

Blacktown Heat Response Plan



**Cool
centre**

Open now

Come inside
and keep cool



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that the
Darug people were the original
Custodians of the Land on which
Blacktown City is built.

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Resilience
NSW

Mayor's message



Councillor Tony Bleasdale OAM
Mayor

I am proud to introduce the innovative Heat Response Plan for Blacktown City Council.

We are providing a structured system of cool centres to protect those most vulnerable to the ill-health impacts of summer heatwaves.

Here in Blacktown City, we feel the impacts of climate change largely through increased urban heat and more severe heatwaves.

Annually, Sydney averages fewer than 10 days with a maximum temperature above 35°C, but western Sydney averages 10-20 such days and NSW Government research predicts that this trend will increase.

Each summer, higher maximum and minimum (overnight) temperatures affect human health through heat stress. A prolonged spell of hot days increases the incidence of illness and death. Older people are particularly vulnerable, as are people with a pre-existing medical condition or a disability.

In recent years during heatwaves, our Council has extended opening hours at our swimming pools and our air conditioned libraries to provide public cool amenities. Through this innovative plan we take things a step further. Our plan outlines how our community collaboration can provide additional cool centres for residents who are most vulnerable to the health impacts of heatwaves.

With the help of Resilience NSW, Council took a methodical approach, undertaking research to determine the areas and communities in Blacktown City that are most at risk of extreme heat. We engaged with a broad range of local community service providers willing to offer air-conditioned venues and volunteer support to run cool centres. In the summer of 2021/2022 we collaborated with specific organisations to run a successful trial of our cool centres.

I hope you will take interest in our plan for running a network of cool centres each summer – and I invite all community service providers to collaborate with Council to help raise awareness of the human health risks of heatwaves, and provide cool centres.

Tony Bleasdale OAM, Mayor

Executive Summary

The purpose of this plan is to provide a network of accessible safe, cool places for residents in Blacktown City during heatwaves.

Blacktown City has significantly higher average summer temperatures than coastal Sydney and it is expected to experience an additional 5 to 10 extremely hot days over 35°C per year by 2030.

Heatwaves of three or more unusually hot days cause more deaths than any other natural hazards, such as bushfires and floods, in Australia. Some people are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of heatwaves because they lack the ability to find respite such as air conditioning and other effective means of cooling. These vulnerable groups include the elderly, people with disabilities, young children, those with low socio-economic status and new migrants to Australia.

The State Heatwave Subplan is a subplan of the NSW State Emergency Management Plan. It details the control and coordination arrangements for aspects of the preparation for, response to, and immediate recovery from heatwaves.

Although the NSW State Heatwave Subplan requires local councils to respond to heatwaves¹ through dissemination of information or assisting local emergency services during heatwaves, it does not include requirements to provide heatwave respite, particularly to vulnerable groups.

Council has identified the use of cool centres as part of our responding to climate change policy and community strategic plan, requiring a proactive approach to treat heatwaves as a local emergency.

This heat response plan responds to Council's:

- Responding to climate change policy and strategy
 - Action 3d: develop a strategy for enabling Council-owned public amenities to provide refuges from extreme heat for vulnerable residents.
- Our Blacktown 2036, community strategic plan
 - Strategic direction 2, focus area 6: Respond to the impacts of climate change.

This heat refuge plan includes:

- a risk analysis to identify those parts of Blacktown City with the most vulnerable populations to heatwave and those that may not have air conditioning and other effective cooling
- initial stakeholder engagement to identify potential cool centres and associated services in Blacktown City
- results of a trial activation of cool centres in the summer of 2021/22
- a heat refuge emergency management plan that includes preparedness actions for cool centres, actions to activate the heat refuge network, monitoring and evaluation.

The plan is grounded in the principles of disaster risk reduction as outlined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. In March 2015, Australia endorsed the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the global blueprint for building the world’s resilience to disasters.

This plan also:

- relates to the disaster management guidance in Australia’s National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, particularly the concept of shared responsibility between communities and government
- considers best practices in emergency management, ISO22320
- recognises the disaster management cycle as a basic planning tool.

