**Media Release**

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**Name heatwaves like cyclones, experts recommend**

New research released today says Australia should consider naming its heatwaves to increase public awareness of the dangers of extreme heat.

The report, *Extreme heat resilience: lessons from Spain for Australia*, looks at what Spain is doing to combat extreme heat and what approaches Australia can use and learn from.

Since 2022, Seville in Spain has had a system for naming and ranking heatwaves like cyclones.

“Australia should take a leaf out of Spain’s book and name heatwaves – it is a great way to help raise public awareness about the dangers of extreme heat,” said Rob McLeod, Policy and Advocacy Manager at Renew.

“In Spain, improved public understanding of the dangers of heatwaves, coupled with a national heatwave plan, has helped save lives. We should consider adopting a framework for alerts and communications here that builds on Seville’s heatwave naming approach.

“Heatwaves have killed more people in Australia than any other natural disaster since 1900, and without sustained and ambitious policies to improve our resilience to extreme heat the challenge will get even harder.”

Report author Rob McLeod was awarded the [2023 Gill Owen Scholarship](https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/gill-owen-scholarship), which enabled him to travel to Spain to conduct the research.

Like Spain, Australia has long been used to hot summers – but thanks to climate change both countries now face more frequent heatwaves. 2023 was the hottest year on record globally and Seville sweltered through Heatwaves Yago, Xenia, Wenceslao and Vera, hitting over 45°C.

The most important way to reduce the threat of more extreme heatwaves is by reducing the emissions that are driving climate change. But Australia, like Spain, also needs to act to reduce the impacts of heatwaves on the community.

Spain has implemented a wide range of responses and activities to help its population adapt to extreme heat events. Other key measures include retrofitting housing, reducing ‘urban heat island’ effects, improving health systems, and local emergency heatwave responses.

Cities including Barcelona and Madrid have a set of emergency response services that happen when there’s a severe heatwave, including cooling centers and health teams that work with communities that are most at risk.

“In Australia, as in Spain, the health impacts of heatwaves are disproportionately experienced by low-income communities, older people, people experiencing energy poverty or precarious conditions, and people with pre-existing health conditions,” said Rob McLeod.

“Addressing energy poverty and vulnerability to extreme heat should be central to Australia’s climate adaptation policy.”

You can read the report on Energy Consumers Australia’s website at: <https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/publications/our-research>

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**About Energy Consumers Australia**

Energy Consumers Australia is the independent, national voice for residential and small business energy consumers. We enable residential and small business energy consumers to have their voices heard.

**About the Gill Owen Scholarship**

The Gill Owen Scholarship supports an individual to travel internationally to research innovative ideas and initiatives that will be relevant to improving outcomes for consumers in the Australian energy market. Gill Owen was a respected policy advocate for consumers and an inaugural Director of the Energy Consumers Australia Board. Gill passed away in August 2016 and Energy Consumers Australia has created an annual scholarship in her name.

You can find out more about the Gill Owen Scholarship here: <https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/gill-owen-scholarship>

**About Renew**

Renew is a member-based non-profit organisation providing expert, independent advice and sustainable solutions to households, government, and industry across Australia. Renew leads the national Climate Resilient Homes campaign.