

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF EXPOSURE TO
POOR LEVELS OF AIR QUALITY RESULTING FROM
BUSHFIRES AND DROUGHT**

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Parliamentary Inquiry

My 13 year old daughter has been diagnosed with Eosinophilic Oesophagitis, Mast Cell Activation Disorder and Vocal Cord Dysfunction. All of these illnesses are triggered by environmental allergies.

Eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders occur when eosinophils, a type of white blood cell, are found in above-normal amounts within the gastrointestinal tract. Eosinophils are an important cell in the body that have many roles including defence against parasitic infections and involvement in some forms of hypersensitivity and allergy. However, in some individuals, eosinophils accumulate in the gut potentially in response to drugs, food, airborne allergens and other unknown triggers and this infiltration can cause inflammation and tissue damage.

Eosinophilic oesophagitis (EoE) is the most common type of EGID where eosinophils are found in the oesophagus with a minimum of 15 eosinophils per high-power field required to make the diagnosis of EoE. The exact cause of EoE in most individuals is unclear but research has shown that in some, it appears to be due to an allergy to food(s) and/or **aero-allergens**. The current estimated prevalence of EoE is 1 in 2,000 individuals and rising.

My daughter has been undergoing food trails for the past 6 years and has to avoid numerous foods, additives, colours and preservatives. A lot of her medicines have to be made from scratch using compounded pharmacists. None of her compounded medications or supplements are covered by PBS or private insurance.

My daughter misses about 25% of her school year due to EoE flare ups mostly from environmental allergens such as smoke. In our home we run 3 hospital grade air purifiers and air conditioners to keep the environmental smoke out. During the recent bushfires in Brisbane in November 2019, she missed over two weeks of school, had an EoE flare up that required 22 days of steroid treatment, missed all her extra mural activities and was forced to remain in doors 90% of the time. The resultant impact this has had on her mental, social and academic health during her first year of high school has been significant. We have had to hire therapists and tutors to help cope through these difficult times and remain up to date with her schoolwork.

The out of pocket costs for her compounded medications are in the region of \$5 000.00 per year. The maintenance of her air purifiers and replacement filters is approximately \$3 000.00 per annum. The extra cost of running portable air conditioners in our rental property is in the region of \$100 per week. The purchase of carbon filter masks so she can go outside during smoky or high pollen days is approximately \$600.00 per annum.

There is no cure for EGID and EoE and more research is needed into the possible causes, development of and support for emerging treatments, less invasive diagnosis and monitoring methods and access to clinical trials.

Currently no medications are approved and listed on the PBS for EGID and EoE for the specific treatment of EoE. When my daughter is reliant on elemental formula during an EoE flare, we are fortunate enough to get this on the PBS but wonder how she will afford this once she turns 18.

She survived the recent bush fire smoke in 2019 but I now worry how she will cope with the chimney smoke that is about to start as we enter winter. We know that environmental smoke from home fireplaces affects not just asthmatics but also people with EoE.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dated: 11 March 2020