

GANNAWARRA SHIRE

# HEAT HEALTH PLAN



## Municipal Endorsement

The Gannawarra Shire as part of its emergency management planning has developed this Heat Health Plan.

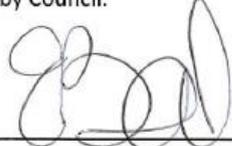
This plan is a sub-plan of the Gannawarra Shire's Municipal Emergency Management Plan and was endorsed through formal motion by the Gannawarra Shire Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) on 6 July 2017 and adopted by Gannawarra Shire Council on 16 August 2017.

Plan endorsed by Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee:

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 11/9/17.

Cr Brian Gibson  
Chair of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee

Plan adopted by Council:

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 21/8/2017

Eric Braslis  
Chief Executive Officer

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## 1: Introduction

Extreme heat events have contributed to more deaths in Australia than any other natural hazard (Bureau of Meteorology 2015). Extreme heat also causes livestock and crop losses, damage to infrastructure such as roads, railways and bridges, and increased demand on, and/or failure of, essential services such as power, transport and water. Failure of infrastructure can further affect the functioning of government, community services, business and industry and exacerbate the impact on human health.

Several consecutive days of extreme temperatures, with high night-time temperatures, are the most lethal however impacts can occur on a single day of extreme heat.

People generally adapt to changing temperature patterns and become acclimatised gradually over long periods of time. There is however a level to which humans become accustomed and these thresholds vary between regions.

In January 2009, Victoria experienced an unprecedented statewide heatwave with temperatures being extreme for a number of days with little overnight relief. A report by the Chief Health Officer concluded that there were 374 additional deaths during the heatwave in comparison to the previous five years. A further 167 excess deaths occurred during the 2014 heatwave.

Across Victoria, the duration, frequency and intensity of heat is expected to increase as a result of climate change (Steffen et al 2014).

Extreme heat can affect anyone; however there are some sectors of the population that are more susceptible. These include the elderly, the very young, those with some pre-existing medical conditions, those on particular medications and the socially isolated (See Appendix 1 for further detail on those vulnerable to extreme heat).

The aim of this Heat Health Plan is to support the community to prepare for, respond to and recover from heatwaves and extreme heat events.

### ***Implementation of this Heat Health Plan will:***

- Ensure health information and support is available to the community.
- Increase the understanding and capacity of the community to respond during heat events.
- Manage a heat event emergency effectively.
- Influence long term changes to improve community health and wellbeing.

### ***This will be achieved by:***

- Undertaking strategies and actions to increase community resilience to extreme heat.
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable groups and the risks they face during heat events.
- Developing partnerships with local organisations to better coordinate response to heat events.

## 2: Planning Framework

The following Acts outline the responsibility of Council when it comes to the heatwaves and extreme heat events:

- *Emergency Management Act 1986* requires Council to have arrangements in place to prevent, respond to and recover from any emergencies that could occur in the municipality.
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* states that Council's function is to 'seek to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipal district.'
- *Local Government Act 1989* outlines the responsibility of Council to protect public health in emergencies.
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987* fosters better planning of the built environment to withstand the impact of a range of likely emergencies, including extreme heat.

The Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) details the emergency roles and responsibilities of agencies in relation to the prevention, mitigation, risk reduction, response and recovery components of emergencies.

In Victoria, natural events like heatwaves constitute an emergency under the *Emergency Management Act 1986*.

The Department of Health and Human Services, Health Protection Branch has the overarching responsibility for the coordination of heat health activities in Victoria. The *Heat Health Plan for Victoria* (Department of Health and Human Services 2015) outlines a coordinated approach to the prevention, preparation and management of extreme heat in Victoria with a focus on health and community service providers and local and state government.

A *Heatwave Planning Guide* (Department of Human Services 2009) assists local government to develop heat health management plans that are relevant to their local community.

Management of extreme heat and heatwave straddles a number of local government areas of responsibility including emergency management, home care services, children services, community health and wellbeing, sustainability and environment, town planning and occupational health and safety.

Gannawarra Shire Council first developed a Heat Health Plan in 2009. This plan has been reviewed since this time and implemented over the summer period each year.

This Gannawarra Heat Health Plan provides a framework for Council to meet its emergency management and other legislative obligations and ensure that a plan is in place to support the community during heatwaves and extreme heat events.

## **3: Terminology**

### **3.1 Heatwave**

The Bureau of Meteorology's *Heatwave Service for Australia* defines heatwaves as 'three days or more of high maximum and minimum temperatures that are unusual for that location'. This definition of heatwave also applies to emergency management when, after three days of extreme heat; that is a heatwave, the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC) assumes the role of control agency to manage the event (see Section 7).

### **3.2 Extreme heat**

The *Heat Health Plan for Victoria* defines extreme heat as the minimum mean temperature that is likely to impact on the health of a community. This is known as the Department of Health and Human Services' heat health temperature threshold. Extreme heat does not have a prescribed duration and may last as little as 24 hours.

### **3.3 Heat health temperature thresholds**

The Department of Health and Human Services has identified heat health temperature thresholds for each weather forecast district in Victoria (which align with the Victorian Country Fire Authority districts). Above these thresholds heat-related illness and mortality increases.

The heat health temperature threshold is based on the forecast average temperature for any given day; that is the average of the forecast daily maximum temperature and the forecast overnight temperature (see Appendix 2).

### **3.4 Heat health alerts**

Heat health alerts are issued by the Department of Health and Human Services for a particular district once the forecast average temperatures reach or exceed the heat health threshold for that district (see Section 7).

### **3.5 Prevention**

The elimination or minimisation of the impacts of extreme heat on communities and individuals.

### **3.6 Preparedness**

Planning and raising community awareness in the lead up to summer and heat events.

### **3.7 Response**

The implementation of pre-determined actions in the event of extreme heat and providing relief and recovery services.

### **3.8 Recovery**

The follow up actions to support persons affected by the event to achieve proper and effective levels of functioning.

## 4: How heat affects health

As temperatures rise so too does the risk of developing a heat related illness; a medical condition that results from the body's inability to cope with heat and cool itself. If left untreated, heat related illness can lead to serious complications, including death.

Heat related illness can make people feel uncomfortable, not so much because they feel hot, but rather because they sense how difficult it has become to lose body heat at the rate necessary to keep their inner body temperature close to 37°C. The body responds to heat stress progressively through three stages:

Stage	Body Response	Symptoms	What to do
1	Heat Cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle pains.</li> <li>• Spasms in the abdomen, arms or legs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop activity and sit quietly in a cool place.</li> <li>• Drink cool water.</li> <li>• Rest a few hours before returning to activity.</li> <li>• See a doctor if cramps persist.</li> </ul>
2	Heat Exhaustion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pale complexion and sweating.</li> <li>• Rapid heart rate.</li> <li>• Muscle cramps, weakness.</li> <li>• Dizziness, headache.</li> <li>• Nausea, vomiting.</li> <li>• Fainting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go to a cool area and lie down.</li> <li>• Fan if possible.</li> <li>• Drink cool water if not vomiting.</li> <li>• Remove outer clothing.</li> <li>• Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths.</li> </ul>
3	Heatstroke (a life-threatening emergency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same symptoms as heat exhaustion except sweating stops.</li> <li>• Mental condition worsens, confusion.</li> <li>• Seizure.</li> <li>• Stroke-like symptoms or collapsing.</li> <li>• Unconsciousness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call an ambulance – phone triple zero.</li> <li>• Get the person to a cool area and lay them down.</li> <li>• Remove clothing.</li> <li>• Wet skin with water, fanning continuously.</li> <li>• Position an unconscious person on their side and clear their airway.</li> </ul>

Source: *How to Cope and Stay Safe in Extreme Heat* brochure (Department of Health and Human Services 2016)

