

**MEDIA RELEASE MEDIA RELEASE MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Ombudsman warns of danger posed to people with disabilities left in vehicles**

The public should be alert to vulnerable people with disabilities being left in cars in heat waves, NSW Ombudsman Michael Barnes said today, ahead of extreme temperatures predicted for the weekend.

‘We have recently received two reports of people with disability being left unattended in vehicles that could easily have ended in tragedy’, Mr Barnes said. In both those matters members of the community called the police who promptly intervened.

In one case, a person with disability was locked in a vehicle at around midday for at least 50 minutes when the temperature was 38 degrees. The person needed to be transported to hospital to manage his distress and the risk to his health.

‘One of my responsibilities is to educate the community about what is required of disability service providers in their treatment of clients’, Mr Barnes said.

‘The community is increasingly aware of the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles. However, it is important for people to recognise that this type of neglect can expose vulnerable adults with disabilities to the same risks of dehydration, heatstroke and even death’, Mr Barnes said.

The Ombudsman called on the public to be vigilant and to take action when necessary.

‘Call 000, or if it’s an emergency, take steps to open the vehicle’, Mr Barnes urged.