



# Borough of Queenscliffe

## Heat Health Plan



*Swan Island bridge at sunset © Lachlan Manley 2020*

Approved under delegation by the  
Chief Executive Officer

This document is a sub-plan of the  
Borough of Queenscliffe Municipal Emergency Management Plan

## Document Control

Version No.	Date	Purpose	Signed by CEO
1.0	23 February 2010	Heatwave Plan	
2.0	17 December 2014	Heatwave Plan. Major review following Auditor General's report.	Lenny Jenner
3.0	24 December 2015	Update statistical data for 2014/15. Insert new distribution list for heat alert message to key stakeholder groups. Staged alert system/action plans amended to align with the Department of Health & Human Services 2015-2016 Heat Wave Plan for Victoria.	Lenny Jenner
4.0	21 December 2016	Update statistical data for 2015/16. Include the Environmental Health Officer as a responsible officer in some tasks. Insert a Communications Plan.	Lenny Jenner
5.0	16 November 2017	Update statistical data for 2016/17. Amend reference to Aged Care and Disability Services to Aged Care Services, as Council no longer provides disability services.	Lenny Jenner
6.0	14 December 2020	Re-write plan to bring it into line with State Heat Health Plan and refer to both extreme heat and heatwave events. Remove specific statistical data. Amend plan response to three stages, change the title to Heat Health Plan and change references to refer to both heatwave and extreme heat. Update position titles and refer to Community Care Services not Aged Care Services.	Martin Gill

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## Background

This Heat Health Plan (the Plan) has been developed to provide a strategic direction for the Borough of Queenscliffe to prepare and respond to heat wave and extreme heat and occurrences. The Plan outlines strategies and actions to assist Council to alleviate the effects of extreme heat and heatwaves at a local level.

The Heat Health Plan is a sub-plan of Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan and should be considered in conjunction with, and as applicable to the following documents:

- Borough of Queenscliffe Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Borough of Queenscliffe Municipal Public Health Plan
- Department of Health and Human Service's Heat health plan for Victoria 2019
- Emergency Management Victoria State Heat Plan 2014

### Why is this Plan needed?

Heat kills more Australians than any natural disaster.

Extreme heat can affect anybody. In 2009 and again in 2014, major heatwaves negatively impacted the health of Victorians. In both instances, heatwaves resulted in significant loss of life, with an estimated 374 deaths in 2009 and 167 in 2014.

Heat can cause illnesses such as heat cramps and heat exhaustion which can lead to the life-threatening condition, heatstroke. Heatstroke is fatal in up to 80% of cases.

Extreme heat can affect anybody. Those most at risk are older people, young children and people with a medical condition. With 50.5% of its population aged over 60, many Borough of Queenscliffe residents are particularly vulnerable to the effect of extreme heat and heatwaves.

## Extreme heat and heatwaves

This plan distinguishes between single days of extreme heat and prolonged heatwaves.

**Extreme heat** occurs when the forecast average temperature on any day exceeds the predetermined heat health temperature threshold.

A **heatwave** involves three or more consecutive days of extreme heat.

Isolated days of extreme heat typically affect the health and wellbeing of Victorians who are most at risk, commonly due to age, illness, medication or social isolation.

In heatwaves, these impacts are compounded and occur alongside significant health impacts across broad sections of the community. Heatwaves also affect Victoria's natural, built and economic environments, often through the compromised operation of critical infrastructure, facilities and services.

The heat health temperature threshold for the Borough of Queenscliffe is when the average temperature is 30°Celsius or above. 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). An example of this calculation is below:

An example of this calculation is demonstrated below.

