

Queensland Health

Extreme heat and heatwaves

Stakeholder toolkit 2024–25



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Introduction

This stakeholder kit has been developed to assist in communicating important information about the risk heat can have on the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders. If you would like to share heat-related messaging through your own communication channels, this kit may assist.

It includes key messages and communication materials designed to be adapted for use throughout the hottest months of the year, or in the lead up to and during a heatwave event.

Queensland Health (QH) is the primary agency for managing heatwaves under the State Disaster Management Plan and outside of proactive heat-related messaging are responsible for issuing warnings if an extreme heatwave occurs. This process is internal to QH, and not outlined in this kit.

The risk of heat and heatwaves on health in Queensland

Heatwaves have taken more lives and caused more adverse health outcomes than any other natural hazard in Australia.

In 2024–25, it is predicted that Queensland will experience longer periods of heatwaves, with higher humidity and overnight temperatures.

A study conducted by James Cook University found:

- emergency ambulance calls increased by over 10% during heatwaves compared to regular days
- heatwaves led to a 5% rise in deaths, varying across Queensland
- very remote areas faced more risk from low to severe heatwaves
- major cities saw the highest danger from extreme heatwaves
- the spike in emergency ambulance calls persisted for up to 10 days after a heatwave, suggesting the days following might still be hot (not classified as a heatwave, but still have a compounding impact on health)
- residents located in metropolitan areas in Queensland had a higher death risk during all heatwave levels
- people with respiratory, mental, and behavioural conditions were more affected by heatwayes.

What is a heatwave?

The Bureau of Meteorology defines a heatwave as 3 or more days of high maximum and minimum temperatures that are unusual for that location.

Heatwaves are identified as the third highest priority natural hazard, and the deadliest, claiming more lives than any other natural hazard. They are also a contributing factor to bushfires, a fatal hazard that also causes secondary health hazards associated with poor air and water quality.

Key messages

Understanding heatwaves

- Heatwaves in Australia have caused more deaths and adverse health outcomes than any other natural hazard.
- In 2024-25, Queensland is predicted to experience longer periods of heatwaves, with higher humidity. Even a low severity heatwave lasting a week can wear out healthy people, especially when it's humid.
- Research shows that emergency services and health departments observe significant increases in emergencies during and up to 10 days after heatwaves.

Recognise and act

- Symptoms of dehydration and heatstroke include dizziness, headaches, nausea, rapid pulse, confusion, and even loss of consciousness. If you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated.
- The colour of your urine is an easy way to see how well-hydrated you are it should be light straw coloured.
- If experiencing heat-related symptoms, it's vital to act immediately. Seek shade, hydrate, cool off, and avoid sugary or alcoholic beverages.

Protecting vulnerable groups

- Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and those
 with certain medical conditions or on certain medications need special attention
 during hot weather.
- Physical workers and athletes need to be extra cautious and ensure they're wellhydrated during heatwaves.

Preparing for heatwaves

- To stay healthy during a heatwave, hydrate, reduce outdoor activity, and keep indoors, ideally in air-conditioned spaces if available.
- If you don't have air-conditioning, consider visiting public spaces like libraries or shopping centres.

- Use wet towels or ice packs to cool down or place your feet in cold water.
- Check on vulnerable neighbours and family members regularly.
- Plan in case of power outages. Store essential medicines out of the heat.

Collective effort

- As Queenslanders, we must understand that heat warnings apply to all of us, not just the 'vulnerable' in our communities.
- By recognising the dangers, symptoms, and precautions associated with heatwaves, we can collectively ensure the safety and well-being of our community.

Call to action

Call to action on any heatwave message opportunity:

For more information visit www.health.gld.gov.au/heatsafe

If you or anyone else show signs of heatstroke call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice or visit your doctor. If it is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000).

Target audience

Summary of our target audience

- **All Queenslanders** who may be impacted by a heatwave and/or who care for children or vulnerable people.
- **Vulnerable people** including the elderly, babies and very young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, people with medical conditions or taking certain medications, people with an alcohol and or other drug problem, and people with an intellectual disability.
- Queenslanders who are at risk of heat exposure including those who work in agriculture, construction, landscaping, delivery services, oil and gas operations, and those who are working in hot conditions outdoors, or indoors without access to air conditioning.

