

NSW Government Response to the Net Zero Commission's Letter on Extreme Heat and Humidity in Summer 2025-2026

INTRODUCTION

The NSW Government thanks the Net Zero Commission (the Commission) for their letter regarding the risks associated with extreme heat and humidity events and welcomes the Commission's recommendations to help mitigate their impacts on communities across the State.

The NSW Government also acknowledges the publication of the Commission's Heat Stress Spotlight Report on 21 April 2026 and will provide a response to that report within the statutory deadline of 21 October 2026.

Extreme heat is one of the most serious and escalating climate risks facing NSW, posing a compounding risk to human health, labour productivity and community wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable populations including older residents, people with chronic health conditions, regional communities and communities experiencing social disadvantage.

The NSW Government recognises the need for coordinated, evidence-based action, taken early and sustained over time, to reduce these risks and ensure that NSW meets its legislated objective that it is more resilient to a changing climate. The NSW Government's response builds on the State Heatwave Sub Plan, which provides the primary operational framework for heatwave preparedness, response and consequence management across NSW. Actions outlined in this response are intended to strengthen and complement existing emergency management arrangements under the Sub Plan, rather than establish parallel structures.

The following provides the Government response to each of the Commission's recommendations.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: In preparation for the coming 2025 Summer, the NSW Government implement specific strategies to manage increasing risks of extreme heat and humidity events.

Recommended action 1.1: Identify currently available Cool Places across the state (accessible venues where community members can seek respite from the heat, distinct from more formal Cool Centres or emergency Evacuation Centres) and deliver Recommendation 30 of the Heat Plan to test

and evaluate community Cool Centres for 2025/26 summer in Greater Sydney. For subsequent summers, this would inform future efforts to expand the initiative in collaboration with councils and across other local government areas.

The NSW Government acknowledges that the identification of currently available Cool Places can assist communities to find respite during extreme heat, particularly for vulnerable people who may have limited access to adequate cooling at home.

The State Heatwave Sub Plan addresses acute heatwave response in NSW. NSW Ambulance plays a central operational and governance role under the Sub Plan, coordinating statewide emergency response and ensuring that acute heatwave impacts are effectively managed across all local and regional jurisdictions. The Sub-Plan encourages councils to identify publicly accessible air-conditioned Cool Places that can be used during heatwaves such as local libraries, community halls and shopping centres. Local Government NSW has identified that, with proper resourcing, councils have capacity to provide or convert suitable facilities into Cool Places to mitigate heatwave harm.

The NSW State Emergency Management Committee released a [‘Cool Centres’ Guideline](#) in December 2025 to provide guidance on good practice arrangements and considerations for Cool Centres in NSW as a means of providing respite during heatwaves.

The NSW Government will explore a broader approach to extreme heat mitigation, adaptation and preparedness in the preparation of the SDMP 2027-2031 and future regional DAPs. RA and other NSW Government stakeholders are also investigating opportunities to support councils with the costs associated with heatwave response and recovery.

Recommended action 1.2: Communicate to the NSW public NSW hospital protocols for managing heat-related presentations to accelerate treatment for those at risk and to help manage impacts on our hospital system during an emergency.

All presentations to NSW hospitals, including heat-related presentations are managed under the Australasian Triage Scale (ATS), the nationally recognised, standardised protocol used in all NSW emergency departments. The ATS ensures timely recognition, prioritisation and clinical management of heat related illness by assessing symptoms, vital signs, risk factors, and urgency. This process ensures that patients with severe heat related presentations are rapidly identified and treated, noting that heat affects individuals differently and therefore no single, uniform treatment protocol applies to all cases. Information on the ATS is publicly available on the [NSW Health – Hospital Triage webpage](#).

Broader systemwide and interagency management of extreme heat events is addressed through the State Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) and the State Heatwave Subplan, which outline roles, responsibilities, and coordinated actions during significant heat events. Information on the ATS and state emergency plans are publicly available.

Recommended action 1.3: Strengthen extreme heat related communications to build community understanding of, and capability to reduce, their own extreme heat and humidity risks to the level of understanding that has been achieved for bushfire or flood hazards. This could include active educational campaigns extending the Beat the Heat communication resources, inclusion of extreme heat and humidity as a hazard in the Hazards Near Me App, and funding support for the Red Cross's TeleCross REDI service which will help ensure the safety of elderly and vulnerable community members.

