

Queensland Heatwave Response Plan

December 2004

HEATWAVE PLAN APPROVAL

Signature:

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Position: Director General Queensland Health

Date: / / 2004

Prepared by Queensland Health
Emergency Preparedness and Continuity Management Project

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1. Authority

The authority for the development and implementation of this Plan is:

- 1.1 Queensland Emergency Medical Systems Advisory Committee (QEMSAC) recommended the development of a heatwave response plan in February 2004
- 1.2 This was endorsed by Cabinet in August 2004 arising from Department of Natural Resources and Mines' submission on climate change adaptation.
- 1.3 The Disaster Management Act of 2003, gives force to mitigation, preparation, response and recovery from adverse events that affect the community.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This document is intended to provide a framework to support a heatwave response across Queensland. Whilst the Plan currently makes specific mention of South East Queensland for summer of 2004/05, it will be applied to all regions of Queensland as the Bureau of Meteorology develops a regionally based heat threshold.

3. Context

- 3.1 Queensland enjoys a warm to hot tropical and sub-tropical climate, and the way this heat is perceived is affected by humidity. The measure used when heat and humidity are combined is known as the 'heat index'. The impact of extreme temperatures can affect the service delivery capacity of many government and community organisations, and may exacerbate the health risks to the public.
- 3.2 In Australia during the 20th Century, heat waves caused more deaths than any other natural hazard except disease, yet remains one of the least-studied and most underrated hazards (Emergency Management Australia 2004). Events that cause loss of property or overt loss of life, enact a significant recovery phase and review of the preparedness and response for that event. The subtle loss of life and increased morbidity associated with heatwave does not elicit a similar recovery phase or post event review.
- 3.3 As an example, over the last 10 years with the exception of 1999, heatwave conditions have been experienced in South East Queensland on two or more days every year. The clinical risk of heatwave is dehydration and hyperthermia leading to shock, organ failure and death. Those most at risk from heatwave conditions are:
 - Aged and frail, especially those living alone
 - Babies and young children
 - Homeless
 - People whose physical disabilities impair their capacity to self-manage
 - People with a mental illness that impairs their capacity to self-manage
 - People taking certain types of medications
 - People suffering chronic disease
 - People working outside and particularly undertaking physical exertion or at sporting events

- 3.4 Recent Heatwave South East Queensland examples:
- January 2000
 - 22 recorded deaths and 350 injuries costing an estimated \$2 million dollars (*Audit of the Queensland Disaster Management System 2004-05*)
 - February 2004
 - 12 recorded deaths and 221 heat related hospitalisations (preliminary data) (*State Coroner and Queensland Health, Health Information Centre*)
- 3.5 In view of the impact that extreme temperature conditions can have on public health, the Queensland Government has developed this Heatwave Response Plan to guide multi-agency preparedness and emergency medical response to extreme heat events. The response capability is determined by:
- 3.5.1 The capacity of the Bureau of Meteorology to accurately predict extreme weather events such as a potential heatwave is 3-4 days preceding the heatwave
 - 3.5.2 By the time a heatwave starts the window of opportunity for effective action is very short
 - 3.5.3 Prior agency preparedness is of the essence
- 3.6 The Bureau of Meteorology does not issue public weather warnings for heat. However, following a heatwave event in January 2000, an arrangement was put in place between the Bureau of Meteorology and Queensland Health regarding heat. The Bureau of Meteorology issues advice to Queensland Health when the heat index is forecasted to exceed 36 in Brisbane for at least 2 consecutive days. Queensland Health in turn forwards this advice to hospitals and other agencies.
- 3.7 In the past, the issuing of heat advice by the Bureau of Meteorology has not been used as a trigger to activate a coordinated response of emergency medical providers and/or government departments. This Plan establishes the Bureau's heat advice as an agency response trigger

4. Principles

- 4.1 Building the capacity of individuals and communities to self manage their response to heatwaves through strategies such as cooling their environment or accessing a cooler environment.
- 4.2 Community involvement is the key to ensuring the health and safety of aged people and other people at risk of heat related illness
- 4.3 Ensure a high level of coordinated emergency medical care to Queenslanders during a heatwave.
- 4.4 It is necessary that summer preparedness campaigns will target public awareness about heat events, in addition to storm and cyclone events. This will focus on the principles of prevention and mitigation. They are:
 - 4.4.1 Advise the public of ensuing heatwave management strategies, via media releases as summer approaches.
 - 4.4.2 Queensland Health and Queensland Ambulance Service to develop leaflets with general heat care advice to health care professionals; (GP practices, pharmacies).

- 4.4.3 Queensland Health, Queensland Ambulance Service, Workplace Health & Safety and Education Queensland to refer social care agencies (HACC, Meals on Wheels, etc.) to information available on the Queensland Health website - www.health.qld.gov.au. This information may be disseminated by social care staff and volunteers to their clients.

5. Aim

The Heatwave Response Plan aims to:

- 5.1 Provide a coordinated plan to guide agency responses.
- 5.2 Minimise heat related mortality and morbidity in the population by raising public awareness of the hazards of heat and the necessity of preventative measures.
- 5.3 Minimise the impact of heat events on staff and other service responders.

6 Objective

This Plan provides a response framework which will achieve the following objectives:

- 6.1 To identify and activate the trigger that activates the heat response plan.
- 6.2 To provide a coordinated emergency pre-hospital, hospital and other agency staff response to heat events.
- 6.3 To develop and implement a communication plan in consultation with and supported by those relevant stakeholders.
- 6.4 To develop and implement a clearly articulated and structured process that engages and supports the community during heatwaves.
- 6.5 To assist with reducing the impact on ambulance, hospital emergency departments and other services.
- 6.6 To implement processes that manage “ambulance turnaround time”, thus reducing the significant service delivery impact this has on the Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Health.
- 6.7 To ensure future preparedness campaigns target public awareness about heatwave events.