What is important to them

- **Relevance:** Messages should align with public perceptions and lived experiences.
- Acknowledgment of vulnerabilities: Recognising different risk levels based on available resources and vulnerabilities is essential.
- **Advice:** They are looking for health advice and recommended actions, not repetitive information.
- **Clear, unfiltered information:** The audience wants direct communication that isn't distorted or sensationalised by media outlets.

Communication materials

Communication materials are available for download from the <u>Queensland Health Asset</u> <u>Library</u> to support communication activities and help you share this important information through your own communication channels.

Social media assets

A selection of copy and images that relates to how to prepare for a heatwave, and what to do during a heatwave are available for you to download from the Queensland Asset Library to use on your own channels. You can adapt the copy to suit your needs and audience.

Queensland Health's 'Every body can overheat' social media tiles are available for use and will be published on Queensland Health's social media channels during summer.

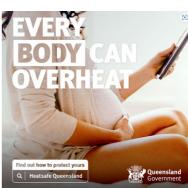












Preparing for extreme heat / heatwaves

Post 1: Heat warnings aren't just for the vulnerable

We all need to be careful during a heatwave.

When it's very hot, your body tries to cool down by sweating.

Sometimes sweating isn't enough to cool you down.

This can make you feel sick, with symptoms like feeling dizzy, having a headache, feeling nauseous, wanting to drink water, or even vomiting.

Heat-related illness can be dangerous, and in some cases, deadly.

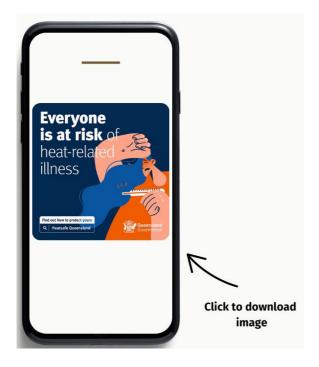
Here's how to keep you and your family safe:

- drink water often (between 6-8 glasses each day)
- check in on loved ones regularly (especially older adults and pregnant women)
- 🄽 avoid heavy exercise during the hottest parts of the day
- keep cool in air conditioning if available or find a shaded or cool spot to rest.
- be sun safe by wearing a hat and sunglasses, keeping out of the sun between 10am and 2pm, wearing long sleeve and light clothing, and applying sunscreen every two hours.

If you, or someone you know, start feeling unwell due to the heat:

- Get medical advice by calling 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit your doctor.
- In emergencies, don't wait, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe



Post 2: Signs of heat-related illness

Feeling unwell in the heat?

If you, or someone you know feels sweaty, nauseous, dizzy, has a fast heartbeat, or seems confused, these may be signs of heat stress or heatstroke.

When your body loses too much water and salt – often from sweating a lot – it's called heat stress.

A more severe condition is heatstroke. This happens when your body can't keep themselves cool. It's very serious and you need medical attention straight away.

If you have these signs or know someone who does:

- Find a cool, shaded place
- Drink water avoid drinks with sugar or alcohol
- Cool the body with a shower or bath
- Lay down and rest
- Wear less clothes
- Use wet towels to cool down
- If you don't get better, get medical advice by calling 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visiting your doctor.
- In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.gld.gov.au/heatsafe



Post 3: Everyone is at risk of heat-related illness

Staying safe in hot weather is important for everyone – even you.

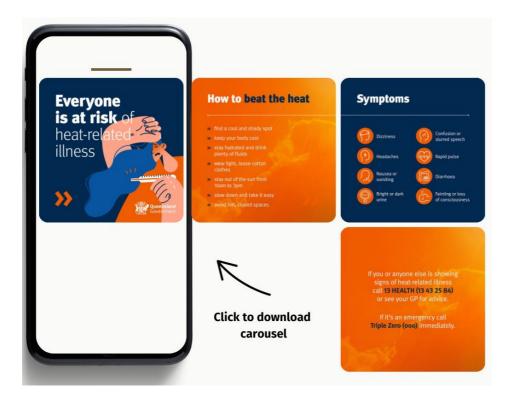
Hot weather can be hard on your body. When it gets very hot, your body tries to cool down by sweating. But sometimes, sweating isn't enough to keep us cool.