<b>Melbourne</b>	
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Average calculation for Tuesday</b>
Min: 20 °C	
Max: 38 °C	$(38 + 25)/2 = 31.5 \text{ °C}$
<b>Wednesday</b>	The threshold for Melbourne = 30 °C.
Min: 25 °C	The temperature forecast indicates that the threshold will be exceeded.
Max: 31 °C	

**This calculation will be repeated for each of the seven days included in the daily forecast.**

(from DHHS *Heat health plan for Victoria* 2019)

## Heat alert system

In Victoria, the Chief Health Officer issues a heat health alert when the forecast average temperature reaches or exceeds the heat health temperature threshold for a specific weather forecast district. The Borough of Queenscliffe is in the Central District, along with Melbourne, Ballarat and the Bellarine and Mornington Peninsulas. The alert will be issued up to three days before the forecast extreme heat conditions and is provided through both email and the free Emergency Victoria app subscription service (available to both the public and government bodies). The MEM, MERO, MRM, MFPO, PHEC and their deputies where appointed are all required to have the app installed and activated for Queenscliffe on their work phones, and should generally monitor weather forecasts.

## The Heat Health Plan

### Aim

The purpose of this heat health plan is to clearly outline how the Borough of Queenscliffe plans to lessen the impact of heat waves and extreme heat events on members of the local community.

### Objectives

This Heat Health Plan aims to reduce heat associated risks within the Borough of Queenscliffe municipality by:

- identifying risks to the community
- assessing the vulnerability of the community to those risks
- providing options to reduce or eliminate the risks and impacts of extreme heat/heatwave on the municipality

- having arrangements in place to reduce the health impacts of extreme heat/heatwave
- developing media and communication messages, in line with whole of government messages, to inform the community and staff of the best way to look after themselves, relatives and their neighbours during extreme heat/heatwave
- providing support and assistance throughout the duration of extreme heat/heatwave
- ensuring response activities are consistent across the whole of government

### Levels of response

The Borough of Queenscliffe's response to an extreme heat event/heatwave is separated into three stages:

- **Stage One: Awareness**

Awareness will commence at the end of November each year. The Department of Health and Human Services will provide extreme heat health information to councils across the state. This information, along with Council initiated information, will be disseminated to the community via Council's website and social media, ratepayer newsletters, local media organisations and through Council's Community Care Services.

- **Stage Two: Alert**

Alert will commence upon the Borough of Queenscliffe receiving a heat health alert from the Chief Health Officer. Notification will be sent out alerting stakeholders to prepare to activate extreme heat management arrangements. Further information will be disseminated to the community via Council's website and social media, ratepayer newsletters, local media organisations, through Council's Community Care Services and through key stakeholder agencies. Council Community Care Service staff to check contacts list is up to date.

- **Stage Three: Activation**

Extreme heat or a heatwave is in progress. Communication to the community will continue as in the previous Alert stage, including encouragement for the community to adopt a 'check your neighbour' routine. Community Care Services to review contact lists updated during the 'Alert' stage and commence contacting clients.

## Action Plans

### Stage One: Awareness – prior to Summer

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Identify vulnerable people and groups and the Council employees who deal directly with them	Use client lists (including Vulnerable Person Register) from Community Care Services to identify individuals and distribute heat health information and care pack through carer networks	Community Services Coordinator	November
	Distribute information as necessary to Maternal and Child Health Services	Community Services Coordinator	November
2. Create awareness of the dangers posed by extreme heat and heatwaves	Develop information material on extreme heat/heat-wave preparedness	Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications / Community Services Coordinator/ Coordinator	November
	Develop a fact sheet aimed at Community Care Workers Develop information sheet aimed at pet owners	Environmental and Public Health / Senior Law Enforcement Officer	
	Disseminate information via communication channels	Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications	
	Distribute extreme heat and heatwave information internally to all Council employees to increase heat health awareness	Coordinator Environmental and Public Health /MRM	November
3. Develop partnerships	Develop promotional opportunities for extreme heat and heatwave awareness including joint articles in local newspapers where applicable	Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications	November

Stage Two: Alert – upon receipt of a heat health alert from the Victorian Chief Health Officer