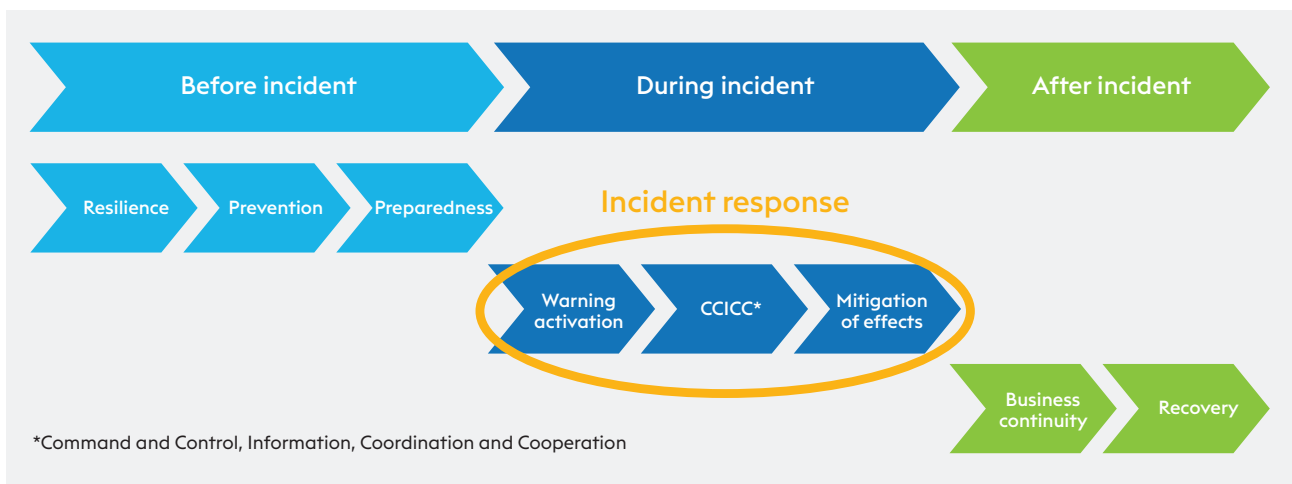


Figure 1: Phases of emergency management (source: ISO 22320)

Impacts of extreme heat in Blacktown City

Heatwaves of three or more unusually hot days cause more deaths than any other natural hazard, such as bushfires or floods, in Australia. Other impacts of extreme heat are more difficult to measure including increased injury and accidents, higher demand for health services, and disruptions to power supply and transport systems².

The impacts of heatwaves are not experienced equally in Blacktown City, and there are large discrepancies in the ability of different communities to withstand extreme heat. Socially vulnerable groups generally have both increased geographic exposure to heat, along with fewer available resources to help prepare for and adapt to increasing heatwaves³.

People most vulnerable to heat include:

- the elderly
- those with underlying chronic health issues
- people with disability
- those with addiction issues
- people experiencing homelessness
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and new migrants.

There is also a high correlation between low socio-economic status and not having air conditioning or other suitable cooling options at home. Studies indicate that spending even a few hours in a cool environment, or with a working air conditioner or cooling unit, reduces vulnerable populations' risk to heat exposure⁴.

There are no other heat refuge networks in Australia, however, the Victorian Government's heatwave guidelines for local councils include:

- identify and promote safe, public places during heatwaves that are air-conditioned, such as libraries or movie theatres
- establish cooling centres in air-conditioned council buildings or use mobile air conditioning units.

Risk analysis

A risk analysis was conducted to identify areas of Blacktown City that have high heatwave risk and the greatest need for cool centres.

Blacktown City Social Profile 2020 and relevant Australian Bureau of Statistics census data was used in the risk analysis. We considered the following population data:

- socio-economic disadvantage
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and new migrants may not have developed social support networks
- people of Aboriginal and Torres Islander descent
- households without a car – this could be a barrier to access existing cool places
- single parents – this may inhibit young children accessing cooling as the parent may be working, and also may relate to low-socio-economic status
- people in need of daily living assistance
- single, older people (over 65 years).

A map showing high heatwave risk areas in Blacktown City was constructed as part of the risk analysis.

