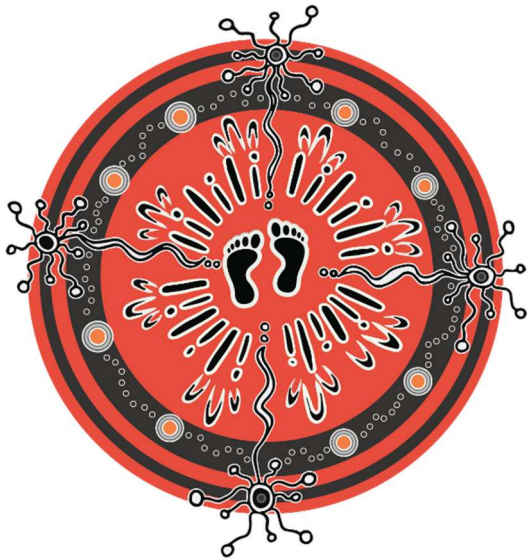


NSW Government Response to Heat Stress Spotlight Report

October 2026

Acknowledgement of Country



Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

NSW Government Response to Heat Stress Spotlight Report

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1 Executive Summary

This document outlines the NSW Government's response to the NSW Net Zero Commission's Heat Stress Spotlight Report, published in April 2026. The Heat Stress Spotlight Report examines the impacts and risks of increasing extreme heat and humidity driven by climate change for NSW, with a particular focus on human health. The report delivers 9 findings across 5 action areas to help the state adapt to a hotter future.

The NSW Government recognises that heat stress from increasing extreme heat and humidity driven by climate change is a significant and growing risk for human health, infrastructure, ecosystems, public services and the economy. The NSW Government accepts all of the Heat Stress Spotlight Report findings. We acknowledge the importance of increasing resilience to heat stress by building on existing programs, policies and emergency management arrangements. We share the Commission's determination to protect NSW from increasing extreme heat and humidity by adapting.

Through the actions outlined in this response, we reaffirm our commitment to evidence-based climate change adaptation, cross-government collaboration and delivering real outcomes for the NSW community. By strengthening preparedness, improving the resilience of homes and neighbourhoods, supporting vulnerable populations and empowering local communities, the Government will continue to help NSW adapt to a hotter future.

Summary of the NSW Government's response to the findings

Finding	NSW Government response
1. A coordinated, seasonal heat response plan for the summer months, which promotes early preventative actions, health system readiness and workforce planning would strengthen preparedness for heat stress.	Accepted
2. Ensuring the effective communication of declared heatwaves is needed to achieve focused action and minimise health impacts.	Accepted
3. Public awareness and education on heat stress can be strengthened through the seasonal heat plan that treats heat like other natural hazards, applies emergency heatwave communication principles, mobilises inter agency coordination and integrates locally led messaging.	Accepted
4. To understand the scale of heat stress health impacts and the effectiveness of actions, data on heat-related deaths and	Accepted

illnesses should be tracked, collected, and published by NSW Health.	
5. Strengthening how heat stress is addressed across all levels of the NSW Planning System would ensure our neighbourhoods are designed and built to reduce the risk of increasing heat stress into the future.	Accepted
6. Current policies and regulations, especially for social, Aboriginal, and rental housing, should be revised to offer sufficient protections to their tenants and decrease their vulnerability to heat stress.	Accepted
7. Strengthening SafeWork NSW regulations to prevent heat stress in the workplace would minimise the health and economic impacts of extreme heat on workers and businesses.	Accepted
8. Heat stress in NSW should be recognised in existing state-wide adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans.	Accepted
9. Providing capacity-building tools and resourcing to local communities to develop and coordinate locally led responses to heat stress could address existing gaps and account for place-based climates and characteristics.	Accepted

This response builds on the NSW Government's published response to the Net Zero Commission's *Letter on Extreme Heat and Humidity in Summer 2025-26*, which outlined existing actions and commitments across government to strengthen preparedness, resilience and adaptation to worsening heat impacts. Further information on the NSW Government's approach to managing heat risk is available in that published response¹.