We might start to feel unwell with a heat-related illness.

Heat-related illness can be dangerous, or even deadly.

If you, or someone around you, starts to feel unwell from the heat, here's how to beat the heat \downarrow .

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.



Post 4: Vulnerable people during a heatwave

Heatwaves are a danger to everyone.

But some people are more at risk of heat-related illness.

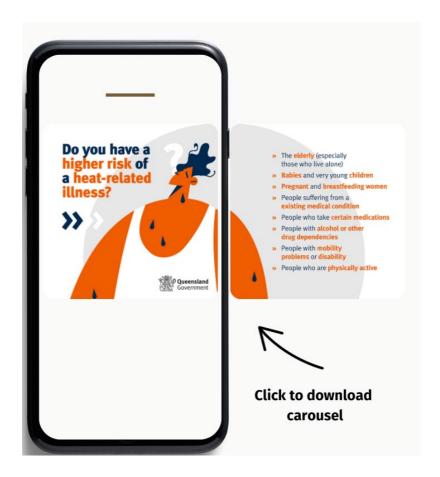
If you have friends, neighbours or family members who are in danger during a heatwave, remind them to:

- drink water (between 6-8 glasses each day)
- 🟃 avoid heavy exercise during the hottest parts of the day
- find a cool place, use fans, or air conditioning if available
- be sun safe. Wearing a hat and sunglasses, stay out of the sun between 10am and 2pm, wear long sleeves and light clothing and apply sunscreen every two hours.

If someone you know starts to feel unwell from the heat, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit your doctor.

In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.



Post 5: Pram safety in hot temperatures

Did you know prams can heat up quickly, putting your little ones at risk? 😨

Using dry covers like blankets or muslin cloths over prams can trap heat, leading to dangerously high temperatures inside.

Young kids dehydrate faster than adults, and their body temperatures can rise 3-5 times quicker, increasing the risk of heatstroke.

Keep prams cool with these tips:

- Drape a damp muslin cloth over the pram with a clip-on fan to lower the temperature inside by 4.7 degrees.
- Make sure the covers are soaked with water but squeezed out so they're not dripping. Use a spray bottle to re-moisten the cloth regularly to keep it working well.
- Regularly monitor infants for signs of overheating.

Let's keep our children safe while enjoying the sunshine! For more tips visit: www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe

i Source:

The University of Sydney (2023). <u>Parents are unintentionally heating up prams: here's what</u> you need to know

#ParentingHacks #BabyCoolingTips #SummerReady



Post 6: How heat affects your body

It's just a bit of hot weather, right? 😨

Wrong! It impacts young and healthy bodies as well, so it's important to understand what's happening in your body when it's hot and how to protect yourself.

When you sweat more, it's because your body increases blood flow to the surface of your skin. Your heart has to worker harder to do this and reduces blood flow to your internal organs as a result. You also start to lose fluids from all that sweating, which can affect your kidneys.

Humidity makes things worse because your sweat has a harder time evaporating off your skin. This means you'll feel a lot hotter, and your body has a harder time of cooling down.



If you don't take measures to rehydrate and cool down, all of this can result in dehydration and heart and organ failure.

To keep safe and cool, remember to:

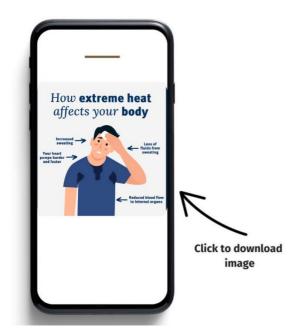
- drink 2 to 3 litres of water a day at regular intervals
- check in on loved ones regularly (especially the elderly and pregnant women)
- 🏃 avoid heavy exercise during the hottest parts of the day
- seek air conditioning, or stay in a cool environment
- 🤓 slip, slop, slap, seek and slide if you're spending time outside.