## 5: Community profile relating to heat

- Gannawarra Shire is located in Northern Victoria.
- There are two main townships Kerang (population 3,893) and Cohuna (population 2,428).
- Rural townships are Koondrook (population 991), Leitchville (population 558), Quambatook (population 249) and Lalbert, Murrabit, Mystic Park and Lake Charm, each with a population of less than 250.
- 10,549 people lived in Gannawarra at the last census in 2016.
- Kerang is on the Melbourne to Swan Hill train line.
- The median age is 49 years, compared to median age for Australia of 38 years.
- 27.6% of the population are aged 65 and over.
- 60% of older people aged over 65 years live in some form of partnership (based on 2011 Census data).
- There is a higher proportion of lone person households 32.5% compared to the Victorian average of 24.7% placing them at increased risk of social isolation.
- 1,326 families with children live in the Gannawarra Shire.
- 86.5% of residents were born in Australia.
- 1.9% of the population identify as aboriginal.
- 91.0% of the population speak English with 2.9% speaking English as well as another language.
- 23.9% of employment is in agriculture, 14.6% manufacturing and construction and 10.5% in health care and social assistance (based on 2011 Census data).
- Residents are more disadvantaged than the state average – based on income, education, unemployment and skill levels (SEIFA Index of Disadvantage).
- Levels of social housing are higher than other areas.
- The Shire has a range of natural and cultural attractions and over holiday periods is a popular location for tourists. Peak tourism areas are along the Murray River and lakes and wetlands.
- Chronic disease prevalence is higher than the state average including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma and musculoskeletal system diseases and dental health conditions.
- Gannawarra has a higher proportion of the population that are at very high risk of short term harm from alcohol consumption.
- There is a higher proportion of the population that are aged mental health clients.
- There is a significantly higher rate of people aged 70 years and over that are receiving Home and Community Care services.
- 30.3% of households across the Shire had no internet connection.
- 7% of older people use some form of residential aged care (based on 2011 Census data).
- 5.1% of people living in the Shire have a severe and profound disability (based on 2011 Census data).
- 6.6% require assistance with core daily activities (based on 2011 Census data).
- Council offers a range of community health programs including home care, meals on wheels, immunisations, childcare and preschool, maternal and child health, and family day care.
- There are a range of health services operating in the Gannawarra Shire including two hospitals, district health service and residential aged care facilities.
- Community strength indicators show that community strength is stronger in the Gannawarra Shire than the state average.
- Residents have access to domestic water, rivers, lakes and public swimming pools for relief.
- The community is heavily reliant on air-conditioning over the summer.

*\*Data provided is from the 2016 Census unless otherwise stated.*

## 6: Local weather and climate statistics

An exceptional heatwave affected south eastern Australia during late January and early February 2009. Many records were set for high day and night time temperatures as well as for the duration of extreme heat. The first stage of the heatwave occurred from 27 to 31 January 2009. After a slight drop in temperature during the first few days of February, extreme heat returned on February 6, and February 7 saw the most exceptional heat of the whole event, accompanied by high winds and very low humidity.

Bureau of Meteorology data for January and February 2009 for Kerang show the temperature for 7 February to be 46.9°C passing the previous record of 46.1°C set on 10 January 1939.

The following table provides Bureau of Meteorology data specific to Kerang for the period 26 January to 9 February 2009 (an exceptionally hot summer). This information provides a sense of how many days a year, Council and partner agencies may need to activate heat health responsibilities in the future:

Date	Maximum temperature	Date	Minimum temperature	Mean temperature
26 January 2009	37.2	27 January 2009	15.6	26.4
27 January 2009	40.0	28 January 2009	20.6	32.3
28 January 2009	44.2	29 January 2009	29.0	<b>36.6*</b>
29 January 2009	44.3	30 January 2009	23.3	33.8
30 January 2009	45.2	31 January 2009	24.9	<b>35.1*</b>
31 January 2009	45.1	1 February 2009	23.2	<b>34.2*</b>
1 February 2009	42.3	2 February 2009	23.4	32.9
2 February 2009	37.0	3 February 2009	20.2	28.6
3 February 2009	37.5	4 February 2009	18.8	28.2
4 February 2009	39.8	5 February 2009	20.6	30.2
5 February 2009	42.5	6 February 2009	18.3	30.4
6 February 2009	42.2	7 February 2009	21.7	32.0
7 February 2009	46.9	8 February 2009	23.7	<b>35.3*</b>
8 February 2009	34.6	9 February 2009	13.4	24.0

*\*Days where the heat health threshold of 34°C was reached during 2009 in Kerang.*

During the 2014 heatwave, Council issued 5 heat health alerts for days when the heat health threshold of 34°C was reached including for 3 consecutive days between 14-16 January 2014, two consecutive days between 1-2 February 2014 and a single day on 8 February 2014. The highest daily temperature reached during this summer was 45.5°C.

According to the Australian Climate Council's 2016 report January and February 2016 were significantly hotter than any other January and February on record and prolonged hot temperatures contributed to a major blue green algae bloom of the Murray River and other local waterways.

During January and February 2016 there was only a single day when the temperature met the heat health alert threshold for the Gannawarra Shire. This was on 19 January 2016, when the daily temperature reached 41.7°C followed by an overnight temperature of 27°C.

During the summer of 2017, two heat health alerts were issued for single days of extreme heat, on 7 January 2017 and 9 January 2017.

The above climate data provides some historical context and guidance as to how many days this Heat Health Plan is likely to be activated.

## 7: Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibility for preparing and protecting vulnerable population groups is shared across state and local governments, health and community service providers and emergency management agencies.

The Department of Health and Human Services has responsibility for reducing the impact of extreme heat on public health by preparing for, and responding to, heat events. It does this by:

- Developing the *Heat Health Plan for Victoria* to raise awareness of the impacts of extreme heat and actions to minimise the risks.
- Developing a *Heatwave Planning Guide*.
- Issuing heat health alerts.
- Maintaining a heat health information surveillance system.
- Developing a communication strategy with a range of resources.
- Providing support and guidance to other agencies.

Local government has a central role in building community capacity and resilience to prepare, plan for, respond to and recover from extreme heat events (Department of Justice 2014).

### Heat health alerts

The Department of Health and Human Services issues heat health alerts for relevant weather districts when forecast average temperatures reach or exceed threshold levels. The purpose of heat health alerts is to notify relevant agencies of forecast extreme heat conditions in preparation for enacting heat health plans.

Heat health alerts are accessible at [www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert) (see Appendix 2).

Gannawarra Shire Council is located within the Mallee District for heat health alerts.

When a heat health alert is issued for the Mallee weather district Council's Municipal Emergency Resource Officer and Municipal Recovery Manager will make the decision to activate Council's Heat Health Plan (see Appendix 3).

### Emergency management

The *State Heat Plan 2014* (Department of Justice 2014) provides a whole-of-government approach to responding to extreme heat events. It outlines the responsibilities of a number of agencies and departments in responding to heat events, including the impacts on health, energy and transport.

Extreme heat is a Class 2 emergency under the *Emergency Management Act 2013* and during extreme heat events the main emergency management tasks are:

- Ensuring the messages to the public are coordinated, consistent and complementary.
- Ensuring the impact and consequences of extreme heat on the community are identified and managed in an integrated and coordinated manner.
- Coordinating the whole-of-government response to the varied emergencies caused by the heat.

The Emergency Management Commissioner is the control agency and responsible for emergency response coordination of extreme heat at the state level, and to ensure the coordination, control, consequence management; communications and recovery functions for these events are integrated and effective (Emergency Management Victoria 2017).

The Department of Health and Human Services coordinates the health response during emergencies through the State Health Emergency Response Plan. The Chief Health Officer and the State Health Coordinator participate in the State Coordination Team and the State Emergency Management Team in order to ensure a whole-of-government heat health response.

Local government has a responsibility to protect public health in emergencies. The *Heat Health Plan for Victoria* encourages local government to address this responsibility by:

- Planning for extreme heat events.
- Enacting arrangements to support vulnerable members of the community.
- Communicating heat health messages.
- Coordinating ongoing support and local recovery activities as required.

## 8: Heat Health Actions - What we are going to do?

This Gannawarra Heat Health Plan groups actions into the following themes:

- **Planning:** Longer term planning and environmental interventions relevant to reducing the ongoing effects of extreme heat.
- **Organisational capacity:** Training of Council staff to deliver care and support to individuals during extreme heat, assisting service providers and ensuring that essential Council services continue to be run during a heat event.
- **Stakeholder partnerships:** Actions to engage, support and work with partner agencies in preparing for and responding to heat events.
- **Community support:** A strategy and set of actions to identify, prepare and support vulnerable or isolated individuals and sectors of the community in preparation for, or in response to, extreme heat events.
- **Communication:** Educational information that can be distributed to the community and service providers, describing the risks of extreme heat and personal steps to reduce the effects.

In determining actions to be incorporated into this plan, Council has referred to the *Heat Health Plan for Victoria* (Department of Health and Human Services 2015).

A full copy of the recommended actions for before, during and after extreme heat contained within the *Heat Health Plan for Victoria* has been included in Appendix 5.

The actions provide year round guidance to prevent, prepare, respond to and recover from extreme heat events.

**Stage 1: Long term prevention actions**

**Stage 2: Pre summer preparation**

**Stage 3: Preparation immediately before forecast extreme heat**

**Stage 4: Extreme heat event response**

**Stage 5: Post event recovery**

A Gannawarra Heat Health Plan Annual Action Checklist has been included as Appendix 6 to assist with the annual implementation of this plan.