¹ <https://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/NSW/Government-responds-to-Net-Zero-Commissions-heat-risk-warning>

Glossary of acronyms and abbreviations

Climate Change Act	<i>NSW Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023</i>
DAP	Disaster Adaptation Plans
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Heat Stress Spotlight Report	The Heat Stress Spotlight Report published by the Net Zero Commission in April 2026
IGA	Intergovernmental Agreement
The Commission	The New South Wales Net Zero Commission
NSW	New South Wales
PHREDSS	Public Health Rapid, Emergency, Disease and Syndromic Surveillance
RA	The New South Wales Reconstruction Authority
SDMP	State Disaster Mitigation Plan
WHS	Work, Health and Safety

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2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of this report

This document outlines the NSW Government’s response to the findings of the Heat Stress Spotlight Report, published by the Net Zero Commission in April 2026. Section 20 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* (the Climate Change Act) requires the NSW Government to publish a response within 6 months of receiving a report from the Commission.

The Heat Stress Spotlight Report examines the impacts and risks associated with extreme heat and humidity across NSW, including their effects on communities, infrastructure, health systems and the economy. The Report delivers nine findings across five action areas: acute and seasonal heat responses, planning, housing, workplaces, and adaptation planning.

The Commission has a legislated function to provide advice to the NSW Government regarding actions being taken to achieve NSW’s legislated emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective. The Heat Stress Spotlight Report was prepared and delivered to the Minister for Climate Change as part of this function.

2.2 Heat in NSW

NSW is already experiencing a warmer climate, with temperatures across the state having increased by around 1.4°C since records began and many of the warmest years on record occurring in the last decade. Climate projections show this warming trend will continue throughout this century under all emissions scenarios, with temperatures rising at a similar rate until around mid-century before diverging depending on future global greenhouse gas emissions.

As average temperatures rise, hot days and heat extremes are projected to become more common across all regions of NSW. The number of days above 35°C is expected to increase, particularly in western and central NSW, although coastal regions are also projected to experience substantial increases. At the same time, cold nights will become less frequent, especially in alpine areas, reflecting a broader shift towards a hotter climate.

Heatwaves are one of the clearest signals of climate change in NSW. NARClIM2.0 projections indicate that heatwaves will become more frequent, longer lasting and more intense throughout the century. Statewide, the average number of heatwaves is projected to increase from around 11 days per year historically (1990-2009) to between 23 and 33 days by mid-century, depending on

emissions, with much larger increases possible by the end of the century under higher emissions scenarios. The longest heatwave each year is also projected to become longer, increasing pressure on communities, infrastructure, ecosystems and public health.

These changes matter because heat affects more than just comfort. Heatwaves are linked to increased health risks, higher energy and water demand, greater stress on transport and other infrastructure, elevated bushfire risk and reduced labour productivity. Rising overnight temperatures are particularly important because they reduce opportunities for people, ecosystems and infrastructure to recover from extreme heat. Limiting future warming through global emissions reductions can slow the rate of increase in heat extremes. Nonetheless, further warming and more heatwaves are expected across NSW, making adaptation and resilience planning increasingly important.

3 Response to Findings

3.1 Response to Finding 1

Finding 1:

A coordinated, seasonal heat response plan for the summer months, which promotes early preventative actions, health system readiness and workforce planning would strengthen preparedness for heat stress.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government supports this finding in principle. The NSW Government will develop a seasonal heat response plan in 2027. The plan will bring together current seasonal heat response actions and will consider opportunities to expand action.

NSW Health acknowledges the importance of seasonal preparedness and actively reviews its preparedness to support sustainable, safe and meaningful service delivery during emergency incidents, extreme weather including heat and heatwaves and planned major events.

NSW Health is guided by state and national emergency management plans and legislation to ensure all aspects of threats to public health and emergencies are effectively managed from a health service perspective. NSW Health is the agency responsible for coordinating the NSW Health Services Functional Area. The NSW Health Services Functional Area Supporting Plan (NSW HEALTHPLAN) describes the strategic emergency management arrangements for providing health support and resources to emergency management in New South Wales.