7. Emergency Response

The Queensland Heatwave Response Plan is a sub-plan of the Queensland Health Disaster Plan (which will be superseded by the State Health Emergency Response Plan, SHERP, in July 2005).

7.1 Command, Control and Coordination

Once a multi-agency response is declared for an extreme weather event (Heatwave) by the State Medical Controller, the Heatwave Response Plan is activated. This Heatwave Response Plan is consistent with the Disaster Management guidelines of the Disaster Management Act 2003 which may also be activated under the provisions of that Act. Queensland Health will assume lead agency coordination of agency response to Heatwave victims.

7.2 Incident Management – Heatwave

Agencies will respond in accordance with their own agency plan whilst acting in a coordinated manner according to the requirements of this Plan.

7.3 Preparedness

7.3.1 Arrangements in place to ensure, that should a heatwave occur, all those agencies which may be needed to cope with the heatwave effects can be rapidly mobilised and deployed.

7.3.2 Ensure agencies understand their role and the roles of others.

7.3.3 Pre-prepared media statements for each stage of the heatwave are accessible.

7.4 Response

7.4.1 Agencies to follow their specific agency action plan.

7.5 Recovery

7.5.1 Maintain a community response to clients who continue to be at risk as the heatwave abates

7.5.2 Provide continuing appropriate media releases

7.6 Clinical Management - Heat Illness

7.6.1 Immediate referral to medical care should be considered for distressed patients.

7.6.2 The principles of management for heatwave are to preferably manage those affected within their own environment.

7.6.3 It is important to create a cool environment or if required move to a cool environment.

7.6.4 Heat loss should be encouraged and supported with urgent cooling without causing shivering.

7.6.5 Re-hydration is also a mainstay of clinical management.

8 Activation Process

8.1 Heatwave Trigger

8.1.1 The Bureau of Meteorology contacts the Coordinator of Emergency Health Services - Queensland Health who advises the State Medical Controller. Queensland Health and the Queensland Ambulance Service may seek further weather clarification from the BoM, to establish the context that the warning was issued in.

8.1.2 State Medical Controller will declare the appropriate warning and advise other stakeholder agencies as required.

8.1.3 The alert trigger will be specific to an area.

South East Queensland

- A 'heat warning' will be declared when the heat index is expected to exceed 36 for Brisbane for 2 days or more or
- An 'extreme heat warning' will be declared when the heat index is expected to exceed 40 for Brisbane for 2 days or more.

8.1.4 Agencies and responders will follow the activation phases based on the national alerting guidelines

- White - issued 3 - 4 days prior to heatwave and agencies notified of alert and commence internal preparations.
- Yellow - issued 1 - 2 days prior to heatwave and initial public warnings are provided via the media.
- Red - issued within 24 hours of expected heatwave and agencies expected to be at a high degree of readiness.
- Green - Agencies stand down from heatwave event readiness.

8.1.5 The Queensland Ambulance Service or Queensland Health facilities will initiate their internal heatwave response strategies as required and coordinated via the office of Coordinator Emergency Health Services.

8.2 Agency roles and responsibilities

8.2.1 Individual Agencies will respond in accordance with the attached Agency Action Plans

8.2.2 Agency Summary Action Plans

- Queensland Health attached
- Department of Emergency Services (lead agency - Queensland Ambulance Service) attached
- Queensland Police Service attached
- Bureau of Meteorology attached
- Workplace Health and Safety attached
- Education Queensland attached
- Disability Services to be advised
- Queensland Transport to be advised
- Department of Energy to be advised

8.3 Communication Arrangements

8.3.1 Public

- At stage Yellow, Queensland Health will issue an initial alert to the community on how to reduce incidence of heat related illness.
- Queensland Health will issue further alerts and information to the community as required during the course of the heatwave.

8.3.2 Agency

- Queensland Health is to provide activation and clinical management advice to all key agencies on receipt of information from the Bureau of Meteorology.
- Electricity, water and telephone agencies are requested not to terminate services to anyone during a heatwave

9. Financial Arrangements

9.1 Heat is not included for funding under the disaster management framework. The types of resources that may be required in heatwave are mostly cooling technology and it is the responsibility of property owners, employers and/or communities to provide this resource. Any heatwave response resources/funding will need to be met by the individual Agency's existing budget.

