

Draft Letter/Email

Dear Mr/Ms/Minister (*delete as appropriate*),

I wish to raise my deep concerns over the environment health impact on myself and my family from residential woodsmoke pollution in my suburb of (*name suburb here*).

It is documented that slow combustion wood burning heaters are responsible for more than two thirds of Canberra's fine particle air pollution. This is compared to motor vehicles which are responsible for just 10%. The ACT Government's own figures show that fine particle air pollution increases nearly threefold in many parts of Canberra during the cooler months of the year. And, while the government claims our overall air quality is good, the fact is Canberra regularly breaches air pollution standards and World Health Organisation Guidelines due to smoke generated by wood heaters.

Less than 5% of Canberra homes burn wood as their primary source of heating. For everyone else it's a secondary form of heating, supplementing gas or electricity. Therefore, a small number of households generate the majority of Canberra's air pollution in the cooler months of the year resulting in high levels of air pollution in many neighbourhoods and damaging our health.

Despite taxpayers' dollars being spent on education campaigns year after year, wood heaters are still used incorrectly and the pollution they generate annually impacts our health and quality of life. Fine particles from woodsmoke go deep into our lungs. Environmental health and medical experts warn woodsmoke can cause heart attacks, strokes, lung disease, asthma attacks, premature births, stunted lung development in children, genetic damage in babies and reduced IQ and behavioural problems. They also warn it contains a cocktail of toxic chemicals and is far more dangerous than tobacco smoke. Governments have introduced tough legislation to protect us from tobacco smoke but we continue to be exposed to an even greater health hazard in the form of wood heaters.

Claims wood heaters are environmentally friendly are also misleading. It is reported that for an equal amount of heat or electricity, wood burning releases more CO₂ than burning gas, oil and even coal, contributing to climate change. The harvesting and indiscriminate collection of firewood from the bush, parks and reserves damages our eco system, destroying the habitats of many of our native fauna.

I note the ACT Government has banned wood heaters in some Canberra suburbs on the basis of protecting public health. I call on you and your colleagues to extend this ban across all Canberra suburbs. Wood heaters do not belong in our neighbourhoods.

Yours sincerely

Name
Address
Contacts