

## 6.1 WOOD HEATERS

Submitting Councillor: Dr Josh Fergeus

### **MOTION**

*That Council:*

- i) Acknowledges Council continues to hear concerns from Monash residents regarding the impact of wood heaters on health, amenity and the environment;*
- ii) Notes the evidence which demonstrates that long term exposure to pollution from wood heaters causes increased risk of heart and respiratory disease, and reduced life expectancy<sup>1</sup>;*
- iii) Notes estimates published in the Medical Journal of Australia of a total cost to the community of \$10,930 per wood heater per year in health and other costs<sup>2</sup>;*
- iv) Notes that wood heaters are responsible for generating more fine particulate matter, generally regarded as the most hazardous air pollutant, than power stations and road vehicles combined<sup>3</sup>;*
- v) Advocates to the State Government and the EPA in support of measures which will reduce the impact of wood heaters on health, the amenity and the environment and informs the Monash community of this work.*

### **BACKGROUND**

In Australia, wood heater smoke significantly contributes to air pollution<sup>4</sup>. This smoke often has an impact on the health of people who have no realistic means of controlling their exposure. Older people, people with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, and/or other respiratory or vascular conditions are especially vulnerable<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that there is no 'safe' level of particulate air pollution of the kind generated by wood heaters.

Under current conditions, Council is unable to ensure compliance with existing regulations relating to smoke emissions from individual chimneys. We should consider if other measures will enable Council to reduce harm of human health and the impact on climate change caused by wood smoke in our community.

### **SENATE INQUIRY**

The Commonwealth of Australia Senate Inquiry into the Impacts on Health of Air Quality in Australia recommended that Councils "manage the use of wood heaters in their own

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<sup>1</sup> [Robinson, Horsley, Johnston & Morgan, 2021](#)

<sup>2</sup> Op cit

<sup>3</sup> Chang, Scorgie, Duc et al, 2019

<sup>4</sup> [Centre for Air Pollution, Energy and Health Research, 2021](#)

<sup>5</sup> Landrigan, Fuller, Acosta, Adeyi, Arnold et al, 2018

jurisdictions through the use of bans, buy-backs, minimum efficiency standards, and other mechanisms as appropriate to protect the health of their local communities”<sup>6</sup>.

### ***IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE***

Air pollution is a major contributor to global warming, and the pollution generated from wood heaters is driving climate change through the production of methane and black carbon particles<sup>7</sup>. The use of a wood heater in one room produces a similar level of greenhouse gas emissions as heating an entire house using gas<sup>8</sup>.

Seeking to address the air pollution caused by the use of wood heaters is in line with Council’s commitment to climate action.

### ***CONCLUSION***

The substantial increases to mortality and financial cost attributable to wood heating indicates that effective policies are needed to reduce wood heater pollution, including public education about the effects of wood smoke on health, subsidies that encourage residents to switch to less polluting home heating, assistance for those affected by wood smoke from other people, and regulations that reduce wood heater use. This approach is supported by the findings of the Senate Inquiry into the Impacts on Health of Air Quality in Australia.

It is likely that effective action will require appropriate responses from both Council and the Victorian Government.

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<sup>6</sup> [Parliament of Australia](#), 2013

<sup>7</sup> [Robinson](#), 2011

<sup>8</sup> Op cit