NSW Health works closely with government and non-government partner agencies to ensure appropriate risk assessment and planning is in place for seasonal incident prevention (where possible) and the management of preparedness, response and recovery activities within their agency. NSW Health services participate in heat and heatwave preparedness arrangements with local emergency management committees (LEMCs) and regional emergency management committees (REMCs).

NSW Health Services undertake risk assessments for local hazards and any planned events to prepare for disruptions and increased presentations. This includes consideration of extreme heat and heatwaves, bushfires, smoke, storms and floods, as well as the needs of priority populations.

All NSW Health facilities must have current, widely understood and easily accessible:

- risk management programs and business continuity plans, including emergency power supply protocols
- notification and escalation pathways and emergency procedures
- emergency management and evacuation plans
- resourcing plans that consider how staff can be surged and whether sufficient redundancy is available to fill key positions during the holiday period and/or prolonged responses
- contact information for key staff, including those who can be contacted during the low activity period to support a response.

In addition, the NSW Reconstruction Authority (the RA) is working to address community awareness of, and preparedness for, heatwaves. This work includes providing public information on heatwave risk and preparedness action through Get Ready NSW and working with communities to identify resourcing and infrastructure needs for heatwave events through disaster adaptation planning. In addition, as part of its regular engagement with partner organisations, the RA is working to promote preparedness for the impacts of heatwave events on infrastructure.

The RA will develop public-facing communication and strategic planning on heatwave and extreme heat preparedness. The RA will also work with NSW Health and emergency services to exercise recovery arrangements for heatwaves.

3.2 Response to Finding 2

Finding 2:

Ensuring the effective communication of declared heatwaves is needed to achieve focused action and minimise health impacts.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government supports this finding in principle. The State Emergency Management Committee appointed NSW Ambulance as the combat agency for heatwave emergencies in December 2024. The [NSW State Heatwave Sub Plan](#) describes the strategic emergency management arrangements for the human physiological effects of heatwaves affecting NSW, including Lord Howe Island. It was revised in 2024.

During the monitored heatwave season, NSW Ambulance undertakes a daily assessment of available intelligence and where required publishes warnings to the community on the NSW Ambulance website, aligned to Australian Warning System (AWS) standards. Community information is also published to social media channels and provided to media outlets as required. During the 2025/26 heatwave monitoring season, NSW Ambulance:

- published 88 warnings to the community; 77 ADVICE level warnings and 11 WATCH & ACT level warnings.
- undertook approximately 83 media activities across television, radio and print media.

In addition, the State Disaster Mitigation Plan (SDMP) 2024-2026 includes actions to improve warning systems, particularly flood and bush fire warning systems. In preparing the next iteration of the SDMP, the RA will consider opportunities for improving heatwave warning systems to ensure the effective communication of declared heatwaves to enable focused action and minimise health impacts.

The RA will also review and develop the pathway for declaring a heatwave event as a natural disaster, including developing standard recovery packages which could be triggered by such a declaration.

3.3 Response to Finding 3

Finding 3:

Public awareness and education on heat stress can be strengthened through the seasonal heat plan that treats heat like other natural hazards, applies emergency heatwave communication principles, mobilises inter -agency coordination and integrates locally led messaging.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government supports this finding in principle. Appropriately ensuring the public are aware and educated about how to manage heat stress is important as the climate changes. NSW Health communicates important prevention and protection public health messaging each year during the warmer months to encourage behaviours that keep at-risk audiences healthy and safe as part of its 'Healthy Safe Summer' campaign.

A key focus for the 'Healthy Safe Summer' campaign is on hot weather which can affect everyone, but particularly older people, babies/young children and people from culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse communities.