10. Communication Plan (Strategic Media and Event/Incident information)

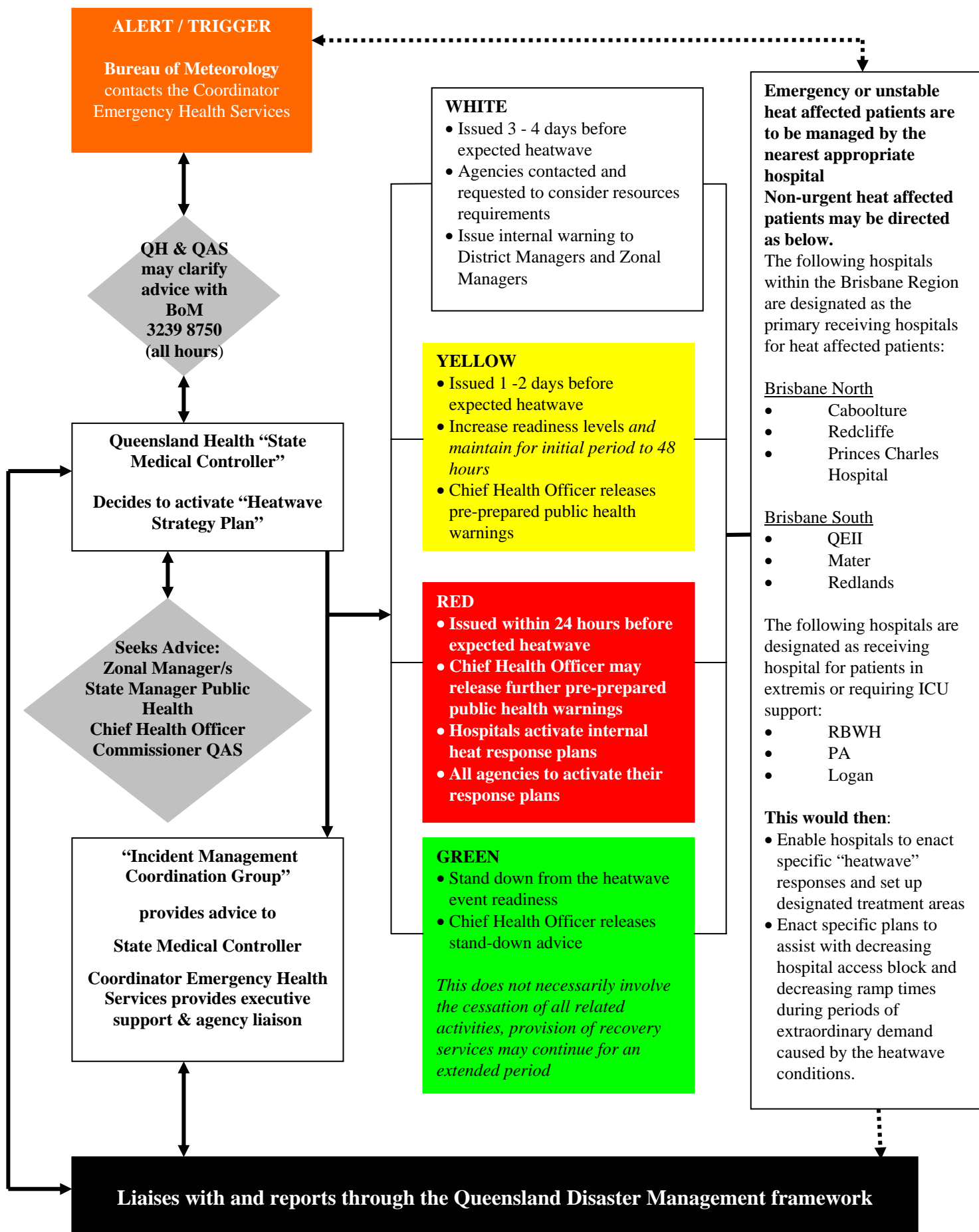
- 10.1 Queensland Health will assume the lead agency role receiving the initial trigger from the Bureau of Meteorology and will contact all other agencies.
- 10.2 Queensland Health will communicate to the community, particularly the aged and frail, the potential for extremely hot days to affect health and wellbeing and what precautions can be taken to reduce the adverse health impact of the heatwave.

11. Emergency Response Evaluation

- 11.1 Within 7 days of cessation of the heatwave emergency, a multi-agency debrief of agency responses will be undertaken.
- 11.2 A review of the heatwave response will be completed within 3 months of the heatwave event.
- 11.3 Queensland Health will facilitate the sharing of the agreed learnings.



