

Woollahra Municipal Council
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5th September 2023

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Healthy planet, healthy people

DEA NSW in support of Woollahra Council's proposed ban on gas appliances and connections to new homes

To whom it may concern,

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) is a charitable organisation of doctors who recognise that human health and wellbeing require an environment free of pollution, capable of providing nutritious food, rich in biodiversity, and able to provide for current and future generations sustainably (<https://dea.org.au/>).

The DEA NSW committee supports Woollahra Council's proposed ban on gas appliances and connections to new homes.

The burning of gas indoors for cooking and heating, once thought to be a clean and healthy energy source, is now recognized to cause harm and is therefore no longer regarded as a healthy choice.

There are several lines of evidence of health problems:

1. Increased risk of asthma

Cohort studies following children living in homes with gas stoves, compared to children living with other kinds of stoves, show an increased prevalence of asthma. In a systematic review of all available research in 2013 the children living in homes with gas stoves had **42% increased risk** of asthma. This has been interpreted by Australian researchers to imply that 12% of childhood asthma can be attributed to gas stove exposure.

2. Increased respiratory symptoms.

A controlled trial of flued versus unflued heaters in NSW classrooms showed increased respiratory symptoms during the weeks when unflued heaters were in use.

3. Increased respiratory disease.

The US EPA conducted an exhaustive review known as an "Integrated Science Assessment" in 2016 in which results from epidemiology, human exposure studies, and animal exposure studies were combined. They concluded that short term exposure to nitrogen dioxide is causative of respiratory disease.

Burning gas releases several combustion products:

- Nitrogen dioxide, released in the gas flame when room air is oxidised.
- Formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and benzene that form from incomplete combustion of hydrocarbons. Benzene is a carcinogen and exposure should be kept as low as possible.

DEA Scientific Committee

Prof Colin Butler

Prof David de Kretser AC

Prof Robyn McDermott

Prof Emeritus Sir Gustav Nossal AC

Prof Fiona Stanley AC

Prof Stephen Boyden AM

Prof Peter Doherty AC

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Prof Ian Lowe AO

Prof Peter Newman AO

Prof Lawrie Powell AC

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A harm minimization approach for the 5 million Australian homes with gas appliances requires public education about improving ventilation whenever a gas appliance is used and phasing out the use of indoor gas appliances. A first practical step is to prevent new homes from being connected to reticulated gas so this problem never arises.

Just as building standards specify health based minimum requirements for sanitation, ventilation, and lighting there are strong health arguments for not permitting indoor gas combustion in future dwellings.

On behalf of our colleagues in DEA NSW, thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss further.

Kind Regards,



Dr Nicholas Williams
Neonatologist
DEA NSW Co-Chair



Dr Shaun Watson
Neurologist
DEA NSW Co-Chair

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