The heat communications include a state-wide paid advertising campaign 'Beat the heat', which runs during summer, from early December until the end of February. Channels comprise of digital (with dynamic digital display), radio, print and social channels (geotargeted). The campaign is supported with comprehensive targeted stakeholder engagement as well as proactive organic and boosted social media from NSW Health channels. Heatwave alerts are communicated as required, to support NSW Ambulance.

'Healthy Safe Summer' campaign information and resources be found at: health.nsw.gov.au/summer.

'Beat the Heat' campaign information and resources can be found at: health.nsw.gov.au/heat.

In addition, Get Ready NSW, led by the RA, is a hazard-agnostic preparedness program that supports individuals, households and businesses to understand their disaster risk and take action to prepare for emergencies and disasters.

Through Get Ready NSW, the RA provides information on preparing for, and remaining safe during, heatwave events. This information currently includes information on those most at risk from heatwave events, how to prepare for summer heat and advice on remaining healthy during heatwave events. The focus of this information is NSW-wide and not specific to any particular location.

3.4 Response to Finding 4

Finding 4:

To understand the scale of heat stress health impacts and the effectiveness of actions, data on heat-related deaths and illnesses should be tracked, collected, and published by NSW Health

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government supports this finding in principle. The NSW Government will investigate new or improved methodologies to track heat-related deaths and illnesses and consider ways to share information with relevant agencies to inform work across government.

NSW Health uses the NSW Public Health Rapid, Emergency, Disease and Syndromic Surveillance (PHREDSS) system to report data on the number of unplanned emergency department presentations in public hospitals in NSW for 'heat problems'. These data are published on the HealthStats NSW website, healthstats.nsw.gov.au/home. These data capture emergency department presentations that are directly heat-related and do not include presentations where temperature contributed to the presentation but was not reflected in the primary emergency department diagnosis. This indicator is useful for tracking heat-related illness over time.

The RA will explore how this data can be embedded into its Outcome and Indicator Bank as well as the development of the Disaster Risk Data Insights Platform.

3.5 Response to Finding 5

Finding 5:

Strengthening how heat stress is addressed across all levels of the NSW Planning System would ensure our neighbourhoods are designed and built to reduce the risk of increasing heat stress into the future.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government recognises the important role the planning system plays in ensuring buildings and neighbourhoods are designed to reduce the risk of heat stress.

The NSW Government supports the intent of this finding and the need to strengthen how heat stress is addressed more consistently across the planning system, recognising that responses are already emerging in several state and local strategic plans and planning controls.

Considering heat early in strategic land use planning

The NSW Government supports the need for early consideration of heat in the planning system to ensure strategic land use planning decisions consider potential heat impacts.

The NSW Government promotes resilient and sustainable strategic planning through region plans and connected programs.

The NSW State Land Use Plan released in August 2026 addresses extreme heat as a natural hazard under the state-wide priority of Resilience. The Resilience priority includes several policy

statements, which provide direction for region and local plans on how to manage extreme heat through land use planning. The Plan is being implemented through a staged program of policy development, region and local planning updates, and ongoing monitoring.

As region plans are reviewed and updated, consideration will continue to be given to how heat resilience measures can be tailored to local circumstances, recognising the diverse climatic conditions, settlement patterns and community needs across NSW. While planning responses may differ between metropolitan, regional and remote locations, the objective of improving resilience to increasing heat stress remains consistent across all parts of the state.

The Sydney Plan recognises the need to strengthen resilience to higher temperatures through cool planning and design. Recognising the significant cooling benefits that urban greening provides, the Plan sets a target of 40% tree canopy cover for the region. The Plan acknowledges that health and wellbeing benefits are experienced from 30% tree canopy cover. The Sydney Plan's Blue-Green Grid aimed at connecting residential areas with waterways, green infrastructure, centres, transport hubs, and walking and cycling routes to support city-wide cooling, biodiversity, climate resilience and waterway health. The Blue-Green Grid will guide state and council action in prioritising planning and investment in Blue-Green Grid corridors across the Sydney region.

