To: Your sitting MP/candidate

Subject line: **Stop wood smoke polluting our neighbourhoods**

Dear full name, MP [remove 'MP' if candidate]

I’m a voter in your area. I am concerned about air pollution in my neighbourhood and its impact on the community's health and our climate. I want the next [enter government election here] Council/government [remove one] to take effective action to reduce wood smoke pollution.

Add optional personal story here - eg: *I have lived in suburb/town for # years. The air in our town/suburb is polluted with wood smoke from people using wood heaters. It is impacting on the health of my family and ability to use our backyard and enjoy our neighbourhood.*

For too long this significant form of air pollution has been subject to minimal restrictions. Even though a small minority (5 - 10%) of people use wood heaters, they have a major impact on our environment and the health of the whole community. Air pollution inventory reports from around Australia that report PM2.5 from that wood heating is the single largest contributor of fine particle pollution PM2.5, more than all vehicles. These include the [NSW Clean Air Strategy](https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Air/nsw-clean-air-strategy-2021-30-220028.pdf) (pg.40) and the Victorian Environment Protection Agency (EPA) Emissions Inventory Report (2016) (pg.17), and the [ACT’s Air Quality Report](https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/article/air-pollution-tab-related-resources) 2020 (pg.28). It can be difficult to obtain an Australia wide picture of the contribution of wood heating to other states and territories as currently the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) does not require states and territories to collect data on PM2.5 from wood heaters.

Wood burning emits short-lived climate pollutants and raises atmospheric CO2. For an equal amount of heat or electricity, wood burning releases more CO2 than burning gas, oil and even coal. Wood smoke pollution is also a major contributor to illness and premature death in our community, including asthma , strokes, heart attacks, lung cancer and other cancers. Australia-wide, the estimated cost for our health system is $3.4 billion per year or $4000 - $5600 per wood heater per year.

​The current policy promoted by government and industry is to ‘burn better’, by encouraging people to use wood heaters that meet existing standards and to burn dry, untreated wood. But this is ineffective. Research shows all wood heaters produce fine particulate pollution at harmful levels, regardless of burning method or modern heater design. In particular, the current approach is failing to protect the health of our children. New Zealand research finds that for every new modern wood heater per hectare there is a 7% increased risk that a child under 3 years will end up in emergency.

The burning of wood is unnecessary given the wide-spread availability of clean, affordable, energy efficient options. Many in the community now support action to stop wood smoke pollution. A recent nationally representative survey by Asthma Australia shows that 77% of people agree that woodfire heaters should not be allowed in residential areas.

As someone seeking to be elected to the next [enter government election here], I ask you to publicly commit to a program of actions to:

**Phase out wood burning in residential areas** that includes:

* Public education: Increase community support for a phase out via funding a wider education campaign on air pollution and the health impacts of wood smoke (as suggested by Asthma Australia – Airsmart)
* **A heater replacement scheme**: Expanding or introducing rebate and replacement schemes to prioritise households with wood heaters so they can access subsidies to change to energy-efficient electric heat pumps.
* **Legislation:** Propose/support laws to require that no new wood heater be installed in residential areas of Victoria and wood heaters to be removed at point of sale of a house (except where there is no access to mains gas or electricity).
* **Regional/rural program:** A focused program to address the cultural barriers of wood burning in regional/rural areas, including education on the health and environmental harms of wood smoke, heating alternatives and available subsidies.
* **Advocacy to federal government**: Call on government to implement the recommendations of the Centre for Air Pollution, Energy and Health research in its policy paper on wood smoke pollution in Australia.

Your response is important and will help to determine my vote. As one of my candidates for this election, please show leadership to ensure we can all breathe clean air.

Yours sincerely,
You name and address