Queensland Health Heatwave Response Plan



QAS EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN



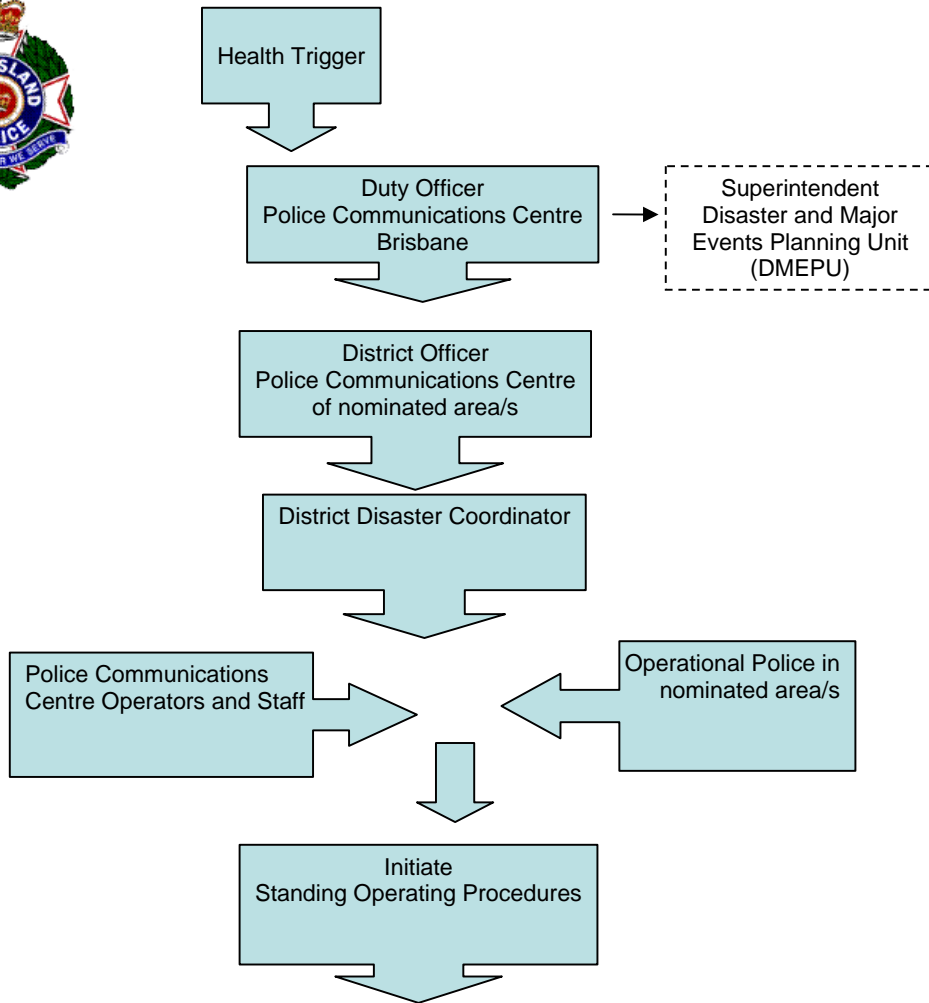


Queensland Police Service Heat Wave Response Plan



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Superintendent DMEPU and District Disaster Coordinator liaises with and reports through the Queensland Disaster Management framework

The Queensland Police Service is aware that calls for service to the Queensland Ambulance Service dramatically increase during heat wave conditions. As such the Queensland Police Service, when prioritising tasks, will be cognisant of the need to provide timely support to calls for service involving members of the Queensland Ambulance Service in an endeavour to assist the Ambulance Service to optimise their deployment.

DRAFT ONLY

BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY

HEAT WAVE WARNING STRATEGY – THRESHOLDS

Introduction

Currently there are no public Heat Weather Warnings issued for Queensland or anywhere else in Australia. One of the main reasons for the lack of such a warning service has been the difficulty in determining the appropriate thresholds for such a service. Other weather warnings are pitched at a level that assist to preserve life and property and are applicable across all parts of Australia. For winds at sea the threshold is 25 knots whilst over land the threshold is 65 km/h. For excessive heat the issue is not so clear. What constitutes excessive heat is very much a relativity issue. Excessive heat levels for people in the tropics are very different from those in southern Australia. Even in the tropics maritime and continental regions are quite different. Any heat warning service has to be site specific and hence a universal threshold, as for wind, is not possible.

A common methodology in setting Heat Stress Warning thresholds is to examine mortality rates over a long period and determine those meteorological conditions that produced increases in the mortality rate. Algorithms can then be developed to predict the expected increase in mortality given a forecast of certain parameters such as temperature and humidity. In the USA and in parts of Europe, the threshold for Heat Stress Warnings has been set at levels that are likely to produce increases in mortality of as little as one or two people.

There is ongoing work by a number of agencies, primarily Bureau of Meteorology and Department of Health, to determine the appropriate level of threat to trigger a Heat Stress Warning in SE Queensland.

The Current System

Following the heat wave event in January 2000 concern was expressed that there had not been sufficient warning of the impending conditions to the community in SE Queensland. As a result the Bureau of Meteorology established a system that predicts Apparent Temperature (a combination of temperature and humidity) several days in advance.

Apparent temperatures in the low 40s were experienced in the 2000 event and are at the higher end of conditions that require some type of public warning. It is considered necessary to be much more conservative. Apparent temperatures that would be experienced a few times on average each summer should be used. Values of 35 for Brisbane and 37 for Amberley have been determined as appropriate.

When apparent temperatures are expected to exceed 35 for Brisbane and 37 for Amberley for 2 days or more the Bureau contacts the Department of Health. The Department then issues a series of media releases publicising the expected onset of these conditions and provides advice to the community on how to mitigate the effects of the excessive heat.

In addition to triggering the public response, this advice to the Department of Health should also trigger relevant responses from agencies across the community to prepare for the event. Clearly that did not occur in February 2004.

The New System

This summer

Based on the experiences of January 2000, December 2001 and February 2004 an event with values of Apparent Temperature of 40 or more over two days is considered to be an extreme heat wave event which could be expected to produce a significant increase in mortalities across southeast Queensland. Following the more conservative approach of some overseas countries the threshold for a heat stress warning will be set at a much lower level. A re-examination of Apparent Temperatures for Brisbane over the past few years indicates that a threshold value of 36 on two consecutive days would capture events that cause minimal heat stress problems in the community and would occur a few times each summer. Thus the criterion for a 'Heat Warning' will be predicted Apparent Temperatures on two consecutive days of 36 for Brisbane. For an 'Extreme Heat Warning' the criterion will be predicted Apparent Temperatures on two consecutive days of 40 for Brisbane.

On the basis of temperature records for Brisbane over the past few years the proposed thresholds can be expected to generate three or four Heat Warnings each summer and an Extreme Heat Warning on average about two years out of three.

Bureau forecasters calculate expected values of Apparent Temperature from predictions of temperature and humidity, using guidance from a variety of computer models. It is not intended that forecast Apparent Temperatures would be provided to the media or made public. Apparent Temperature is not a temperature but simply a number calculated using air temperature and dew point temperature in an algorithm. The number has no physical meaning as a temperature so to eliminate the possibility of anyone confusing a predicted Apparent Temperature with a prediction of an air temperature of the same value, the number will be called the 'Heat Index.'

Arrangements for advising the Department of Health when the criteria for 'Heat Warnings' or 'Extreme Heat Warnings' are predicted to be reached are set out in an internal Bureau of Meteorology Heat Wave Warning directive.

The current media release strategy should remain in place using the above threshold levels of Heat Index. The Bureau of Meteorology will advise the Department of Health when the threshold criteria are predicted to be reached. The Department of Health liaison officer will be provided with an elaborative briefing on the overall scenario by the Senior Meteorologist in the Queensland Regional Forecasting Centre in Brisbane. For any additional information the Senior Meteorologist can be contacted on 07 3239 8750 (all hours). Department of Health will coordinate dissemination of this advice to other agencies and promulgate public awareness information and action advice to the media.