## 8.1 Stage 1: Longer term prevention actions

### Planning

- Increase shade in public spaces as part of urban design planning and project implementation.
- Improve public access to drinking water by installing drinking water fountains.
- Heat proof public buildings where practicable when upgrades are being planned.
- Identify Public Cool Places<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>*In relation to identifying Public Cool Places, Gannawarra does not have shopping centres or public buildings to provide refuge on high temperature days, and it is impractical to run air conditioning in local halls or other buildings not generally occupied on these days. This plan therefore engages a common sense approach with Council determining that residents and communities:*

- *Are generally well equipped and acclimatised to the hot dry heat experienced over the summer months.*
- *Are resilient and generally socially connected.*
- *Looking for a cool space outside of their homes on extreme heat days will find this at local supermarkets, shops and libraries which are open to the public on these days, or in shaded areas at local pools, waterways and lakes.*
- *Are generally considered to be safest in their own homes or in the homes of friends and family. Some local aged care facilities are able to provide daytime refuge for small numbers of elderly residents where other options such as family and friends are not available.*

### Organisational capacity

- Ensure power supply back up for critical services is in place.
- Maintain adequate staffing for delivery of services in extreme heat events.

### Community support

- Encourage a sense of community and neighbourhood connections.
- Assess Community Care client homes for the ability to cope with heatwave conditions. Assessments will be conducted on an annual basis using Checklist (See Appendix 6).
- Review and update the Vulnerable Persons Register to include a heat vulnerability identifier.
- Ensure that vulnerable persons are flagged on Council's Community Care database so that daily contact can be made in the event of extreme heat or heatwave.
- Provide Community Care clients with a copy of the Red Cross Rediplan and offer one-on-one support to assist clients complete a plan.
- Provide Community Care clients with a Gannawarra Shire Emergency Safety Kit.
- Promote the medical cooling concession available for people with conditions that impact on the body's ability to regulate temperature and people reliant on life support machines. Information on concessions is available from the website: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions).
- Incorporate the Maternal and Child Health media clip 'Be Cool in Gannawarra' into New Parent Group programs held throughout the year to communicate key messages around keeping children cool in extreme heat: <https://www.youtube.com/user/GannawarraShire>.

## 8.2 Stage 2: Pre summer preparation actions

### Planning

- Review and update the Gannawarra Heat Health Plan.
- Check supplies of cooling neck wraps, water bottles and thermometers.

### Organisational capacity

- Participate in local and regional exercises and forums.
- Train relevant Council staff to support clients during extreme heat
  - *Heat Health in Community Care training package provides a framework for inclusion of heat health in team meetings, staff forums and workshops.*
- Provide Community Care workers and volunteers with cooling neck wraps and water bottles.
- Establish a cancellation policy for Council organised outdoor events with large gatherings of people during extreme heat events.
- Review Council's Chief Executive Officer Directive: Thermal Environment and ensure that strategies are in place to protect occupational groups from the effects of extreme heat.
  - *In order to decrease the risk of heat related illness on Council's Community Care workforce, workers will be able to re-schedule or cancel Domestic and Home Maintenance Services when the temperature exceeds 37°C, or at lower temperatures if the worker feels that they cannot continue to provide services, for example, on days when the temperature may be lower, but the humidity high. Personal Care continues unaffected.*

### Stakeholder partnerships

- Engage with key stakeholders and community members to raise awareness about the risks of extreme heat.

### Community support

- Encourage Community Care clients to have air conditioners serviced.
- Review process for providing support and contact to vulnerable clients on days of extreme heat e.g. phone checks and/or welfare visits.
- Provide heat help action kits to vulnerable clients.
- Offer to guest present at local seniors groups and distribute heat help action kits.
- Provide advice to vulnerable clients on how to manage their homes in extreme heat.
- Provide thermometers for Community Care clients for placement on the wall of a room deemed to be a 'safe' room, usually the living room, where the client is the coolest.
- Identify, prepare and promote public cool spaces for community use in extreme heat (swimming pools, libraries, shopping centres, health services).

### Communications

- Prepare communication resources, draft media releases, contact lists.
- Identify target groups for awareness campaigns (vulnerable, aged care facilities, sporting clubs, caravan parks, tourism operators).
- Order, display and distribute the Department of Health and Human Services' heat health promotional material and brochures.
- Promote heat health information through staff newsletters.
- Add a Heat Health icon to the home page of Council's website and update the website with consistent heat health information.

### **8.3 Stage 3: Preparation immediately before forecast extreme heat**

#### Organisational capacity

- Monitor local weather conditions on the Bureau of Meteorology's website.
- Ensure appropriate staffing levels and consider staff and client safety in hot weather.
- Coordinate staff to implement Council support process for identified vulnerable clients.
- Council's Environmental Health Officers will ensure that during hot weather vaccines transported and stored as part of Council's immunisation program will be closely monitored to ensure that the cold chain is maintained. Monitoring will be via a wireless digital thermometer attached to the Engel vaccine fridge used for transport. A purpose built vaccine fridge with an auto-dialer alarm (for temperature related failure) is used for vaccine storage.

#### Community support

- Alert Council clients on the Vulnerable Person's Register to upcoming extreme heat.
- Provide consistent heat health messages during client visits or telephone calls.
- Ensure that a Heat Health Checklist is in all Meals on Wheels cars for volunteers to check on clients during extreme heat and heatwaves (see Appendix 6)
- Ensure that Community Care workers who have existing relationships with people vulnerable to heat related illness are briefed and provided with appropriate educational resources and advice.
- Ensure that Maternal and Child Health Nurses and Children Services staff who have contact with the majority of families with children under five living in the municipality are briefed and able to provide education to families on how to care for young children in hot weather.

#### Communications

- Utilise the media kit developed by the Department of Health and Human Services as a basis for all media and communications around the key health messages <<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/council-media-kit-survive-the-heat>>. Resources include:
  - Template media releases.
  - Sample newsletter and website content.
  - Sample social media posts and a range of social media tiles.
  - Posters and brochures are also available to download or order in a range of languages (see information pack document on link above for further details).
- Instigate consistent community messages through local media or other communication channels.
- Provide information to the community regarding:
  - Public cool spaces (including pool and library opening and closing times).
  - Extra caution with food hygiene.
  - Taking care of pets in the heat. More information and resources can be accessed from <<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/dogs/dog-health/heat-and-pets>>.
  - Never leaving children, adults or pets in cars.
  - What to do in the event of a power outage.
- Disseminate information to Community Care clients to ensure that air conditioning, where available, is switched on so that Community Care workers can attend to their duties in relative comfort.
- Remind staff of key messages when working in the heat.

## 8.4 Stage 4: Extreme heat event response actions

### Organisational capacity

- Undertake Council activities in the Municipal Emergency Management Plan if required.
- Reschedule any non-essential services, events and meetings to another day or in the cooler part of the day.
- Divert Council staff to fill any gaps in the Meals on Wheels delivery roster when volunteers opt out due to extreme heat and heatwave.
- Activate workplace based strategies in accordance with Occupational Health and Safety policies. Strategies may include training being scheduled for hot days, particularly between 11am and 4pm, earlier starting and finishing times, additional scheduled breaks.
  - *Council's Occupational Health and Safety Committee considers heat health effects on staff. Some strategies introduced on extreme heat days are:*
    - *Training being scheduled for these days, particularly between 11am and 4pm.*
    - *Earlier starting and finishing times.*
    - *Additional scheduled breaks.*
    - *Information being disseminated to Community Care clients to ensure that air conditioning, where available, is switched on so that Community Care workers can attend to their duties in relative comfort.*

*These strategies are consistent with Council's Chief Executive Officer Directive: Thermal Environment.*
- Take action to ensure that animals in the pound are regularly checked to ensure they have adequate water and are not overheating.

### Community support

- Instigate support process for identified vulnerable clients e.g. phone checks and/or welfare visits.
- Remind vulnerable clients of key actions to take in extreme heat.
- Ensure adequate drinking water is available for clients, visitors, volunteers and staff.
- Provide the opportunity for Meals on Wheels volunteers to opt out of the Meals on Wheels delivery roster during periods of extreme heat and heatwave.
- Ensure Meals on Wheels volunteers are provided with a bottle of water prior to delivery of meals.
- Provide information and education directly to the community via Community Care workers, Maternal and Child Health Nurses and Children Service staff.

### Communications

- Activate heat health alert process – internal and external (see Appendix 3).
- Increase community messaging through local media and standard communication channels.
- Remind staff working in the heat of measures to prevent heat stress, how to recognise heat stress, heat exhaustion and heatstroke, and what to do.

## **8.5 Stage 5: Post event recovery actions**

### Organisational capacity

- Convene a post event debriefing session.
  - Consider what worked well and what could be improved in preparation for further heat events.
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of internal communications and processes.
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of community education and awareness campaigns.
- Annually review and update this Gannawarra Heat Health plan.

