

## 1 Policy History

Revision No.	Council Meeting Date	Minute No.	Adoption Date
1	12/11/2019	19/337	13/12/2019
2	09/07/2024	24/182	08/08/2024

## 2 Policy Objective

To guide Council on the arrangements for the preparation for and response to heatwave events within the Griffith LGA, to reduce the risk or counter the effects on the community from extended periods of high temperatures.

## 3 Policy Statement

### 3.1 Introduction

Griffith City Council recognises that heatwave conditions can have a significant impact on the community. Heatwaves have a range of economic and planning impacts across a broad range of sectors, including health care, transport, emergency services, energy and agriculture. Heatwaves can result in significant health stress on vulnerable people, and this stress may result in death. The Local Government Act provides the guiding principles for Council's and this includes managing risks to the local community.

### 3.1 Scope

One of the roles of Council during an Extreme Heatwave is to help residents understand, prepare for and minimise the impacts of heat. Along with general responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1993 and the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, Council administer other service areas which could be affected by extreme heat, including food safety, water supply provision, public health and environmental risk, road maintenance, bushfire risk and emergency/disaster management.

During an Extreme Heatwave Council's first priority will be to continue operating essential services to ensure there is minimum impact from heat to the delivery of these services to the community.

Council will provide support or assistance as requested by the NSW State Emergency Service or State Government in response to extreme heat events and in accordance with the NSW State Heatwave Sub Plan.

To ensure the best use of Council resources, emphasis will be placed on complimenting and supporting existing services provided by State/Commonwealth Government Agencies and specialist organisations funded to support vulnerable members of the

community, rather than the provision of 'duplicate' services.

### 3.2 Response

When the BOM Heatwave forecast indicates that the Griffith LGA is in the **Low Intensity Heatwave**, Council will:

- Commence the promotion of the “Beat the Heat” website and the key messages to prepare for and stay healthy in the heat. This is the Public Education message that is directed to the community in order to mitigate the impacts of heat.

When the BOM Heatwave forecast indicates that the Griffith LGA is in the **Severe Intensity Heatwave**, Council will:

- Assess available resources for the operation of “cooling centres” that can be accessed by members of the public using the checklist provided in Appendix A. This may include Council owned buildings and facilities such as the Library, Art Gallery, Swimming Pool, Griffith Regional Sports Centre, City Park wet area and the Regional Theatre. There are risks involved with accommodating or encouraging vulnerable people to move during extreme heat. The assessment of resources will include identifying a maximum number of people per m<sup>2</sup> for each facility, the hours of operations, Council’s revenue policy and the forecast of further hot weather, either intensifying or diminishing.

When the BOM Heatwave forecast indicated that the Griffith LGA is in the **Extreme Intensity Heatwave**, Council will:

- Provide community awareness and emergency management information within the Griffith local area settings of vulnerable populations via existing programs and services. This will include the distribution of materials prepared by the NSW Department of Community and Justice/ Homes NSW, State Government and specialist organisations in relation to extreme heat events as well as publication of information on Council’s website, and through other Council media channels as appropriate.
- Consider extended opening hours to Council public facilities if necessary to provide “cooling centres” to be accessed by members of the public. Any changes to normal opening hours will require the approval of the General Manager to ensure that operational staff levels are adequate. This change to normal opening hours will only remain in place for the period of the Extreme Intensity Heatwave.

Any proposed “cooling centre” should be assessed using the checklist provided in Appendix A prior to approval being granted for extended opening hours.

- Consider waiving the cost of entry to the swimming pool. Any changes to normal admission charges will require the approval of the General Manager. This change to pool admission will only remain in place for the period of the Extreme Intensity Heatwave.

### **3.3 Limitations**

This policy only applies to Council facilities that are open to the public as part of the normal function and operation of these facilities.

A single hot day should not trigger the activation of this policy. The BOM Heatwave forecast is the only suitable indicator to proceed with the appropriate response outlined above, depending on the severity of the forecast.

If the General Manager activates any response above this should be done to clearly indicate that it is the extension of an existing service and not create a community perception that additional services are being offered.

The General Manager may choose to make community facilities such as community centres, libraries, theatres, halls, swimming centres and sports stadiums available during extreme heat events but in doing so should recognise that there may be significant cost and risk issues involved. Any decision will carefully consider the logistics associated with management of the facilities such as staffing, security, medical assistance, public liability, infrastructure and air-conditioning, maintenance, cleaning, catering, amenities and hygiene etc. (see attached Appendix A Cooling Centre Check List)

Council will consult with Statewide Mutual on a case by case basis about the management of risk associated with the extended operating hours of existing facilities and services during extreme heat events.