For effective community action it is imperative that a co-ordinated response is implemented once the predictions of Apparent Temperature reach the thresholds. Each agency will take appropriate action to implement the relevant components of any emergency plans.

There will be a review of procedures involved in the heatwave response plan at the conclusion of the 2004-05 summer, including whether or not the threshold temperatures are appropriate. Consideration could be given to making the predicted values available on a registered-user web site to enable relevant agencies to monitor predictions of the Heat Index each day on a 4-day rolling cycle.

The Future

The Bureau is continuing to develop criteria for locations throughout Queensland to enable Heat Stress Warnings to be issued. Such a service will require the extraction of mortality (or other data) to enable comparisons with meteorological data to determine the appropriate expected mortality increases that should trigger a public Heat Stress Warning. This will require input from the Department of Health, the Bureau of Meteorology and other relevant agencies.

Education Queensland

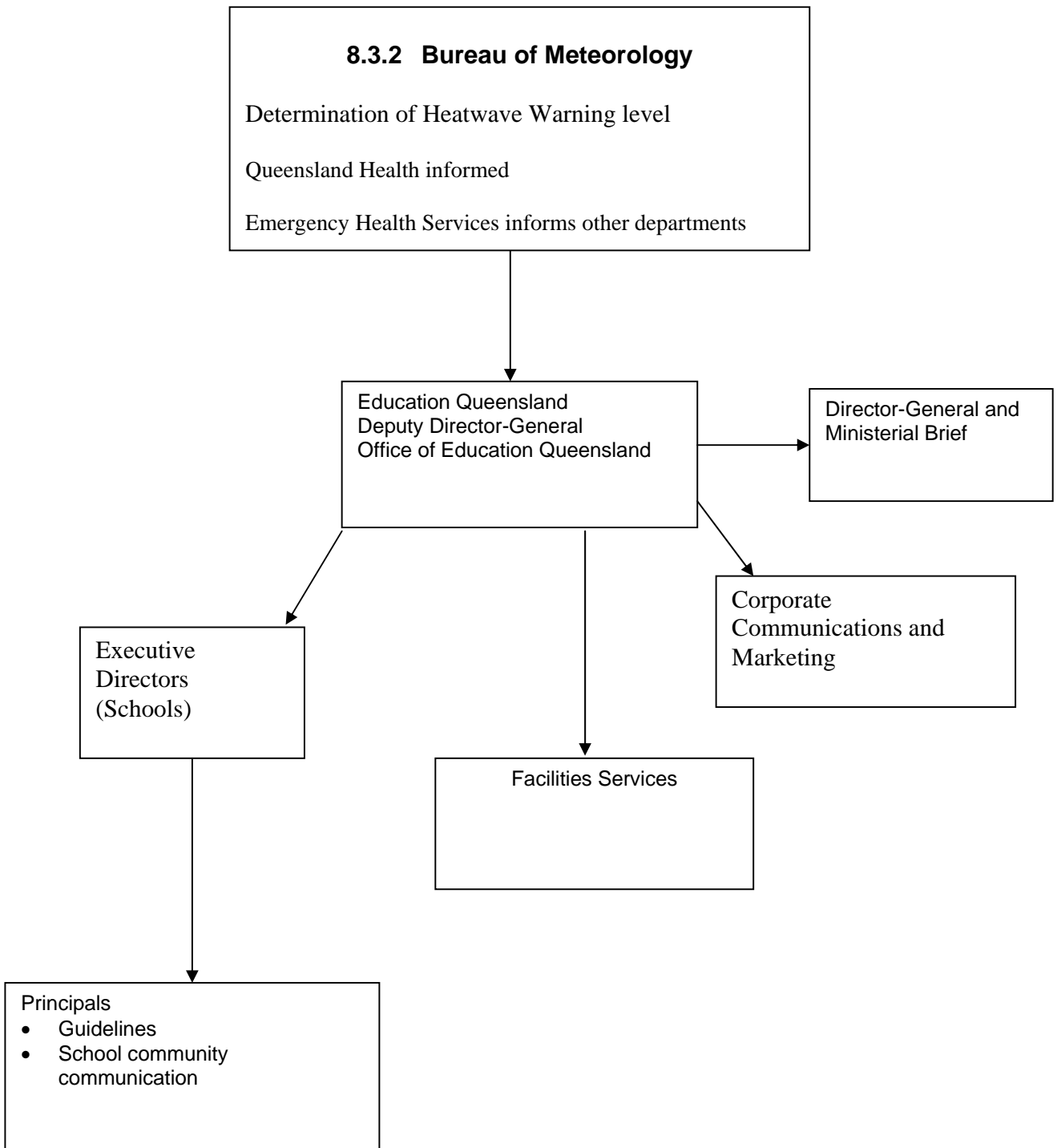
Heatwave Response Action Plan

1. The Deputy Director-General is alerted by Queensland Health that the Bureau of meteorology has issued an Extreme Heat Warning.
2. The Deputy Director-General determines which districts will be affected and alerts the relevant Executive Directors (Schools).
3. Executive Directors (Schools) then alert principals in the district who refer to their *Heatwave Response Guidelines* and take the appropriate action within their school community.
4. The Deputy Director-General communicates with Corporate Communications and Marketing, Education Queensland.
5. The Deputy Director-General communicates with the Facilities Services Branch, Education Queensland, where necessary.
6. The Deputy Director-General also briefs the Director-General and Minister for Education and the Arts where appropriate.