### Community support

- Consider local recovery activities if required.
- Contact and assess vulnerable persons in days immediately after the event.
- Talk with clients about how they are recovering from the heat.

## 9: Communications plan

Communication is an integral part of managing risk. The information delivered must be useful, timely, accurate, consistent and accessible to the target audience, especially the identified vulnerable groups.

The Department of Health and Human Services' *Heatwave Planning Guide* Section 3 (Department Human Services 2009) has been referred to for key messages and information resources.

Communication messages during extreme heat will provide timely and accurate information to the community to reduce the impact of extreme heat events.

During a statewide heatwave or extreme heat, the Department of Health and Human Services will collaborate with Ambulance Victoria to provide key health messages for use by the media.

Council's Communications and Engagement Coordinator will form a partnership with local media and editors of community newsletters circulating through the Shire to ensure that accurate and timely information is accessible to the community.

A Heat Health component will be added Council's website so that community members and service providers can obtain the information they require in an efficient and effective manner.

Council's customer service officers will refer heat related enquiries to Council's Manager Community Health/Heat Health Coordinator.

The key messages to be communicated to the community to reduce the health impacts of heat events will be:

- Keep the home cool
- Keep out of the heat
- Keep the body cool and hydrated
- Help others
- What to do if you have a health problem
- What to do if you or others feel unwell
- Never leave children, adults or pets in cars

***The aim of Council's Heat Health Communication Plan is to spread heat health messages quickly and effectively to those most vulnerable.***

## 9.1 Internal Communication Process

Upon receiving a heat alert notification the Heat Health Coordinator will forward this information to the following staff members:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Director Community Wellbeing/Municipal Recovery Manager
- Director Corporate Services
- Director Infrastructure/Municipal Emergency Resource Officer
- Manager Community Health/Environmental Health Officer/Deputy Municipal Recovery Manager/Heat Health Coordinator
- Community Health Coordinator/Environmental Health Officer/Deputy Heat Health Coordinator
- Manager Operational Services
- Manager Human Resources
- Manager Governance
- Manager Libraries
- Manager Children and Youth Services
- Manager Design and Projects
- Manager Strategic Assets
- Manager Economic Development
- Manager Planning and Regulatory Services
- Manager Finance
- Manager Community Care
- Maternal and Child Health Nurses
- Communications and Engagement Coordinator
- Customer Service Supervisor
- Local Laws Team Leader
- Works Team Leader
- Aquatic Facilities Coordinator

Each of these staff members will be responsible for communicating the heat alert notification to staff under their responsibility and for disseminating this information to their network of contacts.

The Heat Health Coordinator will ensure that information is uploaded onto the Council's Intranet to provide staff with accurate and timely information.

The messages will be consistent and will follow that set out in Appendix 4.

The Department of Health and Human Services' brochure titled *How to Stay Safe and Cope in Extreme Heat* will be attached to internal communication messages.

During periods of leave, Council's Heat Health Coordinator will ensure that back-up procedures are in place.

## 9.2 External Communication Process

Upon receiving a heat alert notification the Heat Health Coordinator will forward this information to members of the Gannawarra Heat Health Planning Group (contact details contained in Appendix 7) and to all members of the Gannawarra Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.

The message will be consistent and will follow that set out in Appendix 4.

The Department of Health and Human Services' brochure titled *How to Stay Safe and Cope in Extreme Heat* will be attached to external communication messages.

External agencies will be requested to distribute the information to their staff and network of contacts.

The general public with heat related queries contacting Council will be referred to the Heat Health Coordinator for more specialised public health information where required.

## 10: Education Strategy

Council will communicate information about the risks of extreme heat and preventative measures before the summer season begins. These messages will start to be disseminated through Council's existing networks and communication channels in the first week of November each year, or earlier depending on seasonal conditions.

### Spread of Educational Material

The spread of information will be two-fold through:

1. Passive information spread - such as the Gannawarra Gazette in local newspapers, media releases, distribution through local newsletters, brochures, counter information, Council's website, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter, etc.
2. Active information spread – such as verbal advice to the elderly and disabled given by Community Care workers, verbal advice to parents with babies presenting at Maternal and Child Health centres, and visits from other service providers.

Education surrounding heat health will be consistent with communication messages and will focus on preventing heat related illness by covering the following areas:

- Keeping the home cool
- Keeping out of the heat
- Keeping the body cool and hydrated
- Helping others
- What to do if you have a health problem
- What to do if you or others feel unwell
- Never leave children, adults or pets in cars

The Department of Health and Human Services' *Tips for engaging local media to promote heat health messages – Information for local councils* (2014) will be used to distribute messages.

***The aim of Council's Heat Health Education Strategy will be based on four simple messages – stay out of the heat, stay cool and drink plenty of water, look out for yourself and others, never leave children, adults or pets in cars.***

## **11: Review process**

An annual review of this Heat Health Plan will be undertaken prior to each summer season. The review will:

- Take into account changes at state and local level.
- Involve relevant stakeholders.
- Assess whether actions contained in the plan continue to have effective outcomes.
- Inform revision and improvement of the plan.

## Appendix 1: People most affected by heat

This information is taken from the Heat Health Plan for Victoria (*Department of Health and Human Services 2015*).

Extreme heat can affect anybody. However, there are some population groups that are more vulnerable to its effects due to factors such as their age, health, environment, social and economic circumstances, location or occupation.

In the context of climate change, vulnerability is the degree to which a community or an individual is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, the adverse effects of climatic changes. As such, vulnerability is a function of a community or individual's exposure to extreme heat and other climatic variables, their sensitivity to such changes and their ability to adapt.

The following people are likely to be most affected by heat:

- Over 65 years old, especially those living alone
- Have a medical condition such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer or kidney disease
- Taking medications that may affect the way the body reacts to heat such as
  - allergy medicines (antihistamines)
  - some blood pressure and heart medicines (beta-blockers and vasoconstrictors)
  - seizure medicines (anticonvulsants)
  - thyroid medications (thyroxine)
  - water pills (diuretics)
- Have a mental illness, particularly those on medication (antidepressants or antipsychotics)
- Problematic alcohol or other drug use such as amphetamines
- An illness or infection that causes dehydration or fever
- Cognitive impairment who may not be able to identify or communicate their discomfort or need for water
- Trouble moving around (such as those who are bed-bound or in wheelchairs)
- Are overweight or obese
- Pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, babies and young children
- Who work or are physically active outdoors (such as gardeners and labourers)
- Health conditions that impair sweating including people with heart disease, dehydration, extremes of age, skin disorders (including sunburn, prickly heat and extensive scarring from burns), congenital impairment of sweating, cystic fibrosis, quadriplegia and scleroderma
- Who are unable to acclimatise
- Homeless
- Low socioeconomic status
- Live alone or who are socially isolated
- Low cardiovascular fitness
- Non-English speaking who may not be able to understand extreme heat announcements or have reduced access to appropriate health or support services.

Belonging to more than one at-risk group may further increase susceptibility to heat. However, protective factors such as the capacity to care for oneself and having access to a cool place, appropriate care and services reduce the risk of heat-related health impacts.

## Appendix 2: Heat health temperature thresholds

# Heat Health Alert System

Information and guidance for councils and stakeholders

### Introduction

The Department of Health and Human Services Heat Health Alert System notifies councils, departmental program areas, hospitals, health and community service providers and the public of forecast extreme heat conditions which are likely to impact on human health.

**A heat health alert is issued when mean temperatures are predicted to reach and exceed heat health thresholds. It is recommended that recipients continue to monitor local conditions and take action in accordance with their own heat plans, service continuity plans and occupational health and safety (OH&S) plans.**

The Heat Health Alert System operates each year from December to the end of February of the following year.

Figure 1: Weather forecast districts and corresponding heat health temperature thresholds  
Image adapted from the Country Fire Authority's 'Know your total fire ban district'.

### Weather forecast districts

The Heat Health Alert System is based on the Bureau of Meteorology weather forecast districts and boundaries (Figure 1).

### Heat health temperature thresholds

The Department of Health and Human Services has identified heat health temperature thresholds for Victoria, above which heat-related illness and mortality increases substantially.

These thresholds differ across the state to recognise the higher temperatures experienced in northern parts of Victoria. A heat health temperature threshold has been established for each of the nine weather forecast districts as shown in Figure 1.



The department monitors the Bureau of Meteorology forecast daily minimum and maximum temperatures and calculates the daily average temperature for each weather forecast district (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Example calculation of the daily average temperature

**Calculating the average temperature**

The average temperature is calculated from the forecast **daily maximum** (in this case Tuesday) and the forecast overnight temperature, which is the **daily minimum for the following day** (in this case Wednesday).

