

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

Organisation: National Asthma Council Australia
Date Received: 13 March 2020

The Hon Greg Donnelly MLC
Chair, Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr. Donnelly,

RE: Health impacts of exposure to poor levels of air quality resulting from bushfires and drought

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on such an important topic.

Bushfire smoke and debris can trigger asthma symptoms, such as wheezing, breathlessness, coughing or chest tightness. The risk can linger long after the bushfire threat has subsided.

People in areas not directly impacted by the bushfires, including built-up areas, are also at risk as winds can carry smoke and ash particles long distances.

The National Asthma Council Australia is a lead authority for asthma in Australia. We set the standards for asthma care, including writing the evidence-based treatment guidelines for asthma diagnosis and management in primary care—the Australian Asthma Handbook. The Handbook is developed by a multidisciplinary team of experts that includes respiratory specialists, general practitioners and pharmacists.

As outlined in the Australian Asthma Handbook, patients with asthma should avoid or reduce exposure to airborne/environmental irritants, such as bushfire smoke. The National Asthma Council supports measures to facilitate better air quality. We agree and support the key actions identified by our sister organisation, Asthma Australia, which are:

Provide timely and appropriate information on air quality, including approaches to reduce the risk of adverse health impacts from exposure to poor air quality.

Manage the adverse health impacts of poor air quality through targeted support, particularly for people who are at greater risk, including people with asthma.

Improve the collection of data and undertake research on the short-and-long-term health impacts of poor air quality, particularly for children.

Prevent sustained periods of poor air quality, through taking meaningful action to address the drivers of climate change.

The National Asthma Council Australia continues to work with stakeholders to improve the lives of people with asthma.

Faithfully

Siobhan Brophy
Chief Executive Officer
National Asthma Council Australia