

27 April 2010

Madam/Sir,

I write to support the attempts of Councillor Robinson to reduce woodsmoke pollution in Armidale. I believe that no new wood fires should be permitted in new houses in Armidale, as this will only add to an already dangerously-polluted winter atmosphere. The advice of experts on this matter is unequivocal.

Furthermore, existing wood stoves should be phased out, aided by generous subsidies for new types of heating that do not disadvantage poorer sections of the community. This may require further lobbying for state and federal funding to add to local funding. In the meantime, educational campaigns should continue, regarding best practice wood burning. Additionally, the value of native vegetation, particularly in large clumps such as around Apex Lookout, in emitting clean air, should be recognised and promoted.

Wood fire exceptions could include restaurants and hotels with existing fires, which could be retained for aesthetic and social reasons as much as heating. These could be extinguished at midnight.

I know of families who have moved to different parts of town, or out of the region altogether to avoid the health hazards of excessive wood smoke. My son suffered bronchialitis as an infant, and was hospitalised. I have no doubt that wood smoke contributed to this. He continues to suffer from respiratory ailments, particularly in winter.

Arguments that wood smoke in a town of Armidale's size is not unhealthy are nonsense. Villages and farmhouses can get away with woodstoves. Larger towns and cities cannot. This is why cities such as London banned wood and coal fires half a century ago in the wake of the 'Great Smog' of 1952, where 4,000 people died of respiratory ailments in those five days, and perhaps an additional 8,000 in the months that followed.

Sincerely,

Dr Marty Branagan

52 Newton St

Armidale

NSW 2350