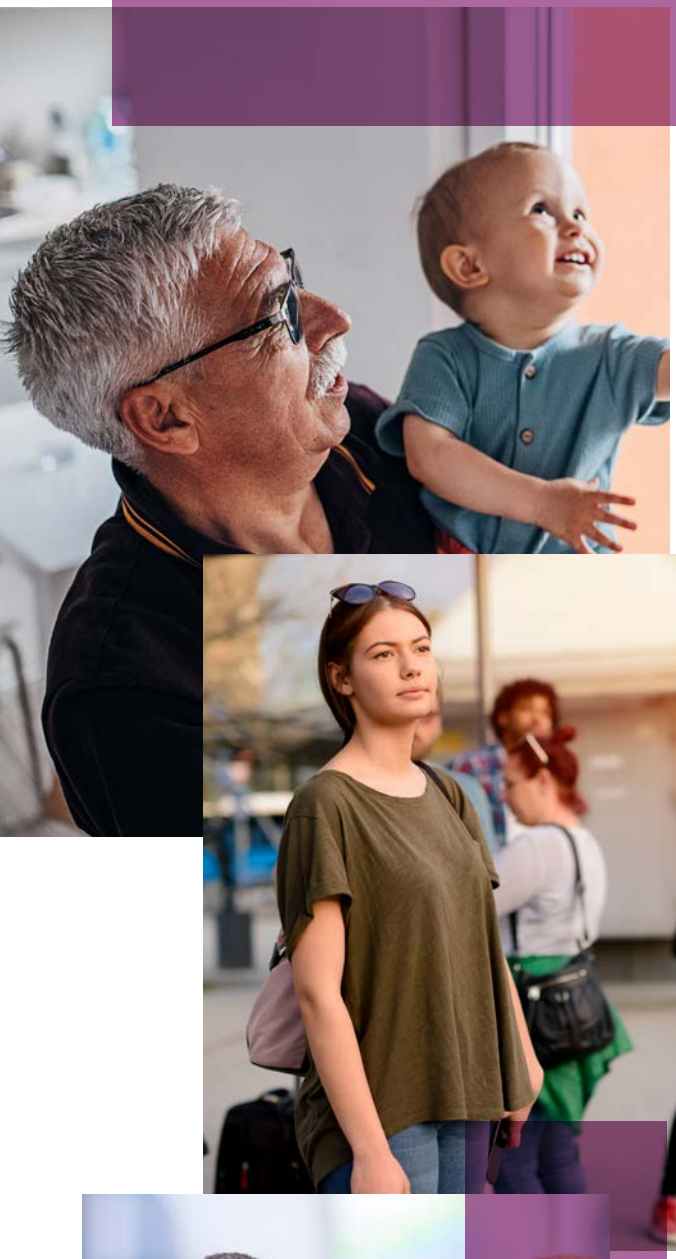
Extreme heat is dangerous and can affect anyone, including fit and healthy people. However, some people are particularly at risk during heat events.

Groups most at risk from heatwaves

- people **aged 65 years and over**, especially those who are also:
  - living alone
  - unable to care for themselves
  - have a disability
  - have a medical condition or mental illness
- people with a pre-existing **medical condition** (e.g. diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease, dementia), **chronic illness** or **mental illness**
- people **taking medications** that can affect how the body responds to heat such as:
  - antidepressant or antipsychotic medications
  - allergy medications (antihistamines)
  - antiseizure medications
  - blood pressure and heart medications (beta-blockers and vasoconstrictors)
  - thyroid medications (thyroxine)
  - water pills (diuretics)
  - insomnia medications
- **babies and infants** aged 0-4 years old
- **pregnant** or **nursing women**
- people with a **disability** (physical, intellectual, sensory, learning, mental or neurological)
- people with **problematic drug or alcohol use**
- **culturally and linguistically diverse communities** where:
  - access to information or understanding English-language warnings are limited
  - social connections and support networks are limited
- people experiencing different types of **social disadvantage** (e.g. isolated, living alone, homelessness, poverty).



