

M.G and J.A Evans  
51 Newton St  
Armidale 2350  
18 April 2010

The General Manager  
Mr Shane Burns  
Armidale-Dumaresq Council  
Armidale 2350

**Re: Armidale Dumaresq Sustainable Domestic Energy Use and Local Air Quality Policy**

Dear Sir,

As you are aware, woodsmoke from domestic heating is a major health problem in Armidale. A number of health professionals including Armidale lung specialist Dr Gary Baker have highlighted the clinical significance of woodsmoke pollution on the incidence of respiratory disease.

As a UNE-trained environmental engineer and also a tutor in public health in the school of rural medicine, I am acutely conscious of both the airflow dynamics of woodsmoke pollution in this area and of the real and current public health consequences of our ongoing failure to regulate domestic wood heaters.

My own personal experience of ill health since moving to Armidale is of worsening respiratory symptoms in the winter, including persistent coughs and sinus inflammations. These problems significantly worsened since moving to the Hilda Avenue and Newton St area in 2004.

I have since found information on research into pollution levels, highlighting in particular the concentration of pollution in exactly this part of town. We will be forced to move, again, from an area which would otherwise be one of the nicest places I have ever lived. I hope we will find cleaner air in other parts of Armidale, as I do not wish to uproot my family or be forced to leave town.

Wood heating is unfortunately a social and economic reality in Armidale. Marginal rural industries have come to rely on revenue from firewood, and home owners with the good fortune not to suffer from respiratory illness may at times insist on their devotion to the benefits of traditional wood heating.

Progress towards sustainable local industry must be progressive, allowing gradual adjustment and reinvestment in alternatives. I do not want to see the elimination of livelihoods, or of traditional cultural practices. However every opportunity must be taken to reinvest, and evolutionary change in public attitudes must be seen as an essential civic responsibility.

Above all, new homes in Armidale should not be permitted to install wood heaters of any kind. There is ample evidence that even the best recent-generation wood heaters emit unacceptable levels of particulate pollution, and that even the best performance is dependent on users operating their heaters to standards which are difficult to achieve.

Since recently installing a gas heater in our Newton St home, I have been amazed at the ease and efficiency of home heating by this method. I am personally and professionally convinced of the benefits in terms of cost, public health and even greenhouse gas emissions, that would accrue with a Council emphasis on more efficient space heating technologies, even simple ones such as gas heaters.

There is no question in my mind that any ongoing preferment of firewood heating in council residential development policy would be anachronistic in the extreme. Please ensure that we do not continue down the unsustainable and unhealthy path of uncontrolled domestic wood heating.

Sincerely,  
Michael Evans, PhD BE BNatRes MIEAust