If you or anyone else shows signs of heat-related illness, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice, or visit your doctor. If it is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.

i Source:

The Guardian Australia (2024). What happens to your body during extreme heat?



During a heatwave

Post 1: Heatwave warning and health risk (Option 1)

The Bureau of Meteorology is warning of a <insert intensity – low/moderate/severe> heatwave in parts of <insert location>.

Because of <insert intensity> heatwave, we're having very hot weather even at night, making it hard to stay cool, especially with the levels of humidity.

Heatwaves can affect everyone, but certain groups, such as the elderly, pregnant women, or young children, might be more at risk.

Heat-related health issues can be severe and sometimes deadly.

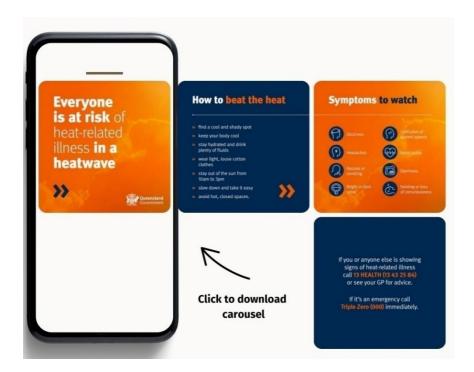
Learn more about how to beat the heat and signs of heat-related illness \bigcirc (point to image). Please check on vulnerable friends, family or neighbours (like the elderly, pregnant or young kids).

If you or anyone else show signs of heat-related illness, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice, or visit your doctor.

If it is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.gld.gov.au/heatsafe.

Get updates from the Queensland Bureau of Meteorology.



Post 2: Heatwave warning and health risk (Option 2)

There's a heatwave in <insert location> and everyone is at risk of heat-related illness.

To beat the heat, remember to:

- drink water (between 6-8 glasses each day)
- wear light, loose cotton clothes
- 🏃 avoid heavy exercise during the hottest parts of the day
- 💪 stay in air conditioning if available, or a find a cool public place like a library
- use wet towels or ice packs to cool down or place your feet in cold water
- 🥯 slow down and take it easy
- wavoid hot, closed spaces
- be sun safe. Wear a hat and sunglasses, keep out of the sun between 10am and 2pm, wear long sleeves and light clothing and apply sunscreen every two hours.

Look out for these signs of heat-related illness:

- Dizziness
- Headaches
- nausea or vomiting
- fainting
- bright or dark urine
- confusion or slurred speech
- rapid pulse
- diarrhoea
- loss of consciousness.

If you or anyone else shows signs of heat-related illness, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice, or visit your doctor. If it is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.gld.gov.au/heatsafe.

Get updates from the Queensland Bureau of Meteorology.

Post 3: Food safety

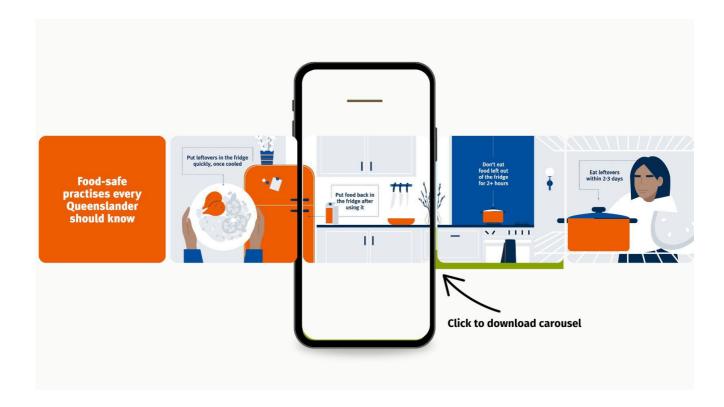
As the weather gets hot, it's important to keep your food fresh and safe.

During very high heat remember to:

- Always put food back in the fridge after use.
- Never eat food that's been out of the fridge for 2 or more hours.
- Put leftovers in the fridge once the food has cooled.
- Eat leftovers within 2–3 days for optimal freshness.
- Thaw and marinate meat in the fridge, not on the bench.
- Shop with a cooler bag and picnic with an esky.