Challenges people face during heatwaves



People are likely to experience difficulty during heatwaves if they:

- **do not have a car** (e.g. to visit a cool place, to see the doctor, to buy food, water or medications)
- **cannot make changes to their home** to reduce heat risk (e.g. for financial, physical or mental reasons)
- **do not know the signs of heat-related illness** (e.g. limited access to information or limited understanding due to neurological, mental, intellectual, sensory or learning disability)
- **do not receive or understand heatwave warnings** (e.g. social and economic disadvantage, computer illiteracy, lack of access to translation services, direct language barriers, illness, disability)
- **rely on others for help** (e.g. groups including babies and children, older people, people unable to care for themselves, people with a disability, people with a chronic or severe illness, and animals)
- **cannot change their behaviour or environment to keep cool** (e.g. groups including babies, children and young people, or those with specific conditions or disability such as Alzheimer's
- **cannot use air-conditioning** because they do not have it, or are concerned about increased electricity costs.

Signs and symptoms

OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

There are four types of heat-related illness:

1. **DEHYDRATION**
2. **HEAT CRAMPS**
3. **HEAT EXHAUSTION**
4. **HEAT STROKE**

Heat-related illness may be mild at first, but if left untreated can worsen to become heat exhaustion and then heat stroke. Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency that requires immediate medical attention.

It is important to note that adults with capacity have a right to decide what happens to their own bodies. Verbal or written permission is required before providing aid for heat-related illness.

IF IN DOUBT, CALL 000 FOR AN AMBULANCE.

1. Dehydration

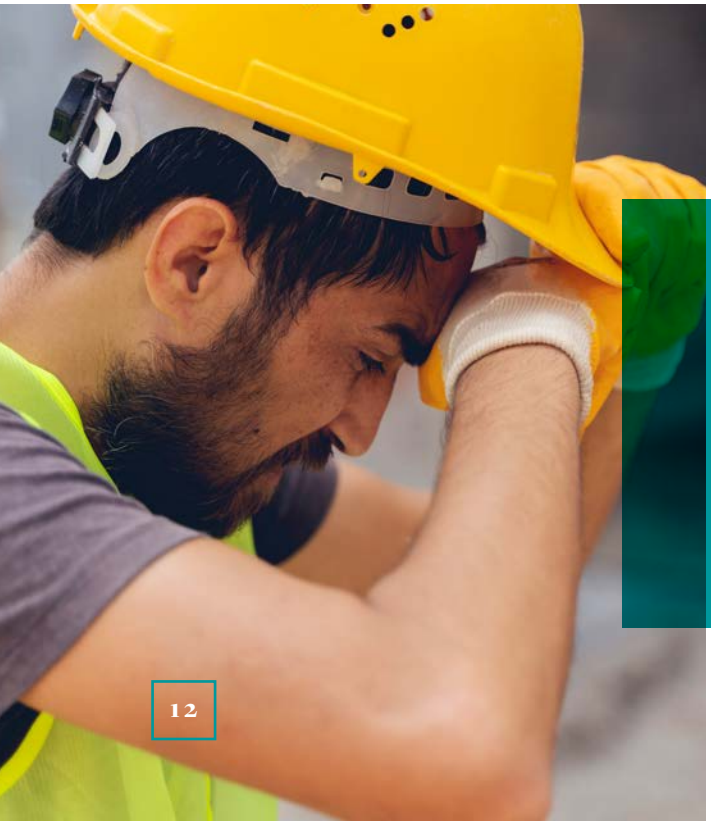
Mild to moderate dehydration makes the heart and kidneys work harder and reduces the amount of water available to cool the body through sweating.