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1. Activate resources to ensure the extreme heat and heatwave message is reaching people identified as vulnerable	Ensure vulnerable clients are contacted and informed of the pending extreme heat/heatwave Direct Community Care Workers to distribute extreme heat/heatwave information personally	Community Services Coordinator	Immediately
	Inform key stakeholder group who are likely to include vulnerable people (via phone or email) of pending extreme heat/heatwave and provide them with information material, such as senior citizens, neighbourhood house, bowling clubs	Community Services Coordinator	Immediately
	Distribute information to Maternal and Child Health services as necessary	Community Services Coordinator	Immediately
	Distribute fact sheet guidance notes to Council Customer Services	Coordinator Environmental and Public Health	Immediately
2. Alert all employees to the pending extreme heat/heatwave	Distribute information to all employees on the precautions they need to take to protect themselves from the heat	Coordinator Environmental and Public Health	Immediately
3. Provide advice to the general public	Disseminate information to the wider community via Council's website, ratepayer newsletters, local media organisations, social media, through Council's Community Care Services through key stakeholder agencies or other avenues as necessary	Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications	Immediately



### Stage Three: Activation – extreme heat or a heatwave is in progress

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Continue activities to ensure the extreme heat/heatwave message is reaching people identified as vulnerable	Ensure that Community Care Services staff are aware of risk and protective factors and implement, where appropriate, daily visits or phone calls for high risk individuals living on their own who have no regular daily contacts	Community Services Coordinator	Immediately
	Encourage residents to adopt a 'check your neighbour' routine. Advise residents to contact a GP, hospital or on call nurse if there are concerns about an individual's health	Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications	Immediately
	Continue to distribute information amongst previously identified community groups	Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications	Immediately
2. Advise all employees that the Heat Health Plan has been activated	Distribute information provided by the Coordinator Environmental and Public Health to all employees on the precautions they need to take to protect themselves from the heat	Coordinator Environmental and Public Health and then All Managers and supervisors	Immediately
3. Provide advice to the general public	Continue to disseminate information to the wider community via Council's website, ratepayer newsletters, local media organisations, social media, through Council's Community Care Services through key stakeholder agencies or other avenues as necessary	Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications	Immediately

### Annual review

Heatwave and extreme heat events can occur with only a week's notice, or less in some cases, therefore it is important to regularly review and exercise this plan (as part of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan) and make amendments as required.

Each review should include feedback mechanisms for evaluating its effectiveness. The Plan must be reviewed at least annually before October or as directed by the Borough of Queenscliffe MERO.

## Communications Plan

### Objectives

The objectives of the communications plan are to:

- provide information and advice in a timely manner targeted at the identified stakeholders
- ensure that health information and support is readily available to our community
- increase the capacity of our community to prepare for and respond to extreme heat and heatwaves.

### Stakeholders

Borough of Queenscliffe community

Councillors and Council staff

Visitor Information Centre

Department of Health and Human Services

Bellarine Community Health

Point Lonsdale Medical Group

Emergency services (Ambulance Victoria, SES, CFA, Vic Police, Red Cross)

Local media agencies and broadcasters

Queenscliff Senior Citizens Centre

Queenscliffe and District Neighbourhood House

### Key Messages

The Borough of Queenscliffe encourages residents to become familiar with ways to stay healthy in the heat. Key heat health messages include:

#### Stay out of the heat

- Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day
- Avoid extreme physical exercise
- Wear light, loose fitting clothes

#### Cool your home down

- Keep your windows closed during the day and open at night after the temperature has dropped
- Turn off non-essential electrical equipment and lights
- Move to the coolest room in your house to sleep

#### Keep yourself cool and hydrated

- Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Take a cool shower
- Spray cool water over your skin or clothing
- Keep a damp cloth on the back of your neck

#### What you can do for others

- Telephone or visit sick or elderly neighbours
- Keep telephone numbers handy for services which may provide assistance
- Be familiar with the cool areas in Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale, such as the library or your local sports club

## **Distribution of Key Messages**

### Media Releases and Alerts

At Stage Two a media release will be distributed to all media outlets and made available on Council's website. Media alerts will be distributed to all local media and across Council's social media channels upon implementation of Stage Three.