An example of this calculation is demonstrated below:

<p><b>Melbourne</b></p> <p>Tuesday</p> <p>Min: 20 °C</p> <p>Max: 38 °C</p> <p>Wednesday</p> <p>Min: 25 °C</p> <p>Max: 31 °C</p> <p>This calculation will be repeated for each of the seven days included in the daily forecast.</p>	<p><b>Average calculation for Tuesday</b></p> <p><math>(38+25)/2 = 31.5^{\circ}\text{C}</math></p> <p>The threshold for Melbourne = average of 30°C.</p> <p>The temperature forecast indicates that the threshold will be exceeded.</p>
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The average temperature for any given day is the average of the forecast daily maximum temperature and the forecast overnight temperature (which is the daily minimum for the following day).

When forecast average temperatures are predicted to reach or exceed the heat health temperature threshold for a specific weather forecast district, the department will issue a heat health alert for that district.

### Heat health alerts

Heat health alerts are issued via the departments' subscription service. To subscribe to receive heat health alerts and other emergency advice from the department go to <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/subscribe/>.

The departments' subscription service is available to organisations and individuals. Generic email inboxes or individual email addresses should be used to subscribe. Please note that an email will be sent requesting confirmation of the subscription. **Please ensure the email requesting confirmation is actioned as the subscription will not be activated.**

**Once a heat health alert is issued, local councils, departmental program areas and health and community service providers should respond in accordance with their heat plans. Individuals should also take action to prepare for extreme heat to protect themselves and those in their care from the impact of extreme heat particularly those most at risk.**

The department may also be considering other factors that may influence vulnerability, such as very high maximum or minimum temperatures and high temperatures over a prolonged consecutive period. High temperature alerts may be issued in these circumstances even if the average temperature threshold is not exceeded. Prolonged high temperatures below threshold levels can still impact on health services.

Where possible, heat health alerts will be issued 3-4 days prior to forecast extreme heat conditions providing recipients with an early warning. Whilst the department will be monitoring forecast temperatures across the state, it is important for councils and other organisations to continue to monitor local conditions. **It may be necessary for councils to activate heat plans in the absence of a heat health alert being issued.** Council contacts are encouraged to monitor local conditions using the Bureau of Meteorology at <http://www.bom.gov.au/>

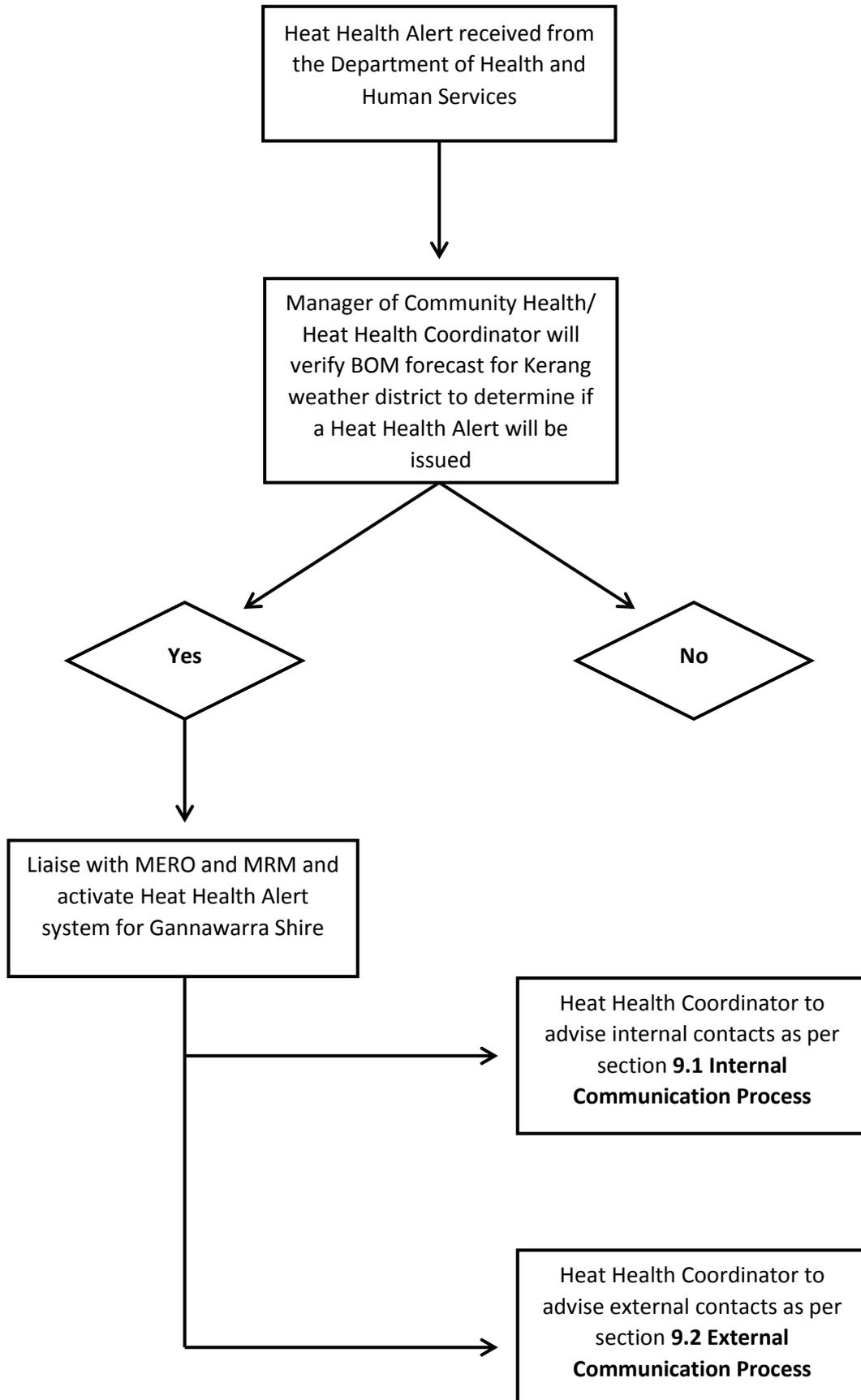
The heat health alerts are available from the Department of Health website at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/heat-health-alert-system/index.htm>

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 Available at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health>



Source: Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heat-health-alerts>

### Appendix 3: Heat health alert activation flowchart



## Appendix 4: Communication materials and key messages

### Heat Alert Communication Message

#### Internal Communication Message

**\*\*\*This email is an alert only, to advise of forecast heat health conditions.\*\*\***

Please note that Victoria's Chief Health Officer has issued a Heat Health Alert for [Insert date/s] for the Mallee district (including the Gannawarra Shire) due to the expected minimum overnight temperatures meeting the heat health threshold.

Council has been issued with a Heat Health Alert from Victoria's Chief Health Officer so as to allow necessary preparations to be made to respond to heat health conditions given the impacts hot weather can have on human health, normal operations and essential services.

The temperature is predicted to reach [Insert temperature/s] on [Insert Date/s].

The reason for the Heat Health Alert is [insert a reason if applicable, eg. that due to the early arrival of very hot weather, the public may be more susceptible to the health effects that are known to arise after such temperatures].

This information is being forwarded to you in accordance with the Gannawarra Shire Council's Heat Health Plan.

#### **Bureau of Meteorology forecasts for KERANG:**

[Insert screen shot of Bureau of Meteorology 7 day forecast]

Staff with activation responsibilities under the Heat Health Plan have been spoken to individually. Additional staff may have service continuity and occupational health and safety responsibilities that are to be activated.

Each staff member receiving this notification is responsible for communicating this Alert to staff under their responsibility.

#### THE KEY MESSAGES ARE:

- STAY OUT OF THE HEAT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN 11AM AND 4PM
- KEEP COOL AND DRINK PLENTY OF WATER
- LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS
- NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN, ADULTS OR PETS IN CARS

#### THOSE MOST VULNERABLE TO THE EFFECTS OF HIGH TEMPERATURES:

- Older people (65 years and older), particularly those living alone with little social contact and/or those with pre-existing medical conditions
- Disabled
- Infants and Children under 5 years of age
- Pregnant and nursing mothers
- People working in hot environments
- Unacclimatised tourists and new residents

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVICE ON PREVENTING HEAT RELATED ILLNESS IS ATTACHED ALONG WITH COUNCIL'S CURRENT THERMAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY.

Further advice and resources can be downloaded from the Department of Health and Human Service's website: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat>

You can monitor local temperatures via the Bureau of Meteorology website: <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/map7day.shtml>

Please contact me should further advice or information be required.

Any further advice can be obtained by contacting [Insert Name and Contact Details].

## External Communication Message

**\*\*\*This email is an alert only, to advise of forecast heat health conditions.\*\*\***

Please note that Victoria's Chief Health Officer has issued a Heat Health Alert for [Insert date/s] for the Mallee district (including the Gannawarra Shire) due to the expected minimum overnight temperatures meeting the heat health threshold.