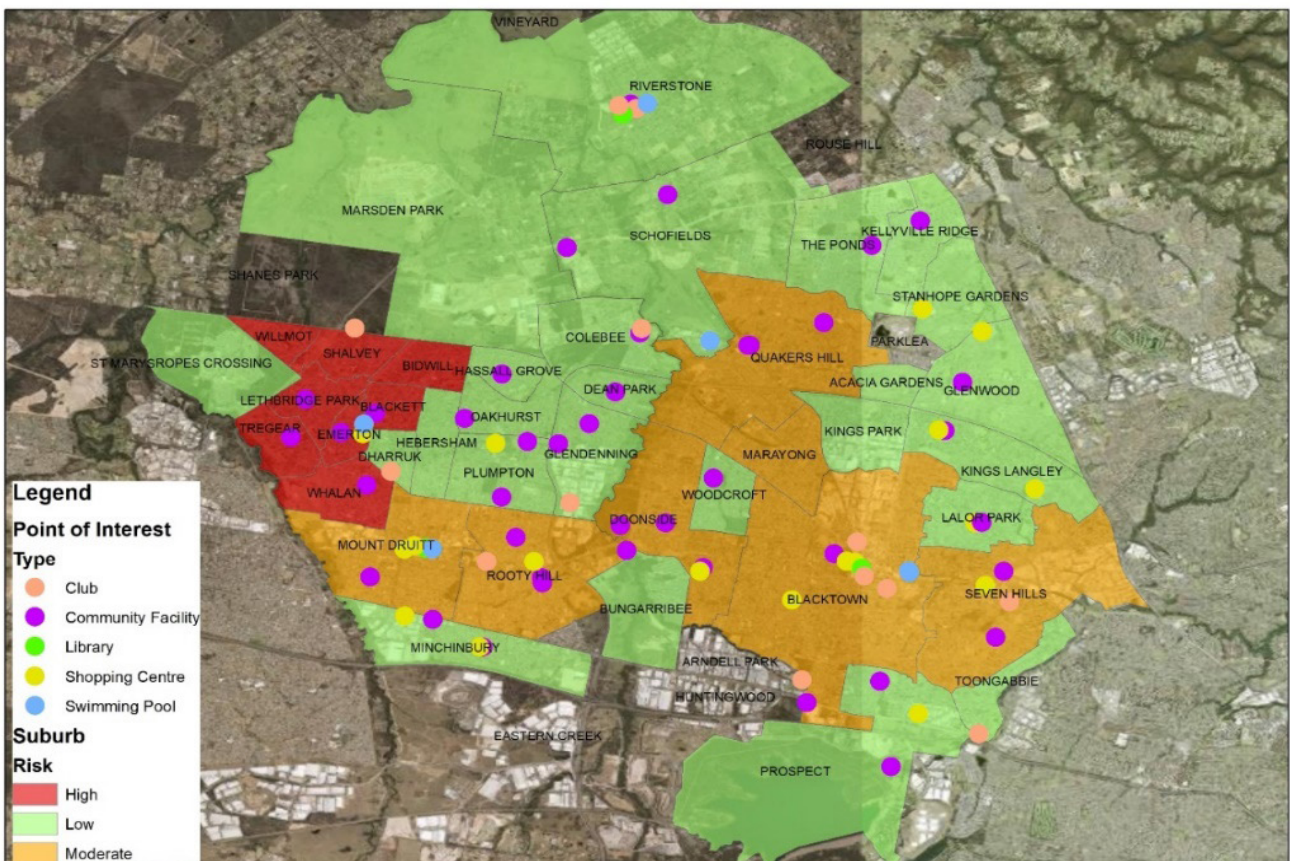


Figure 2: Heatwave risk of Blacktown City suburbs

As shown in Figure 2, the high-risk areas are located in the western part of Blacktown City and include the suburbs of Lethbridge Park, Whalan, Bidwill, Willmot, Shalvey, Tregear, Emerton and Blckett.

The risk trend shown in Figure 2 is further exacerbated by the average gradation of heat from cooler in the east to hotter in the west⁵.

Potential cool centres such as libraries, swimming pools, community facilities, shopping centres and clubs were also mapped in Figure 2. The mapping showed that the main potential cool centres within the high-risk areas were community facilities such as community halls and hubs.

Research⁶ has shown the heat refuge service will be limited and possibly not effective if totally reliant on local government facilities and resources. Thus, there is a need to involve local community service providers and utilise the social capital (e.g. social networks, trust) they possess.

