

## Inquiry into Health Impacts of Air Pollution in Victoria

Imagine two houses, neighbours, one family is outside around a suburban fire pit with their 'cosy' fire. The other is inside frantically trying to keep the smoke out of the house whilst teaching young children how to dial 000 incase mum needs to go to hospital and can't breath again. This is my experience and its terrifying. I'm a single mum with multiple chronic health issues all made worse by smoke and the stress of being smoked out of our home.

My neighbours regularly have a fire pit, they told me its their lifestyle to burn. The distress from this is immense. They know how it affects my health and I even have a drs letter noting how it makes my health conditions worse. They don't care. Most recently I was told they are now building a wood heater in their new property they are building on their block. I was asked are you going to complain about that to? I'm soon to be surrounded by chimneys and fire pits and the council do nothing. I'm very surprised the epa have no power to stop this pollution. Given that wood heating smoke is worse than car exhaust throughout winter.

Next doors fire pit gets up to very unhealthy levels of pollution, its can be 25 degrees and instead of being able to sit in my garden I'm inside with three air purifiers which is still not enough. I cant afford to move house or afford the equipment or modifications necessary to keep me safe at home. Should a cosy fire come at the expensive of a public hospital trip? At The taxpayers expense? During the bushfires of 2019/20 and the very bad pollution, I ended up in the hospital on two occasions with difficulty breathing because of the wood smoke.

I have another neighbour behind me who on lovely 20 degree day will sit in his garage in a t shirt and burn stuff in his 'legal' wood heater. The council assure me they have done all they can and he is allowed to use it, the point here if he is cold why not go inside? They have electric heating. I cant use my garden. 20 degrees is perfect to sit outside and enjoy, play with my kids, hang washing or air out the house. None of these are possible because of the smoke pollution from his garage chimney. I can also bet that he is not burning just wood the smoke is toxic I'm sure he is burning junk but the council can only go on his word right?

During planned burns I cant leave my house, the other week I couldn't attend to pick up my kids from school, luckily my mum did it for me along with help from the school getting them in aftercare. What if she couldn't have? I have no one else. Warning the community more broadly to be able to plan ahead for these burns or finding a better way to clear the land would be better still.

Woodfire smoke of all types is so bad for our health especially those of us with underlying health conditions and disability. Im stuck here at home, I cant afford to move, its literal hell to be surrounded by wood smoke. I live in the inner ring of suburbs in Melbourne North. This shouldn't be allowed in residential areas, someone far out in the bush whilst I don't agree with it they are not merely meters from their neighbours.

Some mornings after the fire pits I hug my children good morning. Their heads and hair smelling of wood smoke as their windows are only meters from the fire pit. What damage is this reckless pollution causing to their little lungs. Why do I have to fight for clean air, when these people have no concern or take responsibility for the damage they are causing their neighbours. Please consider banning wood smoke, clean air is a right! Law should not sway in favour of polluters. Cigarettes are banned and wood smoke is worse for you. We should not have to fight for the right to breathe.

The Health effects on me are difficulty breathing, heavy chest, I cant get a breath, sore eyes, throat, racing heart. I can taste the smoke in my mouth. I'm surrounded which gives extreme claustrophobia, there is no safe spot for me. The stress and anxiety of basically being almost house bound due to disabilities yet not safe in my house. The privilege of health is clear here. The people most affected by this pollution from wood smoke are the ones not well enough to fight, the ones who are not rich enough to make home safe. How many deaths can be counted as wood smoke? If I stop breathing in my house due to my neighbours fire pit smoke. I can bet my death certificate would not say death by fire pit.

Thanks for your time, I'm happy to discuss these matters further.

