

216 President Ave
Miranda NSW 2228
Phone (02) 9540 3936
15⁰ December 2003

Betty Venables 14/1/03

Council On Australian Governments Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management

Dear Sirs

Re: Adverse health effects caused by bushfire smoke.

We are grateful for the opportunity to express our concern in this matter.

The community is now assailed with toxic chemical pollution of an unprecedented magnitude.

The human system is now obliged to withstand the imposed biological stress of water, air and soil pollution as well as that of Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) from all sources of electrical activity. See attachment 1- Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) *Electromagnetic Radiation Health Complaints Register.*)

We have become aware that any additional pollutant which enters our environment has the potential to aggravate the health conditions of those people already affected by environmental contaminants. (*EMR and Your Health, B. Venables (O 1999)*)

We submit that;

any combination of environmental contaminants has the potential for a more powerful adverse impact on health, than each contaminant would alone. (See DR Ross Adey Reference 1)

We submit that;

serious consideration should be given to any possibility of producing an additional contaminant during any large scale procedure, in this instance, bushfire management.

We submit that;

it is necessary to reduce, rather than increase, our environmental pollutant level.

We submit that; measures that will achieve the same result as controlled burning should be employed in bushfire management.

We ask that you accept our comments and our endorsement of the submission made by The Advocates for Clean Air, (attachment 2) as our support of this particular community concern.

Yours sincerely

Betty Venables

Betty Venables Co-ordinator : EMR Safety Network international

References

1 Adey, W. R.,

JOINT ACTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NON-IONIZING ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS and CHEMICAL POLLUTION IN CANCER PROMOTION (1994) Environmental Health Perspectives Vol.,86 pp.297 305

2 Rea, William

"Environmental Sensitivities" 5th Annual International: Symposium on Man in His Environment in health and Disease. (1987)

July 4, 2003

Electromagnetic Radiation Health Complaints Register Launched

Australia has its first centralised Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) Health Complaints Register from today. The CEO of ARPANSA, Dr John Loy, said in Sydney: "Members of the public who believe they have suffered ill-effects as a result of exposure to EMR can now lodge a written complaint with a national database administered by ARPANSA. The agency cannot investigate or attempt to resolve individual complaints, but a standard reporting form allows people to describe the nature of their exposure and any adverse health effects they claim to have experienced. ARPANSA will protect the privacy of complainants."

"The Health Complaints Register will collect reports of health concerns related to possible EMR field exposures in the range of 0-300 GHz. Therefore, it is important to note that the register will not be limited to telecommunications equipment like mobile phones and broadcasting transmitters but will also include sources such as powerlines, induction heaters, microwave ovens and other personal, industrial and scientific EMR producing equipment."

John Loy added: "In designing the Health Complaints Register ARPANSA consulted with other government departments, industry, and community organisations. Relevant data gathered will be used to produce statistical summaries for the public, and the Commonwealth Government, on the nature and level of complaints received. Information could be used by ARPANSA to help identify future areas of research into the effects of electromagnetic fields on people and the environment. Register information may also be disclosed to the National Health and Medical Research Council for its consideration."

The Health Complaints Register honours an undertaking made by the Commonwealth Government in response to recommendations of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee inquiry into EMR in late 2000. The Committee report was tabled in May 2001. Government Senators considered (p.180): "...that the development of a database of reports of adverse health effects from mobile phones and other sources of radiofrequency radiation would assist researchers in formulating research hypotheses, and contribute to public confidence in measures being adopted to minimise health risks associated with EMR."

To avoid restricting and distorting responses the standard reporting form asks people to record six things:

1. personal details;
2. whether they are willing to be contacted by the NHMRC and/or ARPANSA if necessary;
3. symptoms which they believe result from their EMR exposure;
4. whether they have seen a medical or health practitioner about their complaint;
5. the EMR exposure source; and
6. acknowledgment that they understand the purpose for which the information has been collected, and the conditions that surround its collection, retention and use.

Copies of the form can either be downloaded from the ARPANSA website (www.arpansa.gov.au) or request from the ARPANSA Secretariat via 03 9433 2211 or (toll-free) on 1800 022 333 during normal business hours.

ENDS.