Gap analysis

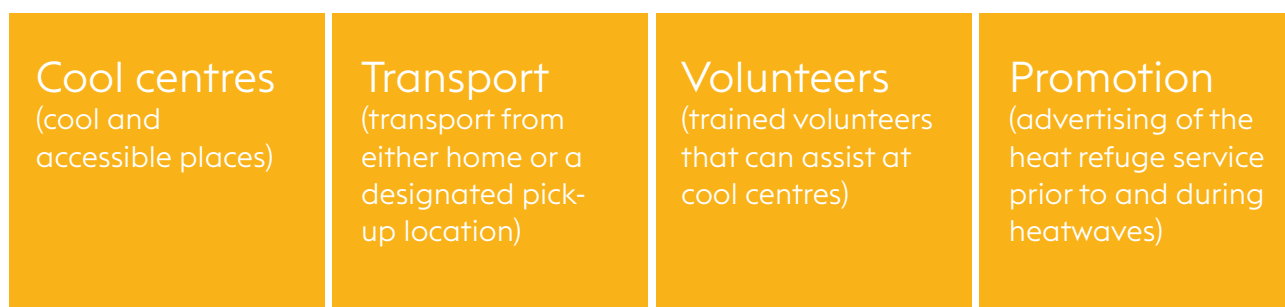
We interviewed 36 community service providers that work with vulnerable groups and/or may be able to provide heat refuge and transport services. The community service providers interviewed included:

- local clubs
- places of worship
- disability services
- multi-cultural services
- Western Sydney Local Health District
- seniors' services
- humanitarian organisations e.g. Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul
- local emergency management e.g. NSW Police.

The interviews found strong support for the heat refuge concept. Several opportunities for cool centres, transport services and volunteers were identified, and these are outlined in Table 1.

A limitation with the initial stakeholder engagement was that there was no direct engagement with potential heat refuge users, meaning that it is difficult to gauge demand. However, the indications from community service providers are that the service will be in high demand during extreme heat days.

There are four main components required in a heat refuge service:



Cool centres

The initial stakeholder engagement and analysis identified the types of potential cool centres. The availability and limitations for each type of heat refuge are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1: Issue and gap analysis for potential cool centres in high risk area

Cool centre	Availability	Limitations
Libraries	<p>There are five libraries managed by Council. These have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> air-conditioning, toilets and disabled facilities internet and books for people to occupy time free entry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited opening hours on weekends Need to comply with library low noise requirements No library in high risk area (Mount Druitt Hub is in a moderate risk area).
Swimming pools	<p>There are five swimming pools managed by Council. Charlie Lowles Leisure Centre Emerton is in the high-risk area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of entry Potential to already be crowded during a heatwave May exclude some older people and those with a disability.
Shopping centres	<p>There are several shopping centres in Blacktown (figure 2). Emerton Village Shopping is located in the high-risk area and has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> air-conditioning, toilets and disabled facilities free entry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited dedicated place in the shopping centre to stay and rest Lack of free drinking water Concern that people gaining respite may be viewed as non-paying customers and be moved along.

Cool centre	Availability	Limitations
Youth centre	<p>There are 2 youth centres, Emerton Youth Recreation Centre and Police Citizens Youth Club. Emerton Youth Centre is located in the high-risk area and has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> air-conditioning, toilets and disabled facilities free entry indoor recreation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually open to youths only, may exclude older people and families.
Community centres and halls	<p>There are 47 community centres/halls managed by Council. 4 community centres or halls are located in the high-risk area at Tregear, Lethbridge Park, Emerton and Whalan. These have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> air-conditioning, toilets and disabled facilities kitchenettes and drinking water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental fee/bond may be required Lack of activities for those seeking relief Need to pick up and return key Most do not have provision for activities or entertainment.
Clubs	<p>There are several clubs across the City (figure 2). One club is located in the high-risk area at Dharruk. This club has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> air-conditioning, toilets and disabled facilities free drinking water and limited activities or entertainment limited free transport facilities to pick up and drop off visitors from home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for gambling. Provision of alcohol which can also have impact on the ability to cope with the heat.
Places of worship	<p>There are numerous places of worship in Blacktown City, several of these are in the high risk area. Many of the places of worship have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> air-conditioned halls and appear willing to use these as cool centres toilet and disabled facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People of one religion or denomination may feel uncomfortable going to another place of worship. May not have any activities. May not be able to provide facilities during worship times or days.
NGO facilities	<p>A few community services providers said they have facilities that are air-conditioned that could be used as cool centres. They would have to be used in concert with existing activities e.g. disability services.</p> <p>These mostly have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> toilet and disability facilities sufficient capacity to accommodate visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not in high risk area Some outside Blacktown City Limited capacity.
Schools	<p>Schools are located throughout Blacktown City. Several are within the high-risk area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many halls without air-conditioning Booking fee required No activities in school halls.

