




**Community
Legal Centres
Queensland**

Preparing for El Niño: Heatwaves, legal need and CLC resilience

CLCQ 2023 State Conference

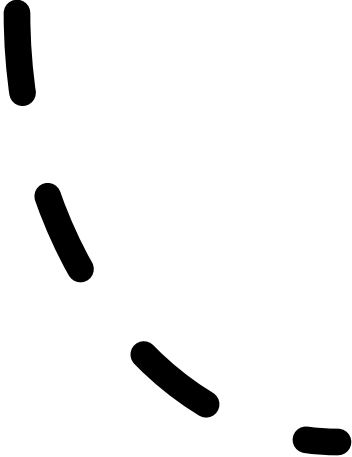
1 June 2023



Community Legal Centres Queensland pay our deepest respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the land in Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

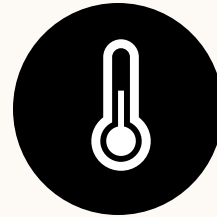
We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations peoples and commit to fostering a culture of learning and working together in the spirit of reconciliation and access to justice.



Session overview



Climate forecasting
in Queensland



Heatwaves, likely
legal needs arising
from longer, hotter
days



Scenario
tabletop discussion



Regroup - climate
resilience for CLCs,
climate ready laws,
next steps

Terminology and framing



Resilience
organisational, not
personal



Caution about the
term '**vulnerability**'

