

FOCUS QUESTION RESPONSES

Chapter 2 AUSTRALIAN WOOD HEATERS

1. Based on the information provided in the Regulation Impact Statement (RIS), my view of the wood heater industry in Australia is that they are not taking enough of their own initiative to develop more efficient/ less emission heaters. Unless purchasers demand it, or government forces it, there is no drive for manufacturers to change. It is a shame there isn't more initiative considering it appears to be an opportunity for Australia to become the world leaders in.
2. Please read the 'Options for wood smoke control discussion paper' produced by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. We may be doubling up in workload.

Chapter 3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

3. My partner and I have experienced wood heater emissions to be a significant issue relative to other forms of air pollution. We were forced to sell out home that was located in an otherwise considerably pollution free area, after our next door neighbour installed a wood heater without any consultation with neighbouring properties. Smoke from their wood heater travelled across their roof in a down draft into our yard. This made it impossible to dry washing outside or enjoy our pergola area without exposure to wood smoke. In the unusual situation, these neighbours used their heater for the extended periods of February to November each year.
4. Yes, I agree that there are no 'safe' levels of pollution
5. Other variables that may need to be considered is the accuracy of readings of air quality in air sheds. If the tools for measuring air quality is not located in an appropriate area or has not be calibrated in many years it may not be giving accurate readings. The air quality meter for Wagga Wagga is located at the racecourse. Is this open space going to give a true reflection of the air quality in more densely areas of Wagga? Are there guidelines for the location of air quality meters? Is there a reporting system for compiling this data for accurate comparison in years to come?
More weight could be added for population growth. I believe this to be a considerable factor required for projecting future impacts.

Chapter 4 RATIONALE FOR GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

6. I believe that the current use of local government for management of wood smoke issues is inadequate. Local council hides behind 'not having the power', not believing there is a problem because there 'hasn't been many complaints' and 'we don't have the resources'.
While we were experiencing wood smoke issues from our neighbours, we made complaints to our local City Council. Our local council followed their local policy of visiting problem wood heater owners and trying to educate them on appropriate heater operation. When this was not a suitable solution, we negotiated to extend the flue at our expense, which also did not achieve a suitable solution.
Having smoke free suburbs would give people a choice not to live with smoke and prevent what happened to us from being forced on us again. Currently we have no say to prevent a neighbour installing a wood heater that previously has so greatly affected our lives.
The current local council policy of using the Australian Standards as the maximum requirements does not go far enough in the installation of wood heaters. The use of the installation recommendations as mentioned on the website of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage gives a more solid and environmentally responsible option.
7. While I understand it is going to be hard to find a one size fits all solution. By having a Commonwealth approach the issue is being reinforced to the public that we have a national issue and that government takes it seriously.

Chapter 5 IDENTIFICATION OF FEASIBLE POLICY MEASURES

8. I have nothing helpful to respond here other than; I really hope so.

9. 'Nudge' programs would be helpful because in general, people do not like being 'told' what to do. This would be especially helpful in the area of a standard definition of excessive wood smoke, giving wood heater owners and non wood heater owners a clear idea of what is and isn't ok.

Aiming some programs at children gives more reinforcement of information to adults because children have the 'nag factor'.

10. I don't support the view that 'imposing restrictions on households not directly experiencing air quality issues' is irresponsible. What is irresponsible is allowing the installation of wood heaters, just so not to 'disadvantage' some people without any consultation or input from fence sharing neighbours. People, including those with greater risk of complications from particulate matter are having wood smoke forced upon them with no chance to put in an objection of a wood heater being installed. This could be easily addressed by the use of a 'Section 68' form that requires sign off from potentially affected neighbours before submission to council, giving neighbours a chance to object based on the grounds of health effects. Putting restrictions on installations of wood heaters also helps relieve the pressure of the bigger picture, the greenhouse effect.

How does a town be identified as an air shed of concern? How can it be added to become identified as an air shed required for targeted education?

Chapter 6 IDENTIFICATION OF FEASIBLE POLICY COMBINATIONS

11. I favour option 7 because it includes a common definition of excessive smoke and has the greatest expected reduction in emissions by 2030 and shorter phase in period.

12. Option 1 and 2 are too easily ignored by people who don't care. People don't have to watch an advertisement, nor do they have to read a pamphlet. They can choose to be ignorant. We need options that are more 'in your face' so people can't claim ignorance as an excuse for poor operation of wood heaters.

Chapter 7 IMPACT ANALYSIS OF FEASIBLE POLICY OPTIONS

13. I hope the base case has been correctly identified, as long as the air quality measurements are being taken and recorded accurately for future comparison.

14. What is the plan for responsible disposal of buy-back units? Will replaced wood heaters become land fill?

While I recognise that wood is a 'renewable resource' under a business-as-usual scenario, when will wood supplies be exhausted? What will be done to protect biodiversity and stop illegal wood collecting?

A possible side effect of manufacturers that use their initiative to improve production of better emission and efficiency models, will be making wood heating a more attractive option for environmentally conscious clients.

15. I have no beneficial comments for this question.

Chapter 8 CONCLUSIONS

16. The conclusions appear to be sound except, you may want to cross check the amount of \$56m in paragraph 4 with the \$39m indicated in 7.3. Please also place more emphasis on population growth.

17. Please don't make installation of heaters more important than that of biodiversity. Please keep sight of the big picture.