

The Health Impacts of Climate Change: NSW Health Adaptation Project

Prepared by Glenis Lloyd
Environmental Health Branch

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Human health and climate change

Climate change health impacts

- Temperature related illness and death
- Food & Water borne disease
- Respiratory disease
- Mental health
- Vector borne disease
- Injury, trauma and related effects

Human health and climate change in NSW

- Pervasive, insidious, cumulative, mostly silent and inevitable - no bodies in the street – not the big bang theory.
- Possibility of some single event body pile ups
- Those already at a health/social disadvantage more likely to suffer in greater proportion. A hard target to reach for health prevention programs
- For rural and remote Australia climate change compounds existing poor social, health and economic circumstances
- Likely to underestimate numbers of mortalities and morbidity

Extreme Heat

- Potential to have greatest impact on health services

BUT

- Potential to be the easiest to adapt to and plan services for with relatively minor public health investment

Extreme heat

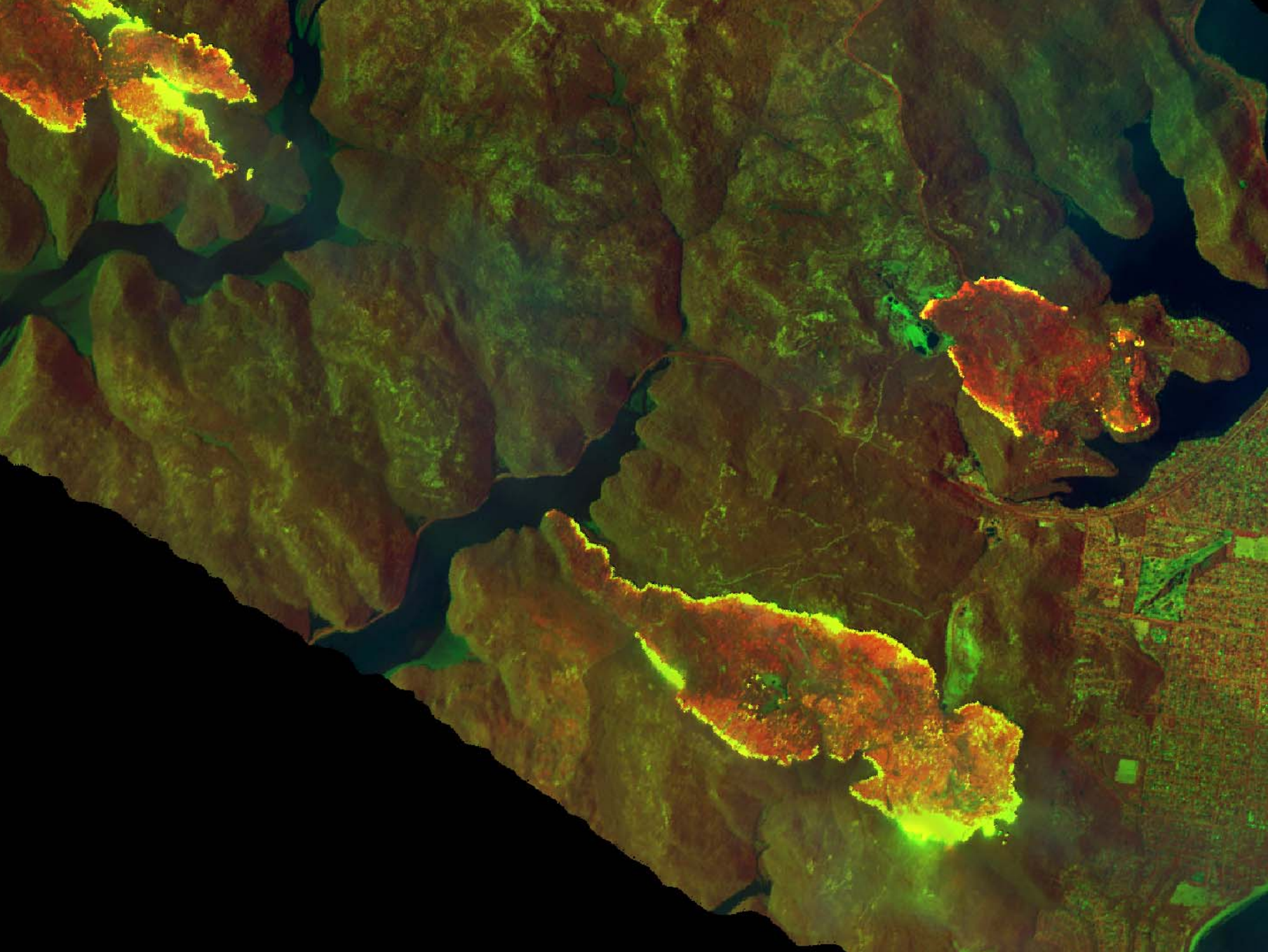
- **France 2003 heatwave – 14,800 deaths:**
 - **>80% over 75 years**
 - **>50% died in nursing homes**
 - **>30% of hospital/medical /nursing staff missing in some hospitals**
 - **Occurred during summer holidays**
 - **Underestimated impacts**

Vulnerable populations and those at risk

- >65, particularly >75
- Mentally ill, disabled and homeless
- Physically unfit (reduced cardiovascular capacity)
- Obese
- Chronic diseases, especially cardio- respiratory
- Certain types of medication, especially psychiatric and cardiac
- Children (immature thermoregulatory response)
- Outdoor workers (high exposure) particularly in urban areas.

But there is good news.....

- **Easy to manage - reduce exposure, adequate hydration**
- **Develop an evidence based heat wave action plan**
- **Link to BoM for region specific media alerts**



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Moone Mooney Creek

*During the 20th Century
heatwaves caused more deaths
than any other natural hazard
apart from disease, yet remains
the least studied and most
underrated hazard.*

EMA Australia, 2003

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1st January 2006 23:41hrs

Effects of the Southerly

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

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