

### 8.3. MM03: Ban on gas appliances and connections in new homes - Doctors for the Environment

On 5 December 2023, a Cremorne resident who is a member of Doctors for the Environment wrote to me and provided the **attached** letter from Doctors for the Environment (“DEA”).

DEA are “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 NSW Division of DEA are encouraging councils in NSW to support a ban on gas appliances and gas connections to new homes. The DEA advocates a harm minimisation approach to phasing out the use of indoor gas appliances by banning gas appliances and connections on all new homes and builds.

Victoria has adopted the policy of banning gas appliances and connections in all new dwellings and it will commence in January 2024. The ACT has already adopted the policy which commenced in November 2023.

350.org Australia’s *Electrify Your Council* campaign is, like the DEA, calling on councils across the State to change their planning rules to require all-electric, gas-free new homes with some councils already implementing change through their planning controls, such as:

(a) Waverley Council is banning indoor gas appliances on health grounds by requiring only electric ovens, cooktops and space heaters are installed in new residential development; and

(b) Parramatta Council is requiring all new residential and non-residential developments in its city centre to be all electric, and is currently considering further changes to require all new non-residential buildings to be all-electric [https://350.org.au/files/2023/08/Analysis -City-of-Sydney-ban-on-new-gas-connections-3.pdf](https://350.org.au/files/2023/08/Analysis_-_City-of-Sydney-ban-on-new-gas-connections-3.pdf)

In NSW, Parramatta Council, Waverley Council and Lane Cove Council have adopted policies to ban gas appliances and connections and amended Development Control Plan provisions to reflect that policy. Woollahra Council is exhibiting similar proposed amendments to their DCP and the City of Sydney is reviewing their policy and seeking further advice on amendments to their planning controls.

In 2019 this Council declared a Climate Emergency. Council’s Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030 adopts ambitious targets to address and mitigate climate change impacts including electrification. Council’s Sustainability Rebates Program is underway and seeks to accelerate emission reductions in North Sydney by incentivising the uptake of renewable energy, batteries, energy efficient technology and to assist the community to eliminate the use of fossil fuel technology.

**I therefore recommend:**

**1.THAT** a report on amending Council's planning controls to require all new residential developments to be all electric be prepared and reported to the next meeting of Council.

**2.THAT** Council write to the Premier of NSW, The Hon. Chris Minns and The Hon Penny Sharpe, MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Heritage urging the State Government to adopt the ACT and Victorian policy approach and develop a plan, supported by incentives or rebates, to transition homes and businesses from gas to renewable energy.

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**COUNCILLOR ZOË BAKER  
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*Healthy planet, healthy people*

Ms Zoe Baker  
Mayor  
North Sydney Council

### DEA NSW in support of a ban on gas appliances and connections to new homes

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 a 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**

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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  
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