Based on the gap analysis (Table 1) the following venues offer the most promise for cool centres:

- libraries (Council-managed, have all required facilities, located near high risk areas)
- community centres/halls (Council-managed, located in high and moderate risk areas)
- clubs (have all facilities and some have transport, located in high and moderate risk areas).

Cool centres were only assessed for extended day use. However, according to the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO⁷, during a heatwave there is little respite for residents at night if they do not have air-conditioning or other effective cooling devices.

Overnight cool centres face several other issues including security, willingness of volunteers to assist, venue insurance and sleeping arrangements. At this stage, this plan only covers cool centres for extended day use e.g. 10am to 7pm.

Transport

Based on the stakeholder engagement, several transport services were identified that could transport people from a designated pick-up location or to and from their homes.

Transport services identified included several club buses or buses belonging to community organisations. Recommendations also include community transport services such as Blacktown Community Transport, Easy Go Connect and Great Community Transport. These services would come at a cost (e.g. insurance, driver fees). Free transport is a major gap particularly in the high-risk area.

Volunteers

Red Cross has trained volunteers for emergency and humanitarian crises and is keen to be involved in providing volunteers at cool centres. Other organisations that could provide volunteers include Lenity Care and Disability Services Australia.

There could be a gap between the number of volunteers available and the capacity and number of cool centres that will be used in Blacktown City. Volunteers would require training regarding cool centres.

Promotion

Promotion of the heat refuge service is critical via community service providers, government agencies and Council through various communications avenues e.g. website, media releases, social media and community newsletters. It should occur generally throughout summer and specifically when a heatwave is imminent and during the heatwave.

All community service providers interviewed said they would promote the heat refuge service through their networks. Gaps in this commitment included First Nations people, women's groups, those providing services to those experiencing homelessness and those with addiction.

Western Sydney Local Health also said it would promote the heat refuge service to its clients.

Cool Centres trial 2021/22

During the summer of 2021/22, the heat refuge plan was trialled through activation at the following locations:

- Tregear Community Centre (figure 3)
- Lalor Park Community Centre (operated by Community Access Western Sydney)
- Lethbridge Park Community Centre (operated by Community Access Western Sydney)
- Blacktown Uniting Church
- Bidwill Uniting Church.

The trial involved the following community service partners:

- Red Cross Australia (volunteers)
- Blacktown Uniting Church (cool centre)
- Bidwill Uniting Church (cool centre)
- Community Access Western Sydney (cool centre).

The trial was impacted by a cooler and wetter summer (La Nina conditions) with no major extreme heatwave events. However, the trial was conducted in sub-optimal heat days with maximum temperatures of between 32°C and 35°C.

The trial did not involve the use of transport to help people attend the cool centres and advertising was done through Council's social media channels and community service networks.



Figure 3: Trial cool centre at Tregear Community Centre

Cool centre trial evaluation

The trial highlighted a number of challenges and in consultation with community service providers, these have been addressed where possible:

Challenge	Proposed improvements
Location of some cool centres are hard to find or not easily accessible.	Cool centres should be close to public transport or have transport options to the area.
Visitors were confused on the opening days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cool centres should only be activated during extreme heat to remain consistent. If possible, cool centres will need to open several days in a row or have clear messaging about opening days.
More lead time required to activate the network of cool centres and volunteers.	We have investigated options of using a private meteorological service, Weatherzone. We have been able to secure more accurate data that gives us a longer lead time on predicted extreme heat days.

