

Wood fires warm

A United Nations report by 50 environmental scientists recommends phasing out wood heaters in developed countries to reduce global warming.

Your correspondents who claim otherwise (Letters, July 22) may have been misled by people who profit from selling wood heaters and firewood.

The UN says methane, ozone and black carbon cause about half of global warming, accelerating the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, so they no longer reflect radiation back into space.

The extra warming could melt methane in permafrost and frozen undersea methane, leading to runaway global warming and catastrophic climate change.

The report's lead author is Drew Shindell, of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. His research, combined with data on emissions from the average new Australian wood heater, shows that, over the next 20 years, burning 3.7 tonnes of firewood (the ACT annual average for a household with a heater) will cause more global warming than gas central heating in seven Canberra homes. That's in addition to producing more toxic fine particle pollution than 300 cars.

The 3.9 per cent of households using wood heaters create 67 per cent of Canberra's fine particle emissions.

Don't be fooled by people with vested interests. Anyone who cares about health or the environment should follow the Australian Lung Foundation's advice of not using wood heaters when non-polluting alternatives are available.

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