Reporting Form



Australian Government



Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency

Electromagnetic Radiation Health Complaints Register

ARPANSA is a Commonwealth agency responsible for protecting the health and safety of people, and the environment, from the harmful effects of radiation. ARPANSA has been tasked with collecting information about health concerns in relation to exposures from electromagnetic fields. ARPANSA invites individuals to report any symptoms, which are believed to result from exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Information provided in your report will be kept in our register in strict compliance with the Privacy Act 1988. Accordingly, the information provided will not be used for any other purpose. In addition, ARPANSA will ensure that the information is stored securely to ensure that it is not lost, accessed by unauthorised people, modified or misused.

If you or a person acting on your behalf choose to make a report, ARPANSA will use the information to:

- Help identify future areas of research regarding the health effects of electromagnetic fields on people and the environment.
- Prepare and publish statistics for the information and use of the Commonwealth Government and the general public on the nature and level of complaints reported to the register.

Please note that it is not possible for ARPANSA to seek to resolve individual complaints.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) may have an interest in developing research proposals arising from information contained in the register. When you make your report, you will be given the opportunity to decide if you want to be contacted by the NHMRC and/or ARPANSA for this purpose.

Reporting forms may be sent to:

*The Manager
ARPANSA Electromagnetic Radiation Health Complaints Register
619 Lower Plenty Road
Yallambie VIC 3085*

Note that anonymous reports will not be accepted.

In respect to your submitted report you may at any time:

- access your report;
- correct, update or complete it; or
- erase it from the register;

by sending a letter to the above address or a facsimile to (03) 9433 2353.

ARPANSA will acknowledge receipt of your report.

Reporting Form

REPORT

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Surname:
First Name(s):
Address:
Phone Number: ()
E-mail address
Date of birth:
Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>

b) If necessary, would you be willing to be contacted by the NHVII2C and/or ARPANSA? YES NO

c) What is your complaint (state the symptoms that you are suffering and which you believe result from exposure to electromagnetic radiation - attach additional sheets if required)?

d) Have you seen a medical or health practitioner about your health complaint? YES NO

e) Please describe the source of the electromagnetic radiation to which you believe you were exposed? (attach additional sheets if required)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

You must sign the form before the information can be entered in the register to demonstrate that you understand the purpose for which the information has been collected and the conditions that surround its collection, retention and use. If you are not the person with the complaint, that person must also sign. You may be contacted by ARPANSA if there is a need to clarify any information in this report.

(Signature of person reporting)

(Signature of person with the complaint)

(Name of person reporting)

Date:

Date:

Thank you for reporting this information

Contact phone number:

EMR Safety Network-international
Working Toward A Safer Environment
[Email: emrsafety@iform.com.au](mailto:emrsafety@iform.com.au)
Phone (m) 9540 3936
WEB SITES < <http://www.geocities.com/emrsafety> >
and
emrsafety.8m.net >

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is to advise of positive action taken recently by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) in regard to electromagnetic radiation. (EMR) exposure and the association with adverse health effects reportedly experienced by many people.

The recently launched *The Electromagnetic Radiation Health Complaints Register*, provides an opportunity to officially register individual complaints. Information documented in this way could be used to guide the authorities to environmental conditions that require EMR mitigation and areas of research that require further study.

The register is a unique opportunity to inform the government of the extent to which EMR health effects are impacting on the individual as well as the community as a whole. The latter of course will depend on the number of complaints registered

If in your considered opinion, EMR exposure has contributed to, or is affecting your health, either at home or in the workplace, please register with ARPANSA. If assistance is required, please call the EMR /SNI on (02) 9540 3936.

Upon request, ARPANSA has provided us with a number of forms to distribute. Additional reporting forms may be obtained by calling ARPANSA's toll free number: **1800 022 333** during business hours. Website < www.arpansa.gov.au >

Please pass this information on to others who may wish to participate.

Sincerer,
Betty Venables Co-ordinator EMRJSNI



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PH !0714128 7293.