The Greening our City program, which supports councils with urban greening, was extended in 2025 from 33 Sydney councils to include 10 councils in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven and Hunter-Central Coast regions. Greening our City grants support councils to increase urban greening through tree and biodiverse understorey planting. The Greener Neighbourhoods grants program supports these councils in strategic planning for urban greening. Grant funding is being provided through the program to support local urban forest strategies, street tree masterplans, canopy data analysis, identifying or designing Blue Green Grid projects, and conducting community engagement activities.

During periods of high heat, people seek relief in green spaces, however, this timing can coincide with periods of imposed water restrictions during drought. The increasing role of water for cooling and the relationship with drought and water restrictions will be considered in future water planning. During periods of extreme heat people also take refuge in waterbodies for recreation and swimming as a means for cooling, yet these can be times when there are increased incidences of poor water quality from algal blooms that can affect human health. Communicating water quality status of waterways could be used to promote planning for heat response to the public.

An Urban Heat Policy for Land Use Planning is proposed to recognise the important role the planning system plays in ensuring buildings and neighbourhoods are designed to reduce the risk of heat stress (exhibited as part of the proposed Climate Change and Natural Hazards SEPP (CC&NH SEPP) package in February-March 2026). The Policy introduces broad principles that can be applied across all stages and types of development.

The NSW Government provides practical tools and guidance to support greater consideration of urban heat in planning decisions. The Cooler Places online resource provides guidance on implementing cooling strategies and the updated Greener Neighbourhoods Guide is designed to support councils across NSW in strategic greening. Tree canopy and heat vulnerability data for Sydney is also available to support decision making and targeted intervention.

Supporting heat resilience alongside housing delivery

The NSW Government supports the need to embed heat resilience alongside the delivery of housing supply. Recent state-led precinct plans and housing policy changes have incorporated urban heat and greening considerations, including:

- planning controls to manage urban heat in the Western Sydney Aerotropolis and Bella Vista and Kellyville Transport Oriented Development (TOD) Precinct
- planning controls in the South-East and North Wilton and Riverstone East Stage 3 precincts that require roof materials for new housing to be light-coloured for reduced solar absorption.
- tree canopy and deep soil targets included in the Tree Canopy Guide for Low and Mid Rise Housing, the NSW Housing Pattern Book Landscape Design Guide, and planning controls for the Accelerated TOD precincts.

The NSW Government will continue to consider opportunities to strengthen heat considerations in ongoing planning reforms including complying development pathways, and state-led rezoning and precinct planning processes.

Advocating for updates to National Construction Code and NatHERS to support future thermal safety standards

To complement the existing and proposed urban heat planning controls and further embed heat resilience in building standards, the NSW Government will continue to advocate at the national level for the National Construction Code and NatHERS to replace outdated data with future climate files.

The NSW Government recognises that updating climate files is an essential step to ensuring future standards produce homes that deliver thermal comfort and safety to residents.

State Disaster Mitigation Planning and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans

Strategic land use planning and building controls are identified as two key tools for reducing disaster risk within the SDMP risk reduction toolkit. SDMP 2024-2026 identifies actions to reduce risk associated with heatwaves, in particular the opportunity to reform building controls and standards to improve outcomes for building occupants. In preparing the next iteration of the SDMP, the RA will work with and support DPHI in the identification and implementation of planning system measures to ensure neighbourhoods are designed and built to reduce the risk of heat stress due to heatwaves and extreme heat events. The RA's first regional multi-hazard DAP for the Northern Rivers will also identify risk reduction actions to address the impacts of heatwaves. In preparing future multi-hazard regional DAPs, RA will continue to work with and support DPHI and councils in the identification and implementation of regional and local planning system measures to ensure neighbourhoods are designed and built to reduce the risk of heat stress due to heatwaves and extreme heat events.

3.6 Response to Finding 6

Finding 6:

Current policies and regulations, especially for social, Aboriginal, and rental housing, should be revised to offer sufficient protections to their tenants and decrease their vulnerability to heat stress.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government is committed to improving the energy efficiency of housing, including social, Aboriginal and rental housing, to protect tenants from the health and financial impacts of heat stress.