Stay safe and enjoy your summer meals without a worry!

For more tips on food safety visit www.qld.gov.au



Post 4: Look before you lock

Every year in Queensland, children and pets are left alone in hot cars. This can be dangerous.

Inside a parked car, temperatures can reach between 20 and 40 degrees higher than outside.

Young children are in danger because:

- They are more at risk of heatstroke
- They dehydrate quicker
- Their body temperatures increase 3 to 5 times faster than adults
- The extreme heat can lead to life-threatening conditions like heatstroke, brain injuries, heart, and lung failure or even death.

Never leave children or pets inside cars, even briefly, and don't give children your keys to play with.

Look before you lock, every time.

For tips on staying safe in the heat, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe.



Post 5: Hydration

As the temperature rises, so does the risk of dehydration! Have you checked the colour of your pee today? ②

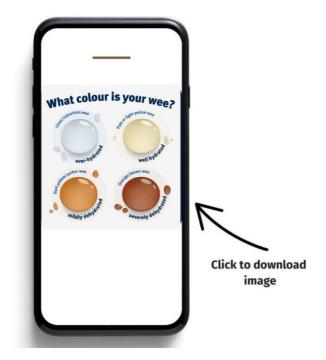
It's an easy way to see how well-hydrated you are. During these hot days, most adults should aim for about 2 to 2.5 litres (that's 8-10 cups!) of water. Kids need around 1 to 2 litres (or 4-8 cups).

Make sure to drink extra water if you're out in the sun, exercising, or if you're pregnant or breastfeeding. *

If your pee is a different colour—like red or green—it could be due to what you've eaten or other health issues.

Keep an eye out! If you notice any unusual colours or if it's very dark along with fever, pain, or trouble urinating, don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare provider. Stay safe and hydrated out there!

For tips on staying safe in the heat visit: www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe



Post 6: Humidity and heat

Heatwave levels don't include humidity.

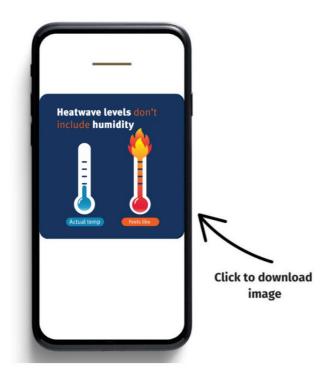
Queensland's humidity increases heat health risks, even for young and healthy people.

When humidity rises, our capacity to cool our bodies through sweat evaporation reduces.

If a heatwave lasts a long time, even if it's a low heatwave, the consistent heat can fatigue even healthy minds and bodies.

So, when you hear 'heatwave', don't just check the temperature. Factor in the humidity and prepare to embrace the Queensland sweat!

For tips on staying safe in the heat visit: www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe



Post 7:

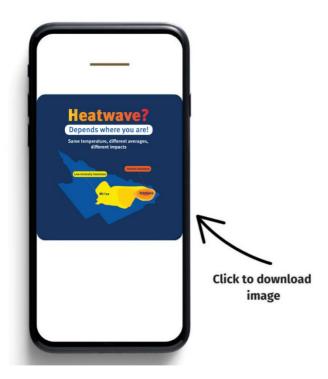
A heatwave in Queensland isn't the same everywhere.

What counts as a heatwave in Brisbane might be a typical summer day in Mount Isa! It's all about local averages.

A heatwave in Queensland is when there are 3 or more days of high maximum and minimum temperatures that are unusual for that location.

So, when you hear 'heatwave', it means the temperature is going to be higher than it normally is in your area.

For tips on staying safe in the heat visit: www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe



Short-form content

Queensland prepares for longer heatwaves and high humidity

As Queenslanders, we're used to sunny and warm weather. But this summer, we can expect more than just the usual heat.

With longer heatwaves and high humidity coming, it's important to be prepared. Here's how you can do that:

- **Know the risks:** understand how extended heat can affect your health.
- **Stay informed:** keep an eye on weather updates and plan outdoor activities accordingly.
- **Be prepared:** make sure you have essential supplies and know who to contact in case of an emergency.
- Stay hydrated: drink plenty of water throughout the day.