ADVOCATES for CLEAN AIR

ATTACHMENT 2

5th December, 2003

Council of Australian Governments Bushfire Inquiry
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
3-5 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

"INQUIRY ON BUSHFIRE MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT"

Attention Mr. Ellis, Professor Kanowski. and Professor Whelan

Dear Sirs,

Re: Adverse HEALTH effects caused_ by Bushfire SMOKE

We refer to the above, and wish to express our grave concerns regarding the current approach to bushfire mitigation practices. Management appears to involve the use of prescribed burning at the exclusion of non-polluting methods like the physical creation of fire break corridors and manual clearing of excess fuel loads.

We consider the deliberate burning of bushland should be the 'choice of last resort', initiated in emergency situations only, to control wild fires already in progress. Given the history of past events where significant numbers of so called "controlled burns" have gotten disasterously out of control and been responsible for complete annihilation of forrests, loss of human life, and destruction of private property, we believe the lighting of a fire to prevent a fire (that may not have occurred otherwise) is an unintelligent approach to mitigation.

The resulting smoke also causes far reaching atmospheric contamination by air toxics like carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which seriously affects the health of susceptible people, many suffering inordinate pain and distress on a daily basis.

Often, temperature inversions act as a "lid" and hold down the noxious gases and toxic substances near ground level where people live, work, and sleep. The ultra fine particles in lingering 'smoke haze' can be responsible for many more ailments than either patients or health workers recognise as having been initiated by smoke pollution. These particles are small enough to evade the body's defences, penetrating deep into the tiny air sacs where oxygen enters the bloodstream (see web site - U.S. Washington *State Department* of Ecology below).

SMOKE IS NO JOKE! An approximated 40-60% of any given community are at risk of being adversely affected to a greater or lesser degree. Research studies have shown more premature deaths are attributed to wood smoke toxicity than is currently acknowledged by Authorities (references are contained in a number of web sites below).

MOST AT RISK are:- Newborns, young Children, the Elderly, and the Immuno-compromised with pre-existing conditions` such as: Asthma, Emphysema, Bronchitis, Cystic Fibrosis, Heart disease, Cancer, Auto-immune dysfunctions like Lupus and M.S., Chronic Sinusitis, Allergic Rhinitis, and MCS (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity) as well as other respiratory conditions, *The ABS National Health Surveys* of both 1995 and 2001 revealing more than one third of Australians had some kind of respiratory complaint.

Since wood smoke contains many of the exact same Irritants, Toxicants, and Carcinogens as Cigarette Smoke, the broader healthy community are also at risk of long term health threats similar to **PASSIVE SMOKING**. A Chart comparing the substances in both Wood and tobacco smoke is enclosed, plus an EPA *Report (Larson and Koenig)* lists additional health harming substances in wood smoke alone. One U.S. EPA Study (*Lewtas et al., 1991*) found "***the lifetime Cancer risk from wood smoke may be as much as 12 times greater than the cancer risk from equal concentrations of cigarette smoke***" (ref. *Washington State Dept. of Ecology, and Armidale's Air Quality Research Group's* web sites).

It seems incongruous that Governments have passed legislation banning cigarette smoke in work places, public dining areas, and on occasions within 10 metres of building frontages, while at the same time allow high quantities of environmental smoke from unnecessary burning activities to contaminate densely populated residential areas in greater proportions than cigarette smoke ever would.

Work areas and public places can be avoided by CHOICE, however NO

CHOICE of avoidance can be exercised by vulnerable people whilst within their own homes. Environmental smoke can be all pervading and is not stopped by closed doors and windows. There is no chance of escaping the respiratory distress, or any number of irritating and debilitating symptoms such as: - severe headaches, burning eyes, nose and throat, sinus pain, joint pain, post nasal drip, chest pain, insomnia, nausea, loss of appetite, cognitive dysfunction, lethargy, and many other adverse effects listed here separately.

We consider smoke from naturally occurring wild fires is more than sufficient for vulnerable people to be forced to cope with, without also having to endure frequent air-fouling from deliberately lit fires, created in the name of "Hazard Reductions".

They are a ***hazard reduction*** for whom? Certainly NOT for those approximate six million or more Australians who will be adversely affected by the ***increased hazard to their Health.***

Cost Effectiveness is always used as an argument to validate BURNING habits. However, NO thought is given, to the passed-on costs having to be borne by an already overburdened Hospital, Medical, and Pharmaceutical system, forced to treat the consequences of unnecessary air-fouling.

