



Health implications of winter warming

Winter is upon us and as a result Armadale Dumaresq Council's Domestic Energy Working Party (DEWP) is turning its focus towards the health implications associated with wood smoke.

According to the Council's Environment and Health Manager Euan Belson, wood smoke contains a complex blend of air pollutants, including carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, air toxins and particulate matter. "Individually and collectively these substances have been linked to a wide range of negative health effects, including an increased incidence of respiratory infections, congestion, coughing, sore throats, chest tightness, ear infection and asthma," Mr Belson said.

Armadale consultant physician and member of the Armadale Health and Wellbeing Committee, Dr Gary Baker, said there were negative health implications of wood smoke both at the source as an indoor air pollutant and as an outside air pollutant in Armadale.

"We do know that wood smoke contributes to increased incidence of respiratory disease, especially for those at greater risk including the elderly, children and people with chronic respiratory disease such as asthma," Dr Baker said. "There is also evidence that other systemic diseases such as cardiovascular disease can be aggravated by exposure to air pollutants."

Dr Baker said the control of wood smoke air pollution was an important public health issue.

Wood has been a traditional and cheap source of fuel in Armadale. He said while there were positive financial, social, emotional and fitness benefits experienced during the gathering and use of wood, reducing the amount of wood smoke in the air needed to be the primary focus to reduce ill health and disease.

Dr Baker said the control of wood smoke air pollution could be done and required a multipronged approach.

"We need to eliminate or

minimise the need for heating by design," Dr Baker said. "Wherever possible, substitution with other non-polluting technologies is the best."

"The development and use of devices with less wood smoke pollution is important and can lead to improved air quality."

"Finally, there is a responsibility for those using wood burning stoves and heaters to burn as cleanly as possible, and maintain wood burning equipment to reduce the amount of wood smoke produced inside and outside homes."

Mr Belson said there was plenty of scope for improvement in wood burning practices which would make a significant impact on Armadale's air quality.

"It is not that difficult to achieve for individuals if they know what to look for," Mr Belson said.

The DEWP is currently examining ways of reducing wood smoke emissions in Armadale through both scientific and educational processes.

Northern Tablelands scores well in 2008 State Budget

MPRichard Torbay has welcomed the allocation of \$124 million for the Northern Tablelands in this year's State Budget, delivered in Parliament House yesterday.

Big ticket items include:

- \$54 million for roads including bridge upgrades on Four Mile and St Helena Creeks on Waterfall Way and Slaughterhouse Creek on Gwydir Highway. The New England Highway Sunnyside Realignment has been allocated \$7.6 million.

- A total of \$6.662 million in Health Service major works funding includes \$2.819 million for the Bingara Hospital, \$3.662 million for the Warialda Hospital, \$89,000 for Guyra Health Service, \$45,000 for Tingha Health Service and \$48,000 for the Walcha Health Service.

- In Armadale \$6.205 million

will be spent on building new public housing units and asset improvement and \$500,000 on completing three works in progress.

- A further \$612,000 goes towards two public housing dwellings being built at Inverell.
- The Copeton Dam upgrade has received \$643,000.

- Northern Tablelands Fire Brigades will receive \$161,000 for major works.
- Planning for a new Armadale Court House has been allocated \$780,000.

- The Department of Community Services will provide \$336,000 to fund caseworker accommodation in the Tablelands.

- Funding of \$263,000 will go towards Forest NSW softwood plantations in the region.

Mr Torbay said regional areas would benefit from cutting payroll tax from six per cent to 5.5 per cent in three stages, indexing the payroll tax threshold to inflation and planned abolition of stamp duty on non-land business assets.

"Increased funding for health, education and police is only keeping place with inflation but it is pleasing to see an increase of 18 per cent funding for the SES and a 7 per cent rise for ageing and disability services including more accommodation for people with disabilities," he said. "I am expecting the Northern Tablelands to receive its fair share of the portfolio budget allocations when they are announced later in the year."

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