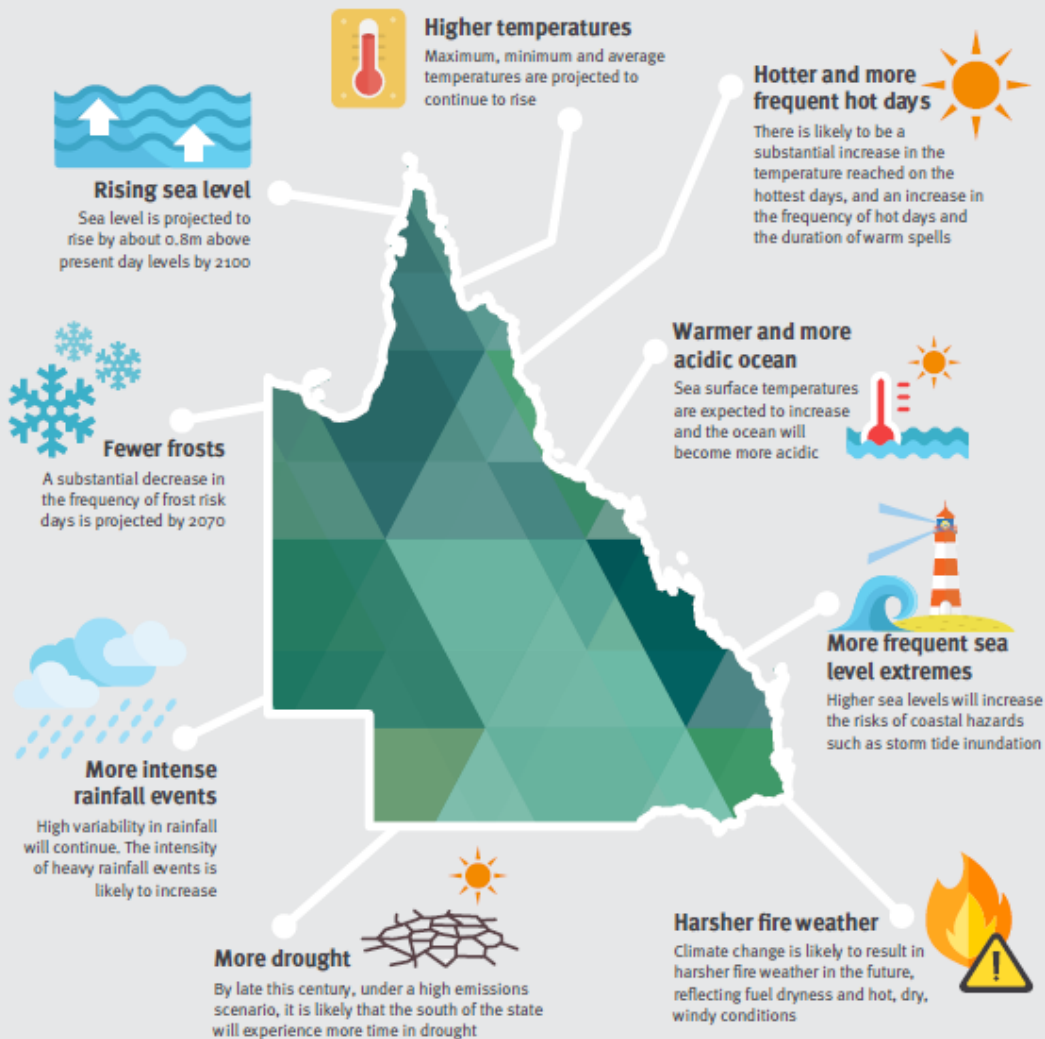


Climate not
natural disasters



Climate justice
where social justice
and climate change
meet

AS QUEENSLAND'S CLIMATE CHANGES, WE CAN EXPECT:



Average temperatures in Queensland have already increased by approximately 1°C over the past 100 years.¹

Between 2011 and 2016, 45 extreme weather events have caused \$13 billion in damage to public assets and infrastructure.²

Insured damage to private assets in declared disaster events is valued at \$8.6 billion in the 10 years to 2016.³

Queensland in 2030

In 2030, under a high greenhouse gas emissions scenario, Brisbane's climate is projected to be more like the current climate of Bundaberg, and the climate of Cairns more like the current climate of Cooktown.⁴

Pathways to a climate resilient Queensland

Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030 p5

La Niña - cool/wet
El Niño - hot/dry

2016 - hottest year on record was an El Niño year.

Scientists predict temporary breach of the 1.5 degree climate threshold by 2027.

"Stands on the shoulders of the rising global temperature"

SPOTTING AN EL NIÑO



TEMPERATURES

in the tropical Pacific Ocean warm, both at the surface and below



SURFACE PRESSURE

changes across the Pacific; higher in the west, lower in the east



TRADE WINDS

weaken, and sometimes reverse



CLOUD

increases near the Date Line

WHEN DO THEY OCCUR?

USUALLY EL NIÑO DEVELOPS IN **AUTUMN TO WINTER** AND STARTS TO DECAY IN SUMMER



EL NIÑO EVENTS CAN LAST FOR AS LITTLE AS

6 MONTHS OR AS LONG AS **2 YEARS**

ON AVERAGE THEY OCCUR EVERY

3 TO 5 YEARS

THE LAST

EL NIÑO WAS IN

2015-16

TYPICAL IMPACTS ON OUR CLIMATE

↓ RAINFALL DECREASES IN EASTERN AUSTRALIA

↑ TEMPERATURE INCREASES IN SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA (DAYTIME TEMPERATURES)



OTHER IMPACTS

INCREASED BUSHFIRE RISK

FEWER TROPICAL CYCLONES

LATER START TO NORTHERN WET SEASON

MORE HEATWAVES

LONGER FROST RISK SEASON

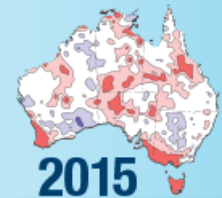
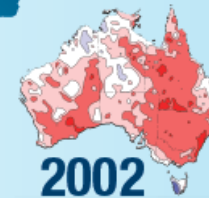
REDUCED CHANCE OF WIDESPREAD FLOODS