Challenge	Proposed improvements
<p>Those impacted by the heat are only able to seek respite during the day, but are leaving a cool centre to return to hot homes.</p>	<p>We provide a cool pack which includes a cool gel pack and heat safety brochures. This will help residents continue to keep cool at night.</p>
<p>Residents are not comfortable visiting or staying in cool centres. Some may prefer staying at home despite the heat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide snacks or light meals can attract people to the cool centres and avoids them having to leave the cool place to purchase meals. • Provide entertainment (Figure 4) such as books, puzzles, kid's colouring books. • Provide options that are accessible for those with disability or the elderly.
<p>Not enough residents know about the service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve publicity e.g. through Council newsletters, a dedicated cool centres Facebook page, and community and ABC radio. • We are also investigating a registration service that will allow residents to sign up for notifications and alerts when cool centres are open. • Flyers to be distributed especially to the high risk areas to raise awareness of a cool centre in the area.
<p>The service is not reaching those socially isolated e.g. elderly and disabled people who are not being checked on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen ties with community organisations and service providers, encourage them to use their social capital to find vulnerable people and encourage them to use the cool centres. • Investigate possibility of a vulnerable persons register with NSW Health.



Figure 4. Types of entertainment available at cool centres

Appendix A: Cool centre action plan

Cool centre action plan

This emergency management plan provides actions for Council to plan, activate and evaluate the cool centres service every year.

This plan considers emergency management principles based on ISO 22320 and the practices in the Australian Emergency Management Arrangements Handbook (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2019). The plan covers the four stages in the disaster management cycle:



1. Prevention and mitigation

Prevention aims to decrease or eliminate the negative consequences of hazards. Mitigation seeks to minimise the impact, and therefore reduce the consequences of an emergency.

Blacktown City Council is committed to reduce the impacts of and adapt to anthropogenic climate change (including more frequent and intense heatwaves) through actions in our Responding to climate change policy and strategy.

2. Preparedness

Preparedness is the ability to be ready for, or to anticipate action, in response to or recovery from an emergency. The following preparedness actions should be conducted prior to heatwave emergencies.

Action	Detail	Who	Timeframe
Develop a working group to maintain the heat refuge network and service.	The working group will work together to plan, activate and evaluate the cool centres service. The group will consider venues, volunteers, transport and promotion of the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council – Environment and Community • Community partners 	August
Monthly working group meetings	The working group should meet monthly and cover planning, activation and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council – Environment • Council – Community • Community partners 	September to February
Develop the heat refuge network and service. Priority should be given to cool centres and services in high risk and moderate risk areas (Figure 2).	<p>The following aspects of the heat refuge network will be identified and confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cool centres (cool, safe, accessible places) • transport (transport from either home or a designated pick-up location) • volunteers (trained volunteers that can assist at cool centres) • promotion (advertising of the heat refuge service prior to and during heatwaves). <p>The operations guide (Appendix B) must also be followed for any venues opened as a cool centre. The operations Guide should also be updated as part of preparedness activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council – Environment • Council – Community • Community partners 	August
Formalise community partnerships	A Memorandum of Understanding or similar formal agreement should also be used to formalise the use of non-Council owned venues.	Council – Environment	August

Action	Detail	Who	Timeframe
Promote cool centres before and throughout summer, and especially during a heatwave	<p>A communications plan should be prepared to cover communications prior to and during a heatwave emergency.</p> <p>The communications plan should include messaging to encourage people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check on neighbours, friends and family members, especially the elderly, those with disabilities or chronic illnesses and those without air conditioning • consider and check on pets to ensure they have a cool place and plenty of water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council – Environment • Council – Communications 	September
Develop messages about cool centres in consultation with the Communications team	<p>This communication should be linked to Council’s heatwave education messages and NSW Health.</p> <p>Advertising and communications methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local radio stations e.g. SWR999 • dedicated Facebook page • letter box drops to residents who reside near cool centres • emails to community service providers’ networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council – Environment • Council – Communications 	September
Review and update heat safety brochures if required and prepare for distribution	<p>Distribute heat safety brochures to our facilities e.g. libraries, leisure centres and Kids’ Early Learning centres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council – Environment 	September
Volunteers are required at all cool centres and may also be required at pick-up and drop-off points for transport services. Where possible, a volunteer program for the heat refuge network should be established.	<p>Volunteers should undergo introductory training including about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aim of cool centres • registering heat refuge customers (Appendix C) • management of cool centre visitors • risk management e.g. what to do during any incidents • being aware of any medical issues that arise with visitors • encourage feedback from visitors through the cool centre feedback survey (Appendix D). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council – Environment • Council – Volunteer Coordinator 	September