SYMPTOMS

- Dizziness
- Tiredness
- Irritability
- Thirst
- Bright or dark yellow urine
- Loss of appetite
- Fainting

WHAT TO DO

- Offer plenty of water to drink, avoid tea, coffee or alcohol
- Move the person somewhere cool, ideally somewhere air-conditioned
- Cool the person using a wet, cool cloth or water spray bottle
- If the person feels unwell, arrange an urgent appointment with their doctor or take them to be assessed in the nearest Emergency Department



2. Heat cramps

Heat cramps usually affect people who sweat a lot during heavy activity such as sport or gardening in hot weather. Sweating causes the body to lose salt and water.

Heat cramps may be caused by lowered salt levels in the muscles. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of serious heat exhaustion.

SYMPTOMS

Muscle pains or cramps

WHAT TO DO

- Stop all activity and have the person lie in a cool place, legs slightly raised
- Offer water to drink
- Help the person have a cool shower or bath, or wet their skin with a sponge or spray bottle
- Massage limbs to ease cramps. Apply wet, cool cloths or ice packs
- Advise the person not to return to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps have stopped (this could lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke)
- If the heat cramps do not go away after one hour, arrange an urgent appointment with their doctor or seek other medical advice

3. Heat exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt contained in sweat. Those most at risk of developing heat exhaustion are elderly people, people with chronic diseases, and people working or exercising in the heat. If heat exhaustion is not treated, it can turn into **life-threatening** heat stroke.

SYMPTOMS

- Heavy sweating (cool and moist skin)
- Pale skin
- Fast and weak pulse rate
- Breathing fast and shallow
- Muscle weakness or cramps
- Tiredness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

WHAT TO DO

- Move the person to a cool place, if possible in an air-conditioned room and lay them down
- Remove excess clothing
- Give small sips of cool fluids
- Cool shower, bath or sponge bath
- Put cool packs (or cool wet cloths) under armpits, on the groin, or on the back of the neck to reduce body heat
- If symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour, arrange an urgent appointment with their doctor or call an ambulance

4. Heat stroke

Heat stroke occurs when body temperature rises above 40.5°C.
Heat stroke is a **life-threatening emergency**. It is important to call 000 immediately and give first-aid to lower body temperature as quickly as possible.

SYMPTOMS

- A sudden rise in body temperature
- Red, hot and dry skin (sweating has stopped)
- Dry swollen tongue
- Rapid pulse
- Rapid shallow breathing
- Intense thirst
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Confusion, poor coordination or slurred speech
- Aggressive or strange behaviour
- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures or coma

WHAT TO DO

- Immediately call 000 and ask for an ambulance
- Move the person into the shade or a cool space, lie them down, and keep them as still as possible
- Give small sips of cool fluids if the person is conscious and able to drink
- Bring their temperature down using any method available (sponging with cool water, spraying with cool water from the garden hose or soaking clothes with cool water)
- Put cool packs (or cool wet cloths) under armpits, on the groin, or on the back of the neck
- Do not give aspirin or paracetamol; they do not help and may be harmful
- If unconscious, lay the person on their side (recovery position) and check they can breathe properly
- Perform CPR if needed

Key planning considerations

FOR HEAT SMART ORGANISATIONS

How to prepare for a heatwave

There are simple steps you can take to help your staff and clients stay safe during a heatwave.

STEP 1 - PLAN

Before summer:

- Develop or review your organisation's heatwave plan. For further detail, follow the planning checklist on page 20.
- Subscribe to the Bureau of Meteorology's weather alerts. This will allow you to brief staff in advance and advise any clients of possible closures/ shutdowns.
- Provide staff with refresher briefing/ training on how to recognise the signs and symptoms for heat-related illnesses.
  - See the Australian Red Cross website for details. *https://www.redcross.org.au/get-involved/learn/first-aid*
- Consider how you will manage staffing over the summer period. Heatwaves often coincide with school holidays, Christmas, New Years, and the Australia Day long weekend. Many volunteers, staff and partner organisations may have reduced capacity during this period.
- Check the service dates of any equipment that requires regular servicing. Equipment is more likely to fail in the heat, putting staff safety and organisation liability at risk.