LESS CHANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN HEATWAVES

STRONGER SEABREEZES

EVERY EL NIÑO IS DIFFERENT

EL NIÑO WINTER AND SPRING RAINFALL



RED = DRIER THAN NORMAL BLUE = WETTER THAN NORMAL

GLOBALLY, 7 OUT OF 10

OF THE HOTTEST YEARS ON RECORD WERE IN AN EL NIÑO YEAR OR THE YEAR FOLLOWING

THERE HAVE BEEN

27 EL NIÑO EVENTS SINCE 1900 **18** BROUGHT DROUGHT TO MANY AREAS

7 OF AUSTRALIA'S 10 DRIEST YEARS ON RECORD WERE DURING EL NIÑO



Australian Government
 Bureau of Meteorology

www.bom.gov.au

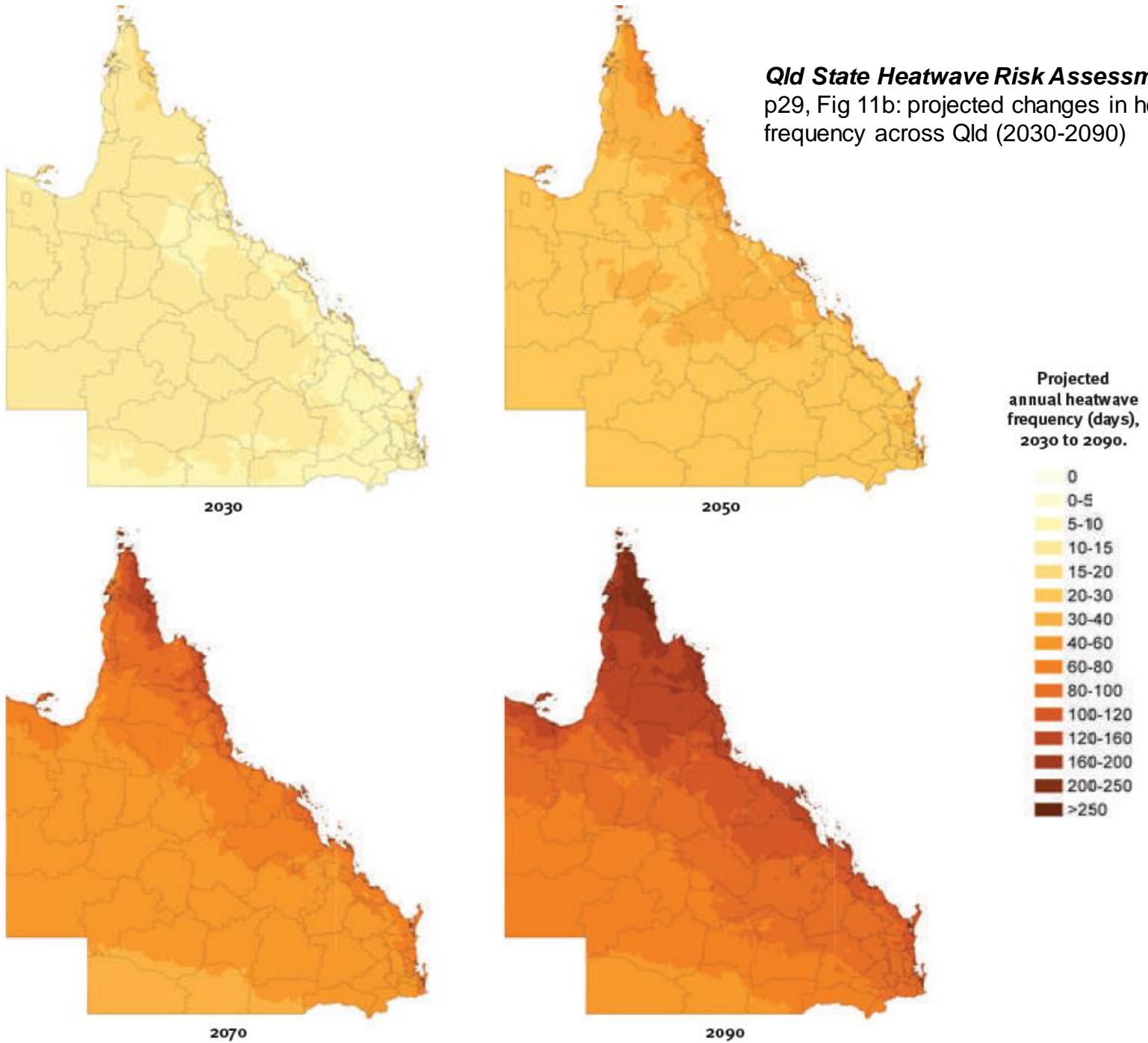


The following heatwave projections are in the lifespan of our children.

