

CANBERRA, YOU DESERVE THE FACTS.

To the people of Canberra,

You may have seen a recent campaign from a wood heater industry group supporting the ongoing use of wood heaters in the ACT.

The industry group calls on you to “protect your right to light”.

But the campaign is silent about the known health dangers of wood heater smoke.

These dangers include asthma and other chronic lung conditions, heart conditions, premature births, and premature deaths. In fact, research suggests wood heater smoke causes up to 63 early deaths each year in the ACT alone.

The campaign fails to recognise that when a person lights a wood heater, their neighbour may lose their own right to breathe freely.

What might this look like?

It could be someone sealing their windows and doors to try to keep the smoke out, rarely leaving the house, or spending hundreds of dollars on air purifiers.

For a person with asthma, they may visit their doctor more often, increase their asthma medicines, struggle to breathe, have to call an ambulance, or even die.

If you have an alternative source of heating, is lighting a wood heater so important that you could risk your neighbour's health, or even their life?

The campaign also claims wood heaters are “eco-friendly”, “sustainable” and “carbon-neutral”.

This is at odds with a report from the ACT's Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. The report states wood heaters are not carbon-neutral in Australia. They produce emissions that contribute to climate change.

The report says that transitioning from wood heaters to alternative heating sources would reduce the impact on climate change.

What about the claim that new wood heaters are less polluting than the old ones? New wood heaters still emit toxic pollutants, and any level of air pollution can be harmful to our health. There is no safe level of air pollution.

Asthma Australia believes Canberrans should have all the facts.

We support the phase out of wood heaters and defend people's right to breathe.

Doris Whitmore
Asthma Australia CEO (Interim)



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