- Check air-conditioning has been serviced recently.
- Review and decide how you will cool your work environment. If you do not have air-conditioning, consider whether you will be able to keep people safe with alternative cooling methods e.g. blinds, fans, icepacks, wet washers and towels.
- Have a 'business continuity' plan in the event of power outage or telecommunication loss.
  - See the ACOSS website *https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/managing-your-risks/business-continuity-plan* for further information on developing a business continuity plan.
- Prepare a communications plan/ community education materials so these are ready to go when a heatwave is forecast.

STEP 2 – PREPARE

When the heatwave is forecast:

- Keep staff up to date on heatwave predictions (staff emails, intranet, websites, phone calls or SMS services, meetings/briefings).
- Promote heatwave safety messages with both staff and clients.
- Ensure all staff, clients and/ or visitors know where to access official sources of information (e.g. Bureau of Meteorology's weather alerts, ABC local radio, social media pages, Red Cross 'Get Ready' app).
- Consider and decide how you will communicate information with staff in the event of an emergency (e.g. Text message, phone call, email, social media).
- Ensure there is an up-to-date list of emergency and staff contacts available to all staff. A list of staff emergency contacts should also be available to management.
- Ensure adequate first aid trained staff are available for the heatwave period, and first aid kits are well stocked.
- Ensure all staff know the signs and symptoms for heat-related illnesses.
- Roster on extra staff or volunteers as needed considering the likely impact of public holidays such as Christmas or New Year.
- Remind staff to drink water during periods of extreme heat, even if they do not feel thirsty.
- Advise staff to wear lightweight and light-coloured clothing. If staff are usually required to wear a dark/ thick uniform or personal protective clothing, provide lightweight, light coloured options for periods of extreme heat.
- Consider whether it is safe for staff to work outside or inside (during a heatwave or on days of extreme heat).
- If staff work outdoors, ensure adequate personal protective equipment is provided e.g. sun-safe hat, sunglasses, sunscreen.
- Ensure heatwave information and educational material is available to staff and clients e.g.
  - Display materials in your front office
  - Ensure information is on your website
  - Send reminders via newsletters or social media
  - Have printed materials available for any staff visiting at risk groups.
- Advise staff to download the Red Cross 'Get Ready' App.
- Ensure that your workplace has plenty of water and food (if applicable) in the event of power outage.
- IT and communications equipment are sensitive to extreme heat. Back up any important information prior to the heat event.
- Assess bushfire risk as bushfires often occur on days with high temperatures.
- Information on bushfire preparedness is available from the NSW Rural Fire Service. See: *rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare*

IF YOUR ORGANISATION CARES FOR/WORKS WITH AT-RISK CLIENTS

- Revise and update any existing care plans to identify high-risk clients.
- Identify whether additional resources will be needed to meet increased demand for assistance during a heatwave.
- Revise and confirm any cool spaces that your organisation can offer to clients (ensure any 'cool spaces' are recorded, and all staff are aware of these areas/ locations).
- Decide/confirm how welfare checks will be undertaken and by whom (e.g. daily phone calls, daily visits). Ensure all staff are updated.
- For more refer to the client welfare checklist on page 24.

STEP 3 - RESPOND

During the heatwave:

- Implement your heatwave plan which may include:
  - Altered hours and working locations
  - Check-ins for those at risk
  - Opening of cool locations for clients.
- Monitor temperatures and act upon heatwave warnings.
- Promote heatwave safety messages.
- Actively monitor and manage the health and safety of volunteers and staff.

STEP 4 - EVALUATE

After the heatwave:

- Discuss with staff any successful actions as well as actions that could be improved to better prepare and respond to future heatwaves.
- Record any useful learnings, suggestions and recommendations.
- Organise a review and if necessary, update the organisation's heat plan.
- If applicable, update or create care plans for existing or newly identified at-risk clients.