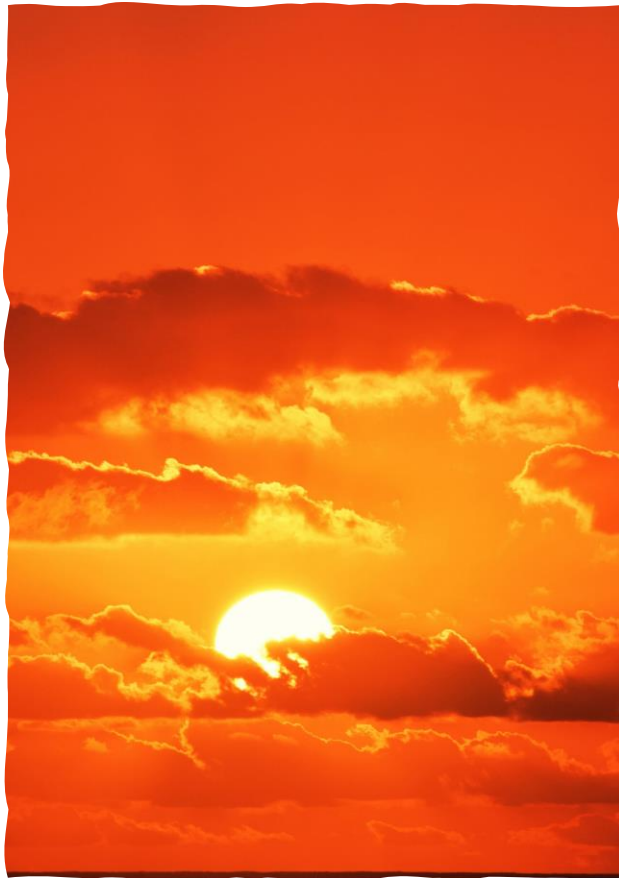
A child who is 12 years old today:

- + 7 = ? 2030.... 19 years
- + 20 = ? 2050.... 39 years
- + 20 = ? 2070.... 59 years
- + 20 = ? 2090.... 79 years

Qld State Heatwave Risk Assessment 2019
p29, Fig 11b: projected changes in heatwave frequency across Qld (2030-2090)



Heatwave characteristics



Three or more days in a row when both daytime and night-time temperatures are unusually high, in relation to the local long-term climate and the recent past.

No single temperature threshold for a heatwave in Australia.

No system for naming heatwaves (unlike cyclones)

Low intensity Most people can cope

Severe Less frequent, challenging for elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions

Extreme Affect infrastructure, power, transport. Everyone at risk.

Heatwaves and their impacts

- 'A **'silent killer'** – extreme weather events get more attention, but extreme heat kills more people.
- **Humidity** and the **wet-bulb temperature**
- The **urban heat-island effect**
- Increasing likelihood of **compound events** (heatwave + drought + bushfires)

