

To: SCEW Secretariat

Subject: Wood smoke pollution submissions

We live in [REDACTED], South of Hobart. The lions-share of residents in our valley use a wood burning appliance as their main source of heating for 8-9 months each year. Even though wood fuel is readily accessible & wood storage generally isn't an issue, we very rarely see a chimney flue operating that is burning clean & smoke free. This is regardless of whether the house is new or old, debunking the theory that new modern wood heaters are less polluting. Is the wood fuel really dry? An example: our new neighbor moved into his house only a few months ago. On arrival he chainsaws down some trees & burns said wood that same day! Subsequently, when we hear the chainsaw going for ½ day, we know that the fresh tree is going into his wood heater & open fire (yes he's got both) the very next day!!! There is no regulation of wood fuel & no one to police the polluters. Compliance is hardly even mentioned in Tasmania. In fact anyone we have spoken with in our community about wood smoke pollution & health are blissfully unaware of any health risks, studies or research findings into the dangers of long term chronic exposure to breathing wood smoke. It seems they believe that wood smoke is natural & benign at best, and a necessary "smell" at worst.

One Federal Senator we met with about this issue described the smoke pollution (romantically) as "the smell of autumn", and, this is probably the general community view. Ignorance is bliss. When we built our healthy eco house in this valley & moved in 3 years ago, we thought this valley was one of the cleanest places on earth. It could be that, if not for the wood smoke air pollution which persists from April right through to mid December. This is not only due to wood heaters & stoves, but as well, open-slather backyard burning & incineration of waste & rubbish. Plus the 'so called' fuel reduction burns where residents are encouraged (by authorities) to gather their green & garden waste into piles or incinerators & burn burn burn. There is absolutely NO concept of responsible waste disposal, and there is absolutely zero consideration for the health of our community with all this toxic smoke. Composting green waste is not even on the radar, just burn. We have been lobbying Govt. at all levels since moving here, because we are so appalled with the air quality, or lack thereof. EPA does no monitoring in our valley. Even if they did monitor, as they do in Hobart or Launceston for example, what is the point in knowing the smoke has reached dangerous levels if there's NO ACTION to reduce or minimize the smoke pollution???

Tasmania would have to have the highest usage of wood burning appliances of all the States, and burning for the most months of the year. Apparently we have the highest asthma rates in Australia. I would not be surprised if we have the highest rates of heart disease & lung cancer as well, just to name a few illnesses related to smoke inhalation. But it's like 'don't mention the war'. Intelligent & educated health professionals don't seem to realize the health implications of long term exposure to wood smoke, & none seem to express any concern, apart from Dr. James Markos. Chimneys & flues billow toxic smoke day in day out for the most part of the year, in every town & city from smallest to biggest populations in this State. Wood you smoke??? Oh yes we do, we all do. Every Tasmanian child passive smokes big time. Its Child Abuse on a mass scale, in my opinion. We need to minimize & reduce wood smoke air pollution NOW, by any & every means possible.

People need to realize the health risks to babies, children & unborn babies, if no one else. Since rises in power costs wood heating uptake has increased & we see many new build houses installing chimney flues. Without the appropriate regulation & legislation our air quality will get worse and worse & the cost to the health system will be crippling. If fresh air is the breath of life, wood smoking be the breath of death???

P.S Enclosed photo is a common site of burning fresh green waste.

Kind Regards
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