Rental homes in NSW are, on average, less energy efficient than owner-occupied homes, and more likely to have poor thermal performance and high energy costs.^[1] Only 22% of rental homes have insulation compared with 54% of owner-occupied homes ^[2] and 30% of NSW renters are unable to keep comfortably cool in summer, compared with 16% of homeowners.^[3] This means that renters face higher energy bills, or trade off health and safety. Social housing is, on average, less energy-efficient than housing in the private rental market, due to its age.^[4] First Nations households are over-represented in renting (56% of First Nations households) and social housing (18% of First Nations households), so they are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of heat stress on rental housing.^[5]

Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative

With the Commonwealth Government, NSW is upgrading 24,000 social housing homes by June 2027 through the Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative (SHEPI) to improve liveability and save tenants money. This initiative will undertake energy performance upgrades to help social housing tenants reduce their energy bills. As of December 2025, under the SHEPI program 11,274 homes have been upgraded with a total of 21,146 energy efficient upgrades. The thermal performance of social housing is a key focus point that has significant impacts on tenants' health and wellbeing.

The success of the current SHEPI has led to a SHEPI Expansion, spanning from 1st July 2026 to 30th June 2030. The Expansion program will aim to upgrade an additional 13,500 existing social housing dwellings and improve their level of thermal comfort and performance.

Homes NSW Heating and Cooling Policy

Homes NSW has previously committed to the need for heat stress mitigation via the release of the Homes NSW Heating and Cooling Policy in August 2024. This policy mandated that all new social housing properties from August 2024 onwards, will have reverse cycle AC and solar PV fitted where possible. AC and solar PV will also be retrofitted to all properties in climate zones 4, 7 and 8, as these climate zones were identified as vulnerable to climate stress.

Energy Rental Standards Investigation

As part of the NSW Consumer Energy Strategy, the NSW Government is also investigating introducing minimum energy efficiency rental standards for rental homes in NSW (MEERS). MEERS, if introduced, could make rental homes safer, healthier, more comfortable and cheaper to run. If introduced, rental homes would need to meet mandatory energy-related requirements, for example, a level of insulation or a standard of appliance. Both private and social housing cohorts are in scope of the investigation. The NSW Government will complete this investigation in 2026.

Homes NSW is working with DCCEEW to consider how standards could be applied to the social housing portfolio and ensure benefits for social housing tenants. The scale and characteristics of the social housing portfolio requires consideration, in terms of implementation complexity and funding.

Where appropriate, the RA will support Homes NSW and DCCEEW to identify and implement revisions to policy and regulations, especially for social, Aboriginal and rental housing, to provide increased protections for their tenants and decrease their vulnerability to heat stress due to heatwaves and extreme heat events, particularly through the State Disaster Mitigation Plan and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans.

3.7 Response to Finding 7

Finding 7:

Strengthening SafeWork NSW regulations to prevent heat stress in the workplace would minimise the health and economic impacts of extreme heat on workers and businesses.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government accepts the intent of this finding and supports it in principle. Preventing heat stress in the workplace is an important step in minimising the health and economic impacts of extreme heat on workers and businesses.

SafeWork NSW supports the concept in principle of strengthening work health and safety regulations to better manage heat stress risks in the workplace and minimise the impacts of extreme heat on workers. Further consideration would be required regarding the practical implementation of any regulatory changes. SafeWork NSW also notes that, as a signatory to the

Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for harmonised work health and safety (WHS) laws, proposed amendments should be considered through the appropriate national processes and forums..

Directly influencing economic outcomes is generally outside the scope and intent of work health and safety legislation, which is focused on protecting the health and safety of workers and other persons at work. To address this, the NSW Government is exploring other actions to reduce both the health and economic impacts of heat stress on workers and businesses. The RA supports workers and businesses via a multi-hazard approach to Business Continuity Planning workshops and Business Beyond Disasters online courses. To date there has been limited focus on heatwaves and extreme heat in these workshops and courses, with many participants focusing on more recent extreme hazard events, disasters and disruption experience. The RA will continue to work with Business NSW and regional stakeholders through the SDMP and DAP programs to support identification and implementation of measures to minimise the health and economic impacts of heatwaves and extreme heat events on workers and businesses.