Action	Detail	Who	Timeframe
Confirm catering for the cool centres or purchase light refreshments	All centres should have cool drinking water and light refreshments or food. Various dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, gluten-free) should be considered where possible. Preference given to caterers who can deliver to the centres on short notice and at requested times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council – Environment 	October
Establish and maintain a cool centre register. Communication would need to be carried out by email, phone call or text message to the person (or carer).	This list can also be developed by each community service provider involved. Residents can choose to register their details to receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> predicted heatwave warnings information and updates on cool centres operating hours. The registration system should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify potential heat refuge customers immediately prior to and during a heatwave (details of customer, their choice of refuge, transport requirements, dietary requirements etc.) confirm potential customers' places at a certain heat refuge on a particular day and transport details (if not, send them to the next closest available heat refuge). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council – Environment 	July 2022 – ongoing

3. Response

A key feature of response is the provision of warnings and information to enable the community to act to protect themselves. The following response actions should be conducted during heatwave emergencies.

Action	Detail	Who	Timeframe
Activate the network during a 'severe' or 'extreme' heatwave as identified by Bureau of Meteorology or equivalent.	Our subscription to the Weatherzone service will provide a longer lead time for heatwave predictions. A temperature trigger will need to be established with Weatherzone for warnings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council – Environment and Community Community partners 	November
The working group should monitor the service during the heatwave and make any amendments as required.	Monitoring could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> visits to cool centres examination of the registration system and vulnerable person register discussions with cool centre customers and venue providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council – Environment and Community Community partners 	November to February

4. Recovery

The following recovery actions should be conducted after heatwave emergencies, including an after-action review.

Action	Detail	Who	Timeframe
Conclude the cool centre service for the year	The working group will be responsible for closing the cool centre service after the summer heatwave season has passed. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organising cleaning and lock-up of venues (if relevant) disposing of any waste at venues thanking venue and transport providers. These records should be retained to assist in evaluation e.g. demand for cool centres, duration of stay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council – Environment and Community Community partners 	April
Conduct an after-action review (de-brief) with the working group in liaison with external venue, transport and volunteer providers.	Conduct a review after each heatwave and at the end of summer. Consider making improvements on the current processes. This action plan should be amended to reflect any changes or updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council – Environment and Community Community partners 	April to May

Appendix B: Cool centres operations guide

Cool centres operations guide

Definition of a cool centre

A cool centre is a temporary facility made available during extreme heat weather conditions.

Our cool centres are:

- especially for vulnerable groups, e.g. the elderly, those with disabilities or chronic illnesses and young children
- when coping mechanisms, e.g. air conditioning is not available in the home
- open for a limited number of hours for a limited number of days and provide limited services.

Cool centres are not:

- day care for children or the elderly or disabled with high care needs, or others who cannot care for themselves
- overnight shelters or homeless shelters. It is assumed that individuals who use the centres can return to their homes when centres close.

How to use this guide

- This guide is for primarily for operating the Blacktown City heat refuge network and for our participating members. This guide contains the minimum requirements of a cool centre.
- The guide may also be informative for other councils and organisations that intend to operate cool centres.
- Operators may decide to offer additional functionality.
- All elements of the operations guide may not be relevant or required in all situations.
- A refuge may scale up or down as needed throughout a heatwave.
- The following will drive decisions about the size of the refuge, the hours of operation, and the services provided:
 - scope and duration of the heatwave
 - community demographics
 - availability of resources.

Cool centres operations guide

- Before opening a refuge, operators should consult with their insurers to determine if all legal requirements are met and liability issues are covered. They may also wish to gain legal advice on this.
- Operators will need to undertake a risk assessment of the site before establishing a cool centre, and partners in the Blacktown City Cool centre network will need to provide this to Blacktown City Council prior to operating a cool centre.

