Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough

Robb Smart
Principle Program and Policy Officer

robb.smart@sa.gov.au

Government of South Australia

human services

Acknowledgement of Country

We, the Department of Human Services (DHS), acknowledge and respect Aboriginal peoples as South Australia's First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and occupants of the lands and waters of South Australia.

We respect and celebrate the varied cultural and spiritual identities of all Aboriginal communities.



Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough (RS-EWR)

- Extreme weather presents a growing and immediate risk to health, safety and wellbeing noting disproportionate vulnerability to heat and cold-related illness
- Further harm during extreme weather is likely to occur at lower thresholds than for people under shelter
- Code Red or Code Blue, is a critical function led by DHS to coordinate activation, communication and service responses for people sleeping rough during extreme weather
- Supports elevated responses across South Australia, including place-based activity, coordinated local responses, and in some circumstances, access to overnight accommodation or shelter

REVIEW: Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough (RS-EWR)

- RS-EWR transferred to DHS in October 2024, at a time of increasing climate intensity, service demand and system pressure
- Delivered across 2025-26, it responded to the growing misalignment between current program settings, the risks faced by people sleeping rough, and the operational realities experienced by service providers
- The Review found that the current RS-EWR model is not fit for purpose – delivering four priority reforms to shift from a reactive, bureaucratic response to a clearer, health-risk-informed statewide function focused on preparation and planning.

Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough

50+

responses *since* October 2024

194

days *since October 2024*

26%

of all days *since October 2024*

21%



Severe and Extreme heatwaves

60%



Cold, Wet, Windy conditions

19%



Severe Weather Warnings from BoM

Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough

50+ responses *since* October 2024

2,200
Nights: hotel/motel/shelter

6,600
Services: incl. Material aid

39%
Metro

61%
Regional

65%

35%

44%
Aboriginal people

66%
Male

93%
Adults 25yo+

Findings: Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough (RS-EWR)

- Program settings are no longer aligned to the health risks faced by people sleeping rough, the operational realities of service delivery, or the impacts of a changing climate
- The current settings contribute to an erosion of trust between people sleeping rough, service providers and DHS as system steward
- Strong place-based coordination in some communities shows that timely, clear and coordinated responses are achievable and can improve service coverage, uptake and outcomes
- Current approach is highly reactive, inconsistent, complex and bureaucratic,

Reforms: Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough (RS-EWR)

- ***The Review made four key recommendations for priority reforms of the RS-EWR to:***
- ***strengthen the statewide stewardship function, simplify and align the activation model to risk, improve communication and pre-season planning, and improve and strengthen place-based coordination and system integration.***
- Implementation over the next 12+ months across three phases
- Establishing Strong Foundations (to Feb 27); Strengthening the Response (to August 27), Embedding Change (Sept 27 & beyond)

Reforms: Extreme Weather Response for people sleeping rough (RS-EWR)

Phase	Period	Key priorities	Review recommendations
Establishing Strong Foundations	Sept. 2026 to Feb. 2027	Focuses on developing new activation arrangements, including risk-based thresholds and model reform for Code Red, then Code Blue, updated brokerage processes that support preseason preparation; establishing governance, evaluation and continuous improvement frameworks to support future phases of reform.	1a Outcomes Program Logic 1b Data and Information Sharing Improvements 1d Evaluation and Continuous Improvement 2a-2c Activation Thresholds and Model Reform 2d-2e Brokerage and Accommodation Reform 3a Information Handouts 3d Activation Communications Improvements

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More information

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