

Message from petition lodger to Darebin Council.

Date: 23/3/20

Personal details of resident redacted for privacy

Dear Darebin Council, Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councilors

Further to the petition 'Tackling Darebin's wood smoke pollution essential to tackling the climate emergency'

We write to ask that Darebin Council take urgent action to reduce the use of wood heaters in Darebin, as pollution has been shown to worsen the severity of Coronavirus infections.

[Our petition](#) was presented to the Council meeting of the 3 February 2020 for report back to the April meeting. The need to reduce wood smoke has become more urgent as we approach winter and the increasing risk of coronavirus exposure in the community.

Many residents, like ourselves, are constantly exposed to high levels of smoke from the wood heaters of our neighbours in winter. We live next to neighbours who use their wood heaters throughout winter, both day and night, every single day. Our children both have asthma, which is exacerbated by wood smoke pollution. Despite various attempts, Darebin Council officers have been unable to get our neighbours to reduce their wood heater use. We are seriously concerned that exposure to this smoke could exacerbate the seriousness of a Covid-19 infection, as has been indicated by international evidence. We are also concerned that neighbours who use wood heaters are unaware that they are creating increased health risks for themselves and their neighbours.

Wood smoke is a serious problem in Winter in Darebin and other areas of Melbourne. This year's winter season comes after exposure to hazardous levels of smoke pollution from the Summer bushfires, which are likely to have had long-term health effects. It is likely that wood heater use in Darebin will only increase this winter as people will be staying at home due to the Coronavirus pandemic. This has already occurred in other countries affected by coronavirus.

We therefore ask that, as a matter of urgency, Darebin Council communicates to ALL residents that:

- Air pollution, including wood heater smoke, is likely to exacerbate the seriousness of infections with Coronavirus
- Wood heater smoke also increases the risk of other health problems, such as stroke, heart attacks, lung and other cancers. It also contributes to global warming.
- Residents must therefore minimise their use of wood heaters for the sake of their own and their neighbours' health.

We further suggest that the Council:

- establish a wood heater replacement program, similar to that in Canberra
- or as a shorter-term measure, establish a fund for residents to pay for other heating solutions (such as portable fan heaters or column heaters - many of these could be ordered and delivered online) to support them through the coming winter.

By addressing smoke pollution at a local level, Darebin Council will help to support residents and Victoria's health system as it responds to the escalating coronavirus crisis.

Kind regards