Remember, extreme heat can affect not just your body but also your mental health, leading to poor sleep and irritability. While the elderly and very young are more at risk, anyone can suffer from heat-related illnesses.

Watch for symptoms like sweating, headaches, nausea, and muscle cramps, which can signal heat exhaustion. More severe symptoms like a rapid heartbeat, dizziness, confusion, and even loss of consciousness can indicate heat stroke.

If you or someone else shows these symptoms, take action immediately: find shade, drink water, and use wet towels to cool off. If you suspect heat stroke, call Triple Zero (000) for help.

Keeping our community safe is everyone's responsibility. We can all help by staying indoors during the hottest parts of the day, using air-conditioned public places like libraries, and checking on vulnerable friends and neighbours.

Simple things like sipping cold water, applying cool towels, or using ice packs can really help.

Stay informed and stay cool. For more tips on staying safe in the heat this summer, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/heatsafe

Impending heatwave event

Heatwave warning – stay safe and informed

We're bracing for an imminent heatwave in **<insert location>**.

The Bureau of Meteorology has alerted that <moderate/severe> conditions are set to affect <insert location> in the coming <insert timeframe>.

Severe weather can be more than just uncomfortable; it can be dangerous for your health. Here's how to stay safe and prepared:

Plan Ahead

- Keep an eye on the weather using the Bureau of Meteorology's Heatwave Service.
- Make sure food and medicine are stored at safe temperatures.
- Have a backup plan if the power goes out.
- Know who to contact if you need help.
- Follow your doctor's advice if you have health issues.

Stay Cool

- Stay indoors during the hottest part of the day.
- Keep windows and doors shut to block out heat.
- Use air conditioning if you can or find a cool public place like a library.
- · Avoid heavy activities.
- If you have to go outside, wear a hat, long sleeves, and light clothing. Seek shade and apply sunscreen every two hours.

Stay Hydrated

- Drink plenty of water—about 6 to 8 glasses a day.
- Avoid drinks like alcohol, hot beverages, and sugary drinks, as they can worsen dehydration.
- Carry a water bottle if you're going outside.

Look out for others

- Check in on elderly friends, neighbours, and relatives during heatwaves to see if they need help.
- Never leave children or pets in parked cars.
- If using a pram in the heat, cover it with a damp muslin cloth and consider using a small fan for extra cooling. Avoid dry materials, as they can trap heat.

Heat stress can lead to serious health issues like cramps, exhaustion, and heatstroke. If you or someone else shows signs of these, call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25) or Triple Zero (000) in an emergency. For more tips on staying safe in hot weather and caring for vulnerable individuals, visit the Queensland Health <u>website</u>.

Screensaver/digital screens

A digital screensaver is available to download in landscape orientation.





Download screensaver here

Factsheet and preparation checklists









Download fact sheet for health emergency kit





Download CALD poster (stay safe in heat)



Download CALD poster (heatstroke)

Queensland Government

Translated resources

The 'protect yourself' and 'know the signs of heatstroke' posters are available in other languages including:

- Arabic
- Fijian
- French
- Italian
- Punjabi
- Samoan
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Thai
- Tok Pisin
- Tongan
- Vietnamese



Download the translated resources

Other resources



Watch video - Birdie and the very hot day







Part 1 - Claire's warning: Heat, humidity and health

Part 2 - Martin's story: Why does age increase heat risk?

Part 3 - Heatwave ready: How to stay safe during hot...

<u>View Ethos – Heat Health Early Warning System for Older Persons by Griffith University</u>

More information

- Hot weather health and safety
- Get Ready Queensland
- Reduce the risk of skin cancer
- Preventing skin cancer
- Heatwave service

Cancer Council Queensland

• Sun protection

Cancer Council Australia

Sun safety

RSPCA

- Animal care advice
- Heatstroke prevention (dogs)
- Heat and dogs in cars

Contact us

If you have any questions about the contents of this toolkit, please contact Queensland Health via email at: strategiccommunications@health.qld.gov.au.