ATTACHMENT 1

Education Queensland Heatwave Response

Communication Process



ATTACHMENT 2

Heatwave Response Guidelines for Principals

1. An alert by the Executive Director (Schools) that your school falls within the *Extreme Heat Warning Zone* will indicate that excessive temperatures for at least two concurrent days can be expected within four days.
2. Prepare a communication strategy for your school community immediately.
3. It is not departmental policy to either close schools or send students home during heatwave conditions.
4. Discuss with your staff strategies to manage the hot conditions as much as possible.
5. Strategies should include:
 - a. Modifying or suspending normal school activities during the excessive heat;
 - b. Postponing any outdoor or sporting activities where appropriate;
 - c. Increasing access to the coolest areas of the school grounds or facilities for lessons or other activities;
 - d. Ensuring that students with special needs are appropriately supervised, including the monitoring of their hydration;
 - e. Ensuring that school lunch boxes are stored in cool areas; and
 - f. Facilitating and encouraging students to drink plenty of water and to stay out of the sun.
6. If a student becomes heat-stressed, normal first aid procedures should apply. That is, parents and caregivers would be contacted and arrangements for students to be collected as in any other case of injury or illness.
7. See below for symptoms of heat stress.
8. Inform the Executive Director (Schools) of any emergent heat-wave-related issues.
9. In exceptional circumstances, after the heat-wave alert is lifted, provide a written report to the Executive Director (Schools) where necessary including possible future improvements to procedures.

8.3.2 What to Drink

Queensland Health recommends that during hot weather, water (room temperature or slightly cool rather than very cold) is the best fluid to drink.

Drinks containing caffeine (tea, coffee, cola and “energy” drinks as well as drinks containing excessive sugar (soft drinks, colas, “energy” and some “sports” drinks) should be limited or avoided altogether.

8.3.2

8.3.2 Health Effects of Excessive Heat

Heat-related conditions cover a wide range of diseases ranging from swelling of hands and feet, prickly heat occurring in unacclimatised people and heat cramps, through to heat exhaustion, to the more severe and potentially fatal heatstroke.

8.3.2 Symptoms of Heat Stress

Symptoms of more severe heat stress include malaise, headache, rapid pulse, nausea and vomiting.

People with heat stroke usually have core body temperatures above 39 degrees Celsius and an altered mental state such as confusion, lethargy or agitation. Seizures and coma can follow.

For further information see:

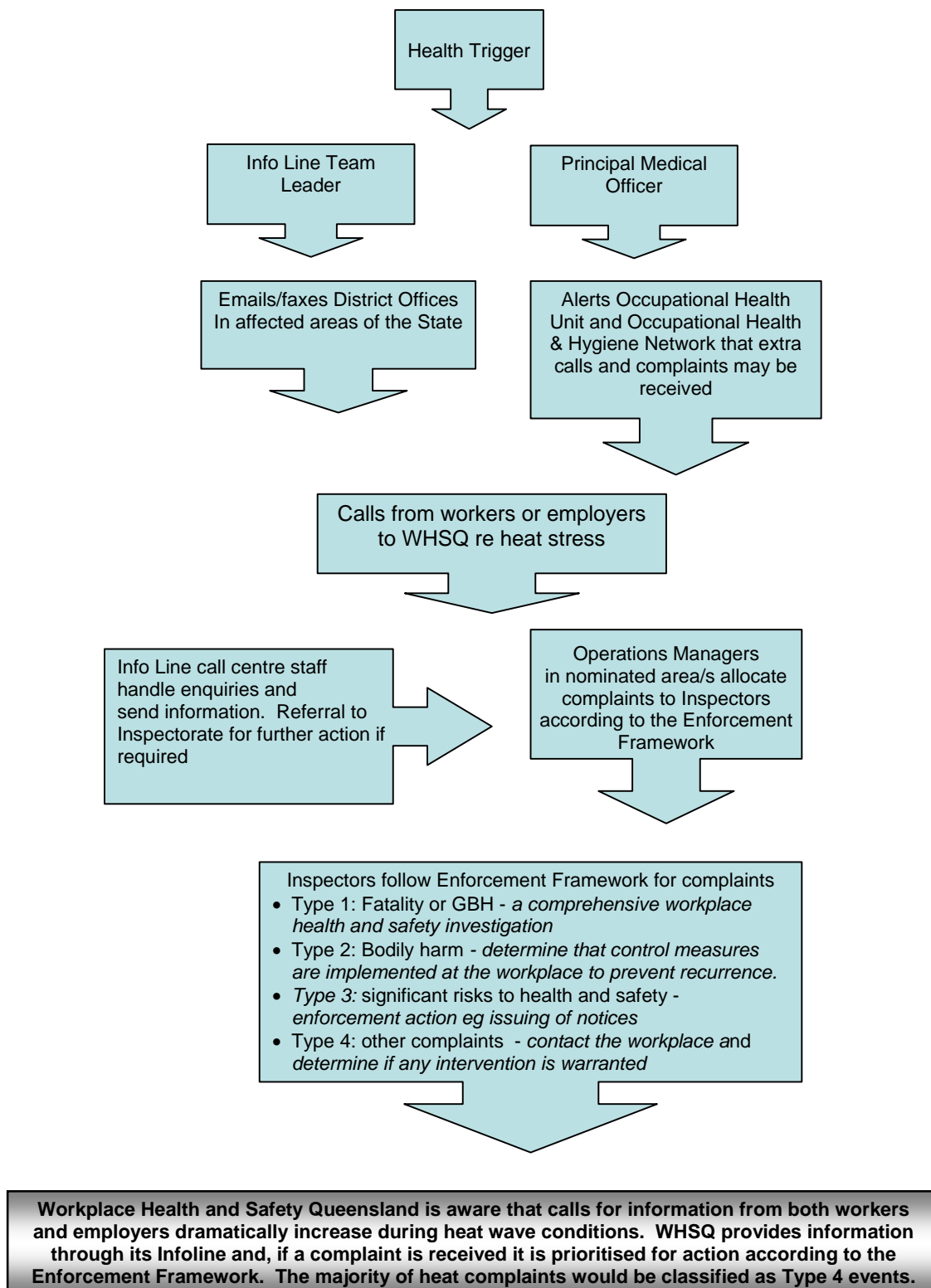
www.ambulance.qld.gov.au (*Prevent Heat Related Illness*);

www.whs.qld.gov.au/brochures (*Heat Stress: managing the risk*);

www.health.qld.gov.au/phu/Documents/cphun (*Preventing Heat Related Illness - a Public Health brochure*).