We regard it UNCONSCIONABLE of Government agencies to blatantly and knowingly release highly toxic, and potentially carcinogenic substances into the atmosphere. All airborne pollutants must eventually fall to earth, affecting rain water and soil, which ultimately contaminates our food chain as well.

It seems to those of us who experience the inescapable regular invasion of our personal spaces, that Authorities entrusted with the responsibility of community well-being, are NOT prioritising human health requirements. We need not worry about chemical and biological warfare coming from offshore, we're slowly but surely doing a good- job of poisoning ourselves.

People should expect to be entitled to breathe clean air whilst within their own homes. We believe Governments should be protecting the Environment and Human Health above all else, ensuring wherever possible that NON-POLLUTING practices are the primary methods of mitigation employed. Work for the Dole', and other Community Service schemes may be utilized to provide the extra manual labour required to ensure a clean environment.

Protection of life and property against bushfire threats could be achieved WITHOUT BURNING if reasonable ongoing physical maintenance of buffer zones around housing and roadways was treated as a PRIORITY. We're told mechanical and manual clearing was 'Best Practice' some 30 or so years ago, and provided year round work for many. The use of this practice would also provide employment in other areas like Saw Milling, Wood Chip and Mulch industries, land fill businesses, as well as being constructively used in 'Green Power Stations' where waste vegetation is burned under controlled conditions with scrubbers and filters to protect the Environment.

People who CHOOSE to live within vegetated areas should become accountable for shouldering a great deal of the responsibility of 'risk management', and preparedness for wild fire events. Enforcement of risk management requirements involving mechanical and manual fuel load reductions, plus the installation of trickle irrigation with bore water (where possible), could be administered by the Rural Fire Service.

It is envisaged the invention and development of special equipment to slash and vacuum &/or irrigate ordinarily inaccessible terrain, would also create employment in Engineering and manufacturing fields.

The increased costs involved in the use of ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY methods of mitigation may be greater in the short term but would be far outweighed by the long-term broad economic, and health gains - providing cleaner air, better health, increased productivity, and fuller employment.

Substantiating Scientific references regarding adverse health effects and mortality risks can be found at web sites hereunder:

U. S. Washington State Department of Ecology:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/program/air/woodsmoke.pdf>

NSW EPA: <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke/problem.htm>

NEPC (National Environment Protection Council)(PM2.5 Variation):

http://www.ephc.gov.au/nepn/air/variation_d1.html

ivEPC (National Environment Protection Council)(Air Toxics):

<http://www.ephc.gov.au/nepn/air/toxics.html>

Amidale's Air Quality Group: <http://www.ozemail.com.au/airqual>

Burning Issues: <http://www.burningissues.org>

American Lung Association:

http://www.lungusa.org/air/out00_woodburning.htm#solutions

and, <http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/cleanbay/pdf/woodsmokebill.pdf>

ReNew Magazine: <http://www.ata.org.au>

European Commission DG Environment - (cost of CO₂ emission)
<http://europa.eu.int/commlenvironment/lenvecolair/beta/ec02a/forprinting.pdf>

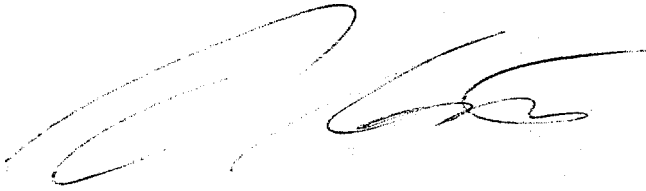
UK Department of Environment:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/airquality/airpoll/index.htm>

Although our focus has been on health, it has come to our attention that rainfall is also affected by pollution from bushfires. Enclosed is a copy of a News Release' by NASA', which is headed:- "NASA Spacecraft Provides Direct Evidence - Smoke Inhibits Rainfall" (part of a submission by "Australian Management Consolidated Pty. Ltd.", on Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry, concerning *ure water supplies* for Australia's rural industries and communities).

We thank you for the invitation to comment on 'Bushfire Mitigation and Management', and hope our perspectives will make a difference.

Yours faithfully,



Gayle Crossett (AFCA)
On behalf of those too sick
to raise a voice.

A quote from the American Lung Association:

"When You Can't Breathe, Nothing Else Matters"