Heatwave planning checklist

IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER HOW YOU WILL PREPARE, RESPOND AND RECOVER. MAKE A PLAN BY CONSIDERING THIS CHECKLIST

Heatwave planning checklist

Whether your organisation is large or small, having a basic heatwave plan is the best way to ensure you are prepared to support the safety of staff, volunteers and clients over summer.

This checklist is designed to step through key considerations for community organisations when developing a heatwave plan. Each organisation will need to assess their own capacity, skills and resources when considering the questions that follow.

Your organisation

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION	ACTIONS
Communication	
Have you subscribed to weather alerts? ○ If so, continue to monitor for updates.	
How will you keep personnel up to date on heatwave forecasts? ○ E.g. staff emails, intranet, website updates, phone calls or SMS, meetings/briefings.	
Do all personnel, clients and/or visitors know where to access heatwave warnings? ○ E.g. Bureau of Meteorology's weather alerts, ABC local radio, social media pages, Red Cross 'Get Ready' app.	
How would you communicate information with personnel in an emergency? ○ E.g. phone calls or SMS services, emails, social media.	
Do you have an up-to-date list of all staff/volunteer contacts and their emergency contacts?	
Staff management and training	
Do you have first aid trained personnel?	
Are all personnel aware of heat-risk, the signs of heat stress, and what to do if they encounter someone who needs assistance? ○ If no, consider a Red Cross training course.	
Have you provided heatwave information and educational material to personnel?	
In the event of a heatwave, will personnel be able to complete their usual duties comfortably and safely?	
Have you communicated with personnel that they must make a conscious effort to stay hydrated during periods of extreme heat, even if they do not feel thirsty?	
Have you advised personnel to wear lightweight or light-coloured clothing when it is hot?	

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION	ACTIONS
Staff management and training continued	
Have you assessed whether it is safe for personnel to work outside or inside (based on the inside conditions and type of work) when it is hot? ○ Do you need to alter working hours to avoid the hottest part of the day? ○ Do you have an agreed trigger for when certain activities will cease?	
Have you advised personnel to download the Red Cross 'Get Ready' app?	
Have you provided personal protective equipment to personnel required to work outdoors? ○ E.g. sun-safe hat, sunglasses, sunscreen.	
If you close/send people home, what implications might this have? ○ Will people have difficulty getting home in the heat? ○ How will you communicate this to clients? ○ Will clients be disadvantaged by altered operating hours or closure?	
Resources and equipment	
Have you checked the maintenance schedules of equipment prior to summer?	
Do you have an air-conditioner? ○ What temperature is the unit rated to? ○ Has the unit been recently serviced? ○ If air-conditioning fails, who will you call?	
Electricity and power	
Have you considered and/or reviewed how you will cool your work environment? Will this be impacted by a power outage?	
Will access to your services be impacted by power outage? ○ Water ○ Lifts ○ Sliding doors ○ Phone and internet ○ Public transport (rail)	
Have you made plans to back up any important information?	
Do you need to stock up on food and water in the event of a power outage?	
Do you have refrigerated goods that might spoil in a power outage?	
If applicable, do you have eskies and ice packs to conserve refrigerated food?	
Business continuity	
Do you have a business continuity plan? ○ See ACOSS website in the resources section. *https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/managing-your-risks/business-continuity-plan*	

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION	ACTIONS
Other considerations	
Have you considered bushfire and/or smoke risk?	
If your organisation works with animals, have you included them in your heatwave planning?	
Have you considered what you would do if heat coincides with other emergencies e.g. COVID-19 or bushfire	

Helping others

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION	ACTIONS
Resources	
Do you have an air-conditioned venue where people can sit to cool down? ○ Is it accessible? ○ Who would staff it? ○ If no, could you collaborate with someone who does? ○ Does the venue have back up power? If no, do you have a plan for what you will do in a power-outage?	
Do you have plenty of water available?	
Do you have plenty of seating? ○ If no, could you collaborate with someone who does?	
Do you have community transport that could help people access cool places? ○ If no, could you collaborate with someone who does?	
Could your staff/volunteers/venue have bottled water and icepacks/ cool towels on hand in case you come across someone in need?	
If your organisation cares for clients	
Do you have capacity to undertake welfare checks via phone or in-person?	
Can you help clients develop a heatwave emergency plan and kit? ○ See Red Cross website for planning resources.	

