

# TOWNSVILLE HEAT RESILIENCE PRIORITY ACTIONS

These recommendations from the Townsville heatwave scenario workshop hosted by Sweltering Cities, Queensland Community Alliance and North Queensland Conservation Council in June 2025 are designed to inform advocacy, planning, and investment in equitable climate adaptation. They are not endorsed by any single organisation but represent strong, commonly expressed priorities for protecting lives, strengthening communities, and preparing Townsville for a hotter future. A consistent theme throughout the workshop was that **resilience is collective** and that adaptation strategies must deliver **benefits across communities**.

## **STRENGTHEN SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOCAL CONNECTION**

Community connection is one of the most powerful forms of resilience but it depends on physical spaces, communications, and support structures that reflect and serve the local context.

- Fund neighbourhood programs that help people connect with and support one another.
- Create and maintain inclusive, climate-safe meeting places like neighbourhood centres, community halls, and shared public spaces.
- Build local communications infrastructure, such as community newspapers and events, that reflect North Queensland identities, voices, and strengths. Support culturally inclusive storytelling, public messaging, and education about heat health and preparedness.

## **ENSURE SAFE AND DIGNIFIED WORK IN EXTREME HEAT**

Workplace heat safety is not just a labour issue, it's a public health and equity issue. Workers in construction, care, delivery, hospitality, and emergency services are on the frontline of climate risk. Legislated, enforceable workplace heat safety standards will provide clarity and confidence. Flexible summer work arrangements will help people work at cooler times when possible,

## **BUILD COOL, CONNECTED PUBLIC SPACES**

Safe, shaded, and accessible public spaces are essential for both physical safety and social wellbeing and should be present in every suburb. Upgrading public places with shade, green cover, evening lighting and cooling infrastructure for play, exercise, and rest will enable people to gather, connect, and support one another.

## **SUPPORT LOCAL GREENING AND FOOD SYSTEMS**

Green infrastructure and local food systems can reduce heat, strengthen food security, support biodiversity, and build neighbourhood pride. Free trees, tree planting events, and more flexible trimming or tree removal policies will make Townsville cooler and greener. Planting the right trees in the right place creates the best long term investments for councils, utilities and communities. Garden education, community farms, and garden competitions connect people. Native landscaping and small-scale food production should be supported in planning codes.

## **EXPAND RELIABLE AND EQUITABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS**

Keeping cool in a heatwave should not depend on income or postcode. Local energy solutions can improve comfort, save money, and prevent deadly heat stress. A regional energy resilience plan for homes, schools, and community infrastructure should include: solar and batteries for social housing, incentives for residential solar and batteries, and neighbourhood-scale energy systems like community batteries and microgrids.

## **EMBED CLIMATE LITERACY IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Education systems, from schools to trade training to community learning, are key to ensuring that all residents can adapt safely and confidently to heat. Peer-to-peer and community-led learning programs build trust and community connection. Civics education focused on misinformation resilience and critical thinking will support social cohesion and community participation.

## **PLAN AND RETROFIT FOR CLIMATE-READY HOMES AND BUILDINGS**

Building codes, design standards, and financial incentives must reflect the lived reality of extreme heat in Townsville. Homes should be cool, affordable, and safe.

## **SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY AND HEALTH RESPONSE**

Adaptation must explicitly include people with disability and health conditions, and people experiencing poverty and people who come from multicultural backgrounds to ensure communities have the capacity to respond together in an emergency. Specifically, we can expand community-led heatwave and disaster response programs. Plans should ensure food, water, and support can be delivered to isolated or at-risk residents.

## **DESIGN TRANSPORT THAT PROTECTS AND CONNECTS**

Heat-safe, accessible transport allows people to stay connected, reach cool spaces, and avoid dangerous exposure. Good transport is a lifeline during extreme heat. Public transport stops and walking routes should be improved with shading, cooling, and safe waiting areas. Use existing infrastructure (like the rail line) and innovation to increase local transport options in growth areas.

## **LEAD WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND LONG-TERM PLANNING**

Townsville can lead on regional heat adaptation, but this requires strong local governance, clear long-term planning, and ongoing collaboration with communities.

- Publicly commit to a nature-positive vision for Townsville, with council leadership.
- Establish focus groups to help communities fact-check, shape, and communicate policy.
- Fund and share financial modelling that shows the long-term benefits of investing in adaptation.