The NSW Government recognises that community awareness and self-protective action are among the most effective tools for reducing heat-related harm.

NSW Health's Beat the Heat resources aim to build community understanding and capability of reducing their own heat risks and are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure communications reflect current evidence regarding extreme heat impacts. NSW Health will continue to monitor evidence of the modifying effect of humidity on the population health impacts of heat to inform its public communications. NSW Ambulance will consider strengthening messaging on humidity within its operational communications around heatwaves. NSW Ambulance is also exploring the inclusion of heatwave as a hazard within the HazardWatch website and Hazards Near Me app.

Recommendation 2: The NSW Government take a leadership role in implementation and governance of the Sydney Heat Smart City Plan, establishing clear governance for adapting to the increasing frequency and severity of extreme heat and humidity events.

Recommended action 2.1: Identify a governance framework to coordinate efforts to respond to increasing extreme heat and humidity events and ensure roles have been established, with identified Ministerial responsibility across the adaptation, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery cycles, covering chronic heat risks and extending beyond the medical emergency response to heatwaves.

The NSW Government recognises that clear governance and Ministerial accountability are essential to effectively managing escalating risks associated with extreme heat and humidity.

The Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce, co-chaired by the Reconstruction Authority (RA) and Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC), currently coordinates local, State Government

and non-Government stakeholders to implement the Greater Sydney Heat Smart City Plan (the Heat Plan).

Various Ministers are responsible for administering Acts that have interactions with the impacts of heat and humidity. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Minister for Recovery and Premier - *NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022*
- Minister for Climate Change - *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*
- Minister for Planning and Public Spaces - *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Departments working under each of these Acts will continue to work together alongside NSW Health and other relevant portfolios when required to respond to climate hazards, heat being one of many.

Recommended action 2.2: Take a joint leadership role in coordinating governance for the Heat Plan. This could be done as part of broader multi-hazard disaster planning (Recommendation 1 in the Heat Plan), through incorporation of the Heat Plan actions into a Disaster Adaptation Plan for Greater Sydney, or another mechanism.

Preparation of the SDMP 2027-2031 will involve significant collaboration and coordination across NSW Government agencies, including in addressing heatwave mitigation, adaptation and preparedness. RA's DAP Guidelines describe the establishment of collaborative governance arrangements to oversee preparation and implementation of regional DAPs.

Recommended action 2.3: Clarify its commitment to delivering on selected actions in the Heat Plan with modifications as required to align with government priorities and/or to expand action to a whole of state level. Efforts to extend recommendations across the state should maintain applicability to place-based implementation.

The NSW Government is committed to delivering the recommended actions it is responsible for under the Heat Plan. The Heat Plan sets out 40 actions, of which 21 are led by the NSW Government. Responsibility for these actions is shared across 9 different agencies¹. The NSW Government is committed to expanding actions to a whole of state level where appropriate. Many actions are already implemented on a statewide basis, are expected to scale as resources allow, or have indicated the capacity to be delivered at a statewide scale.

¹ NSW Agencies include: The NSW Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer, NSW Reconstruction Authority, Homes NSW, NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, NSW Treasury, Transport for NSW, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water, Premiers Department, NSW Health

Recommended action 2.4: Deliver an implementation plan for recommended government actions in the Heat Plan particularly for actions that are not a part of existing NSW Government programs **and** **Recommended action 2.5: Identify and increase** funding sources available to deliver on new actions.

The NSW Government acknowledges the intent of this recommendation and recognises the importance of structured implementation for actions under the Heat Plan. The majority of the NSW Government-led actions are either complete or underway and are being delivered through established programs and governance arrangements, therefore a separate overarching implementation plan would be duplicative. The NSW Government will continue to refine co-ordination processes, maintain momentum on progressing actions, and work with the Greater Sydney Heat Plan Taskforce to support effective delivery.

The NSW Government acknowledges the recommendation to identify and increase funding sources to support the delivery of actions under the Heat Plan.