NEW

Volunteer Handbook

COOL ROOM

Trial project, February - June 2025

Interested in being a volunteer? Call 5345 4078

This community-led initiative is supported by a team of volunteers. This trial is part of the Living and Ageing Well in Hepburn project funded by the Western Victoria Primary Health Network under the Australian Government's Primary Health Networks program.

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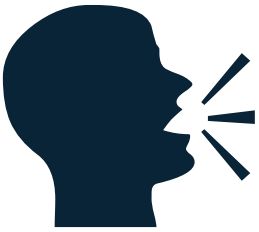
Central Highlands Rural Health

Clunes Neighbourhood House

Marketing Material:

Posters about town and social media posts are a great way to raise awareness of the Cool Room. External signage (a sandwich board, banner or flag) that can be put out when the Cool Room is open is highly effective, particularly if it highlights that everyone is welcome. Advertising in the lead up to summer, ideally with an educational component to improve people's awareness of the risks of extreme heat, and the actions they can take to adapt to hot weather, would be ideal.



However there is no doubt that word of mouth advertising is one of the best ways to raise people's awareness of the Cool Room. A huge thanks to our Cool Room volunteers who have been the real ambassadors for this project. Not only did you identify the need for this project, but you also helped develop and trial it. You have demonstrated that you are the best advocates for the Cool Room. You raise awareness of the Cool Room's availability, and encourage people to use it. Along the way, many of the people you've encouraged have also became Cool Room volunteers ☺.

Poster



We recognise that this is a trial and look forward to revising how we will proceed in the 2025/2026 summer.

Facebook Tile

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Volunteer Guidelines - Welcome

Thank you for volunteering to help make our pop up Cool Room a safe and welcoming retreat for the community. This handbook provides guidance, expectations, and essential procedures to support you in your role. Importantly though, it provides you with context about how the Cool Room evolved, and how your involvement is helping keep people safe during extreme heat.

Background - why we have a Cool Room?
The Cool Room exists because we know that extreme heat kills more people in this country every year than any other natural disaster, and our community wants to do something about that. Extreme heat doesn't discriminate. It can impact anyone in our community – young, old, fit and healthy, or someone with a pre-existing condition.

These deaths can be prevented if people know how to confidently deal with extreme heat – and sometimes, knowing what to do means knowing where they can go to escape the heat, particularly during heatwaves.

Heat can harm us all, but some people are more vulnerable than others
While extreme heat is a threat to all of us, we do know that some people are at greater risk than others. These include:

- Young people
- Older people
- People with health conditions, including those on certain medications
- People who work or play outside, possibly regardless of weather conditions
- People who live alone
- People who live in homes that don't handle the heat well

During extreme heat, particularly heatwaves where people are impacted by high temperatures for several days and nights in a row, our Cool Room is a short-term retreat from the heat.

What we hope to achieve with a Cool Room?
The purpose of our Cool Room is to provide everyone in our community with a safe and welcoming cool space to retreat during extreme heat. While people enjoy the amenities our Cool Room offers, we also want to boost their confidence to:

- Adapt their behaviour during extreme heat to keep safe
- Adapt their environment to be better prepared for extreme heat
- Know other cool spaces in our community
- Help others during extreme heat

Our Cool Room is essentially a cool space that is formally activated on hot days so people can come, relax and socialise in the airconditioning.

What the Cool Room is not?
The Cool Room is not a first aid centre, a relief centre or an evacuation centre. This is important to clarify, in case people have other expectations. If people need medical help call Triple Zero.

Volunteer Guidelines - Continued

Location and Other Use
The Cool Room is located in the former Senior Citizens building, now called Attitude at 25 Fraser Street, Clunes. The building is all abilities access with toilets, kitchen and three meeting rooms; two of which are fitted with split systems. It does not have shower facilities. It does have an enclosed yard at the rear.

This building is owned by Hepburn Shire Council and leased by Clunes Neighbourhood House. Activity leaders from the community who run activities in the building access it via a code and keysafe.

It is utilised for activities most days of the week, including when it might also be used as a Cool Room. If activities are occurring they have precedent to the Cool Room, influencing which rooms volunteers use ie avoiding the room in use by the activity group, when they activate the Cool Room.

Examples of People who might like to Volunteer for the Cool Room
Cool Room volunteers are essentially social or hospitality volunteers. People who would enjoy being Volunteers for the Cool Room include:

- People who like to have a chat
- People who have time available in the afternoons
- People who'd like to relax in an airconditioned space on a hot day

Volunteer Requirements
All Cool Room volunteers are required to be registered volunteers with Clunes Neighbourhood House. To register visit www.clunesnh.org/volunteer or pop into the office, Tuesday – Thursday 9.30am til @ 2.30pm.

Volunteers will require a Working with Children and Police Check. We will assist you to obtain these if you don't have them already!

Volunteers will need to be able to get to and from the Cool Room with their own transport. It is best to limit activity during the heat of the day during extreme heat, so ideally Cool Room volunteers will not be reliant on public transport or walking. However, if you do not have transport that does not exclude you from volunteering. It just means that we will adapt what we do to ensure that you – as well as others - remain heat safe.

NOTE: When the Cool Room is activated, there will always be two volunteers rostered on to open it.

Cool Room Guidelines

Activating the Cool Room
Trigger: We activate the Cool Room when it is 35 degrees or more.

Cool Room Season: Currently we align our 'Cool Room Season' with summer. We recognise that changing weather patterns mean that this may change in the future, reviewing this annually when we evaluate the program.

During the season volunteers take turns each week in monitoring the weather forecast (Bureau of Meterology App) and confirming people's availability. The team are connected via WhatsApp.