Council has been issued with a Heat Health Alert from Victoria's Chief Health Officer so as to allow necessary preparations to be made to respond to heat health conditions given the impacts hot weather can have on human health, normal operations and essential services.

The temperature is predicted to reach [Insert temperature/s] on [Insert Date/s].

The reason for the Heat Health Alert is [insert a reason if applicable, eg. that due to the early arrival of very hot weather, the public may be more susceptible to the health effects that are known to arise after such temperatures].

This information is being forwarded to you in accordance with the Gannawarra Shire Council's Heat Health Plan.

### **Bureau of Meteorology forecasts for KERANG:**

[Insert screen shot of Bureau of Meteorology 7 day forecast]

You have received this information as you are either a nominated emergency management contact for the Gannawarra Shire or you have asked to be added to the heat health alert system for the Gannawarra Shire in the past. If you are no longer the relevant contact within your organisation please contact me so that updates can be made.

Note that the predicted mean temperature is expected to meet the heat health temperature threshold of 34°C set for the Mallee District (including Gannawarra Shire) on [Insert Date/s] due to the forecast high overnight minimum temperature.

### THE KEY MESSAGES ARE:

- STAY OUT OF THE HEAT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN 11AM AND 4PM
- KEEP COOL AND DRINK PLENTY OF WATER
- LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS
- NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN, ADULTS OR PETS IN CARS

### THOSE MOST VULNERABLE TO THE EFFECTS OF HIGH TEMPERATURES:

- Older people (65 years and older), particularly those living alone with little social contact and/or those with pre-existing medical conditions
- Disabled
- Infants and Children under 5 years of age
- Pregnant and nursing mothers
- People working in hot environments
- Unacclimatised tourists and new residents

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVICE ON PREVENTING HEAT RELATED ILLNESS IS ATTACHED.

Further advice and resources can be downloaded from the Department of Health and Human Service's website: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat>

You can monitor local temperatures via the Bureau of Meteorology website: <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/map7day.shtml>

On receiving this alert it is suggested that you take the following action:

1. Disseminate this information to your network of contacts, including your own staff and clients.
2. Implement your own Heat Health, Service Continuity, and Occupational Health and Safety Plans.

Any further advice can be obtained by contacting [Insert Name and Contact Details].

## Appendix 5: Recommended actions from the Heat Health Plan for Victoria

### Recommended actions for Local Government to take before, during and after extreme heat

Table 2: Recommended actions for local government to take before, during and after extreme heat

Before summer	Immediately before forecast extreme heat	During extreme heat	After extreme heat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update the heat health plan and other relevant heat plans, including business continuity plans.</li> <li>Engage with key stakeholders and community members to raise awareness about the risks of extreme heat.</li> <li>Identify established and informal networks to connect and engage with Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.</li> <li>Use relevant lists of people who may be at risk of extreme heat that are current, including people who receive HAAC services or Meals on Wheels, in heat health planning.</li> <li>Update the heat health communication strategy.</li> <li>Participate in exercises and forums to discuss and improve individual and collective responses to extreme heat.</li> <li>Update individual heat health plans for clients and vulnerable-client lists.</li> <li>Provide heat health information to staff engaged in delivering client services so they can raise awareness.</li> <li>Engage staff across council to identify opportunities to promote heat health and enhance activities to respond to extreme heat.</li> <li>Order and display the department's heat health brochure in the lobby and other council venues and distribute to clients.</li> <li>Encourage staff to download the Better Health Channel app from &lt;<a href="http://www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html">www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html</a>&gt;.</li> <li>Encourage staff to subscribe to receive heat health alerts from &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert.htm">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert.htm</a>&gt;.</li> <li>Talk with clients, family and carers about downloading the Better Health Channel app and subscribing to receive heat health alerts.</li> <li>Consider long-term planning opportunities to reduce impacts of extreme heat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take action in accordance with heat health plans or other plans containing heat-related actions such as service continuity plans, emergency management plans and occupational health and safety plans.</li> <li>Monitor local weather conditions on the Bureau of Meteorology's website.</li> <li>Instigate consistent community messages through local media or other communication channels.</li> <li>Provide consistent heat health messages during client visits or telephone calls.</li> <li>Update the council website with consistent heat health information or message from the mayor or CEO.</li> <li>Reschedule services to the cooler part of the day.</li> <li>Ensure appropriate staffing levels and consider staff and client safety in hot weather.</li> <li>Ensure staff engaging with the public are aware of what the council is doing to support and protect those at risk such as where people can go to stay cool.</li> <li>Restock the department's brochure in the lobby and distribute to clients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake council activities in the municipal emergency management plan if required.</li> <li>Reschedule any non-essential events, meetings and services to another day or in the cooler part of the day.</li> <li>Increase community messaging through local media and standard communication channels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk with clients about how they are recovering from the heat.</li> <li>Consider what worked well and what could be improved in preparation for further heat.</li> <li>Consider local recovery activities if required.</li> </ul>

## Recommended actions for Health and Community Service Providers to take before, during and after extreme heat

Table 3: Recommended actions for health and community service providers to take before, during and after extreme heat

Before summer	Immediately before forecast extreme heat	During extreme heat	After extreme heat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update the heat health plan and other relevant heat plans, including business continuity plans.</li> <li>Engage with key stakeholders and community members to raise awareness about the risks of extreme heat.</li> <li>Update the heat health communication strategy.</li> <li>Participate in exercises to discuss and improve individual and collective responses to extreme heat.</li> <li>Ensure appropriate staffing levels and consider staff and client safety in hot weather.</li> <li>Update individual heat health plans for clients and vulnerable-client lists.</li> <li>Talk with clients, family and carers about downloading the Better Health Channel app from &lt;<a href="http://www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html">www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html</a>&gt;.</li> <li>Talk with clients, family and carers about subscribing to receive heat health alerts from &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert</a>&gt;.</li> <li>Ensure staff are appropriately trained to identify clients who may need assistance.</li> <li>Order and display the department's heat health brochure in the lobby and other council venues and distribute to clients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take action in accordance with heat health plans or other plans containing heat-related actions such as service continuity plans, emergency management plans and occupational health and safety plans.</li> <li>Monitor local weather conditions on the Bureau of Meteorology's website.</li> <li>Restock the department's brochure in the lobby and distribute to clients.</li> <li>Reschedule services to the cooler part of the day.</li> <li>Provide consistent heat health messages during client visits or telephone calls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reschedule any non-essential events, meetings and services to another day or in the cooler part of the day.</li> <li>Increase consistent community messaging through local media and standard communication channels.</li> <li>Monitor temperatures in client areas.</li> <li>Ensure adequate drinking water is available for clients, visitors and staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk with clients about how they are recovering from the heat.</li> <li>Consider what worked well and what could be improved in preparation for further heat.</li> <li>Update plans and activities as required.</li> </ul>

## Recommended actions for Clinicians to take before, during and after extreme heat

Table 4: Recommended actions for clinicians to take before, during and after extreme heat

Before summer	Immediately before forecast extreme heat	During extreme heat	After extreme heat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop or review a heat health plan or strategy for the practice and staff.</li> <li>Ensure staff are appropriately trained to identify patients who may need assistance.</li> <li>Identify at-risk patients in your practice and begin talking about how they will cope during the heat.</li> <li>Advise at-risk patients on adjustments to medications and fluid intake recommendations during extreme heat periods.</li> <li>Check whether your fan or air-conditioner works well.</li> <li>Subscribe to the department's heat health alert system at &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert</a>&gt;.</li> <li>Download or order the department's Factsheet for clinicians from &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-community-resources">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-community-resources</a>&gt;.</li> <li>Plan for power outages, for example, what to do with vaccine fridges.</li> <li>Talk with clients, family and carers about downloading the Better Health Channel app from &lt;<a href="http://www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html">www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html</a>&gt;.</li> <li>Talk with clients, family and carers about subscribing to receive heat health alerts from &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert</a>&gt;.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor local weather conditions on the Bureau of Meteorology's website.</li> <li>Hand out the department's heat health brochure to patients and carers.</li> <li>Keep the waiting room cool, and provide water.</li> <li>Reschedule any non-essential appointments with at-risk patients to a cooler part of the day or another day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for increased demand from patients with heat-related illness or exacerbated medical conditions.</li> <li>Call patients who do not show up for appointments to ensure they are OK.</li> <li>Talk with patients about how they are coping during the heat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk with at-risk patients and their carers about their recovery from extreme heat.</li> <li>Consider what worked well and what could be improved in preparation for further heat.</li> <li>Update plans and activities as required.</li> </ul>

## Recommended actions for Health Services to take before, during and after extreme heat

Table 5: Recommended actions for health services to take before, during and after extreme heat

