

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

9 June 2017

## **Where there's smoke...**

As the weather cools down it's a good time to remind each other about the issue of air quality in the Valley during winter.

Tasmania has regulations that are aimed at improving air quality by placing controls on backyard burning and smoke emitted from domestic wood heaters.

Smoke reduces the quality of the air we breathe. Prolonged exposure to domestic wood smoke in Tasmania is a real problem for those who have chronic illnesses like asthma or heart conditions. Poor air quality is more common in many neighbourhoods during the colder months of winter when the air is calm and wood smoke builds up over several days.

Smoke from your chimney means that your wood heater is wasting fuel by not burning efficiently. Wasted fuel equals wasted money. It's also an offence to pollute the environment with an excessively smoky chimney.

State legislation bans backyard burning in the open or using an incinerator on blocks less than 2,000 square metres in area.

The legislation does not prevent fire hazard reduction burn-off on large properties but does prohibit the burning of rubbish, plastics and other hazardous substances.

Council officers are authorised under the legislation to issue infringement notices (or on-the-spot-fines) to a person who commits an offence under the regulations.

There are other alternative garden waste disposal options which include: Private waste removal contractors; Home composting; Domestic worm farms; Compost bins and Waste mulching and chipping contractors.



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Smoke from a domestic wood heater is considered to be in breach of the legislation if the smoke is visible 10 metres or more from the chimney for at least 30 seconds at a time, as well as being generally visible for at least 10 minutes. Excessive smoke from wood heaters can be a major contributor to air pollution. Smoke can be a nuisance to your neighbours and contains pollutants that are known health hazards.

There are products on the market that help make wood heaters burn more efficiently and reduce the amount of pollution emitted. Having your flue swept annually will also ensure your flue is in good working order and free from build-up. Operating your wood heater correctly is the key to clean and efficient heating.

Smoke from poorly operated wood heaters can be reduced as much as 80% by following a few simple steps. These include: always burn with a flame; never let the fire smoulder; only use well-seasoned, dry fire wood; don't shut your fire right down when you go to bed; burning the fire on high for 20 minutes after adding wood; checking your heater complies with relevant Australian Standards and always keep the air vents open enough to keep some kind of flame

More information about effective wood heater operation can be found at <http://epa.tas.gov.au/Pages/Improving-Wood-Heater-Use.aspx> on the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) website.

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has more information on the potential health impacts of wood smoke exposure at [http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air/my\\_health](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air/my_health)  
The DHHS also provides public health alerts for air quality at sites around Tasmania using real time data.

Alternatively, you can contact the Council's Environmental Health Department on 03) 6264 0355.



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