### Media Distribution List

Council's standard media distribution list will be utilised for all Stage One, Two and Three information. This includes local emergency broadcasters, commercial and public radio and local newspapers.

If additional stakeholders would like access to this material for their own publication, it can be made available upon request.

### External Council Newsletter article

One brief article pointing to additional information will be included in the Council newsletter.

### Council website

An extreme heat/heatwave page is to be created and maintained under [www.queenscliffe.vic.gov.au/community/emergency-management](http://www.queenscliffe.vic.gov.au/community/emergency-management). The MERO, in consultation with the Coordinator Environmental and Public Health, is responsible for providing the content to the Extreme Heat / Heatwave Event page. The content shall be reviewed annually prior to each summer and ad hoc at each Stage Three implementation and inform the Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications if any amendments are required.

At each Stage Three implementation the Coordinator Community Engagement & Communications will include an Extreme Heat / Heatwave notice on the homepage.

### FAQ Information Sheet

FAQ/information sheets provided by the Department of Health and Human Services will be available via Council's website and printed copies available from Customer Services and at the Queenscliffe Visitor Information Centre.

## Appendix 1: About the Borough of Queenscliffe

### Location

The Borough of Queenscliffe is located at the eastern tip of the Bellarine Peninsula and forms one side of Port Phillip Heads – opposite Point Nepean in the Mornington Peninsula. It is surrounded by Bass Strait, Port Phillip Bay and Swan Bay on three sides. On its fourth side, it has a land boundary with the City of Greater Geelong.

The Borough is approximately 105 kilometres south-west of Melbourne and 35 kilometres east of the regional city of Geelong.

### Our community

The Borough of Queenscliffe has a unique demographic profile of permanent residents, as sourced from the Census 2016:

- There are 2,853 permanent residents, living in 2,802 dwellings.
- The 55.9% of private dwellings unoccupied during the 2016 census is indicative of the large temporary population as many property owners only holiday or live part-time in the Borough.
- 58% of the permanent resident population live in Point Lonsdale.
- 50.5% of the population is aged over 60.

This population profile presents a range of challenges for Council, particularly given the population fluctuations associated by tourism and the attraction of the Borough over the summer period which increases to around 17,120 people. (Source: National tourism data)

Age structure provides key insights into the level of demand for services and facilities, as most services and facilities are age-specific. The following table shows the breakdown in age structure for the Borough of Queenscliffe compared to the Victorian average in 2016.

	<b>Borough of Queenscliffe</b>	<b>Victorian Average</b>
Babies and Pre-schoolers (0 to 4 years)	2.7%	6.3%
Children (5 to 17 years)	11.9%	15.5%
Adults (18 to 59 years)	34.8%	57.3%
Mature adults and Seniors (60 to 84 years)	45.3%	18.8%
Elderly (85 years and over)	5.2%	2.2%

Source: [www.profile.id.com.au/queenscliffe](http://www.profile.id.com.au/queenscliffe)

## Appendix 2: What is heat-related illness and heat stress and how to prevent and treat it

### Extreme heat events and public health

Heat-related illness and heat stress occur when the body is unable to cool itself enough to maintain a healthy temperature. The body normally cools itself by sweating, but sometimes sweating isn't enough and the body temperature keeps rising.

Heat-related illness can range from mild conditions such as a rash or cramps to very serious conditions such as heat stroke, which can kill. Heat may worsen the condition of someone who already has a medical condition such as heart disease. Prevention is the best way to manage heat-related illness.

### Vulnerable groups within the community

Extreme heat events are known to increase the incidence of illness and death, particularly among vulnerable population groups.

Vulnerable population groups include people with the following characteristics:

- older people (65 years and older)
- children under five years old
- pregnant or nursing mothers
- people with a pre-existing medical condition, such as diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease or mental illness
- people with a condition that impairs the body's abilities to regulate its own temperature like Multiple Sclerosis
- those living alone with little social contact
- people taking certain medications, such as those for depression or insomnia
- people with a disability.

