



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01AM (AEST) THURSDAY, MAY 6**

## **Invisible Danger: Gas, Asthma and our Children**

**NEW REPORT:** Over 80 percent of Victorian homes use gas - more than any other state or territory - which could be exposing children to a higher risk of asthma, a new Climate Council report has found.

“Gas is not only a fossil fuel that is driving climate change, but cooking with gas is estimated to be responsible for up to 12 percent of the childhood asthma burden\* in Australia,” said Climate Council spokeswoman and report author, Dr Kate Charlesworth.

“A child living with gas cooking in the home faces a comparable risk of asthma to a child living with household cigarette smoke,” she said.

The report, *Kicking the Gas Habit: How Gas is Harming our Health*, finds that gas commonly used for cooking and heating harms people’s health, while the process of extracting gas exposes communities to hazardous substances.

Asthma Australia CEO Michele Goldman said: “Australia has some of the highest rates of asthma in the world, and it is the leading cause of disease burden among school-aged children.”

“We should be doing everything possible to improve health outcomes for our children,” she said.

“Some people will be shocked to learn that cooking dinner on a gas stove could be contributing to their child’s asthma symptoms, we need education to improve awareness for indoor air pollution,” said Ms Goldman.

“People can take steps to reduce their risk by increasing ventilation, such as modern extraction fans over gas stoves, flues for gas heaters, and simple measures like opening windows. However, this won’t eliminate the risk completely,” she said.

### **Report key findings:**

- Far from the “clean and natural” image that the gas industry markets, gas cooktops are known to produce contaminants that increase the risk of childhood asthma: in particular, nitrogen dioxide and certain forms of particulate matter, like PM2.5.
- Other types of indoor gas use, such as unflued gas heaters in homes, also harm children’s health.
- Children and poorer households are at highest risk from, and most likely to be harmed by, gas production and use.
- Research conducted in Queensland’s Darling Downs found that people living near coal seam gas developments were more likely to be hospitalised for tumours, as well as blood and immune diseases.
- Gas is a polluting fossil fuel. Governments can prevent health issues, and reduce harm, by helping households and the country move away from gas.
- Clean energy alternatives like solar and wind are the key to a prosperous, healthy future for all Australians.

“Just as doctors spoke up on the dangers of asbestos and tobacco in the past, we have a responsibility now to sound the alarm on the dangers of gas,” said Dr Charlesworth.

“Gas is both directly hazardous to our health, and also as a fossil fuel drives climate change, which worsens health risks related to extreme weather such as heatwaves, bushfires and intense storms,” she said.

“The Victorian Government has already taken strong steps to improve the rights of renters and introduced ambitious policies to ensure homes are more efficient. Now, the government needs to go even further to ensure Victorians are safe in their homes,” said Dr Charlesworth.

“This includes taking simple, practical steps such as ending mandatory gas connections for new residential developments – as in the ACT – and making it more affordable for vulnerable Victorians to replace their gas appliances,” she said.

“Australians who switch from gas to efficient electric appliances will save money, protect their family and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities,” said Dr Charlesworth.

***\*Burden of disease explained [here](#)***

**For interviews please contact Brianna Hudson on 0455 238 875 or Vai Shah on 0452 290 082.**

The Climate Council is Australia's leading community-funded climate change communications organisation. We provide authoritative, expert and evidence-based advice on climate change to journalists, policymakers, and the wider Australian community.

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