

scew.secretariat@environment.gov.au

Standing Council on Environment and Water Secretariat

GPO Box 787, Canberra, ACT 2601

### **Consultation for Reducing Emissions from Wood Heaters - Submission**

I live in the suburb of [REDACTED] in Melbourne. We live two houses away from a house with a wood heater that is in operation from morning to night. My neighbor with the wood heater uses it as their main heat source (though they have other heating available). They light it at about 7am every morning and it is often still burning at midnight. Living in a haze of smoke for most of winter is awful – every day we can smell smoke inside our house.

We have three children. We moved into our house three years ago. My teenagers have never had asthma but my seven year old developed asthma after our first winter in our house. We notice his asthma seems worse on days when there is lots of smoke in the air. He is constantly using his puffer and preventer medication. When our neighbours go on holidays, his asthma is better and we have had days when the puffer is not needed.

I looked up the impact of wood smoke and discovered that many studies have found the health effects of smoke from wood heaters are similar to smoking cigarettes. The articles I read were published in major health journals.

I have spoken with my neighbors about the smoke. They were receptive to trying to minimize the smoke (they had also had another neighbor complain about it) and it seems that they are using their heater properly. Their heater is relatively new, their wood is stored under shelter, and they regularly purchase proper fire wood. When I contacted my local council they said there is nothing that can be done if my neighbours are using it properly.

My research shows that regardless of whether the heater properly operated, the smoke is still a serious health risk – in relation to respiratory problems and heart disease.

We have no other way to get our neighbours to stop or even reduce using their wood heater. We are considering moving because we are concerned about the health effects on our kids.

For these reasons, I believe community education about proper use of heaters is not helpful. What would be best is to phase them out. Smoking cigarettes is banned in restaurants, and outside of buildings and even on some beaches. Wood smoke is a more significant problem than cigarettes, but in Melbourne, people's use of wood heaters is not being restricted in any way.