Deaths from natural hazards 1900-2011

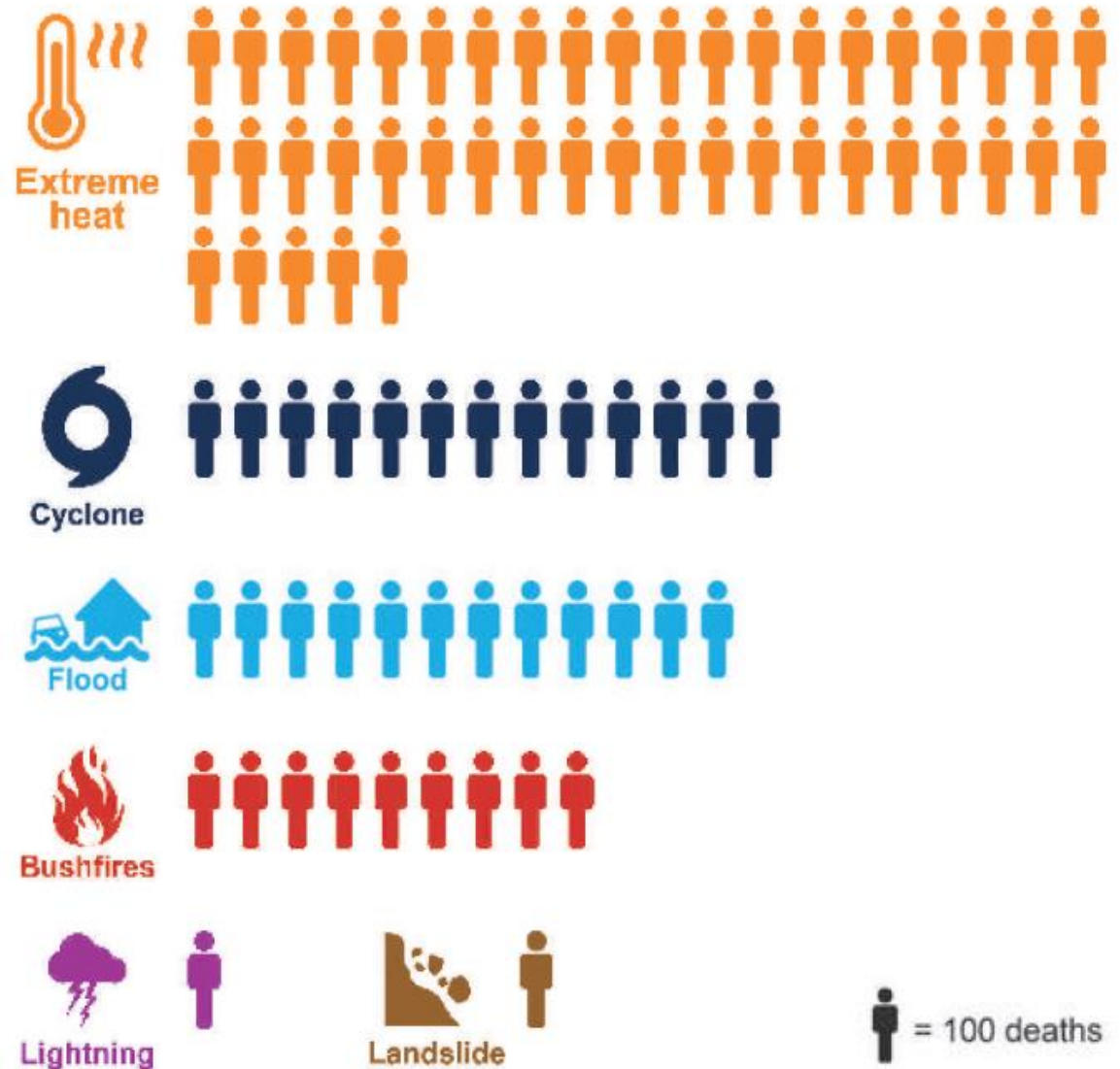