Before summer	Immediately before forecast extreme heat	During extreme heat	After extreme heat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a heat health plan including business continuity that addresses the needs of staff, patients and carers.</li> <li>• Provide orientation and training within the hospital on preparedness and essential actions during extreme heat.</li> <li>• Identify at-risk patients and begin talking about what will be required for them on extreme heat days.</li> <li>• Check your contingency planning for air-conditioning and power supply.</li> <li>• Plan for power outages, for example, what to do with vaccine fridges.</li> <li>• Subscribe to the department's heat health alert system at &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert</a>&gt;.</li> <li>• Download or order the department's <i>Factsheet for clinicians</i> from &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-community-resources">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-community-resources</a>&gt; and distribute it.</li> <li>• Participate in heatwave exercises to discuss and improve individual and collective responses to extreme heat.</li> <li>• Talk with clients, family and carers about downloading the Better Health Channel app from &lt;<a href="http://www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html">www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html</a>&gt; and subscribing to receive heat health alerts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take action in accordance with any relevant heat plans.</li> <li>• Monitor local weather conditions on the Bureau of Meteorology's website.</li> <li>• Make the department's heat health brochure available to patients and carers.</li> <li>• Keep waiting and outpatient rooms cool, and provide water.</li> <li>• Consider cancelling or deferring outpatients or other non-essential hospital programs that are scheduled on extreme heat days.</li> <li>• Review discharge plans for at-risk patients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for increased demand from patients with heat-related illness or exacerbated medical conditions. This may include a significant increase in ambulance transfers, admissions to the emergency department, short-stay unit and wards.</li> <li>• Plan for a potential increase in arrival of deceased individuals.</li> <li>• Plan for increased staff absenteeism.</li> <li>• Liaise where necessary with the State Health and Medical Commander.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider what worked well and what could be improved in preparation for further heat.</li> <li>• Consider a formal debrief of the response in order to revise and improve the hospital's heat health plan.</li> <li>• Update plans and activities as required.</li> </ul>

## Recommended actions for Individuals to take before, during and after extreme heat

Table 6: Recommended actions for individuals to take before, during and after extreme heat

Before summer	Immediately before forecast extreme heat	During extreme heat	After extreme heat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak with a doctor about how to best cope during the heat (medications, limiting fluids, etc.).</li> <li>• Plan how to stay cool during the heat.</li> <li>• If you are unable to keep cool at home, identify other places that provide cooling such as a neighbour's or family member's home, public library, shopping centre or movie theatre.</li> <li>• Get a copy of the department's heat health brochure for tips for coping during extreme heat from your general practitioner.</li> <li>• Check that your fan or air-conditioner works well.</li> <li>• Stock up on food, water and medicines.</li> <li>• Plan how to cope if the electricity goes out or public transport is disrupted.</li> <li>• To prepare for black outs, ensure there is a torch, fully charged mobile phone or a landline phone, plus a battery-operated radio and sufficient batteries.</li> <li>• Download the Better Health Channel app from &lt;<a href="http://www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html">www.vic.gov.au/social-media/mobile-apps/better-health-channel-health-information-and-services.html</a>&gt; to receive extreme heat notifications for your location.</li> <li>• Subscribe to receive heat health alerts from &lt;<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert">www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert</a>&gt;.</li> <li>• Talk with family or friends you think will need extra support and assistance during extreme heat to discuss how to help them keep cool during extreme heat.</li> <li>• If you are at risk of heat-related illness, talk with your family and friends about how they can help you survive the heat.</li> <li>• Identify programs that offer concessions to assist with installing awnings, shade cloth or external blinds.</li> <li>• Install awnings, shade cloth or external blinds on the sides of the house facing the sun.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor local weather conditions on the Bureau of Meteorology's website.</li> <li>• Consider rescheduling non-essential appointments to a cooler part of the day.</li> <li>• Locate a torch, fully-charged mobile phone or a landline phone, a battery-operated radio and sufficient batteries in case of power failure.</li> <li>• Listen for bushfire messages if you live in a bushfire-risk area.</li> <li>• Contact your local council to know what they may be doing to assist residents during extreme heat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen for bushfire messages if you live in a bushfire-risk area.</li> <li>• Check on family and friends who you think need extra support and assistance during extreme heat.</li> <li>• Watch and listen for news reports about the extreme heat and for heat health messages.</li> <li>• Check for notifications from the Better Health Channel app for your location.</li> <li>• Check the VicEmergency website for heat health alerts and community heat health messages.</li> <li>• Read the department's brochure for tips on coping during extreme heat.</li> <li>• Keep in touch with friends, neighbours and relatives.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of water.</li> <li>• Spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings.</li> <li>• Never leave children, adults or animals in parked cars.</li> <li>• Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day.</li> <li>• If outside, stay in the shade and drink plenty of water.</li> <li>• Limit outdoor activities that can be rescheduled for a cooler day, such as gardening or building renovations.</li> <li>• Wear a hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing when outside.</li> <li>• Wear sunscreen.</li> <li>• Ensure those in your care such as children are dressed appropriately and drink water regularly.</li> <li>• Reschedule any non-essential appointments to another day.</li> <li>• Seek medical assistance if you feel unwell.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restock food, water and medicines for the next event.</li> <li>• Consider what worked well and what could be improved in preparation for further heat.</li> <li>• Take care of others.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 6: Checklists

### Checklist for Community Care Workers

Where a heat alert is issued the following should be checked by Community Care Workers:

Question	Tick if Yes	Action to Take if answer is No.
Is the client indoors?		You should encourage the client to come indoors by 11am and explain that today is a predicted heatwave day.
Does the client have an air conditioner? Is the air conditioner on?		Air conditioning should be switched on where available.
Have all curtains and blinds been closed?		All curtains and blinds should be closed
Have meals for the day been reviewed?		Discuss alternatives for changing meals, eg. replacing hot meals with salads.
Does the client have activities planned for the afternoon which limit physical exertion?		The client should be encouraged to participate in passive activities such as reading particularly between 11am and 4pm
Is clothing worn by the client minimised?		The client should be encouraged/assisted to remove unnecessary clothing eg. cardigans, jumpers, long sleeved shirts, hats and footwear where appropriate.
Does the client have access to cool water?		Place a jug of cool water out for the client to drink during the day. Place another jug in the fridge for later on. Encourage the client to drink adequate amounts of water, fruit punch, cordials and icy poles
Does the client live alone? Is the client staying home for the day?		Is someone calling around or phoning during the afternoon? If still No, notify the Manager Community Care so that phone contact can be made.

In addition to the above, Community Care Workers should encourage clients to:

- Monitor the temperature inside the house to try to keep the house around 25°C
- Rest during the hottest part of the day in the coolest part of the house
- Use wet face cloths or the like to increase comfort
- Be aware that it is very hot and that they should be extra careful to look after themselves

If there are any concerns about the health of the client, the Manager Community Care should be contacted immediately.

***Reminder: Community Care Workers should take regular breaks on hot days and drink plenty of water.***

## Checklist for Meals on Wheels Volunteers

Where a heat alert is issued the following should be checked by Meals on Wheels Volunteers:

Question	Tick if Yes	Action to Take if answer is No.
Is the client indoors?		Encourage or assist the client to come indoors and explain that today is a hot day.
Does the client have an air conditioner? Is the air conditioner on?		Encourage or assist the client to switch air conditioning on where available.
Have all curtains and blinds been closed?		Encourage or assist the client to close curtains and blinds, etc.
Does the client have activities planned for the afternoon which limit physical exertion?		Encourage the client to participate in passive activities such as reading particularly between 11am and 4pm
Is clothing worn by the client minimised?		Encourage or assist the client to remove unnecessary clothing eg. cardigans, jumpers, long sleeved shirts, hats and footwear where appropriate.
Does the client have access to cool water?		Encourage or assist the client to put out a jug of cool water to drink during the day, and to place another jug in the fridge for later on. Encourage the client to drink adequate amounts of water, fruit punch, cordials and icy poles.
Do you have any concerns about the health or wellbeing of the client?		Notify the Manager Community Care.

In addition to the above, Meals on Wheels volunteers can assist clients by encouraging them to:

- Monitor the temperature inside the house to try to keep the house around 25°C
- Rest during the hottest part of the day in the coolest part of the house
- Use wet face cloths or the like to increase comfort
- Be aware that it is very hot and that they should be extra careful to look after themselves

If there are any concerns about the health of the client, the Manager Community Care should be contacted immediately.