Ref: 04/102080

Workplace Health & Safety Queensland Heat Wave Response Strategy





Draft Heatwave Response Communication Plan

Queensland Health

Background

The 20-21 February 2004 heatwave in south east Queensland significantly impacted on emergency medical providers such as Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and the emergency departments of hospitals. In a report to the Chief Health Officer in July 2004, the State Coroner indicated that 12 deaths could be attributed to higher than normal temperatures. The report also indicated that of these deaths a significant proportion were elderly people and/or people with pre-existing medical conditions.

To increase preparedness for significant heat events and to ensure Queensland Government is able to effectively respond to future extreme heat events, Queensland Cabinet endorsed the need to develop a Heatwave Response Strategy. This Communication Plan, as an element of the Queensland Heatwave Response Plan is part of this strategy

Warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology to Queensland Health include:

“Heat warning” - when the heat index is expected to exceed 36 degrees in Brisbane for two days or more.

“Extreme heat warning” - when the heat index is expected to exceed 40 degrees in Brisbane for two days or more.

Communication objective

To communicate to the community, particularly to aged people, the potential for extremely hot days to affect health and wellbeing and what precautions can be taken to reduce the potential for these to occur.

Principles

Community involvement is the key to ensuring the health and safety of aged people and other people at risk of heat related illness.

Target audiences

- General Community

- Aged people and carers of elderly people at home, and in residential and aged care facilities

While most people are potentially at risk of experiencing discomfort during extremely hot weather, the aged are considered most vulnerable, particularly those more socially isolated and less able to adequately prepare for such weather.

Key messages

- Heat related illness is preventable.
- Tips on keeping cool
- Symptoms of heat related illness and what to do
- It is important for people to check on elderly neighbours, friends and family.

Strategies

Target Group	Strategy	Timeframe	Responsibility
Queensland Health staff	Co-ordinator Emergency Health Services contacts agencies	triggered by the forecast of a heat event (2 days prior)	CHO's Office
General Community	"Staying cool this summer" media release. Joint Health Minister and Chief Health Officer (CHO).	1 Dec 2004 (start of summer)	Public Affairs
	Investigate potential articles for: <i>Brisbane today</i> <i>Liveable Brisbane (BCC)</i> <i>Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter</i>	Jan 2005	Public Affairs
	Finalise fact sheet on website (joint QH and QAS)	Dec 2004	EHSU
	Heat warning (media release) issued for a heat event	triggered by the forecast of a heat event (2 days prior)	Public Affairs
	Send heat warning when released to communications contacts: Dept of Emergency Services Education Queensland Contact list with Co-ordinator Emergency Health Services	Day released	Public Affairs
Aged people and carers	Investigate potential articles for: <i>HACC Report</i> <i>Now That's Living, ACQ</i> <i>Sunshine Coast Senior</i> <i>50 Something</i>	Jan 2005	Public Affairs
	Letters/meetings to providers and consumers of aged, residential, nursing homes	Dec 2004	EHSU

Media protocol for a forecasted heat event

- BoM will advise QH of an extreme heat event in SE Queensland;
- State Medical Controller will decide to activate this Plan
- A media release will be released through
 - A Queensland Health state spokesperson - Minister and/or Chief Health Officer
 - An authorised QAS spokesperson
- Talking points provided for communication officers in hospitals. Media spokesperson to be nominated.

Implementation

The media releases will be issued annually as part of a summer preparedness campaign.

Evaluation and Review

To ensure the Communication Plan is achieving its objective the performance of the plan will be evaluated 6 months after its implementation. On the basis of this evaluation it will be modified as required.

Draft media release - Joint Health Minister and Emergency Services Minister

To be released following notification by the Bureau of Meteorology of a heatwave and the activation of Heatwave Response Plan by the State Medical Controller

Heat Wave Alert for *geographical area*

Advice from the Bureau of Meteorology indicates that temperatures in the *geographical area* will reach *insert exact details of temperature* over the next ? days

These temperatures are above what is normally expected in the State for this time of year.

Health Minister Gordon Nuttall and Emergency Services Minister, Chris Cummins today advised Queenslanders to take precautions to avoid heat stress during this time.

A report this year indicated that 12 deaths could be attributed to higher than normal temperatures experienced during the February heatwave in south east Queensland this year.

The aged and young children, especially babies and toddlers, are most at risk from heat stress so it's important to take extra care.

During the heat wave:

- Drink enough fluids.
- Avoid dehydrating drinks including caffeine, alcohol and drinks with high sugar levels like most soft drinks and energy drinks, as these can interfere with the rapid absorption of fluids.
- Minimise physical activity,
- Stay out of sun when the UV and heat is the strongest between 10am and 3pm.
- Check on how elderly family, friends and neighbours are coping with the heat.
- Ensure that young children are having enough fluids and dress them in cool clothing.

Symptoms of heat stroke include headaches, lethargy, nausea and vomiting. More severe symptoms can include weakness in the limbs, slurred speech, confusion, and in extreme cases, seizures. If you are affected by heatstroke, seek medical advice.