They also include people in the following circumstances:

- people without air-conditioning or who decide not to use it
- homeless people
- low income earners
- those with limited access to transport
- people who are outdoors for any reason, especially doing strenuous activity like working or playing sports
- residents in the upper floors of multi-storey buildings
- some people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who cannot access health services or information.

Because elderly people have a reduced ability to adapt to summer heat, they are more prone to heat stress. They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition and to be taking medication that may interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature.

### Types of heat-related illness

Some heat-related illnesses and common symptoms include:

- Heat cramps – these are muscle pains or spasms, usually in the abdomen, arms or legs. They may occur after strenuous activity in a hot environment, when the body gets depleted of salt and water. They may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.
- Heat exhaustion – this is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke. Warning signs may include a pale complexion and sweating, rapid heart rate, muscle cramps and weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting or fainting.
- Heat stroke – this is a life-threatening emergency and requires urgent attention. Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to prevent the temperature rising rapidly. The symptoms may appear the same as for heat exhaustion, but the skin may be dry with no sweating and the person's mental condition worsens. They may stagger, appear confused, have a seizure, appear to have a stroke or collapse and become unconscious.

### What you can do to prevent heat-related illness in yourself and others

Before the hot weather:

- See your doctor and make sure your medical condition is as well controlled as possible.
- Undertake regular moderate exercise in warmer weather prior to severe hot weather to enable the body to adapt and cope better with hot weather.

Once the weather is hot:

- Drink plenty of water and non-alcoholic fluids. (If your doctor normally limits your fluids or you are on fluid tablets, you may need to check how much to drink while the weather is hot.)
- Avoid alcohol because of its dehydrating effects.
- Stay indoors, if possible with air-conditioning, or in the shade.
- Take a cool shower or bath.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing.
- Reduce physical activity.
- Check on older, sick and frail people who may need help coping with the heat.
- Never leave anyone in a closed parked car.
- Don't rely on fans to cool people unless they are well hydrated and there is adequate ventilation.
- Know the signs and symptoms of excessive heat exposure and know how to respond.

If you must be out in the heat:

- Limit outdoor activity to morning or evening hours.
- Protect yourself from the sun and Slip, Slop, Slap when outside by using sunscreen, wearing a hat and covering exposed skin.
- Rest regularly in the shade and drink fluids frequently.

### What to do for heat cramps

- Stop activity and sit quietly in a cool place.
- Increase fluid intake.
- Rest a few hours before returning to activity.

- Seek medical help if cramps persist.

#### **What to do for heat exhaustion**

- Get the person to a cool area and lie them down.
- Remove outer clothing.
- Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths.
- Seek medical advice.

#### **What to do for heat stroke**

- Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- Get the person to a cool, shady area and lie them down.
- Remove clothing and wet skin with water, fanning continuously.
- Position an unconscious person on their side and clear their airway.

**If you are concerned that someone may be suffering heat-related illness, encourage them to see their doctor.**

#### **Where to get help**

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000) for an ambulance
- Your doctor
- Bellarine Community Health Inc., Nelson Road, Point Lonsdale 3225 Tel. 5258 0888
- Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024

## Appendix 3: Survive the heat tips

(from [betterhealth.vic.gov.au](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au))



### Drink plenty of water

- Keep a full drink bottle with you.
- Take small sips of water frequently.
- If your doctor normally limits your fluids, check how much you should drink during hot weather.



### Never leave anyone in a car

- Never leave kids, adults or pets in cars – the temperature can double in minutes.
- Visit the [\*\*Never Leave Kids in Cars\*\*](#) page for more information on kids in hot cars.