3.8 Response to Finding 8

Finding 8:

Heat stress in NSW should be recognised in existing state-wide adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government supports this finding in principle. Appropriately ensuring heat stress is considered through adaptation planning and disaster risk reduction processes is an important consideration as heat stress increases with climate change.

The NSW Government will further strengthen the recognition and treatment of heat stress and extreme heat risks through future reviews and updates of relevant plans. Opportunities to reduce heat stress could be explored in the 2026 review of the NSW Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2025–2029.

Heat risks are considered in the NSW Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment. The state level risk assessment explores risks for the state associated with increasing average temperatures, more frequent and intense heatwaves, and hotter extremes. These are significant hazards affecting all regions of NSW and are drivers of compounding and cascading risk. The findings of the risk assessment will be used to inform state-wide adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans as they are reviewed and/or drafted.

Future iterations of the RA's disaster risk modelling capability (DRDIP), the next SDMP and future regional DAP optioneering processes will also explore additional metrics and thresholds, including locally set thresholds, that capture the impacts of extreme heat beyond declared heatwaves, where resources allow. These may include humidity metrics where local data permits.

Where appropriate, the SDMP and future regional DAPs will incorporate actions to reduce risks associated with extreme heat events in addition to heatwaves, recognising that extreme heat adaptation and mitigation interventions are closely aligned to heatwave interventions.

3.9 Response to Finding 9

Finding 9:

Providing capacity-building tools and resourcing to local communities to develop and coordinate locally led responses to heat stress could address existing gaps and account for place-based climates and characteristics.

Overall response: accepted

Discussion

The NSW Government recognises the important role of local communities and local government in understanding and responding to the impacts of heat stress. Locally led responses can help ensure actions are tailored to community needs, vulnerabilities, and local climate conditions.

The NSW Government supports the intent of this finding and acknowledges the value of building local capability to identify, prepare for and respond to heat-related risks.

A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for local government

Local councils were recognised in the report as being uniquely placed to fully understand the risks and challenges faced by a local community during a heat event. Local councils often provide facilities management resourcing for communal areas within a community such as libraries, community centres, sporting facilities and open spaces. This includes maintaining community facilities to an acceptable standard through the provision of repairs and maintenance, cleaning and security.

Councils are also responsible for delivering local planning policies that support the needs of the people through the approval of resilient homes, sufficient communal space such as green/blue spaces and other mechanisms to maintain a liveable and workable environment for residents.

The issue of funding and resource constraints is not limited to local government. Additional services including non-government and not for profit community support services are limited by similar challenges.

The case studies outlined in the Heat Stress Report also highlighted that a one-size-fits-all approach to a response would not be an ideal method of allocating resources as the risk factors to be mitigated differ between local government areas. Additionally, the local government sector needs to manage how the resources are allocated within their area, as some of the larger regional areas also have a discrepancy between what may be available in one town compared to the next.

The further a community is from a central business district, the more reliant the community is on council funded facilities and the community itself. The availability of commercially funded opportunities such as shopping centres, cinemas, and entertainment venues to play a role in the management of heat stress across a community should be considered when allocating resources.

During other types of disasters, we may see an entertainment venue which is generally open long hours both day and night providing a respite for impacted residents and offering free or low cost food and beverage services to support the local community. This response from the commercial sector is not always available in smaller communities or where there is a stronger reliance on government or not for profit services.

Existing and future opportunities

The NSW Government is already supporting local heat resilience through a range of initiatives. The State Heatwave Sub Plan addresses acute heatwave response in NSW and encourages councils to identify publicly accessible air-conditioned Cool Places, such as libraries, community halls and shopping centres, that can provide respite during periods of extreme heat.