Annexure A Cooling Centre Check List outlines the issues that will be assessed prior to activating a cooling centre. The access and usage of public facilities during an extreme heat event could attract liability risks to Council. Council acknowledges that cooling centre operating during an extreme heat event will be made available to the community at large without exception.

### **3.4 Events**

Council operated events that are impacted by extreme heat should activate their heat plan if one has been developed and consider the provision of water, the provision of shade and the provision of cooling to attendees. If the impact of hot weather cannot be mitigated during an event, consideration will be given to the cancellation of an event. The primary focus for consideration will be the health and safety of the attendees, staff and workers, and not the costs incurred if an event is cancelled.

## 4 Definitions

**Extreme Heat:** In this policy means a climatic condition of abnormally hot weather where the high maximum temperatures are unusual and prolonged for the Griffith LGA. ***This term should not be confused with 'Extreme Heatwave'.***

**Heatwave:** The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) generally defines heatwave as 'A period of abnormally hot weather lasting over several days', and can be characterised as three or more days of high maximum and high minimum temperatures that are unusual for that location. In this Policy, a heatwave is considered as an 'Extreme Heat' event in which a set of meteorological conditions occur that is described by the Bureau of Meteorology as a heatwave and which may affect the Griffith LGA.

### Heatwave Intensity/Severity Scale

The BoM uses the following Scale to describe heatwave intensity or severity:

- **No Heatwave**
- **Low Intensity Heatwave** – The bulk of heatwaves at each location are of low intensity, with most people expected to have adequate capacity to cope with this level of heat.
- **Severe Heatwave** – Less frequent, higher intensity heatwaves are classified as severe and will be challenging for some more vulnerable people, such as those over 65, pregnant women, babies and young children, and those with a chronic illness.
- **Extreme Heatwave** – Even rarer and exceptionally intense heatwaves are classed as extreme and will impact normally reliable infrastructure, such as power and transport. Extreme heatwaves are a risk for anyone who does not take precautions to keep cool, even those who are healthy.

(Source – BoM website - <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/about.shtml>)

**Hot Day:** A period of 24 hours with a forecast temperature equal to or exceeding 40°C

**Public Education:** In this policy means public awareness through increasing knowledge to enable people to understand the risk and the

necessary actions to take to mitigate the effects of the risk. Public education is delivered prior to the event.

**Public Information:** In this policy means the information and advice provided to the public during an extreme heatwave to inform them of the response actions being taken and the specific actions that they should take, given the circumstances, to protect themselves.

**Vulnerable People:** People who may be affected by heat to varying degrees depending on their personal circumstances may be at risk. Generally more vulnerable sections of the community include those over 65 years of age, pregnant women, babies and young children, outdoor workers and those with a chronic illness.

## 5 Exceptions

Nil

## 6 Legislation

Local Government Act 1993

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989

## 7 Related Documents

NSW State Heatwave Sub Plan *A sub plan of the NSW State Emergency Management Plan*

Minimising the impacts of extreme heat: A guide for local government *Published by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage March 2016*

## 8 Directorate

Infrastructure and Operations – Emergency Management

## APPENDIX A – Cooling Centre Check List

PROPOSED COOLING CENTRE								
Name:								
Address								
Centre Manager:								
Normal operating hours:	DAY	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
	OPEN							
	CLOSE							
Modified operating hours:	DAY	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
	OPEN							
	CLOSE							
SUITABILITY								
Floor Area m <sup>2</sup> :								
Maximum number of people including staff:								
Overnight stay	YES		NO		Circle one			
Number of Toilets:	MALE:		FEMALE		Disabled MALE		Disabled FEMALE	
Number of Showers	MALE:		FEMALE		Disabled MALE		Disabled FEMALE	
Kitchen:	YES		NO		Circle one			
Meal Prep:	Commercial Kitchen		Light Meals		Tea/Coffee		Circle one	
Laundry:	YES		NO		Circle one			
STAFF								
Normal Staff numbers:								
Additional Staff Required:	May require additional skill sets, including WHS compliance							
Volunteer Staff Required:	May consist of SES personnel etc.							
UTILITIES								
Lighting:	Provide an assessment of the of the following utilities and the suitability for a cooling centre Is there adequate internal and external lighting for the proposed extended hours of operation:							
Cooling:	What cooling is provided and is it adequate for the proposed extended hours of operation: Eg. fans, evaporative air conditions, reverse cycle air conditioning							
Water supply:	Is there suitable adequate access to the water supply for the proposed number of people?							
Furniture:	Provide details of the suitable adequate furniture for the proposed number of people?							
HEALTH								
First Aid:	Availability of relevant first aid to respond to health issues							
Emergency Services:	Availability and access to emergency services to respond to health issues							