### Stay somewhere cool

- Spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings (shopping centres, libraries, cinemas or community centres).
- Keep yourself cool by using wet towels, putting your feet in cool water and taking cool (not cold) showers.
- Block out the sun at home during the day by closing curtains and blinds.
- Open the windows when there is a cool breeze.
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day.
- If you must go out, wear a hat and sunscreen and take a bottle of water with you.
- Dress yourself and those in your care lightly.
- Wear light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing made from natural fibres like cotton and linen.
- Eat smaller meals more often and cold meals such as salads.
- Make sure food that needs refrigeration is properly stored.
- Avoid intense activity like exercise, renovating and gardening.
- Watch or listen to news reports for more information.
- Don't forget your pets – a cool bath, wet towel to lie on, a place next to a fan and plenty of fresh water work just as well for animals.





## Plan ahead

- Keep up to date with weather forecasts –watch the news daily, check the **BOM forecast online** and read the current **heat health alert on health.vic**.
- Cancel non-essential outings and plan essential activities for the coolest part of the day.
- Stock up on food, water and medicines so you don't have to go out in the heat.
- Visit your doctor to check if changes are needed to your medicines during extreme heat.
- Store medicines safely at the recommended temperature.
- Check that your fan or air-conditioner works well. Have your air-conditioner serviced if necessary.
- Prepare for power failures - ensure you have a torch, battery-operated radio, fully charged mobile phone or battery back-up, food items that don't require refrigeration, medications, plenty of drinking water and other essential items.
- Look at the things you can do to make your home cooler such as installing window coverings, shade cloths or external blinds on the sides of the house facing the sun.



## Check in on others

- Look after those most at risk in the heat – your neighbour living alone, older people, young children, people with a medical condition and don't forget your pets.
- Keep in touch with friends and family who may need help. Call or visit them at least once on any extreme heat day.
- Encourage them to drink plenty of water.
- Offer to help family, friends and neighbours who are aged over 65 or have an illness by doing shopping or other errands so they can avoid the heat.
- Take them somewhere cool for the day or have them stay the night if they are unable to stay cool in their home.
- If you observe symptoms of **heat-related illness**, seek medical help.

## Appendix 4: Extreme heat and animals

Animals are also vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat and heatwaves. Many animals cannot shed their coats when they become hot and their various cooling mechanisms are very different, and somewhat limited, compared to people.

What you can do to prevent heat-related illness in your animals

- On very hot days, it is best to walk your pets in the coolness of the early morning or evening. You may even take them to the local beach, creek or river to let them have a paddle to cool down. By avoiding the hottest part of the day, both you and your pets will enjoy the walk even more and your pets will avoid possible dehydration, sunburn and potentially painful paws.
- All pets must have cool, shady areas. Cats and dogs are able to move around and seek shade, but small animals such as rabbits, guinea pigs and birds can't move from their cages. Make sure that your caged animals are not in direct sunlight and that their cages are protected from the sun as the shade moves.
- Make sure that your pets have access to plenty of cool water. It is a good idea to provide several good-sized water containers in case one is spilt. Ensure the containers are in the shade, try adding some ice to the water to keep it cool for longer.
- Consider using a small swimming pool (or a child's clam shell), fill it with water and place in the shade. Your dog can then wade in the water to keep cool. If your pets share your yard with children, remember to have all necessary precautions in place, including fencing, in order to keep them safe.
- Never leave your pets in a car on a hot day as they will not cope, even with the windows down. If it feels hot to a person sitting in a parked car, it will feel much hotter to an animal in a fur coat.
- Rabbits and guinea pigs are particularly susceptible to heat and a good remedy is to put a frozen water bottle in their cages so that they can regulate their body temperature. Replace these bottles as required.
- Small animals such as rabbits, guineapigs and ferrets, as well as kittens and puppies, cope best if brought inside. If allowed free run in a laundry or bathroom, they will benefit from the cool tiles. If this is not possible, drape their cage with wet towels and provide a sturdy icepack or frozen water bottle for the animal to lean against so it can regulate its own body temperature.
- If your animal seems to be in discomfort, try wetting its feet and misting water onto its face. This is an option for dogs, cats, ferrets, poultry and caged birds as many animals control their inner temperature through their feet. It's important not to saturate a bird's feathers as this can cause them to go into shock.

If you are concerned that your animal may be suffering heat-related illness, contact your local veterinarian.