Minimum facility requirements for a cool centre

Facilities should be selected carefully to ensure:

- air-conditioning is available and at low risk of failing during high temperature days
- reasonable capacity (e.g. greater than 20 persons) to be worthwhile opening
- seating is available (must have seating for each person as many will be older and/or disabled)
- accessibility (most centres should be in or near high risk or moderate risk areas of Blacktown City to enable short transport or even in walking distance)
- opening hours should at least be noon to 5 pm, later if possible
- toilets are available. There should be male, female and disabled toilets commensurate with the maximum people capacity
- cool drinking water is available (during COVID-19 restrictions this should be provided in separate bottles). A refrigerator should be available to keep water cool
- food provisions at or nearby
- facilities for disabled persons. These should be available including wheelchair access ramps, disabled toilets
- drop-off ease or available nearby parking. Drop-off zones should be close to the centre entrance
- COVID-19 plan. Refuge venues should have a COVID-19 plan in place or comply with the current COVID-19 restrictions issued by NSW Health
- space is available for specialised purposes (e.g. first aid, play, quiet).

Cool centres operations guide

Minimum furniture and service requirements for a cool centre

- Prior to opening a refuge, an operator should determine the furniture and services required by users and the operator's ability to meet them.
- Furniture must include tables and chairs, available power (for charging electronic devices etc).
- Prolonged or particularly severe temperature conditions might require expanded services.
- Where an operator will be providing food and expects that food to be prepared on site, they need to obtain advice from the Blacktown City Council. Pre-planning may be required to meet health regulations.
- Operators should consider if they wish to accommodate pets, before opening a cool centre.
- Operators should be able to provide heatwave information updates to cool centre patrons.
- All visitors should be signed in via a sign-in sheet (Appendix C).
- Visitors are given the survey to complete (Appendix D). A copy of the survey responses should be given to Blacktown City Council.

When to Open a cool centre

- Cool centres should be open when the Bureau of Meteorology declares a 'extreme' or 'severe' heatwave warning.
- Organisations should follow the heatwave service where possible: <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/>⁸

Cool centres operations guide

Coordination with local emergency services

It is recommended that the operation of Centres during extreme heat days be coordinated with local emergency services to:

- ensure emergency services are aware that the Centre is in operation in case of any incidents
- get support from a broader system (e.g. access to additional services and volunteers)
- where possible, cool centre operators should communicate with other cool centre operators to maintain situational awareness and resource sharing e.g. if one centre is at full capacity, operators can suggest another centre with capacity.

Staffing or volunteers

- Centres can be operated by volunteers and/or employees of an organisation (e.g., non-profit, faith-based, community).
- Operators should consider having staff or volunteers who are certified in first-aid and/or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) available during operating hours. Medical services beyond first-aid are not provided at Centres and should be referred to health authorities.
- Staff should be aware of how they can support individuals with functional needs. Service animals must be allowed to accompany their owners.
- All volunteers should be briefed for the tasks they will perform such as:
 - ensuring health and safety of all guests and staff
 - greeting patrons
 - signing patrons in on arrival and orienting them
 - making them comfortable
 - providing verified information about the emergency
 - accommodating diverse communities; and maintaining records.

Cool centres operations guide

COVID-19 procedures

It is important for the ongoing control of COVID-19 in NSW to follow the advice of NSW Health, especially if you are setting up a cool centre. Please also refer NSW Health's advice on cleaning and disinfection for public settings for guidance.

- Physical distancing:
 - maintain social (physical) distancing within cool centre centres, ideally at least 1.5 metres between individuals
 - separation of furniture and creating spaces for individual family units (families who live together do not need to maintain physical distancing in a cooling centre).
- Cleaning and disinfecting:
 - clean and disinfect environmental and commonly touched surfaces routinely throughout the day
 - wipe down tables and chairs with a disinfectant wipe between patrons
 - provide a safe place for visitors to dispose of garbage
 - refer to NSW Health's COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Manual: https://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0018/644004/COVID-19-IPAC-manual.pdf

Appendix C: Cool centre sign-in sheet

Date:

Location:

Name	Address	Phone Number	Emergency contact and number

Appendix D: Cool centre feedback survey

1. What age group do you belong to? If you are here with someone else, you may select more than 1 age group.

- Under 18 years old
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55+ years old

2. Where did you hear about the opening of the cool centres?

- Social media
- E-Newsletter
- Email
- Referral from family, friends or support worker
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Other (please specify):

3. Which suburb do you live in? This will help us evaluate cool centres locations.

4. Would you use the cool centres again or recommend it to someone else?

- Yes No

5. Do you have any comments or feedback?

References

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Cool centre

Open now

Come inside
and keep cool



Blacktown
City Council