Media Contact:

Minister's Office, Queensland Health
Minister's Office, Emergency Services

Queensland Health

Date: 18 November 2004

Prepared by: Karryn Clark, Principal Marketing and Communications Officer (Public Affairs),
ph: 41424

Cleared by:

Emergency Services

Date:

Prepared by:

Cleared by:

Draft media release

To be released December 1/ start of summer

Protecting yourself in the summer heat

With summer now here, Queenslanders are being encouraged to think ahead on how they are going to stay cool during the hot days.

The Bureau of Meteorology is predicting – *WHAT* normal temperatures.

Health Minister Gordon Nuttall said one of the most important things the community can do is to check on how their aged family, friends and neighbours are coping with the heat.

“Unfortunately some aged people close up their homes due to security concerns or believe that this will keep the house cooler,” Mr Nuttall said.

“Make sure they are drinking plenty of water; ensure the house is well ventilated, with windows open and that they have a fan. You may need to seek an air-conditioned environment if they are particularly affected by the heat.

“Babies and toddlers are also most at risk from the effects of the heat so again ensure they are having enough fluids and dress them in cool clothing.

“As well as protecting your skin from skin cancer, staying out of sun if possible when the UV and heat is the strongest between 10am and 3pm, will also help you to stay cool,” said Mr Nuttall.

Chief Health Officer, Dr Gerry FitzGerald said heatstroke can be a serious condition with symptoms such as headaches, lethargy, nausea and vomiting. More severe symptoms can include weakness in the limbs, slurred speech, confusion, and in extreme cases, seizures.

“When the weather is hot, you should minimise physical activity and drink enough fluids,” said Dr FitzGerald.

“This means avoid dehydrating drinks including caffeine, alcohol and drinks with high sugar levels like most soft drinks and energy drinks, as these can interfere with the rapid absorption of fluids.

“If you are affected by heatstroke, seek medical advice.”

Media Contact: Minister’s Office

Date: 25 November 2004

Prepared by: Karryn Clark, Public Affairs, ph: 41424

Cleared by:

DRAFT HEAT WARNING

To be released following notification by the Bureau of Meteorology of a heat warning - when the heat index is expected to exceed 36 degrees in Brisbane for two or more days and following activation of the Heatwave Response Plan by the State Medical Controller.

Heat Warning for *geographical area*

Advice from the Bureau of Meteorology indicates that temperatures in the *geographical area* will reach *insert exact details of temperature* over the next ? days. These temperatures are above what is normally expected in the State for this time of year.

Health Minister Gordon Nuttall today advised Queenslanders to take precautions to avoid heat stress during this time.

"A report indicates that 12 deaths could be attributed to higher than normal temperatures experienced during the February heatwave in south east Queensland this year. These deaths occurred in people over the age of 65 years," Mr Nuttall said.

According to Chief Health Officer, Dr Gerry FitzGerald, the aged and young children, especially babies and toddlers, are most at risk from heat stress so it's important to take extra care.

"Symptoms of heat stroke include headaches, lethargy, nausea and vomiting. More severe symptoms can include weakness in the limbs, slurred speech, confusion, and in extreme cases, seizures," said Dr FitzGerald.

"If you are affected by heatstroke, seek medical advice."

During the heat wave:

- drink enough fluids
- avoid dehydrating drinks including caffeine, alcohol and drinks with high sugar levels like most soft drinks and energy drinks, as these can interfere with the rapid absorption of fluids
- minimise physical activity
- sporting activities or events may pose a significant risk and should be avoided
- if possible, stay out of the sun when the UV and heat is the strongest between 10am and 3pm.
- check on how aged family, friends and neighbours are coping with the heat
- open windows and use fans to cool you down
- stay indoors and possibly seek an air-conditioned environment
- ensure that young children are having enough fluids and dress them in cool clothing.

Media Contact:

Minister's Office, Queensland Health

Date: 25 November 2004

Prepared by: Karryn Clark, Public Affairs, ph: 41424

Cleared by:

DRAFT EXTREME HEAT WARNING

To be released following notification by the Bureau of Meteorology of a heat warning - when the heat index is expected to exceed 40 degrees in Brisbane for two or more days and following activation of the Heatwave Response Plan by the State Medical Controller.

Extreme Heat Warning for *geographical area*

Advice from the Bureau of Meteorology indicates that *geographical area* will experience extreme heat over the next ? days with temperatures expected to reach *insert exact details of temperature*.

Health Minister Gordon Nuttall today advised Queenslanders to take precautions to avoid heat stress during this time.

"A report this year indicated that 12 deaths could be attributed to higher than normal temperatures experienced during the February heatwave in south east Queensland this year. These deaths occurred in people over the age of 65 years," Mr Nuttall said.

According to Chief Health Officer, Dr Gerry FitzGerald, the elderly and young children, especially babies and toddlers, are most at risk from heat stress so it's important to take extra care.

"Symptoms of heat stroke include headaches, lethargy, nausea and vomiting. More severe symptoms can include weakness in the limbs, slurred speech, confusion, and in extreme cases, seizures," said Dr FitzGerald.

"If you are affected by heatstroke, seek medical advice."

During the heat wave:

- drink enough fluids
- avoid dehydrating drinks including caffeine, alcohol and drinks with high sugar levels like most soft drinks and energy drinks, as these can interfere with the rapid absorption of fluids
- minimise physical activity
- if possible, stay out of the sun when the UV and heat is the strongest between 10am and 3pm.
- check on how elderly family, friends and neighbours are coping with the heat
- open windows and use fans to cool you down
- stay indoors and possibly seek an air-conditioned environment
- ensure that young children are having enough fluids and dress them in cool clothing

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