

29 January 2009

Immediate release

HEATWAVE POSES RISK TO ELDERLY - NURSING CHIEF

The CEO of Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) has expressed concern about the impact of the current heatwave on Melbourne's elderly.

As the city's largest provider of home nursing, RDNS' nurses care for around 7,000 people each day in their own homes, the majority elderly and frail.

Chief Executive Dan Romanis has highlighted the extra burden put on RDNS' clients by current record high temperatures, stressing that extra care needs to be taken.

"Our nurses are seeing first-hand the effects of the heat on our clients, most of whom are elderly. Many of these people live alone and due to their age and frailty are already vulnerable," he said.

"RDNS' nurses will be even more vigilant over the coming days as the heat continues unabated. They will ensure that clients receive the nursing care they need each day but will also be on the look-out for any extra strain or stress that the heat is putting on them," he explained.

"Times like this are a drain and a nuisance for many of us but for the frail and the elderly, extreme heat can pose a real risk to their health."

Mr Romanis has urged family, carers and neighbours of the elderly to pay extra attention to the health of their loved ones and friends over the coming days. He says that there are some basic things that the elderly can do to be more comfortable and reduce the risk of stress caused by the extreme heat.

Mr Romanis' advice includes:

- Drink water frequently and throughout the whole day to avoid dehydration
- Avoid drinks that can add to dehydration, such as coffee and alcohol
- Stay out of the direct sun and try to remain indoors at the height of day
- Wear light, loose fitting clothes
- Avoid any extra activity or exercise to avoid overheating
- Ask family, friends and neighbours for help if needed.

Mr Romanis stressed the need for the community as a whole to be aware of the stress the current heatwave is placing on the elderly and frail.

"This segment of the community is one of our most vulnerable and we all have a responsibility to ensure that we do as much as possible for them during this unprecedented period of extreme heat," he said.

He said that nurses from RDNS would continue to provide scheduled visits as normal but acknowledged that demand may peak over the coming days due to the heat.

Concerned RDNS clients or their carers can contact the service on 1300 33 44 55.

----- ENDS -----

Media enquiries: Dan Woods 0410 416 276

Evan Gordon 0410 416 348