



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP
Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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SUMMER SAFETY TIPS FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Australia is one of the hottest and driest continents on earth and is experiencing its third hottest year on record. The Australian Government has issued a timely reminder to aged care service providers to prepare for the expected heatwave and is encouraging all Australians to check on the welfare of their elderly relatives and neighbours.

Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot said that it is important that everyone is mindful of the impact that expected heatwave conditions can have on older Australians.

Minister Elliot said: "The elderly are particularly vulnerable when temperatures climb into the high 30s and beyond.

"Aged care staff do a great job and are dedicated and committed to the care of older Australians, but it is important in heatwave conditions that they recognise residents may not be able to communicate their discomfort," Minister Elliot said.

"It is important that each of us takes the time to check on our older relatives and neighbours during the hot days that are expected this summer," Minister Elliot said.

Residential aged care homes had been advised to monitor the health of their residents during heatwave conditions. Reminders had also been sent to organisations caring for frail older people who live in their own homes.

The Department of Health and Ageing's advice says that due to aged-related changes, older Australians do not always recognise that they are overheating and do not sweat as much as younger people.

They are also more prone to heat stress because their body may not adjust as efficiently as younger people's bodies to sudden temperature changes.

They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition and to be taking medication that may interfere with the body's ability to regulate fluid.

Minister Elliot recommended that carers monitor the fluid intake of older people in their charge, offering small amounts of fluid regularly as well as alternatives such as jelly, ice cream and fruit ice blocks.

"There are other precautions that can be taken, including ensuring the temperature in their rooms is comfortable; wearing loose fitting clothing; offering tepid showers, and keeping curtains and blinds closed during the heat of the day.

"These very sensible precautions should help to keep our frail and older Australians safe throughout the coming summer months," Minister Elliot said.

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