

The *HeatwaveHELP* (Health Emergency Local People) project aimed, between June 2024 and May 2026, to reduce heat-related harm through locally-led resilience-building in three local government areas (LGAs) in western Victoria.

Convened by the Grampians Public Health Unit, and locally-led and implemented by local project leadership groups in Horsham Rural City, Northern Grampians Shire, and Hepburn Shire, the *HeatwaveHELP* project saw more than 2000 community members across faith, care, cultural, business, services, sport, volunteer, social, health and other networks and workplaces trained to

- ❖ identify, from among people they already knew, who might be at high risk of heat harm, and
- ❖ support those people to prepare for and stay safe from heat before and during periods of severe and extreme heat.

Project activities across the LGAs included:

- *Developing locally-appropriate place-based heat-harm prevention strategies* suited to local context, capacity, and needs, and which built on the expertise of key local partners including councils, community and neighbourhood hubs, Aboriginal Cooperatives (Budja Budja and Goolum Goolum), and health organisations
- *Developing clear simple HEATSAFE messages* about heat risks and low-tech low-cost ways to stay safe
- *Disseminating HEATSAFE messages* and actions for safety using posters, social media tiles, magnets and lanyard cards, and through community workshops, information sessions, local media (including the ABC), and by mobilising the in-person networks of those trained
- Strengthening multi-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration and commitment to increasing heat risk awareness and embedding sustainable actions to prevent heat harm across our communities, having learnt from ancient First Nations' ways of mob caring for mob, and leveraging our shared community value of people looking out for each other in times of need.

Achievements have included

- More than 1 in 20 adults in the three LGAs were trained in HEATSAFE knowledge about harms from heat and how to use simple strategies to lower someone's risk of harm
- Many of those trained then used their knowledge and skills to check-in with and support clients, friends, family members, patients, patrons, neighbours, visitors and others in social, commercial and professional settings to stay heat-safe, in various ways and places, additionally including by
 - Opening cool spaces (including in pubs, churches, halls, foyers)
 - Ensuring professional staff and teams in general were prepared, before it hit, for heat's impact both on staff members themselves and on the people who relied on their services
 - Adopting re-modelled policies, procedures, guidelines, checklists, templates, training resources and other documents (across civic, health, emergency and other sectors) which had been revised to embed and trigger HEATSAFE thinking and actions to support others, and
 - Ensuring that key actions became part of "business as usual" thereby locking-in sustainability into the future
- Initial analysis of health service use data showed differences in patterns of use during and after heat events in summer of 2025-2026 compared with earlier years. Over time with further analysis we can better understand any changed patterns and grow our confidence about their impacts and longevity.

*Two years of two full-time equivalent HeatwaveHELP Co-ordinators were funded 2024-2026 through a grant provided by the Australian and Victorian Governments under the *National Partnership Agreement on Disaster Risk Reduction*. Critical in-kind people and resource support was provided by the project's 15 organisational partners. Thousands of residents and staff, members and volunteers in the more than 135 organisations involved contributed in inestimable ways. The project could not have had the impact it did without the work, support and commitment of so many.*

The HeatwaveHELP team members were privileged to be trusted by our communities to work side by side in helping to build strong and heat-resilient localities.

From here we are seeking to share our experiences and knowledge with others in and through our wide professional, civic and community networks while we continue to evaluate and understand the impact the HeatwaveHELP resilience-building model has had and can have.

HeatwaveHELP organisational partners 2024-2026

Grampians Public Health Unit (GPHU)
Hepburn Shire Council
Northern Grampians Shire Council
Horsham Shire Council
Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative
Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative
Central Highlands Rural Health
East Wimmera Health Services
Grampians Health
Western Victoria Primary Health Network
Ambulance Victoria
Department of Health, Victoria
Department of Families Fairness and Housing, Victoria
ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) Victoria
Griffith University
Additionally, the Project Steering Committee had consumer representation

HeatwaveHELP Team:

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HeatwaveHELP Co-ordinators

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HEATWAVE H.E.L.P.

*A Grampians region collaboration
Grampians Public Health Unit*



Heat can be fatal

Some people
are more at risk

H

Home
and living
conditions

E

Environment
and social
exclusion

A

Age and
underlying
conditions

T

Taking
certain
medications

There are ways
to stay safe

S

Stay cool and
drink water

A

Avoid being
outside in the
heat of the day

F

Phone family
and friends

E

Emergency
alerts and
weather
warnings



Scan to visit the
Better Health Channel
for more information
about the effects of
heat on health



HEATWAVE H.E.L.P.

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The Heatwave HELP project is funded by the Australian Government in partnership with the Victorian Government under the National Partnership Agreement for Disaster Risk Reduction.