

Smoke and fire

Canberra's wood smoke problems have been well reported, but Queanbeyan's problems are worse because of our narrow southern valley.

If one looks into the valley from heights one can see both the morning haze and how so much pollution is caused by so few. Closing down 100 active chimneys would make a substantial difference.

Wood smoke is a rich cocktail of carcinogens, toxins and irritants but our politicians are still loathe to act effectively. I wrote a constructive letter to our mayor a year ago but never received a reply.

Governments seem more concerned about the combustion rights of a tiny minority than the rights of the vast

majority to breathe clean air.

Voluntary regulation is ineffective when there is a significant disparity between private benefit and public cost. Nor do schemes that pay some people a little to remove wood heaters make sense when others are allowed to put them in.

Regulating wood quality through sellers is flawed, too, as people take their chainsaws into the hills.

My neighbour put one in last winter and the smoke is terrible. My yard is often out of bounds, I have to use a clothes dryer rather than my line and smoke seeps into the house through vents in bathrooms.

The asthma of a person nearby is aggravated by neighbourly wood smoke.

Wood may be a sustainable fuel but soot is a major global problem. Woodburning is just not the kind of thing in a built-up area.

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Canberra Times, 19 July 2010.

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2. Mail: Letters to the Editor, *The Canberra Times*, PO Box 7155, Canberra Mail Centre, ACT 2610.