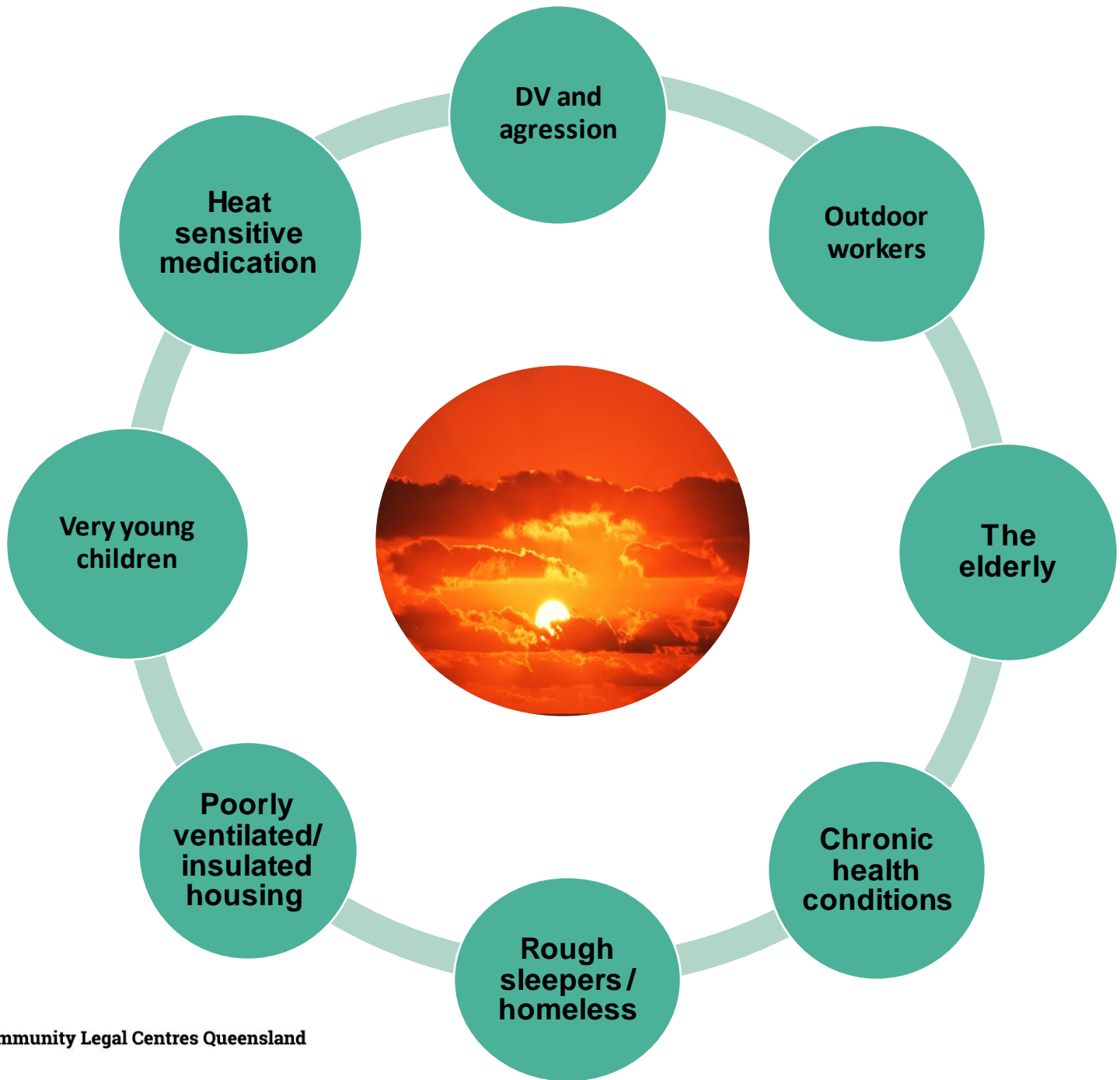
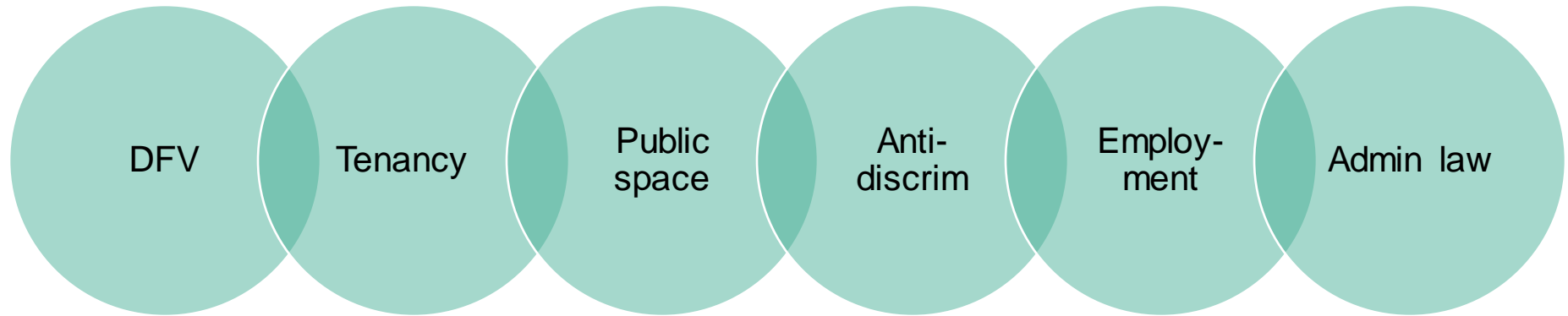


