

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Ambulance Services



Thursday, 21 December 2023

## HERE COMES THE SUN: BEAT THE EXTREME HEAT THIS SUMMER

Victorians are being urged to follow simple steps to stay safe this summer and to never leave kids in cars – as new data reveals hundreds of call outs to locked cars in the past three months.

As the state braces for sizzling temperatures, Minister for Ambulance Services Mary-Anne Thomas today joined Ambulance Victoria and Kidsafe to launch the latest *Extreme Heat Can Be Dangerous* and *Never Leave Kids in Cars* campaigns.

It is a timely reminder as staggering new statistics reveal paramedics were called to 322 reports of people locked in cars in the past three months – with a total of 1,240 call outs in 2023.

The temperature in a parked car can more than double within minutes and is often 20 to 30 degrees hotter than outside – a deadly combination for children, whose body temperature rises much faster than adults.

Tackling a common misconception, Victorians are reminded that leaving the windows of a parked car down has little effect on reducing the temperature – tests showing that when windows are left open 10 centimetres, the temperature will only reduce by five degrees.

A proven tactic to help parents and carers lower the risk of accidentally leaving a child in a hot car is to make small changes to their daily routines such as ensuring they automatically check the back seat before locking up.

Changes could include opening the back door of the car each time after parking (even if there is no child in the back seat) or placing a child's bag or toy in the front seat as a reminder.

Extreme heat kills more people than natural disasters, and as heatwaves become more frequent due to climate change, it is placing vulnerable Victorians at risk of serious or potentially fatal health problems.

For these people – including the elderly, babies and infants, pregnant women, people with acute or chronic health problems and people who are socially isolated – summer weather can lead to heat exhaustion and heatstroke, trigger heart attacks or stroke, or worsen existing conditions such as kidney or lung disease.

Simple steps Victorians can take to survive the heat:

- Drink plenty of water, stay cool by seeking out air-conditioned buildings
- Plan ahead and schedule activities to the coolest part of the day
- If heading outdoors, seek shade when possible, wear a hat and sunscreen and avoid exercising in the heat
- Check in on others most at risk in the heat

In the event of an extreme heat period, the Department of Health will provide information and advice to ensure Victorians know how to stay well during the heat and ways to keep cool. If you or someone you know is showing signs of heat exhaustion, heatstroke, or other health emergencies, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For urgent care not requiring an emergency response people can contact the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, visit a Priority Primary Care Centre, call NURSE-ON-CALL or visit a GP or local pharmacist for advice.

For more tips on surviving heat and the *Never Leave Kids in Cars* campaign, visit [betterhealth.vic.gov.au](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au).

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## **Quotes attributable to Minister for Ambulance Services Mary-Anne Thomas**

*“With temperatures expected to soar across the state this summer, it is critical Victorians are prepared to stay healthy and safe – being prepared, staying hydrated and checking in on loved ones who may be most at risk.”*

*“We are urging Victorians to heed the warnings and never leave kids in parked cars – by making small changes to your daily routine or leaving reminders can drastically reduce the risk of a fatal mistake.”*