THIS PLAN SHOULD BE REVIEWED PRIOR TO THE START OF SUMMER EACH YEAR.

Client welfare checklist

THIS CHECKLIST IS DESIGNED AS A BASIC GUIDE FOR ORGANISATIONS THAT PROVIDE IN-HOME CLIENT SERVICES

Client welfare checklist

This checklist is designed as a basic guide for organisations that provide in-home client services. Actions relating to care plans and medications should only ever be undertaken by qualified professionals.

Client name:

Key contact name:

Key contact phone: **Fluid restriction:** ☐ **Yes /** ☐ **No**

Medications:

Before summer

Spring is an ideal time to check your client has everything in place for a safe summer season. It is also a good time to talk to them about their plan for very hot days.

FOR THE PERSON	Y/N
Does the person have a care plan? If so, it should include information on: • Underlying health conditions • Drinking recommendations (including fluid restrictions) • Medication (including how this may affect the person in hot weather). If their care plan does not include this information, contact their doctor to clarify.	
Does the person have light, loose-fitting clothing to wear when the weather gets hot? Linen or cotton are the coolest options.	
Does the person have a plan for very hot days? If suitable, suggest they download the Red Cross 'Get Ready' App. If they do not have access to a computer, provide a paper copy of the Red Cross RediPlan available from: *https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare*	

FOR THEIR HOME	Y/N
Can any improvements be made to the person's home to make it cooler in summer? • Do they have ceiling or pedestal fans? • Do all windows have coverings? Thick, pale-coloured curtains are ideal for reflecting heat. • Is there external shading on the hottest parts of the home? Shade cloth, plants or external blinds on west and north-facing walls can prevent the home heating up. If needed, discuss whether these improvements are possible.	
Are cooling devices working well? • Fridge and freezer • Fans • Air-conditioner (Has it been serviced recently? Is it set to cool?) If needed, assist in arranging service or repair of cooling devices.	

Notes.

Client welfare checklist

When a heatwave is forecast

When hot weather is forecast, make sure the person has everything they need to stay safe at home. Help arrange additional check-ins with friends and family where possible.

FOR THE PERSON	Y/N
Does the person have access to additional support and care during the heatwave period? If possible, speak with their family and friends to let them know how they can support the person. Recommend they contact them at least once a day during the heatwave. Alternatively, check whether additional professional care or check-ins can be provided.	
Does the person know who they will call if they need help? Check the person has a list of 'key contacts' with telephone numbers for their doctor, support workers, carers and others able to help. Place this on the fridge so it's ready in an emergency.	
Does the person have items to help them cool down? • Cool, wet towels or washers • Ice packs in the fridge or freezer • Water spray bottle • Drinking water in the fridge	
Does the person have light, loose-fitting clothing ready to wear? Linen or cotton are the coolest options.	
Are necessary medical equipment or aides in working order? If not, help them arrange this.	

FOR THEIR HOME	Y/N
Is the fridge, freezer, fan and air-conditioner working properly and set to cool?	
Does the person have a cool room to spend time in during the heatwave? If not help them prepare one: • Select a cool room in the home • Ensure curtains are drawn and external shading is in place • Shut doors to other rooms • Focus fans and air-conditioning on this space • Set up the room to ensure they have everything they need.	
Does the person have an emergency kit in case of power outages? TORCH AND BATTERIES FIRST-AID KIT 10 LITRES OF WATER PER PERSON POWERPACK TO CHARGE YOUR MOBILE PHONE. BATTERY-POWERED RADIO LIST OF KEY PHONE NUMBERS COOLER BOX AND ICE Long power outages can interrupt water supply.	
Does the person have enough food and medicine for the heatwave period? If the person has animals, do they have enough pet food? Assisting them to prepare will reduce the need to leave home during the heatwave.	
Does the person have any appointments or outdoor activities planned for the heatwave? Help them to cancel or reschedule these to avoid the heat and encourage indoor activities such as reading or watching TV.	
Does the person have cool meals planned for the heatwave period? Cool meals such as salads are best. Using the stove or oven will heat up their home.	
Notes.	