***Reminder: Meals on Wheels Volunteers should drink plenty of water on hot weather days***



# Community Care Services

## Home Safety Checklist

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes / No	Comments
<b>Outside Residence</b>	
	Pathway surface level, non-slip, uncluttered, adequate width
	External key lock in place
	Street number clearly identified
	Entry steps and verandah surface level, non-slip, uncluttered, solid
	Lighting adequate, illuminated at night if required
	Doors and gate easy to open and clear of obstruction
	Pets restrained and separated from worker
<b>Inside Residence (General)</b>	
	All exit doors in working order
	Smoke detectors present and working
	Heaters in suitable position (eg. no bedding, clothes or water nearby)
	Any weapons visible or reported to be present
<b>General Cleaning Equipment</b>	
	Vacuum cleaner appropriate design and in working order
	Vacuum/mop etc stored appropriately and easily accessed
	Broom appropriate
	Mop and bucket appropriate and in working order
<b>General Cleaning Substances</b>	
	Substances in original container
	Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) available
	Appropriate substances available
	Personal protective equipment available - gloves
	<i>Chemicals for home use list provided to client</i>
	<i>Provided by Gannawarra Shire</i>



# Community Care Services Home Safety Checklist

Client Name:  
Completed By:  
Date:

	N/A - Not Applicable		Y - Yes		N - No		Comments	
	Kitchen	Bathroom	Toilet	Laundry	Hallway	Lounge		Dining Room
Adequate workspace								
Furniture/equipment needs to be moved								
If yes easy to move								
Furniture stable								
Bench/table/bed etc adequate height								
Floor surface appropriate (level and no trip hazards)								
Power points appear in good condition								
Power Points easy to access								
Lighting adequate								
Equipment in good working condition								
Heating/cooling adequate								
Any issues with area to be cleaned								
<b>Heat Check</b>								
Air-conditioner								
Air-conditioner serviced/cleaned recently?								
External Blinds								
Internal Blinds								
House Insulation								
Draft Stoppers								
Fans								
Identify the coolest room								
Internal/External Thermometer								

**Gannawarra Heat Health Plan Annual Implementation Checklist**

**Stage 1: Long term prevention actions (Timeline = ongoing)**

Action	Person responsible	Complete	Underway	Not Commenced	Comments
<b>PLANNING</b>					
Seek funding opportunities to increase shade in public space					
Seek funding opportunities to improve public access to drinking water					
Seek funding opportunities to heat proof public buildings					
Identify public cool places					
<b>ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY</b>					
Ensure power supply back up for critical services is in place					
Ensure adequate staffing for delivery of services in extreme heat events					
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>					
Assess Community Care client homes for the ability to cope with heatwave conditions on an annual basis using checklist (Appendix 6)					
Review and update the Vulnerable Persons Register to include a health vulnerability identifier					
Ensure that vulnerable persons are flagged on Council’s Community Care database so that daily contact can be made in the event of extreme heat or heatwave					
Provide Community Care clients with a copy of the Red Cross Rediplan and offer one-on-one support to assist clients complete a plan					
Provide Community Care clients with a Gannawarra Shire Emergency Safety Kit					
Promote the medical cooling concession available for people with conditions that impact on the body’s ability to regulate temperature and people reliant on life support machines. Information on concessions is available from the website: <a href="http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions">www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions</a>					
Incorporate the Maternal and Child Health media clip ‘Be Cool in Gannawarra’ into New Parent Group programs held throughout the year to communicate key messages around keeping children cool in extreme heat: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/GannawarraShire">https://www.youtube.com/user/GannawarraShire</a>					

## Stage 2: Pre summer preparation actions (Timeline = before October)

Action	Person responsible	Complete	Underway	Not Commenced	Comments
<b>PLANNING</b>					
Review and update the Gannawarra Heat Health Plan					
Check supplies of cooling neck wraps, water bottles and thermometers					
<b>ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY</b>					
Participate in local and regional exercises and forums to discuss and improve individual and collective responses to extreme heat					
Train relevant staff to identify clients who may need assistance using the Heat Health in Community Care training package					
Provide Community Care workers and volunteers with cooling neck wraps and water bottles					
Establish a cancellation policy for Council organised outdoor events with large gatherings of people during extreme heat events					
Review Council's Chief Executive Officer Directive: Thermal Environment and ensure that strategies are in place to protect occupational groups from the effects of extreme heat					
<b>STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS</b>					
Engage with key stakeholders and community members to raise awareness about the risks of extreme heat					
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>					
Encourage Community Care clients to have air conditioners serviced					
Review process for providing support and contact to vulnerable clients on days of extreme heat e.g. phone checks and/or welfare visits					
Provide heat help action kits to vulnerable clients					
Offer to guest present at local seniors groups and distribute heat help action kits					
Provide advice to vulnerable clients on how to manage their homes in extreme heat					
Provide thermometers for Community Care clients for placement on the wall of a room deemed to be a 'safe' room, usually the living room, where the client is the coolest					
Identify, prepare and promote public cool spaces for community use in extreme heat (swimming pools, libraries, shopping centres, health services)					

**Stage 2: Pre summer preparation actions (Timeline = before October) Continued**

Action	Person responsible	Complete	Underway	Not Commenced	Comments
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>					
Prepare communication resources, draft media releases, contact lists					
Identify target groups for awareness campaigns (vulnerable, aged care facilities, sporting clubs, caravan parks, tourism operators)					
Order, display and distribute the Department of Health and Human Services' heat health promotional material and brochure					
Promote heat health information through staff newsletters					
Add a Heat Health icon to the home page of council's website and update the website with consistent heat health information.					

### Stage 3: Preparation immediately before forecast extreme heat

Action	Person responsible	Complete	Underway	Not Commenced	Comments
<b>ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY</b>					
Monitor local weather conditions on the Bureau of Meteorology's website					
Ensure appropriate staffing levels and consider staff and client safety in hot weather					
Coordinate staff to implement Council support process for identified vulnerable clients					
Ensure temperature control of vaccines as part of Council's Immunisation program					
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>					
Alert clients on vulnerable persons register of upcoming extreme heat					
Provide consistent heat health messages during client visits or telephone calls					
Place a Heat Health Checklist in all Meals on Wheels cars for volunteers to check on clients during extreme heat and heatwaves (see Appendix 6)					
Brief and provide appropriate educational resources and advice to Community Care workers who have existing relationships with people vulnerable to heat related illness					
Brief Maternal and Child Health Nurses and Children Services staff so that they are able to provide education to families with children under five during extreme heat events					
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>					
Instigate consistent community messages through local media or other communication channels using the media kit developed by the Department of Health and Human Services as a basis <a href="https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/council-media-kit-survive-the-heat">https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/council-media-kit-survive-the-heat</a> around the key messages plus public cool spaces, extra caution with food hygiene, taking care of pets in the heat <a href="http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/dogs/dog-health/heat-and-pets">http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/dogs/dog-health/heat-and-pets</a>					
Disseminate information to Community Care clients so as to ensure that air conditioning, where available, is switched on so that community care workers can attend to their duties in relative comfort					
Remind staff of key messages when working in the heat					

#### Stage 4: Extreme heat event response actions

Action	Person responsible	Complete	Underway	Not Commenced	Comments
<b>ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY</b>					
Undertake Council activities in the Municipal Emergency Management Plan if required					
Reschedule any non-essential services, events and meetings to another day or in the cooler part of the day					
Divert Council staff to fill any gaps in the Meals on Wheels delivery roster when volunteers opt out due to extreme heat or heatwave conditions					
Activate workplace based strategies in accordance with Occupational Health and Safety policies. Strategies may include training being scheduled for hot days, particularly between 11am and 4pm, earlier starting and finishing times, additional scheduled breaks					
Ensure that animals currently in the pound are regularly checked to ensure they have adequate water and are not overheating					
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>					
Instigate support process for identified vulnerable clients e.g. phone checks or welfare visits					
Remind vulnerable clients of key actions to take in extreme heat					
Ensure adequate drinking water is available for clients, visitors and staff*					
Provide the opportunity for Meals on Wheels volunteers to opt out of the Meals on Wheels delivery roster during periods of extreme heat and heatwave.					
Provide Meals on Wheels volunteers with a bottle of water prior to delivery of meals.					
Provide information and education directly to the community via Community Care workers, Maternal and Child Health Nurses and Children Service staff.					
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>					
Activate heat health alert process – internal and external (Appendix 3)					
Increase community messaging through local media and standard communication channels					
Remind staff working in the heat of measures to prevent heat stress, how to recognise heat stress, heat exhaustion and heatstroke, and what to do					

### Stage 5: Post event recovery actions

Action	Person responsible	Complete	Underway	Not Commenced	Comments
<b>ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY</b>					
Convene a post event debriefing session					
Put a process in place to ensure review and update this Gannawarra Heat Health plan that takes into account debrief					
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>					
Consider local recovery activities if required					
Contact and assess vulnerable persons in days immediately after the event					
Talk with clients about how they are recovering from the heat					

Not available for  
public viewing

## Appendix 8: References

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