

To: SCEW Secretariat

Subject: Submission on Woodheater Consultation Regulation Impact Statement

Importance: High

Submission from [REDACTED], NSW

In the winter of 2008 subsequent to significant rises in the cost of electricity, we began to regularly experience strong blasts of wood smoke from various directions around us followed by ongoing infusion of smoke into our home which would last all night and often into the next day. We took every measure possible to try to prevent the infiltration of smoke into our home including taping doors and windows, putting up draft stoppers in the ceiling, purchasing air purifiers, even taping down lights to try to seal out the pollution.

Unfortunately it was all in vain. After numerous calls to our local [REDACTED] Council and who seemed to think that the wood burners were in fact the victims and not us, and myriad calls to the EPA, now OEH, we eventually contacted our local newspaper who printed various articles and letters on our behalf in an attempt to raise the public's awareness on the health impacts of burning wood.

The effects of being subjected to ongoing wood smoke infiltration into our home meant that we frequently experienced sore itchy eyes, sore throats, at times respiratory distress, and nausea and fatigue. In addition our home and our belongings often smelled of smoke and we experienced deposits of black soot throughout the home. After exhaustive attempts to try to remedy the situation and upon advice from GP's and specialist medical practitioners I was finally forced to sell my home and move.

It is incomprehensible to us that wood burners have greater rights to burn wood and pollute than we have to breathe clean air and to live safely and comfortably in our own home.

This problem is due to the lack of a reliable standard or test for wood heater emissions. The current test was devised over 2 decades ago when the health hazards of fine particle pollution were not as well known as they are today. Adding to this unsatisfactory situation is the fact that the wood heater test bears little or no relation to real-life emissions. According to a NSW OEH consultancy report, a heater rated 3 grams/kg has real-life emissions of 8.8 grams/kg, and one rated 1.5 grams/kg has real-life emissions of 6.7 grams/kg.

With the Federal Government Consultation Regulation Impact Statement showing that every kilogram of PM2.5 emissions in Sydney has estimated health costs of \$263, and with average firewood consumption of 3.43 tonnes per year, a new wood heater rated 3.0 grams/kg has health costs of \$7,938 per year and one rated 1.5 g/kg health costs of \$6,044 per year.

Installing such devices is sheer madness - why would any government, let alone the public, want to allow this? The only sensible option to protect public health is a moratorium on the installation of new wood heaters until an independent health-based standard has been set. The wood heating industry was involved in setting previous "standard". The new standard must be set by independent health authorities whose main concern should be public health, not the profits of the wood heating industry.