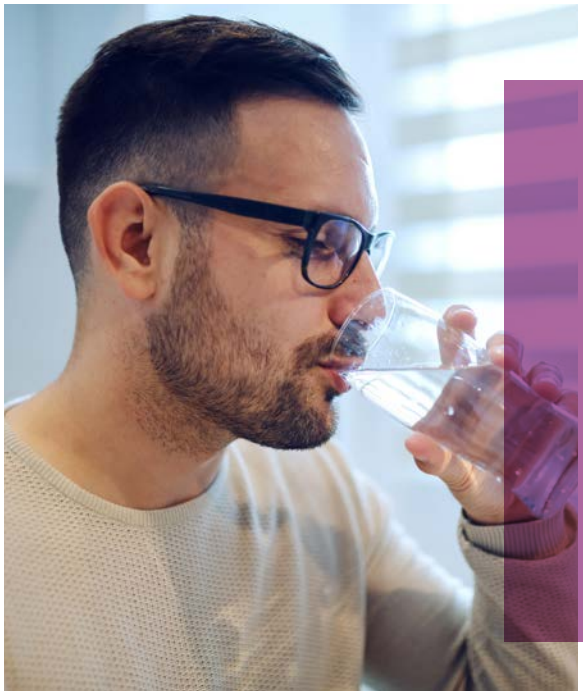
Client welfare checklist

During a heatwave

If you believe the person is not coping, arrange a visit to their doctor or **call 000 in an emergency.**

FOR THE PERSON	Y/N
Does the person seem their usual self? Out of character behaviour such as confusion, tiredness or irritability may be a sign they are suffering heat-related illness. If you are worried seek medical help.	
Is the person drinking plenty of water? Check they have more water available in the fridge. Advise them to avoid alcohol, tea and coffee which could make dehydration worse. If the person is on fluid restrictions, follow their personal medical advice.	
Is the person wearing light, loose-fitting clothing? Advise them to remove unnecessary clothing like cardigans or stockings unless there is a medical reason.	
Does the person know how to keep their body cool? • Using air-conditioning and fans • Wetting the skin with towel or spray bottle • Placing a wet towel behind their neck • Taking cool showers • Using ice packs	
Does the person have more wet towels or ice packs in the fridge or freezer?	
Remind the person to postpone any household chores or do them early in the morning before it gets hot. Encourage indoor activities such as reading or watching TV.	
Does the person know where and how to receive weather updates? Encourage them to check weather updates regularly.	
Does the person have a list of key contacts handy?	

During a heatwave continued over...



A note on drinking recommendations

It is important that people drink enough fluids during hot weather, even if they are not feeling thirsty. Each older person and person at risk should receive personalised drinking recommendations. This is best done by their doctor from their doctor. It is important to remember that some people my have to restrict their fluid intake due to a medical condition.

Client welfare checklist

...During a heatwave continued

FOR THEIR HOME	Y/N
Does the temperature in the person's home feel safe?	
Are they using fans and/or air-conditioning? Is the air-conditioner set to cool?	
Were windows, curtains, blinds and shutters closed early in the day before it got hot? If not, advise the person to do this tomorrow or arrange for someone to assist them. Windows should only be opened when the outside temperature is cooler than inside.	
Can anything else be done to make the home cooler? • Close outdoor blinds or shutters • Draw curtains, or if no curtains, try using thick blankets to cover windows • Close doors to unused rooms • Encourage the person to turn on fans or air-conditioning.	
If the person's home is still too hot, can you or someone they know help them visit a cool place like a shopping centre, library, or friend's home? If the person visits a cool place, ensure they drink plenty of water before returning home.	
Remind or assist the person to open windows for air flow when the outside temperature cools down.	
Do pets have shade and plenty of water?	
Notes.	

