

From: Darryl Johnston [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 24 August 2012 7:13 PM
To: EHPP Landscapes & Ecosystems Section Mailbox
Subject: Comments on the Draft Native Forestry Code of Practice for Southern NSW

Dear Sir/Madam

For 17-years I have campaigned to draw government and public attention to the serious environmental and public health impact of residential wood smoke pollution in Canberra, and especially the Tuggeranong Valley. In that time we have had some progress in the licensing of wood sellers, the introduction of the wood heater buyback scheme and the latest wood heater education program. Much more still needs to be done to protect Canberra residents from the serious health impact of domestic wood burning.

Imagine my surprise to hear of legislation in the NSW Government's Forestry Code for Southern NSW that allows commercial logging of native forests for firewood. I have been informed that forestry networks have publicly stated their intent to use these sources to promote and supply firewood for use in the Sydney and Canberra markets. It is a major concern to us all when we have firewood merchants deliberately targeting environmentally sensitive forests right on Canberra's doorstep, Taralga or the far south coast. And, it is ironic that Australian Government bans the import of furniture made from rare Asian forest timbers, yet we seem happy to burn wood from our own environmentally sensitive bushlands.

The burning of wood for domestic heating in Canberra is the largest single source of air pollution in our city. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics only 2-point-3-percent of Canberrans burn wood for their primary source of household heating. Yet, according to the Federal Environment Department the burning of wood for domestic heating produces 71 percent of our particle air pollution. Motor vehicles account for just 10-percent. Domestic wood burning is responsible for 66-percent of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH, known to be carcinogenic) pollutants and cars are responsible for about 30-percent. Despite claims by the wood heating industry that heating with wood is Greenhouse neutral, the ACT Environment Commissioner has warned that 85% of wood burnt in the ACT comes from unsustainable sources. A report in the Air Quality Journal also states that the incomplete burning of wood by most Australian wood heaters produces fine carbon particles that contribute to the Greenhouse problem. *(The majority of wood heater owners do not use them properly so the burning process is incomplete)*

Domestic wood smoke is known to contain many toxic gases/chemicals and known carcinogens. In many respects it is very similar to tobacco smoke and we know there is no safe level of exposure to that. The NSW Environment Department warns on its website that; *"Wood heaters can produce up to seven times as much particle pollution as cars and the air pollution it causes can also effect our health."* It goes on to warn that; *"wood smoke contains a number of noxious gases, including carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and a range of organic compounds some of which are toxic or carcinogenic and fine particles, which go deep into the lungs."* It also lists the chemicals contained in wood smoke on its website. They include, apart from those already mentioned, Benzene, Formaldehyde, particulate matter and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons among others. It goes on to say that these pollutants can cause breathing difficulties even at relatively low levels, especially for people suffering existing respiratory conditions, such as asthmatics, and for very young children and frail older people. There is also evidence that smoke pollution can cause cardiac problems. It warns that; if you can see or smell smoke from your wood heater then you are causing a problem for yourself, your family and your neighbours.

The ACT Government has stated that domestic wood smoke pollution is a significant environmental health issue in Canberra and especially the Tuggeranong Valley. The ACT Government's latest Burn Right Tonight education and advertising campaign warns; *"Smoke from domestic wood heaters is the largest source of air pollution in Canberra. Wood smoke*

pollution is an environmental issue and is linked to a number of serious health conditions." Minister Corbell stated in a press release dated 16 May 2012, *"Domestic wood heaters remain the largest source of air pollution in Canberra. Tuggeranong in particular has become an issue in winter with particle pollution due to emissions from wood heaters, as the area sits in a valley. It is important that Canberrans are aware of the effects of wood smoke."*

Even as long ago as 1991 a committee of inquiry warned the ACT Government, *"that a potential health risk of pollutant emissions by solid fuel heaters is intensified by their near ground level release from the suburban household chimney and a lack of control existed over their contribution to fine particle pollution had implications for public health. People most affected by wood smoke pollution are those with pre-existing heart and/or lung conditions, the very young whose lungs are still developing and the frail and elderly."*

So significant is the problem, the ACT Government has been presented with a proposal to introduce a new emissions standard for all new wood heaters installed in the ACT and the removal of old polluting heaters. Similar action has been taken in Port Macquarie and Camden. This proposal is also in response to a lack of action by the Federal Government and the wood heating industry itself.

Based on all the above information, I believe it would be totally irresponsible of any government to encourage the burning of wood for domestic heating in our residential areas by opening up new sources for firewood. If anything the NSW Government should be taking tough and decisive action to reduce domestic wood smoke pollution in our neighbourhoods and protect public health. The NSW Office of Environmental Health recently stated that the burning of wood for domestic heating was a major source of pollution in Sydney and added significantly to the State's health costs. I also believe it would be totally irresponsible to open up sensitive forest areas to firewood merchants who would do significant damage to wildlife, many of which rely on logs and dead trees for their habitats.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to contribute to the review.

Kind Regards
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