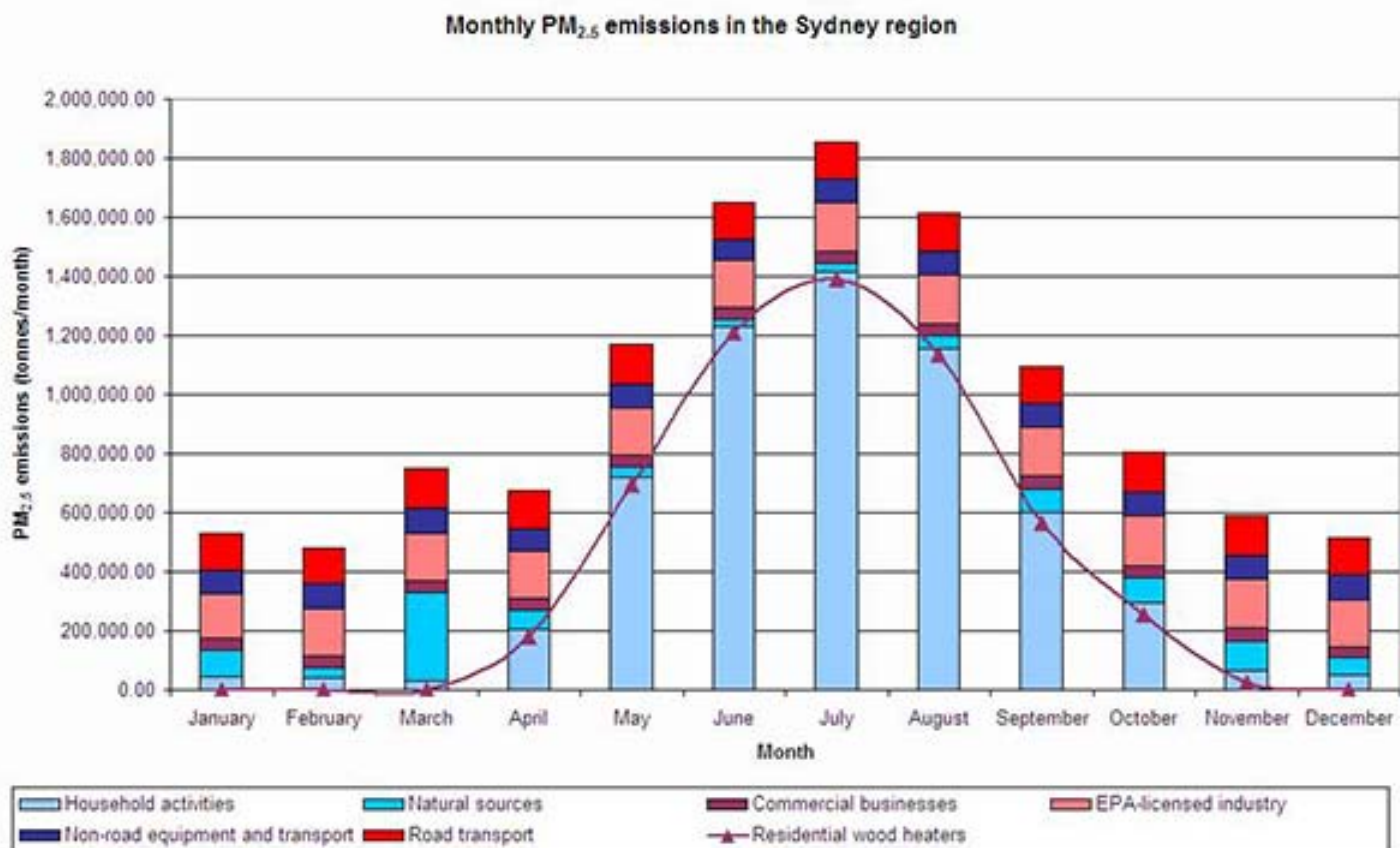
A moratorium will at least prevent the problem from getting worse, but won't solve the problems experienced by the people such as ourselves. We were forced to sell our home to avoid ill-health caused by wood heaters that satisfy the current, but totally inadequate "standard". In addition to a moratorium on the installation of new wood heaters, we

recommend two additional measures found to be highly cost-effective in the NSW Wood smoke Control Options report.

- 1) Phasing out wood heaters when houses are sold
- 2) Wood heater licensing fees to provide funds for wood smoke-reduction programs and to solve problems when people's health is affected by wood smoke.

The wood smoke-reduction programs should, as in Launceston, encourage people to switch to non-polluting heating. In addition to requiring all current wood heaters to be removed when houses are sold, there should be a sunset clause to ensure all heaters that don't meet the new health-based standard are removed within 10 years.

The need for speedy action is illustrated by the graph produced by the NSW EPA. We know that PM_{2.5} is the most health-hazardous air pollutant, responsible for hundreds if not thousands of premature deaths in Sydney. Government's failure to regulate has led to a totally unsatisfactory situation where more than half of man-made PM_{2.5} emissions are from a single source. Wood heaters are used as the main form of heating by only 5% of Sydneysiders. This unsatisfactory situation should be addressed immediately, with policies designed to reduce emissions by 95% with 5 years.



Yours sincerely,

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