Figure 4: Infographic highlighting the mortality rate of heatwaves against other significant natural hazards within Australia. Source: Department of Environment and Science adapted from McMichael et al., 2003



Anticipated legal issues



- Extreme heat is a climate injustice for unlikely cohorts i.e., prisoners
- Not such a “long tail” of legal need compared to floods, bushfires etc.
- Underlying drivers suggest law reform and policy change as a priority
- Are heatwaves part of the disaster management cycle?
- How might the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* be deployed?

Scenario

- It has been 6 days of above 39 degrees across your part of Queensland during mid-January. The pressure on the electricity system has caused patchy and frequent blackouts, including where you live, and where your workplace is located.
- The extended and severe heat has led to spot fires flaring up in bushland about 10km away. Air quality is poor as a result of smoke pollution.
- The local council has announced it will open a 'heat respite centre' at the public town hall. Your CLC has been requested to attend on an outreach basis and deliver legal information and assistance to local residents.

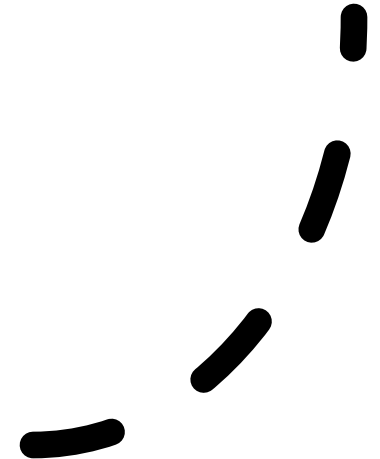
Discuss in
groups

How might this scenario impact:

- Your workplace?
- Your clients?
- You?

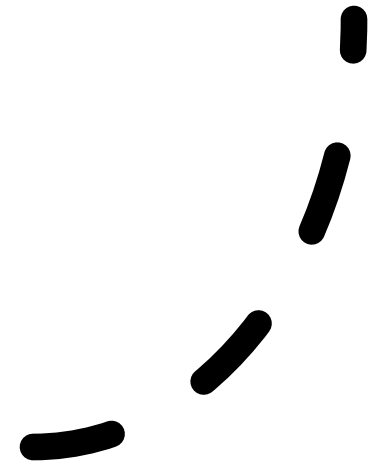
What legal issues might arise for your client group?

What are the implications for your workplace's capacity?



Heatwaves and law in the Qld context

1. Are our laws fit for purpose? *Do they offer protection for Queensland CLC clients most likely to be at risk from heatwaves?*
2. If not, what are we doing about it?
3. What is your vision for CLCQ's role?



Call for air-conditioners in 'inhumane' cells after outback heatwave triggers prison riot

By Rani Hayman and Matt Garrick
Posted Mon 31 Dec 2018 at 1:25pm



California will name and categorise heatwaves - should Australia follow suit?

Heatwaves kill more people in Australia than all other natural disasters combined, and some experts believe naming them might help reduce deaths



Too hot to learn - why Australian schools need a national policy on coping with heatwaves

Published: February 23, 2017 6:19am AEDT



Policy & law reform?

'My apartment is literally baking': calls for minimum standards to keep Australia's rental homes cool

People are 'sweltering in poorly insulated rentals, getting sick and sometimes even dying', social services advocate says

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...een sweltering through Melbourne's hot weather as her al cooling. Photograph: Christopher Hopkins/The



Disaster and Climate Justice Exchange

LAST WEDNESDAY
OF THE MONTH
2:00-3:00PM
VIA ZOOM



Community
Legal Centres
Queensland

An informal, monthly drop-in space for any Queensland community legal centre staff to discuss climate change and extreme weather events, and how it is impacting you and your work.

Relevant sector updates and climate action news will also be provided.

More information: monica@communitylegalqld.org.au



**Community
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Thank you

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