Recognising the important role local governments and community organisations can play in supporting vulnerable community members, the NSW State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) released a 'Cool Centres' Guideline' in December 2025. The guideline provides guidance for local and state government agencies, Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs), Regional Emergency Management Committees (REMCs) and other stakeholders that may be involved in the planning, identification, establishment, operation and review of community Cool Centres in NSW.

These initiatives provide practical tools and guidance to support locally led responses to heat stress and demonstrate the value of collaboration between state agencies, local governments and communities.

The NSW Government also recognises the significant contribution of the Greater Sydney Heat Smart City Plan 2025-2030 (the Heat Plan), in advancing heat resilience across Greater Sydney. The Heat Plan demonstrates the benefits of place-based planning, strong local government leadership and coordinated action across multiple sectors to address the impacts of extreme heat. With lead responsibility for 21 actions under the Plan, the NSW Government is actively contributing to its implementation and supporting coordinated action across government, local councils and communities. The NSW Government recognises the Heat Plan as a successful model for integrating local knowledge, community needs and state-level support to improve resilience to heat stress. The experience and insights gained through its implementation will continue to inform broader heat adaptation and resilience initiatives across NSW. The NSW Government acknowledges that further opportunities may exist to strengthen local capacity-building, coordination and knowledge-sharing, subject to consideration of local needs, existing programs and available resources.

The NSW Government's Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPS) program led by the RA, includes assessments of regional vulnerabilities and strengths, gaps in community awareness and

preparedness, and the resources required to enhance community-led and community-centred planning for heatwaves. Through future regional DAPs this work will be expanded to further strengthen community awareness and preparedness and planning for both heatwaves and extreme heat events.

Opportunities to further build community capability and support locally led responses to heatwaves will also be considered through the broader public facing community awareness and preparedness campaigns delivered by the NSW Government, including Get Ready NSW and AdaptNSW. Coordinated by the RA, Get Ready NSW provides practical information and resources to help communities prepare for heatwaves and other natural hazards, while AdaptNSW coordinated by DCCEEW supports longer term climate adaptation by providing information on climate risks, climate projections and adaptation guidance. It also includes case studies demonstrating how communities across NSW are responding to climate change impacts, including heat stress.

Future climate projections are essential for understanding how heat risk will change over coming decades and ensuring that adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures are proportionate to future conditions, rather than historical experience. To build local capability and support locally led responses to heat, the NSW Government will:

- Provide a toolkit of projections for extreme temperatures (including wet bulb temperatures) and heatwaves tailored for every local government area in NSW. This will enable councils to assess current and future chronic and extreme heat risks without requiring specialist expertise.
- Deliver training, guidance and technical support through a regional roadshow, existing council networks (such as Local Government NSW's Climate Action Professional Officers' Group) and by establishing a climate service for councils to support their needs in using climate projections and exploring adaptation options.
- Support planning and risk management of projected heat impacts by developing technical guidance on adaptation measures and pathways, and '*ready reckoners*' for Community Strategic Plans, Local Strategic Planning Statements, enterprise risk assessments, and regional adaptation initiatives.
- Engage with councils to help strengthen the use of future heat projections in emergency management and decision-support tools such as the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Cool Suburbs Tool.

Together, these actions would help transition from providing climate data to enabling informed decisions, equipping councils and communities with the evidence, tools and confidence needed to respond to increasing heat risk.

4 Conclusion

The NSW Government recognises that heat stress resulting from extreme heat and humidity presents a significant and growing climate change risk, with wide ranging impacts on human health, infrastructure, communities, ecosystems and the economy across NSW.

We are committed to strengthening NSW's resilience to heat stress through practical, evidence-based action. Addressing heat stress requires a coordinated approach that strengthens

preparedness, supports vulnerable communities, and improves the resilience of homes, workplaces, infrastructure and essential services.

Through the actions outlined in this response, the NSW Government will continue to work across government, businesses and communities to support adaptation and ensure NSW is well prepared for a hotter future.

5 References

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