Tips:

Bushfires often occur on days with high temperatures.

Information on bushfire preparedness is available from the NSW Rural Fire Service.

rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and prepare

NSW Fire & Rescue offers free Fire Safety Visits for households including checking smoke alarms.

https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=9316

Client welfare checklist

After a heatwave

Many people become unwell in the days following hot weather. It is important to keep in touch with at-risk individuals after the heatwave has passed in case they need help.

FOR THE PERSON	Y/N
Does the person seem their usual self? Out of character behaviour such as confusion, tiredness or irritability may be a sign they are suffering heat-related illness. If you are worried seek medical help.	
Have you asked the person if they are feeling okay? Offer any support or follow-ups that are available to them.	
Have you asked the person how they coped during the heatwave? • What did they do to try and keep cool? • What worked and what didn't? • Was there anything that was too hard to do? • Would more assistance have helped? Make a record of the person's experience and what could be done better next time.	

FOR THEIR HOME	Y/N
If there was a power outage, check the fridge for any bad food or expired medicine.	
Can anything be done to help cool the person's home after the heatwave? • Open windows for air flow • Positioning fans.	
Notes.	

GENERAL NOTES
Notes.

Resources

WHO TO CALL FOR HELP

In an emergency call **000**

For advice on medications and their effect in hot weather – get in touch with the person's doctor.

For general health advice – call **Health Direct** on **1800 022 222**

This is a free 24-hour telephone health advice line staffed by registered nurses to provide expert health advice (NSW Government health advice line, calls from landlines are free).

ACCESS HEATWAVE WARNINGS AND INFORMATION

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)

Issues predictions of heatwave intensity, location and duration through their national heatwave forecast service.

Available here: *bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/*

NSW Health

Distribute heatwave warnings, preparation and health advice through their website. *https://www.health.nsw.gov.au*

ABC Radio Sydney 702 AM

The ABC is Australia's official broadcaster of emergency warnings.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

NSW Beat the Heat

- Information for carers. Available at: *health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/information-for-carers.aspx*
- Information for health professionals. Available at: *health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/information-for-health-professionals.aspx*
- Health Tips for a Safe Season brochure. Available at: *ghhin.org/resources/beat-the-heat-health-tips-for-a-safe-season/* (multiple languages)
- Factsheet: Heat related illness including heat stroke. Available at: *health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/heat-related-illness.aspx*

Preparing older people for emergencies: Meals on Wheels NSW x Red Cross, 'ACT! A Collaborative Toolkit'. Available at: *https://nswmealsonwheels.org.au/act*

For more information on how to help the **Deaf Community access information**, you can contact a local 'Deaf Liaison Officer (DLO) from the Deaf Society. Available here: *https://deafsociety.org.au/community_programs/page/get-ready-project*

Preparing clients for emergencies: a resource for community service workers (Resilience NSW) *emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/community-service-workers/preparing-clients-for-emergencies.aspx*

Red Cross RediPlan: information and template to develop an all-hazards emergency plan *redcross.org.au/prepare*

NSW Rural Fire Service: Bushfire plan and preparation advice. *rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare*

Business continuity: ACOSS toolkit to assist community organisations develop business continuity plans *resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/managing-your-risks/business-continuity-plan*

WSROC

Advocating for the people of Western Sydney

The Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils' (WSROC) mission is to build collaboration between local governments across Greater Western Sydney, promoting Western Sydney, its people and places, through advocacy, business improvement, strategic leadership, research and partnerships. WSROC has facilitated the development of this guide.

Address: PO Box 63 Blacktown NSW 2148
Phone: 02 9671 4333
Web: wsroc.com.au
Email: info@wsroc.com.au

Heat Smart Western Sydney has been funded under the State Government Natural Disaster Resilience Program.