Fortunately, extreme heat is often predicted. People are usually able to prepare several days in advance for it **and so can we.** If a 35 degree day is predicted the volunteer monitoring the weather will:

- Advise the WhatsApp group that a 35 degree day is predicated on "set" date
- Request availability of volunteers for that day
- Confirm to the WhatsApp group who is on roster
- Confirm to the WhatsApp group who is next on call if someone falls through

The Clunes Neighbourhood House 'social media' volunteer is part of the WhatsApp group. When it is likely that the Cool Room will be activated, they will post reminders of the Cool Room's availability and how it works on:

- Social media
- The town online noticeboard

Note: Tea/Coffee/Water is always available at Cool Room. However there may not be milk or biscuits. One of the volunteers on the roster should pick up milk and biscuits from the IGA prior to activation. All volunteers are provided the account code when they are inducted so they do not incur any cost doing this.

Evaluating the Cool Room
After each activation the volunteers on roster will complete a feedback form at https://forms.wix.com/r/7082603487904662420. You can access this on your phone, or just by using the iPad in the building.

People leaving the Cool Room are encouraged to fill in this feedback form which is on an iPad as they leave the building - Cool Room Feedback | Clunesnh

After each activation Clunes Neighbourhood House will acknowledge the feedback form from the volunteers on roster and facilitate any team discussions if any changes are identified.

PS. We love to remind people that there are no right or wrong answers. That we just want to hear about their experience and thoughts.



Cool Room Guidelines - Continued

Key Volunteer Responsibilities
Here is a quick guide of what you need to do when the Cool Room is open:

1. **Opening the Cool Room:**
- Using the keysafe code provided unlock the building. To avoid loosing it, pop the key straight back in the keysafe once the door is unlocked
- Turn on the airconditioning in each room throughout the building
- If another activity is running in the building, assume that room will be unavailable and use the other rooms
- Stack games, magazines, books on a table in the room for ready use
- Keep blinds closed to keep the building cool but be conscious of people's ability to see
- Set up tea/coffee station or familiarise yourself with where everything is in kitchen
- Put signage out including "Welcome" flag – but keep pathways clear, especially for those using mobility devices or wheelchairs

2. Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere
It is unlikely that you will get a rush of people all at once. Instead you will probably be able to welcome people individually, weaving all of this into a natural conversation:

First Impressions:
- Greet everyone warmly with a smile and offer assistance.
- Make eye contact, introduce yourself, and use friendly, respectful language.
- Explain how the 'Cool Room' works – provide them with a heat safe information bag
- Advise people that you are not a first aid centre or relief centre. If they are feeling unwell, ask them to tell you and you can move them to a quiet room,
- Show them what is available to do
- Encourage people to make themselves a drink or snack in the kitchen
- Introduce others
- …people are likely to come back regularly, so welcome familiar faces and don't hesitate in chatting, to talk about your role. **Who knows, they might be interested in becoming a volunteer too?**

Safety:
- Signage is in place, but when people arrive point out the emergency exits, fire extinguisher locations, and assembly point.
- In emergencies, remain calm and assist others as instructed.

Heat Safe Information:
From your induction you are aware of the risks of heat and how people can keep themselves safe. Remember the acronym - HeatSAFE:

H - home and living conditions
E - environment and exclusion risks
A - age and underlying conditions
T - taking certain medications
S - stay cool and drink water
A - avoid going outside in heat of day
F - stay in touch with family and friends
E - emergency alerts and warnings

The information resources that you can give to people as they arrive reinforce this, and can be used by you to encourage conversation. **One of the best outcomes of a Cool Room can be that people feel more confident about their knowledge of the risks of heat, and how to keep safe.**

Cool Room Guidelines - Continued

Heat Health:
You are a social volunteer, not a health professional. However there are signs of heat stress that you can look out for including:

- Confused & Delirious Mental State
- Seizures
- Rapid Pulse
- If a person looks very unwell call 000 Common signs of Heat Exhaustion
- Dizziness & Headache
- Pale sweating
- Rapid heart rate
- Fainting
- Muscle cramps/weakness First Aid

If people show signs of heat stress, move them out of the main room to one of the more private rooms (providing it is cool!). Provide them with a cool face and neck with cloth and water. Tell them you are not a first aider and that that if symptoms persist it is best to call 000. You can help with this.

Reporting Procedures:
- Report all incidents or safety concerns to the emergency contact/s listed below
- Use the incident logbook or digital form listed in Resources & Support below

Volunteer Code of Conduct:
Remember from your induction that we ask all volunteers to:
- Respect the dignity, privacy, and rights of every participant.
- Be reliable, punctual, and cooperative.
- Avoid discrimination, harassment, or offensive behavior.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Follow all safety, safeguarding, and organisational policies.

Resources & Support
Emergency Contact Info: **Call Lana de Kort on 0422152811 or Deb Bright on 0419 341 127**
Training Schedule: Training is conducted on induction, and at the beginning of the summer.
Incident Report Form: Hard copies are located in the folder or online at https://forms.wix.com/r/7153943058101305365. You can access this on your phone or via the iPad.

Closure
- Fill in your feedback form – we'd love to know how you went and any reflections you've had
- Bring in signage
- Turn off urn
- Turn off airconditioning and fans in all rooms
- Turn off lights in all rooms
- Empty bins (spare bags in base of the bin) and deposit in bins as you leave

Thank You!
Cool spaces like this Cool Room are modest and simple ways that a community can care for each other and stay connected during extreme weather. The information you shared about heatsafe behaviours and things you can do at home helps people keep safe in the heat.

So a HUGE thank you – for all that you do.