

# Heat Smart Western Sydney

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**COUNCIL NAME**

Western Sydney  
Regional Organisation  
Of Councils Ltd

**WEB ADDRESS**

[wsroc.com.au/](http://wsroc.com.au/)

**SIZE**

8,872 square  
kilometres

**POPULATION**

2,175,000-plus

## Overview

The Heat Smart Western Sydney project sought to build resilience to current and future heatwaves, with a focus on supporting vulnerable communities.

In partnership with councils and the Australian Red Cross, WSROC implemented an engagement program to provide communities and frontline staff with knowledge and tools to adapt to heat and manage its impacts.

Through this engagement program, they also co-designed 25 recommendations for improving heatwave governance, mitigation, adaptation and response.

## Background

Heatwaves are widely recognised as Australia's most deadly natural hazard, and are projected to become more frequent and intense under climate change.

During the development of their [Turn Down the Heat Strategy](#), WSROC found that many organisations did not have a formal role in helping communities to manage heatwaves and adapt to a hotter climate.

Initial project scoping also identified that current health advice focuses on air-conditioning as the primary heat adaptation measure. This is not practical for many vulnerable people due to tenancy limitations, mobility challenges or cost-of-living.

Heat Smart Western Sydney was developed to better understand the challenges faced by vulnerable communities during heatwaves and how such events are currently being managed in Western Sydney. The project sought to identify opportunities for improvement, and build a coordinated approach to adapting to a hotter climate.

The project was funded under the Resilience NSW Community Resilience Innovation Grants.

## Implementation

Heat Smart was managed by WSROC in partnership with six councils, the Western Sydney Local Health District and consultancy Risk Frontiers. The Australian Red Cross, Western Sydney Community Forum, SouthWest and Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health Districts also played a key role.

An initial literature review, stakeholder interviews, and a community survey revealed the need for improved heatwave governance to support community resilience, as well as the need to educate and empower communities to manage their own risks.

The findings were presented at workshops with emergency management committees, councils and community service providers to gain feedback and further understand stakeholder experiences.

Heat Smart partners developed heatwave planning and preparedness workshops and resources, which were tested with communities. 20 workshops were delivered with tailored content for community service providers, frontline health providers and CALD communities. Formats ranged from online to face-to-face and in-home care.

## Outcomes

The Heat Smart Resilience Framework includes 25 recommendations for a holistic, multi-sector approach to heat resilience. The Resilient Sydney Steering Committee has committed to look at implementing the recommendations.

The Heat Smart suite of community engagement resources include print and digital pamphlets, social media tiles, and videos. These are available in 10 languages, catering to people of different abilities, literacy levels, and backgrounds. Plans are in place to promote these resources in future summers.

A Heatwave Guide for community organisations includes guidance on organisational planning and client welfare checklists.

Following the heatwave planning and preparedness workshops, community members reported a high confidence in managing impacts of heat.

75% of stakeholders agreed that the Heat Smart program has improved their organisation’s capability to engage communities about heatwave risk.



## Key Learnings

The Heat Smart project demonstrated that the need to adapt infrastructure, environments and behaviours for extreme heat events is still widely overlooked, and the scale of potential impacts under appreciated.

It identified that strategic intent on climate adaptation can often fail to translate into action due to a lack of practical guidance.

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Heat has complex, far-reaching and cascading impacts on city systems and the people that live in them. A highly collaborative, cross-sectoral, approach was needed to develop and agree actions.

Partnerships are also key to ensuring the continuity of the project and for resources to reach communities. Primary health networks are pushing the resources to GPs and other frontline health professionals in the lead up to summer, while the Australian Red Cross are delivering the workshops on an ongoing basis.

### Contact

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This project was the 2022 winner of the Climate Change Adaptation Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards