

As part of this update, approximately 400,000 P2/N95 masks will be provided to the ACT. This includes the existing 100,000 masks that are currently being made available to those particularly sensitive to smoke predominantly through local pharmacies and the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service for their vulnerable clients.

We are working closely with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmacy Society of Australia to monitor demand for these masks across the community, as there is a need to ensure that we maintain a reserve of masks in the event of an emergency bushfire situation in the ACT.

We ask the community to join with us in ensuring that we are supporting the people in our community who are most at risk of the health impacts of the smoke at this time.

For further information on how to fit P2/N95 masks properly and current health advice, visit the ACT Health website at: <https://health.act.gov.au/public-health-alert/heavy-smoke-and-hot-conditions-act#p2n95masks>

**From:** Pulli, Tracey (Health) <[Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 6:38 PM

**To:** PICC02 <[PICC02@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC02@act.gov.au)>; PICC01 <[PICC01@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC01@act.gov.au)>; Doran, Karen <[Karen.Doran@act.gov.au](mailto:Karen.Doran@act.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <[Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au)>; Johnston, Vanessa (Health) <[Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au](mailto:Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au)>; Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health) <[Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au](mailto:Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au)>

**Subject:** FW: 20-01-07 Hunt - Media Release - Number of P2 masks for bushfires increases to more than 1.8 million [SEC=OFFICIAL]

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Karen/Em and Karen D

Please see below the P2/N95 mask update that I have drafted for view by PICC and EC and to be distributed. This has been cleared by the CHO.

Announcement on Greg Hunt's twitter, so news is out there.

## **P2/N95 mask update**

The Commonwealth Government has this afternoon provided an update on the masks being made available across Australia.

As part of this update, approximately 400,000 P2/N95 masks will be provided to the ACT. This includes the existing 100,000 masks that are currently being made available to those particularly sensitive to smoke through local pharmacies and the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service for their vulnerable clients.

We are working closely with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmacy Society of Australia to monitor demand for these masks across the community, as there is a need to ensure that we maintain a reserve of masks in the event of an emergency bushfire situation in the ACT.

The current supply of Commonwealth masks available through pharmacies are for the following groups of particularly sensitive individuals:

- people with existing chronic lung and heart conditions, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, and heart disease
- all pregnant women, and
- people over 65 years of age.

We ask the community to join with us in ensuring that we are supporting the people in our community who are most at risk of the health impacts of the smoke at this time.

We would like to remind the community that the best way to protect yourself and your family is to avoid exposure to the smoke through staying indoors where possible, and not using evaporative air conditioners which draw air into the house from outside.

In regards to retail sales of masks for the general population, these are available at Canberra pharmacies, hardware stores and office/workwear suppliers. Call stockists ahead of time to check availability.

For further information on how to fit P2/N95 masks properly and current health advice, visit the ACT Health website at: <https://health.act.gov.au/public-health-alert/heavy-smoke-and-hot-conditions-act#p2n95masks>

**ENDS**

**Additional lines for consideration to include:**

- For those in our community that are vulnerable to prolonged outdoor exposure, such as rough sleepers and the homeless, we will continue to make masks available through the Early Morning Centres.
- Housing ACT is also distributing P2 masks to its tenants and clients in the homelessness service sector who are most in need.

Cheers  
Tracey

Tracey Pulli | Senior Director of Media

Ph: (02) 5124 9444 | Email: [tracey.pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:tracey.pulli@act.gov.au)

Communications and Government Relations | Office of the Director-General | ACT Health Directorate

Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606

[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**From:** Pulli, Tracey (Health)

**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 5:51 PM

**To:** PICC01 <[PICC01@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC01@act.gov.au)>; PICC02 <[PICC02@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC02@act.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Coleman, Kerry (Health) <[Kerry.Coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerry.Coleman@act.gov.au)>; Johnston, Vanessa (Health) <[Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au](mailto:Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au)>; Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health) <[Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au](mailto:Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au)>

**Subject:** FW: 20-01-07 Hunt - Media Release - Number of P2 masks for bushfires increases to more than 1.8 million [SEC=OFFICIAL]

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Karen and Emily

As discussed with Emily just now, this has just been provided to us from the Commonwealth – a media release that has gone out by Minister Hunt on masks.

I am drafting a Mask update now for our channels with Kerryn. We have updated Minister Stephen-Smith's office who is contacting CMO as we speak.

Will come back to you with text shortly.

Cheers  
Tracey

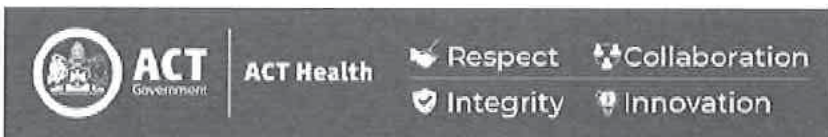
Tracey Pulli | Senior Director of Media

Ph: (02) 5124 9444 | Email: [tracey.pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:tracey.pulli@act.gov.au)

Communications and Government Relations | Office of the Director-General | ACT Health Directorate

Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606

[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**From:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <[Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 5:46 PM

**To:** Cook, Caitlin <[Caitlin.Cook@act.gov.au](mailto:Caitlin.Cook@act.gov.au)>; Pulli, Tracey (Health) <[Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au)>; De'Ath, Michael (Health) <[Michael.De'Ath@act.gov.au](mailto:Michael.De'Ath@act.gov.au)>; Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health) <[Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au](mailto:Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au)>; Glenn, Richard <[Richard.Glenn@act.gov.au](mailto:Richard.Glenn@act.gov.au)>; Doran, Karen <[Karen.Doran@act.gov.au](mailto:Karen.Doran@act.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Fwd: 20-01-07 Hunt - Media Release - Number of P2 masks for bushfires increases to more than 1.8 million [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**From:** Kelly, Paul <[Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au](mailto:Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 7, 2020 5:42:00 PM

**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <[Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au)>; Kerry Chant (Ministry of Health) <[kerry.chant@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kerry.chant@health.nsw.gov.au)>; Brett Sutton (DHHS) <[Brett.Sutton@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Brett.Sutton@dhhs.vic.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Health Ops <[Health.Ops@health.gov.au](mailto:Health.Ops@health.gov.au)>; Phan, Jen <[Jen.Phan@health.gov.au](mailto:Jen.Phan@health.gov.au)>

**Subject:** FW: 20-01-07 Hunt - Media Release - Number of P2 masks for bushfires increases to more than 1.8 million [SEC=OFFICIAL]

FYI, hot off the press, includes recent orders at insistence of Min Hunt's office.

Paul

Prof Paul Kelly MBBS, DTM+H, PhD, FAFPHM

Chief Medical Adviser and Acting Chief Medical Officer

Health Products Regulation Group

Australian Government Department of Health

T: 02 6289 4270 | E: [paul.kelly@health.gov.au](mailto:paul.kelly@health.gov.au)

Location: TGA Symonston GG.03

PO Box 100, Woden ACT 2606, Australia

*The Department of Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continued connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present.*

---

**From:** STUDDERT, Lisa <Lisa.Studdert@health.gov.au>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 5:34 PM

**To:** Kelly, Paul <Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au>

**Subject:** FW: 20-01-07 Hunt - Media Release - Number of P2 masks for bushfires increases to more than 1.8 million  
[SEC=OFFICIAL]

Sent with BlackBerry Work

([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

---

**From:** KELLY, Matthew <Matthew.KELLY@health.gov.au>

**Date:** Tuesday, 07 Jan 2020, 17:20

**To:** KELLY, Matthew <Matthew.KELLY@health.gov.au>

**Cc:** PERRIN, James <James.Perrin@health.gov.au>

**Subject:** 20-01-07 Hunt - Media Release - Number of P2 masks for bushfires increases to more than 1.8 million  
[SEC=OFFICIAL]



## **The Hon. Greg Hunt MP**

Minister for Health

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet

## **Professor Paul Kelly**

Acting Australian Government Chief Medical Officer

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

7 January 2020

## **NUMBER OF P2 MASKS FOR BUSHFIRES INCREASES TO MORE THAN 1.8 MILLION**

The Australian Government is now supplying more than 1.8 million P2 face masks to assist frontline workers and those at risk in communities affected by the bushfires.

The Government is providing more than 1 million masks to NSW, 455,400 to Victoria, approximately 400,000 to the ACT, 19,200 to Australia Post, and 3000 to the Australian Federal Police. More will be made available should they be requested.

Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, said the provision of the P2 masks formed an important part of the Government's comprehensive response to the bushfire crisis.

"The Government is working closely with affected jurisdictions to identify if additional masks – beyond those already being provided – are required," Minister Hunt said.

Acting Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, said available supplies of P2 masks should be allocated as a priority to those most at risk of significant health effects from smoke, including:

- People with existing heart or lung conditions, including angina, ischaemic heart disease, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (bronchitis and emphysema).
- People over 65 years of age, as they are more likely to have heart or lung disease.
- Children 14 years and younger.
- Pregnant women.
- Diabetics.

“It is important to note that wearing masks is not an alternative to avoiding smoke. The best thing people in smoke-affected communities can do is stay inside with doors and windows closed if at all possible,” Professor Kelly said.

“People with underlying heart or lung health issues and other chronic conditions should consult their doctor for advice before using a P2 mask.

“Anyone who feels dizzy, faints or is out of breath while wearing a P2 mask should remove it and go to a place with cleaner air quality.

“People concerned about bushfire smoke should follow the recommendations of their doctor or local health authority, and check state and territory health department advice for up-to-date information on air quality.”

State and territory governments are distributing the P2 masks and providing air quality guidance within their jurisdictions.

ENDS

Authorised by Greg Hunt MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Somerville, Victoria.

**Matt Kelly | Media Adviser**

Office of the Hon. Greg Hunt MP

Minister for Health | Federal Member for Flinders

Suite M141, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

T. 02 6277 7476 | [REDACTED] E. [matthew.kelly@health.gov.au](mailto:matthew.kelly@health.gov.au)

---

"Important: This transmission is intended only for the use of the addressee and may contain confidential or legally privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, you are notified that any use or dissemination of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you receive this transmission in error please notify the author immediately and delete all copies of this transmission."



## **The Hon. Greg Hunt MP**

Minister for Health

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet

## **Professor Paul Kelly**

Acting Australian Government Chief Medical Officer

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

7 January 2020

### **NUMBER OF P2 MASKS FOR BUSHFIRES INCREASES TO MORE THAN 1.8 MILLION**

The Australian Government is now supplying more than 1.8 million P2 face masks to assist frontline workers and those at risk in communities affected by the bushfires.

The Government is providing more than 1 million masks to NSW, 455,400 to Victoria, approximately 400,000 to the ACT, 19,200 to Australia Post, and 3000 to the Australian Federal Police. More will be made available should they be requested.

Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, said the provision of the P2 masks formed an important part of the Government's comprehensive response to the bushfire crisis.

"The Government is working closely with affected jurisdictions to identify if additional masks – beyond those already being provided – are required," Minister Hunt said.

Acting Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, said available supplies of P2 masks should be allocated as a priority to those most at risk of significant health effects from smoke, including:

- People with existing heart or lung conditions, including angina, ischaemic heart disease, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (bronchitis and emphysema).
- People over 65 years of age, as they are more likely to have heart or lung disease.
- Children 14 years and younger.
- Pregnant women.
- Diabetics.

“It is important to note that wearing masks is not an alternative to avoiding smoke. The best thing people in smoke-affected communities can do is stay inside with doors and windows closed if at all possible,” Professor Kelly said.

“People with underlying heart or lung health issues and other chronic conditions should consult their doctor for advice before using a P2 mask.

“Anyone who feels dizzy, faints or is out of breath while wearing a P2 mask should remove it and go to a place with cleaner air quality.

“People concerned about bushfire smoke should follow the recommendations of their doctor or local health authority, and check state and territory health department advice for up-to-date information on air quality.”

State and territory governments are distributing the P2 masks and providing air quality guidance within their jurisdictions.

ENDS

**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Pulli, Tracey (Health)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 7:36 PM  
**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health); Johnston, Vanessa (Health); De'Ath, Michael (Health); Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health)  
**Subject:** Heads up: WorkSafe messaging for tomorrow on keeping employees safe in the smoke and heat  
**Attachments:** Media release - Worksafe - Smoke and heat Jan2020.docx; 2001\_Safe from Smoke\_WorksafeACT FB Tile.jpg

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Kerryn, Michael and the two Vanessa's

Please see below and attached, WorkSafe messaging that will get out tomorrow on keeping employees safe in the smoke and heat. It's a media release from the WorkSafe Commissioner and social media messaging.

Cheers  
 Tracey

Tracey Pulli | Senior Director of Media

Ph: (02) 5124 9444 | Email: [tracey.pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:tracey.pulli@act.gov.au)

Communications and Government Relations | Office of the Director-General | ACT Health Directorate

Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606

[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**From:** Polglase, David <David.Polglase@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 7:17 PM  
**To:** PICC02 <PICC02@act.gov.au>; PICC01 <PICC01@act.gov.au>; Stewart-Moore, Karen <Karen.Stewart-Moore@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Health Media <HealthMedia@act.gov.au>; Pulli, Tracey (Health) <Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: FOR URGENT APPROVAL: Smoke messaging

UNCLASSIFIED

Thanks Em

This is great and will action everything you have mentioned below.

I will brief Greg fully also on any media between now and then, particularly the masks update.

Thanks for your help on this

Cheers  
 Dave

David Polglase | Senior Director, Content



Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile [REDACTED]  
**Communications & Engagement** | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate |  
**ACT Government**  
 Level 5, Canberra Nara Centre, 1 Constitution Avenue, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au)

Please note: I am out of the office on Fridays

**From:** PICC02 <[PICC02@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC02@act.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 7:10 PM  
**To:** Polglase, David <[David.Polglase@act.gov.au](mailto:David.Polglase@act.gov.au)>; PICC01 <[PICC01@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC01@act.gov.au)>; PICC02 <[PICC02@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC02@act.gov.au)>; Stewart-Moore, Karen <[Karen.Stewart-Moore@act.gov.au](mailto:Karen.Stewart-Moore@act.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** Health Media <[HealthMedia@act.gov.au](mailto:HealthMedia@act.gov.au)>; Pulli, Tracey (Health) <[Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** RE: FOR URGENT APPROVAL: Smoke messaging

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi David

This is approved through the PICC, but we do suggest maybe looking at the language around 'safe'. It may be more appropriate for Greg to say 'minimising exposure'.

I have copied in Health Media so they can advise the CHO., however I note it is drawn from material she has already approved.

As discussed, the Emergency Controller approved the media plan we discussed, which is Greg providing proactive information to community/industry.

To optimise traction you may like to pitch to the afternoon and/or Drive programs for radio (it's going to get smoky from 4pm) but you could get the TVs earlier in the day.

Comms will go out tonight from ESA on a mask update and recommend you/Greg note it prior to doing media tomorrow.

Thanks

Emily

**From:** Polglase, David <[David.Polglase@act.gov.au](mailto:David.Polglase@act.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 6:52 PM  
**To:** PICC01 <[PICC01@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC01@act.gov.au)>; PICC02 <[PICC02@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC02@act.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** FW: FOR URGENT APPROVAL: Smoke messaging  
**Importance:** High

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi team

Please find attached media release and social media graphic/text for approval re Worksafe.

If approved tonight, I could try and get Greg on ABC Breakfast in the morning and then issue media release at 9am, followed by Minister social media posts.

I might give you a call Karen to discuss

Cheers

Dave

David Polglase | Senior Director, Content

Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile: [REDACTED]

Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate |

ACT Government

Level 5, Canberra Nara Centre, 1 Constitution Avenue, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au)

Please note: I am out of the office on Fridays

---

**From:** Polglase, David

**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 6:29 PM

**To:** Jones, Greg <[Greg.Jones@act.gov.au](mailto:Greg.Jones@act.gov.au)>; Pretorius, Dion <[Dion.Pretorius@act.gov.au](mailto:Dion.Pretorius@act.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Francis, Michelle <[Michelle.Francis@act.gov.au](mailto:Michelle.Francis@act.gov.au)>; CMTEDDMedia <[CMTEDDMedia@act.gov.au](mailto:CMTEDDMedia@act.gov.au)>; Bunt, Jacquie <[Jacquie.Bunt@act.gov.au](mailto:Jacquie.Bunt@act.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: FOR URGENT APPROVAL: Smoke messaging

**Importance:** High

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Greg

Just an update.

I have tick off from PICC on the proposed approach and will look to clear the attached info tonight.

Please see the attached draft media release which has been based off the statement you edited earlier.

I have also attached the social media tile that we did up this afternoon, along with the draft social media messaging for the Min's office.

Facebook

With heavy smoke conditions impacting the ACT, WorkSafe is encouraging employers to look at mitigation strategies to control the current heat and smoke conditions. For example, employers can eliminate strenuous or outdoor work where possible or provide P2 masks if there will be prolonged outdoor activity, or for those workers who are sensitive to smoke.

Keep up-to-date with the current State of Alert at [esa.act.gov.au](http://esa.act.gov.au).

Twitter

With heavy smoke impacting the ACT, WorkSafe is encouraging employers to reduce strenuous work and look at mitigation strategies to control the current conditions. Keep up-to-date with the current State of Alert at [esa.act.gov.au](http://esa.act.gov.au).

Are you happy if all this information goes to PICC for clearance now?

We will touch base then first thing in the morning on when all the information can be released publicly along, with interviews.

Cheers

David

David Polglase | Senior Director, Content

Phone: 02 6205 9957 | Mobile: [REDACTED]

Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate |

ACT Government

Level 5, Canberra Nara Centre, 1 Constitution Avenue, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au)

Please note: I am out of the office on Fridays



# MEDIA RELEASE

8 January 2020

## Keep your employees safe from smoke

Due to the heavy smoke conditions impacting the ACT, WorkSafe is encouraging employers to look at mitigation strategies to minimise the impact of the current heat and smoke conditions.

Employers are particularly being asked to eliminate strenuous or outdoor work where possible (including postponing or re-scheduling).

ACT Work Safety Commissioner, Greg Jones, said employers should undertake a risk assessment of their work activity, and revise the assessment as conditions change.

“Employers have a legal obligation to provide their workers with a safe working environment and take all reasonably practical steps to eliminate or minimise the risks associated with their work,” Mr Jones said. “This includes taking into account the environmental conditions that workers are required to operate under.

“We suggest employers provide P2 masks if there will be prolonged outdoor activity cannot be avoided or for those workers who are sensitive to smoke. Employees are also encouraged to speak up if they are feeling the effects of smoke and to take regular breaks.

Additionally, alternative cooling arrangements should be used if evaporative air conditioning is currently being utilised.



For more information regarding outdoor smoke, please read [ACT Health’s Outdoor Smoke factsheet](#).

To be kept up-to-date with the current State of Alert, please visit the ESA website at [esa.act.gov.au](http://esa.act.gov.au).

**Statement ends.**

**Media contact:**

**CMTEDD Media**    M 0466 937 557    E [CMTEDDMedia@act.gov.au](mailto:CMTEDDMedia@act.gov.au)

 [worksafe@act.gov.au](mailto:worksafe@act.gov.au)  
 13 22 81

**WORKSAFE ACT**

# Keep employees safe from the smoke and heat



**ACT**  
Government

**WORKSAFE**ACT

**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

**From:** Pulli, Tracey (Health)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 8:23 PM  
**To:** PICC02; PICC01  
**Cc:** Coleman, Kerry (Health); Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health); Johnston, Vanessa (Health)  
**Subject:** ACT Health Directorate comms priorities for tomorrow

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Karen, Nicole and Em

Just a quick email to run through priorities for community messaging for tomorrow, following discussions today on process for keeping the Emergency Controller abreast of upcoming health messaging on air quality.

Topic	Details	Channels	Timing
<b>Air quality updates</b>	As required and based on conditions. A number of responses to social media posts have also been drafted and will be finalised for response tomorrow.	- ACT Health social media channels (Facebook and Twitter). - local media (as required and upon request)	If needed
<b>Mental health and wellbeing</b>	Information to be made available on the ACT Health website on mental health and wellbeing advice on dealing with the bushfire crisis. This will include links to resources to help people manage trauma in crisis for their families.	- ACT Health website and social media channels (Facebook and Twitter) with relevant ACT Govt channels to share.	Aiming for 1pm
<b>Hourly air quality monitoring</b>	Updates to air quality monitoring pages on the ACT Health website to include hourly monitoring data.	- ACT Health website and social media channels (Facebook and Twitter) with ESA to share. - Updated talking points for CHO and EC	Aiming for 4pm (ahead of expected heavy smoke haze coming through)
<b>Common irritations of bushfire smoke</b>	Tips on how to alleviate common irritations of bushfire smoke	- ACT Health social media channels (Facebook and Twitter).	Tomorrow COB/Friday
<b>Updates to existing comms docs</b>	The following will come through for approval through EC: - Updated Access Canberra/Canberra Hospital Switch - Updated talking points on masks	Internal use only	N/A

**Summary of today's activity**

- Media lines on future preparedness for health impacts of bushfire – CHO approved and provided to PICC
- ACT Health webpage update and social media post on how to use a P2 mask – CHO approved and provided to PICC
- Mask update for ESA channels following Commonwealth Government announcement on mask availability – CHO approved and provided to PICC to issue.

Hope this is helpful.

Cheers

Tracey

**Tracey Pulli | Senior Director of Media**

Ph: (02) 5124 9444 | Email: [tracey.pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:tracey.pulli@act.gov.au)

**Communications and Government Relations | Office of the Director-General | ACT Health Directorate**

Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606

[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 8:47 AM  
**To:** ACT Health, HPSOps; Johnston, Vanessa (Health); Chatterjee, Swarup (Health); Redfern, Jade (Health); Behm, Claire (Health)  
**Cc:** Pulli, Tracey (Health)  
**Subject:** FW: bushfire smoke // RE: Offer of support [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Attachments:** Bushfire smoke and health protection FINAL.pdf

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi all – for inclusion in this morning’s art re moving forward on both health impacts and air quality reporting discussions

K

**Kerryn**

Public Health, Protection and Regulation | **ACT Health Directorate**  
 PH 5124 9442 | **MOB** [REDACTED]  
 25 Mulley Street, HOLDER ACT 2611 | GPO Box 825, Canberra City ACT 2601  
 E [Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au) W <https://health.act.gov.au/>

---

**From:** Kelly, Paul <Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 6 January 2020 7:40 PM  
**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: bushfire smoke // RE: Offer of support [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Kerryn

We are preparing a press release about chronic health effects, working with the authors of the attached draft MJA article.

It would be good for you to see and comment when close to final tomorrow (with Kerry and Brett) as I want to make sure it doesn’t cross across any of your messages. So heads up.

In the meantime, this makes interesting (and reassuring) reading I think. It also raises the issue of real time recording/reporting of air quality, which I agree that this would in fact be more useful than the 24 hour rolling average in the context of long-term smoke events. This was one of your questions this morning on ABC radio, so here is a nuanced input to that debate.

FYI Air Rater (Vanessa is of course all over this) does give realtime reports for PM2.5 and for pollen, as well as (what you quite rightly said today) is individual eyes and noses!

Regards,  
 Paul

Prof Paul Kelly MBBS, DTM+H, PhD, FAFPHM  
 Chief Medical Adviser and Acting Chief Health Officer

---

Health Products Regulation Group  
 Australian Government Department of Health  
 T: 02 6289 4270 | E: [paul.kelly@health.gov.au](mailto:paul.kelly@health.gov.au)



Location: TGA Symonston GG.03  
PO Box 100, Woden ACT 2606, Australia

*The Department of Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continued connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present.*

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 6 January 2020 3:20 PM  
**To:** Kelly, Paul <Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au>; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Phan, Jen <Jen.Phan@health.gov.au>  
**Subject:** bushfire smoke // RE: Offer of support [SEC=No Protective Marking] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear Paul

Please see below the six pieces of health protection advice on bushfire smoke I tweeted yesterday.

I am also attaching the article on this topic we submitted to MJA just before Christmas (currently under fast-track review).

As [REDACTED] mentioned, we are developing factsheets for (1) lay person and (2) primary care practitioners on the basis of this material.

Please let me know how I can best help (e.g. additional advice on PM2.5 prolonged exposure effects).

Kind regards

-----  
Six things you can do to protect yourself from #bushfire #smoke:

- 1. STAY INDOORS:** Create a clean air space in your home, close doors & windows (fill gaps with towels/tape), use air conditioning (not evaporative coolers) on recirculate mode, use air purifier with HEPA filter. 1/6
  - 2. AVOID STRENUOUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OUTDOORS.** Don't go for your usual jog. Go to gym/indoor swimming pool. Visit air-conditioned libraries, cinema, shopping centres. Time your activities in a way that reduces your exposure to #smoke. Go for a walk when air quality is better. 2/6
  - 3. MEDICATION:** Those with heart/lung conditions are more sensitive to #smoke. Keep sufficient supplies of your regular medication. Follow your asthma/medical plan (keep your inhaler with you). Talk to your doctor if you feel unwell, before making changes to your medical plan. 3/6
  - 4. FACEMASKS:** Use P2/N95 professional #facemask if you have to be outdoors. Fit them tightly around mouth & nose. Replace mask when it becomes dirty/moist. Remove mask if you feel faint/unwell. Surgical masks offer little protection. There are no professional masks for kids. 4/6
  - 5. TRUST YOUR SENSES:** When you smell/see #smoke, air pollution is HAZARDOUS. If you have itchy eyes, cough, running nose reduce activities, stay indoors, take lozenges/eye drops. If you feel difficulty breathing, wheezing, tight chest seek urgent medical attention / call 000. 5/6
  - 6. KEEP WELL & FOLLOW NEWS/ADVICE:** Stay away from the #heat & #smoke, keep well hydrated, eat plenty of fruits & veggies (don't eat junk). Most importantly quit smoking. Antioxidant supplements (vitamin C & E) may help. Follow local news/advice @ACTHealth, @ACT\_ESA, @ACTRFS. 6/6
- 

[REDACTED]  
Professor of Global Environmental Health  
National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health  
Research School of Population Health

Australian National University  
Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Kelly, Paul <Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 6 January 2020 2:24 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Phan, Jen <Jen.Phan@health.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Offer of support [SEC=No Protective Marking] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Great.

Jen can you please get Celia's team directly in touch with Anu team?

Regards

Paul

Sent with BlackBerry Work  
([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Monday, Jan 06, 2020, 1:57 PM  
**To:** Kelly, Paul <Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au> [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Phan, Jen <Jen.Phan@health.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Re: Offer of support [SEC=No Protective Marking] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Paul – Professor [REDACTED] is sitting right next to me. He is the person to whom you refer.

He is cc'd.

His number is [REDACTED]

We have just decided to produce a HealthANSWERS fact sheet on air quality for (1) lay person, and (2) primary care practitioners.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dean  
ANU College of Health and Medicine  
The Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 2601 AUSTRALIA

[REDACTED]

CRICOS Provider #00120C

---

**From:** "Kelly, Paul" <Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au>  
**Date:** Monday, 6 January 2020 at 12:23 pm  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** "Phan, Jen" <Jen.Phan@health.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Offer of support [SEC=No Protective Marking] [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Thanks [REDACTED]

Pretty flat chat here. I'll keep you and ANU in mind. One nonclinical resource may be your colleague who keeps tweeting about smoke, sorry I don't have the name in front of me. I need some rapid work on a lay persons explanation of high pm2.5 for prolonged periods and chronic health risks.

Paul

Sent with BlackBerry Work  
([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Monday, Jan 06, 2020, 9:31 AM  
**To:** Kelly, Paul <Paul.Kelly@health.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Phan, Jen <Jen.Phan@health.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: Offer of support [SEC=No Protective Marking]

Dear Paul

Sending to you having received Brendan's out of office reply.

[REDACTED]  
Dean  
ANU College of Health and Medicine  
The Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 2601 AUSTRALIA

[REDACTED]  
CRICOS Provider #00120C

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Monday, 6 January 2020 at 9:29 am  
**To:** "MURPHY, Brendan" <Brendan.Murphy@health.gov.au>  
**Cc:** "Jen.Phan@health.gov.au" <Jen.Phan@health.gov.au>, "Jack.Dolan@health.gov.au" <Jack.Dolan@health.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Offer of support



Dear Brendan

I'm sure you have much on your plate, but I just wanted to reach out and offer, if it would be helpful, my expertise or capacity to mobilise resources from ANU.

I've attached a brief bio for reference.

FYI your honorary ANU professorship is almost done.

Yours sincerely,

  
  
Dean  
ANU College of Health and Medicine  
The Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 2601 AUSTRALIA

  
CRICOS Provider #00120C

---

"Important: This transmission is intended only for the use of the addressee and may contain confidential or legally privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, you are notified that any use or dissemination of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you receive this transmission in error please notify the author immediately and delete all copies of this transmission."

---

"Important: This transmission is intended only for the use of the addressee and may contain confidential or legally privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, you are notified that any use or dissemination of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you receive this transmission in error please notify the author immediately and delete all copies of this transmission."

---

"Important: This transmission is intended only for the use of the addressee and may contain confidential or legally privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, you are notified that any use or dissemination of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you receive this transmission in error please notify the author immediately and delete all copies of this transmission."

## **Bushfire smoke – how can we protect individuals and populations?**

Sotiris Vardoulakis<sup>1\*</sup>, Bin Jalaludin<sup>2,3</sup>, Geoffrey G Morgan<sup>4,3</sup>, Ivan C Hanigan<sup>4,3,6</sup>, Fay H Johnston<sup>5,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Research School of Population Health, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, Australia

<sup>2</sup> Ingham Institute of Applied Medical Research, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>3</sup> Centre for Air pollution, energy and health Research, Sydney, Australia

<sup>4</sup> Sydney School of Public Health, University Centre for Rural Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>5</sup> Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

<sup>6</sup> Health Research Institute, University of Canberra, ACT, Australia

### ***More nuanced health advice is needed to protect populations and individuals from exposure to bushfire smoke***

Bushfires have always been a feature of the natural environment in Australia, but the risk has increased over time as fire season start earlier, finish later, and extreme fire weather increases with climate change.<sup>1,2</sup> The current early season bushfires in NSW and Queensland have already caused six fatalities, extensive damage to property, and destruction of flora and fauna, as well as exposing millions of people to extreme levels of air pollution. Bushfire smoke, as well as smoke from prescribed burns, contains a complex mixture of particles and gases that are chemically transformed in the atmosphere and transported by the wind over long distances.<sup>3</sup> In this context, a major public health concern is population exposure to very small particles (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), which can penetrate deep into the respiratory system inducing oxidative stress and inflammation<sup>4</sup> and even translocate into the blood stream.<sup>5</sup>

Mortality rates have been found to increase in Sydney on days with high bushfire smoke pollution.<sup>6</sup> Hospital admissions, emergency department attendances, ambulance call-outs, and general practitioner consultations, particularly for respiratory conditions, all increase during periods of severe PM<sub>2.5</sub> from bushfires.<sup>7-10</sup>

Infants and young children, the elderly, pregnant women, people with asthma, emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and other respiratory condition, people with cardiovascular conditions such as angina, and with diabetes are more vulnerable to bushfire smoke. Those in lower socioeconomic groups or working outdoors are also at higher risk, as they may have less access to health services or lower ability to take preventive measures.

### **Health protection advice and trade-offs**

Current health protection advice related to bushfire smoke mainly focuses on short-term measures aimed at reducing personal exposure to pollution. This includes advice to stay indoors with windows and doors closed, and reduce strenuous physical exercise outdoors, particularly if individuals experience health symptoms or have pre-existing respiratory or cardiovascular conditions. General advice also includes having access to regular medication, such as asthma medication, checking on elderly neighbours, and seeking medical attention if needed. This advice, however, has been tailored to brief air pollution episodes that last only a few hours/days. In situations like the current bushfire smoke event in NSW and Queensland where severe smoke pollution persists over longer periods (weeks to months) and affects large population centres, there is a need for more nuanced evidence-based health advice.

Reducing prolonged/heavy physical exercise outdoors may become impractical over longer periods, for example for school children, and for people who work outdoors. Children and adults need to carry out a

range of daily activities that involve spending time outdoors (e.g. attending school or work, playing, shopping, and commuting). Advice to reduce strenuous physical exercise outdoors becomes problematic over longer periods, as they can generally benefit from active travel (i.e. walking and cycling) and regular outdoor exercise, and may not have access to indoor sports facilities. We believe that more nuanced advice should encourage individuals to be guided by air quality forecast and the pattern of PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels at air pollution monitoring locations near them, and plan their daily activities in a way that minimises personal exposure to pollution. For example, according to Fig. 1a, PM<sub>2.5</sub> was lower in most locations in Sydney in early morning hours during the early December 2019 bushfire smoke episode. Exercising outdoors, and cycling or walking to school or work within this time-window, if possible, would help maintain good physical activity levels without substantially increasing exposure to smoke. Fig. 1b shows that locations in the city's north were affected by much higher PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels than some locations in the south at the highest peak of smoke on 10<sup>th</sup> December. Ideally, real-time information on the temporal and spatial variation of air pollution in all jurisdictions should be made available online to enable individuals to assess air quality near them. Avoiding pollution from other sources (road traffic, cigarette smoking, etc.) is also advisable, although widespread bushfire smoke is likely to dominate personal exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> during severe smoke events.

Advice to stay indoors may also be impractical over longer periods. Older houses in Australia are often quite "leaky", allowing bushfire smoke to penetrate indoors over time and creating unhealthy indoor air quality conditions. Well sealed and air conditioned indoor environments (e.g. modern apartments, libraries, shopping centres), can provide respite from smoke pollution, particularly if effective air filtration systems are in place (see also CAR factsheet: Bushfire smoke – what are the health impacts and what can we do to minimise exposure? <https://www.car-cre.org.au/position-papers>). However, many urban residents exposed to bushfire smoke may not have easy access to such places and even if they do, they might not be able to stay there for prolonged periods. This is particularly an issue for elderly or disabled people and young children. Moving people around a large city, especially those with mobility or other health conditions, is impractical and may even increase the risk of adverse health events in extreme cases. The priority should be to create a clean air space within the home, e.g. by using air conditioning/filtration, where people can spend most of their time during prolonged periods of bushfire smoke. Homes should be ventilated during periods of cleaner outdoor air quality, e.g. around midnight in the conditions observed in Sydney in early December (Fig. 1a), to cool down the homes and avoid build-up of indoor pollutants.

Access to regular medication, including asthma preventers/relievers, statins or aspirin, is important for people with pre-existing lung and heart conditions, and should be arranged in consultation with their general practitioners. Maintaining a healthy diet, with plenty of fruits and vegetables, and keeping well hydrated is likely to help reduce short- and long-term health effects. There is emerging evidence that antioxidant and fish oil supplementation may have a protective effect against air pollution exposure,<sup>11</sup> however more research is needed in this area.

A lot of the media attention during periods of bushfire smoke is around the use of facemasks. These are increasingly used in highly polluted Asian cities, particularly in China. Use of facemasks during brief air pollution episodes (outside occupational settings and extreme air pollution emergencies related to volcanic eruptions) is not routinely recommended by health authorities. This is because their effectiveness depends heavily on the facial fit, material and condition of the masks. Surgical masks may have reasonable filtration efficiency, however their design generally confers poor facial fit and high inward leakage of PM<sub>2.5</sub>.<sup>12</sup> Professional P2/N95 facemasks, which can provide very efficient filtration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> if well-fitted, are only designed for adults and can make it difficult to breathe and increase thermal discomfort. None of the above masks confers protection from exposure to toxic gases in bushfire smoke (e.g. carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compound). There are a number of practical and ethical considerations that should ultimately inform a decision about whether or not to recommend and/or distribute facemasks during air pollution emergencies.<sup>13,14</sup> Clear information about the effectiveness, benefits and drawbacks of

different types of masks should be provided by health authorities to enable individuals to make informed decisions.

### **Risk communication**

A nuanced and balanced communication approach that takes into account health risks, people's concerns, and the effectiveness and practicality of protective measures, is needed. Bushfire smoke alerts, real-time air quality data and forecasts, and related health advice can play an important role in reducing population exposure to hazardous air pollution. Importantly, they can enable individuals, particularly those more sensitive, to plan their daily activities in a way that minimises personal exposure to pollution.

Environmental health literacy, and a better understanding of the causes and effects of bushfires, and of the health consequences of air pollution more broadly, is important. There may be a misconception that smoke from burning wood or other organic fuels is "natural", hence not harmful to health. There is no consistent scientific evidence supporting this belief. Toxicological studies have consistently demonstrated that particles derived from biomass burning can activate inflammatory, oxidative and genotoxic responses, which are similar to road traffic particles.<sup>15</sup> A recent systematic review of epidemiological studies has shown higher asthma-related effects for PM<sub>2.5</sub> from landscape fire smoke compared to other sources.<sup>10</sup>

Health professionals often compare outdoor air pollution with cigarette smoke, as both contain mixtures of toxic chemicals, have the same route of exposure (i.e. inhalation), and common health outcomes (e.g. lung cancer and other respiratory illnesses, heart disease, mortality risk). Such a comparison helps raise awareness of the long-term health risks associated with outdoor air pollution.

### **Conclusions and evidence needs**

The current unprecedented bushfire smoke levels along the east coast of Australia have raised concerns of short- and long-term health impacts in large population centres. They have also tested the existing health protection advice, which mainly focuses on shorter and more localised smoke episodes. Exposed populations increasingly seek advice on personal interventions (e.g. facemasks, air cleaners, daily activities) that can help them self-manage health risks from bushfire smoke. It is important that health professionals and patients, as well as healthy individuals and those at higher risk (e.g. pregnant women and the elderly), develop a good understanding of the available health protection measures, and their effectiveness and potential trade-offs (Table 1). Access to local, real-time air quality information and reliable smoke forecasts is essential for managing personal exposure as well as clinical deterioration in sensitive individuals.

Managing the health impacts of fire smoke should be integral to landscape fire planning and bushfire emergency response. Close collaboration between health, education, environmental and fire management and emergency response agencies is essential for achieving the best overall outcomes for population health and wellbeing. Further research is needed into the medium- and longer-term impacts of bushfire smoke, as well as into the effectiveness and health equity implications of related health protection advice. Working towards ambitious climate change mitigation targets is an essential long-term strategy for managing the underlying causes of the increasing bushfire risk in Australia and overseas.

### **Acknowledgements**

Sotiris Vardoulakis is employed by the Australian National University. He has received funding support from the UK National Institute for Health Research, Medical Research Council, Natural and Environmental Research Council, Public Health England, and Dyson Ltd.

Bin Jalaludin is employed by the South Western Sydney Local Health District. He does not receive any other funding.

Geoffrey G Morgan and Ivan C Hanigan are employed by the University of Sydney and receive funding support from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council.

Fay H Johnston is employed by the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Department of Health.

This research was undertaken with the assistance of resources from the Centre for Air pollution, energy and health Research Data and Analysis Technology (CARDAT) platform (<https://cardat.github.io>)

### Competing interests

No relevant disclosures.

### References

1. Harris S, Lucas C. Understanding the variability of Australian fire weather between 1973 and 2017. *PLoS ONE* 2019; 14(9): e0222328.
2. Di Virgilio G, Evans JP, Blake SAP, et al. Climate Change Increases the Potential for Extreme Wildfires. *Geophysical Research Letters* 2019; 46(14): 8517-8526.
3. Johnston FH. Understanding and managing the health impacts of poor air quality from landscape fires. *MJA* 2017; 207(6): 229-230.
4. Lodovici M, Bigagli E. Oxidative stress and air pollution exposure. *J Toxicol.* 2011; 487074.
5. Brook RD, Rajagopalan S, Pope CA 3rd, et al. Particulate matter air pollution and cardiovascular disease: An update to the scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation* 2010; 121(21): 2331-2378.
6. Morgan G, Sheppeard V, Khalaj B, et al. Effects of bushfire smoke on daily mortality and hospital admissions in Sydney, Australia. *Epidemiology* 2010; 21(1): 47-55.
7. Martin KL, Hanigan IC, Morgan GG, et al. Air pollution from bushfires and their association with hospital admissions in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, Australia 1994-2007. *Aust. N. Z. J. Public Health* 2013; 37(3): 238-243.
8. Johnston FH, Purdie S, Jalaludin B, et al. Air pollution events from forest fires and emergency department attendances in Sydney, Australia 1996-2007: a case-crossover analysis. *Environmental Health* 2014, 13: 105.
9. Salimi F, Henderson SB, Morgan GG, et al. Ambient particulate matter, landscape fire smoke, and emergency ambulance dispatches in Sydney, Australia. *Environment International* 2017; 99: 208-212.
10. Borchers Arriagada N, Horsley JA, Palmer AJ, et al. Association between fire smoke fine particulate matter and asthma-related outcomes: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Environ Res* 2019; 179: 108777
11. Whyand T, Hurst JR, Beckles M, et al. Pollution and respiratory disease: can diet or supplements help? A review. *Respiratory Research* 2018; 19: 79.
12. Cherrie JW, Apsley A, Cowie H, et al. Effectiveness of face masks used to protect Beijing residents against particulate air pollution. *Occup Environ Med* 2018; 75: 446-452.
13. McDonald F, Horwell CJ, Wecker R, et al. Facemask use for community protection from air pollution disasters: An ethical overview and framework to guide agency decision making. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 2020; 43: 101376.
14. Huang W, Morawska L. Face masks could raise pollution risks. *Nature* 2019; 574(7776): 29-30.
15. Johnston HL, Mueller W, Steinle S, et al. How harmful is particulate matter emitted from biomass burning? A Thailand perspective. *Current Pollution Reports* 2019, doi:10.1007/s40726-019-00125-4.

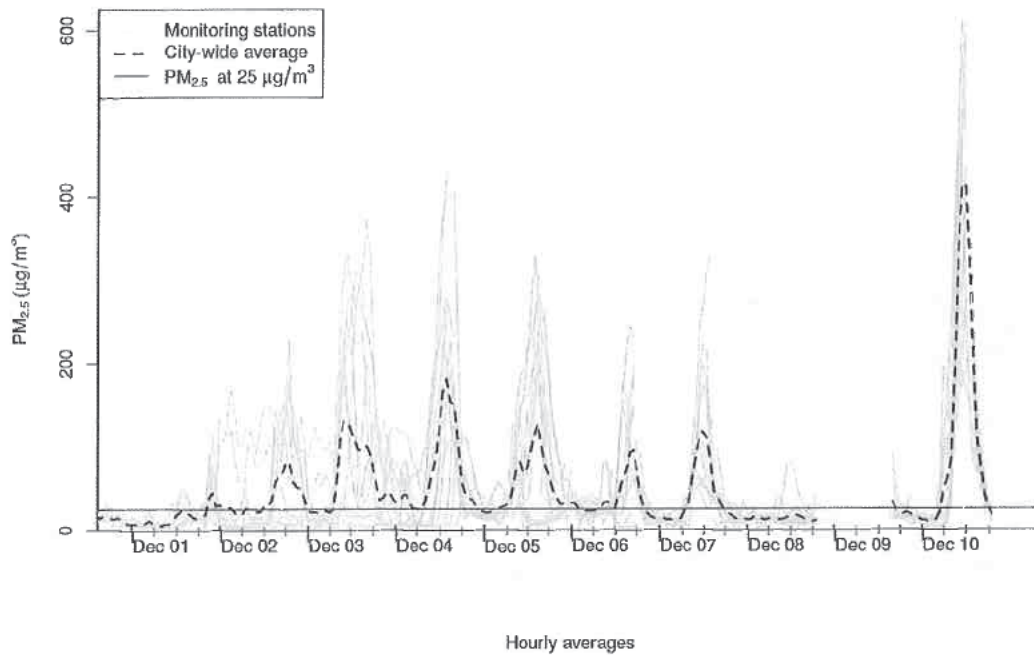


**Table 1:** Benefits and drawbacks of personal risk reduction measures during bushfire smoke events

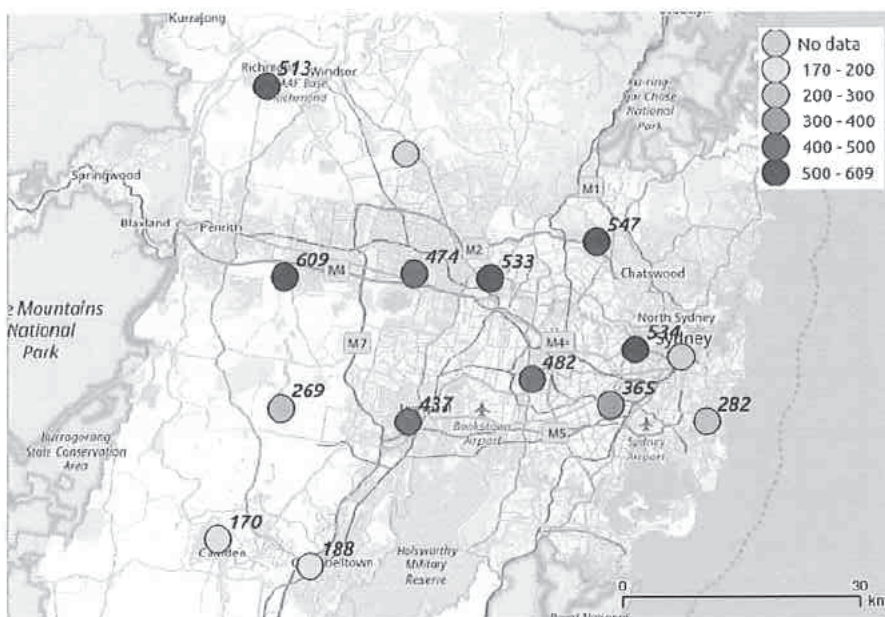
Risk reduction measure	Pros	Cons
Staying indoors (at home, workplace or school)	Effective in reducing personal exposure to PM <sub>2.5</sub> in relative well-sealed rooms with air conditioning (on recirculating mode) and/or air filtration (with HEPA filters) and no indoor pollution sources (e.g. cigarette smoking).	Building overheating and low air exchange rates resulting in high indoor temperatures and carbon dioxide levels. Significant upfront cost for installation of air conditioning/filtration systems. Impractical over longer periods of time (i.e. several days).
Reducing strenuous physical exercise outdoors	Effective in reducing personal exposure to bushfire smoke.	Could be detrimental to cardiovascular and mental health if air pollution persists over longer periods, unless other opportunities for exercising are provided (e.g. in indoor sports centres)
Using a clean air facility or public building with good indoor air quality (e.g. air-conditioned shopping centre, public library, community centre, sports centre)	Effective in reducing exposure to outdoor air pollution over short periods (i.e. hours).	Impractical over longer periods of time. At risk individuals may need onsite medical assistance or ambulance transport. Large number of such facilities will be required in cities and may need retrofits for airtightness or installation of HEPA filters for air intake.
Portable air cleaners ("air purifiers")	Effective in reducing indoor air pollution levels if fitted with high efficiency particulate air filters (HEPA).	Less effective in less airtight houses which are common in Australia. Highly effective in well-sealed rooms of certain size as recommended by manufacturer. Significant upfront purchase cost.
Facemasks, including professional masks and surgical masks	Well-fitted professional (P2/N95 or similar) masks offer effective protection from PM <sub>2.5</sub> in bushfire smoke. Exhalation valves can reduce build-up of humidity and carbon dioxide within masks.	It is often difficult to achieve a good facial fit with a N95 respirator (e.g. due to small face, facial hair, etc.) No professional (e.g. N95) respirators are made for children. Surgical masks offer only moderate protections. Cloth masks, bandanas or t-shirts offer no protection. Facemasks may give a false sense of security and are generally uncomfortable to wear over longer periods.
Antioxidant supplements, fish oils (omega 3), and other dietary advice	Suggestive evidence that carotenoids, vitamins D and E protect against pollution damage which can trigger asthma, COPD and lung cancer initiation. Vitamin C, curcumin, choline and omega-3 fatty acids may also have a protective role. A healthy diet, rich in fruits and vegetables, is generally beneficial	Dietary supplements can provide long-term health benefits, but may be costly. They should not be used as substitute to a healthy and balanced diet.

	(however there is no direct evidence of protective effect against air pollution).	
Asthma medication, aspirin, statins, other medications	Asthma preventive medication can attenuate exacerbations of the condition. There is very little evidence that aspirin, statins or any other medication may have a direct protective effects against air pollution.	Advance notice of smoke events is required to enable asthma preventive medication to be used.
Smoke forecasts, air pollution and health alerts	They are mostly free to use and can enable individuals to develop personal smoke exposure reduction plans. Localised hourly air quality information more useful than 24-hour rolling averages or spatially averaged data.	Plethora of air quality websites, apps and indicators, which are not always well validated. Information in electronic media may not reach some sensitive groups (e.g. elderly).
Temporary relocation	Can provide health protection to at-risk groups, such as pregnant women, or people with serious lung or heart disease, affected by localised but persistent smoke episodes.	Impractical when large population centres are affected. Difficult and expensive to relocate many people. Socioeconomically deprived individuals, the elderly and those very ill have lower ability to relocate. Relocation may have an impact on cognitive function in the elderly.

Figure 1



**Figure 1a:** PM<sub>2.5</sub> data between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, downloaded for 15 monitoring stations in the Sydney region from NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (<https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/air-quality/search-for-and-download-air-quality-data>). The straight line represents the Australian 24-hour PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard (National Environment Protection Measure). Note that full data validation has not been completed by NSW DPIE for these records and they have only passed an initial automated validation process.



**Figure 1b:** PM<sub>2.5</sub> (µg/m<sup>3</sup>) levels at air quality monitoring stations at the peak of the bushfire smoke event on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019, 13:00hrs.

## Picture



Sydney, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019

**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 9:04 AM  
**To:** Bergin, Catherine; Doran, Karen  
**Cc:** Murray, Christine; ACT Health, HPSOps; Johnston, Vanessa (Health)  
**Subject:** FW: ACTCOSS Correspondence  
**Attachments:** RE: Reducing the Impact of Smoke in Canberra and Appropriate Use of P2/N95 Masks; RE: Air quality masks for community services

UNCLASSIFIED

Thanks Cath and Christine

I've cc'd Karen Doran as she is working with me on the CSD side of mask access.

As discussed my concern is around the 'scope' boundaries for access – we will consider messaging we need moving forward to accommodate this request.

Thanks, Kerryn

**Kerryn**

Public Health, Protection and Regulation | **ACT Health Directorate**

PH 5124 9442 | **MOB** [REDACTED]

25 Mulley Street, HOLDER ACT 2611 | GPO Box 825, Canberra City ACT 2601

E [Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au) W <https://health.act.gov.au/>

---

**From:** Bergin, Catherine <Catherine.Bergin@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 7:07 PM  
**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Murray, Christine <Christine.Murray@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: ACTCOSS Correspondence

Hi Kerryn

As discussed, copies of the emails from ACTCOSS including the details of the community organisations requesting access to masks for frontline staff are attached.

CSD is happy to distribute the masks to the 18 organisations. Christine (cc'd) is the best contact in the first instance.

Thanks again.

Cath

---

**From:** Murray, Christine <Christine.Murray@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 6:21 PM  
**To:** Bergin, Catherine <Catherine.Bergin@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Cross, Rebecca <Rebecca.Cross@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** ACTCOSS Correspondence

UNCLASSIFIED Sensitive

Hi Catherine

Please see attached, as discussed, the correspondence with ACTCOSS. This includes the information from ACTCOSS on Community Organisation requesting a supply, our advice and ACTCOSS response. I have had two conversations with [REDACTED] today and he indicated he would call Rebecca.

Rebecca and I have been consistent in maintaining the advice as per the correspondence.

Happy to discuss further if required.

Thanks  
Christine

**Christine Murray**  
a/g Executive Group Manager  
Inclusion and Participation

P 02 6207 5046 | E [christine.murray@act.gov.au](mailto:christine.murray@act.gov.au)  
Community Services Directorate | ACT Government  
11 Moore Street, Canberra | GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601 | [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au)

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

The information contained in this email and any attachments is for the intended recipient only. It may contain material of a confidential nature relating to the operations of the Community Services Directorate, or its clients, contractors or stakeholders. Information of this nature may be subject to the provisions of the *Information Privacy Act 2014*, *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, *Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997*, *Children and Young People Act 2008*, *Housing Assistance Act 1987* and/or the *Crimes Act 1900*. Any person who inappropriately discloses this information may be subject to disciplinary/criminal proceedings under any of these Acts. If you have received this email in error, please notify the sender and then delete this transmission and any attachments.



**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Johnston, Vanessa (Health)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 9:17 AM  
**To:** Pulli, Tracey (Health)  
**Cc:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health); ACT Health, HPSOps  
**Subject:** RE: Contact centre-masks  
**Attachments:** AC and CH switch information - Heavy smoke and masks - as at 200107(2).doc

**Importance:** High

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Tracey,  
 I have one minor change around the number of masks from the Commonwealth – this version is cleared and ready to go. Can this also go upstairs to Jason Kneipp.  
 Regards,  
 Vanessa

**From:** Pulli, Tracey (Health) <Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 8:50 PM  
**To:** Johnston, Vanessa (Health) <Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au>; ACT Health, HPSOps <ACTHealthHPSOps@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: Contact centre-masks

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Vanessa

Please see attached for your review – information sheet for Access Canberra and the Canberra Hospital Switch on the Heavy smoke conditions and masks. This takes on board the request from Donna for additional Q&A. Can you look at this in the morning, so we can then progress to Kerryn for clearance? Thanks in advance.

**Kerryn** – fyi so you know where this request is at.

Cheers  
 Tracey

Tracey Pulli | Senior Director of Media  
 Ph: (02) 5124 9444 | Email: [tracey.pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:tracey.pulli@act.gov.au)  
 Communications and Government Relations | Office of the Director-General | ACT Health Directorate  
 Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606  
[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**From:** McKerlie, Donna (Health) <Donna.McKerlie@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 3:35 PM

**To:** Pulli, Tracey (Health) <Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au>; ACT Health, HPSOps <ACTHealthHPSOps@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Johnston, Vanessa (Health) <Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Contact centre-masks

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Tracy/David,

Can we please arrange a time to get together and work on some standardized messaging.

Cheers

**Donna McKerlie**

Director Emergency Management  
 Hospital Emergency Management Coordinator  
 Office of the Chief Operating Officer | Canberra Health Services | ACT Government  
**T:** 02 5124 5324 | **M:** [REDACTED] | **E:** donna.mckerlie@act.gov.au  
 Building 24, Level 1, Canberra Hospital, Yamba Drive, Garran ACT 2605  
**RELIABLE | PROGRESSIVE | RESPECTFUL | KIND**

---

**From:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 2:57 PM  
**To:** McKerlie, Donna (Health) <Donna.McKerlie@act.gov.au>; Pulli, Tracey (Health) <Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au>; ACT Health, HPSOps <ACTHealthHPSOps@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Johnston, Vanessa (Health) <Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Contact centre-masks

UNCLASSIFIED

Thanks Donna – I think some work has already been done on some of the more general answers from us. I'm putting you in touch with Tracey and David – can you please work with them (or whomever they point to) on this.  
 Thanks, Kerryn

**Kerryn**

Public Health, Protection and Regulation | **ACT Health Directorate**  
**PH** 5124 9442 | **MOB** [REDACTED]  
 25 Mulley Street, HOLDER ACT 2611 | GPO Box 825, Canberra City ACT 2601  
 E [Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au) W <https://health.act.gov.au/>

---

**From:** McKerlie, Donna (Health) <Donna.McKerlie@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 2:56 PM  
**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Contact centre-masks

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Kerryn,

Below are some of the 'queries' received by CHS switchboard regarding air quality and masks.

1. Where can the masks be sourced from



2. When will masks be available to collect from the TCH
3. What is the criteria for vulnerable people obtaining the masks
4. Where can inpatients obtain masks from
5. Information about other masks suitable for the situation
6. Is it safe to go outside
7. Calls from childcare centres relating to safety of children in care.
8. Information about air quality, and where to find this information
9. List of hardware stores and what ones have available stock.
10. Business calling about safety of their staff and information regarding closing due to smoke.
11. Can children wear P2 masks, and how to protect children if they can't wear masks
12. What are the Specific needs for vulnerable people susceptible to lung conditions

Should we get together to work out some wording around how to answer these queries?

Kind Regards

**Donna McKerlie**

Director Emergency Management

Hospital Emergency Management Coordinator

Office of the Chief Operating Officer | Canberra Health Services | ACT Government

T: 02 5124 5324 | M: [REDACTED] E: [donna.mckerlie@act.gov.au](mailto:donna.mckerlie@act.gov.au)

Building 24, Level 1, Canberra Hospital, Yamba Drive, Garran ACT 2605

**RELIABLE | PROGRESSIVE | RESPECTFUL | KIND**

---

**From:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <[Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 11:40 AM

**To:** Snowden, David <[David.Snowden@act.gov.au](mailto:David.Snowden@act.gov.au)>; Rynehart, Josh <[Josh.Rynehart@act.gov.au](mailto:Josh.Rynehart@act.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Pryce, David <[David.Pryce@act.gov.au](mailto:David.Pryce@act.gov.au)>; Bailey, Kim.P <[Kim.P.Bailey@act.gov.au](mailto:Kim.P.Bailey@act.gov.au)>; McKerlie, Donna (Health) <[Donna.McKerlie@act.gov.au](mailto:Donna.McKerlie@act.gov.au)>; McDonald, Bernadette (Health) <[Bernadette.McDonald@act.gov.au](mailto:Bernadette.McDonald@act.gov.au)>; De'Ath, Michael (Health) <[Michael.De'Ath@act.gov.au](mailto:Michael.De'Ath@act.gov.au)>; ACT Health, HPSOps <[ACTHealthHPSOps@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTHealthHPSOps@act.gov.au)>; Pulli, Tracey (Health) <[Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: Contact centre-masks

UNCLASSIFIED

Thank you David and Josh – that's wonderful.

Our comms people are working on the information as we speak. We will be in touch

Thanks, Kerryn

**Kerryn**

Public Health, Protection and Regulation | ACT Health Directorate

PH 5124 9442 | MOB [REDACTED]

25 Mulley Street, HOLDER ACT 2611 | GPO Box 825, Canberra City ACT 2601

E [Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au) W <https://health.act.gov.au/>

---

**From:** Snowden, David <[David.Snowden@act.gov.au](mailto:David.Snowden@act.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 January 2020 11:38 AM

**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <[Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au)>; Rynehart, Josh <[Josh.Rynehart@act.gov.au](mailto:Josh.Rynehart@act.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Pryce, David <[David.Pryce@act.gov.au](mailto:David.Pryce@act.gov.au)>; Bailey, Kim.P <[Kim.P.Bailey@act.gov.au](mailto:Kim.P.Bailey@act.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Contact centre-masks

Hi Kerryn

Confirming our discussion, AC Contact centre can set up an ACT govt contact Number (6205.....) today. Ahead of activating the line we will require scripts and Q&A from ACT Health.

Josh Rynehart is cc'd, and is the AC Executive with oversight of the contact centre. Happy for you to liaise directly with Josh.

Thanks

David Snowden | Executive Group Manager  
Access Canberra | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate | ACT Government  
ACT Commissioner for Fair Trading  
Chief Executive Officer, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission

## Information for Access Canberra/Canberra Hospital Switch

**ISSUE:** HEAVY SMOKE IMPACTING CANBERRA AND P2 MASKS

**UPDATED:** *As at Wednesday 8 January 2020*

---

### Referral Points

- **If the caller is after general information on the smoke:**
  - The heavy smoke affecting the ACT is expected to continue while fires continue to burn across the border.
  - This dense smoke is impacting the air quality across a large area of our region and South East Australia, not just the ACT.
  - During these periods of smoke, all Canberrans are advised to minimise their levels of prolonged or heavy physical activity outdoors. When there is heavy smoke in the area it is best to avoid all physical activity outdoors.
  - People who are sensitive to smoke, especially those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, should take extra care and stay indoors where possible and take medication prescribed by their doctor.
  - Encourage the caller to go to the “Health alerts” section of the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)) for relevant health advice, or to follow the ACT Health Facebook and Twitter social media accounts.
  - Encourage the caller to stay updated on when smoke is coming into the ACT via the ESA website ([www.esa.act.gov.au](http://www.esa.act.gov.au)) and follow ACT ESA on Facebook and Twitter.
  
- **If the caller is after information on P2 and N95 mask availability:**
  - From 7 January 2020 a supply of P2/N95 masks provided by the Commonwealth Government are available to those particularly sensitive to smoke through local pharmacies.
  - The masks are also available through Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service for their vulnerable clients.
  - The groups of particularly sensitive individuals who will be able to access these masks, if they choose, include:
    - people with existing chronic lung and heart conditions, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, and heart disease
    - all pregnant women, and
    - people over 65 years of age.
  - Each eligible person will receive two masks at the pharmacy.
  - In regard to retail sales of masks, some are available at Canberra pharmacies and hardware stores. Encourage caller to call local stockists ahead of time to check availability.
  - Encourage the caller to go to the “Health alerts” section of the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)) for further information.
  -
  
- **If the caller is after information about working outdoors:**
  - With the heavy smoke affecting Canberra’s air quality, people who are required to work outdoors should avoid prolonged or heavy physical activity while they are working outside.

- Refer the caller to WorkSafe ACT for further advice on working outdoors in smoky conditions.
  - Employers should conduct a risk assessment of the potential exposure of their workers to the smoke. Heavy or strenuous activity should be eliminated or at least limited where the activity cannot be avoided. This is the same for hot conditions which may also coincide with reduced air quality from smoke.
  - Encourage the call to go to the WorkSafe ACT website ([www.act.gov.au/worksafe](http://www.act.gov.au/worksafe)) for advice for employers and workers.
  - Encourage the caller to go to the “Health alerts” section of the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)) for relevant health advice, or to follow the ACT Health Facebook and Twitter social media accounts.
- **If the caller is after information about childcare centres:**
    - Encourage the caller to contact their childcare centre directly for further advice on arrangements being put in place in facilities.
    - Reiterate general health advice (above).
    - Encourage the caller to go to the “State of Alert” section of the ACT ESA website ([www.esa.act.gov.au](http://www.esa.act.gov.au)) and follow ACT ESA on Facebook and Twitter.
- **If the caller is a journalist/media:**
    - Put them through to the Public Information Coordination Centre on 6205 1693.
- **If the caller needs medical assistance or emergency care:**
    - Anyone with concerns about their health should seek medical advice from their doctor (General Practitioner).
    - Anyone experiencing wheezing, chest tightness or difficulty breathing should seek urgent medical attention and in the event of a medical emergency call triple-zero (000).
- **If the caller needs information on the State of Alert:**
    - To prepare the community for the extreme weather conditions forecast for the ACT and region, a State of Alert has been declared for the ACT.
    - The State of Alert will ensure our emergency services and broader ACT Government services are able to be as responsive as possible to the needs of the community.
    - Encourage the caller to stay updated via the ESA website ([www.esa.act.gov.au](http://www.esa.act.gov.au)) and follow ACT ESA on Facebook and Twitter.

---

## Additional Question and Answer

### *Where can the masks be sourced from?*

- The Commonwealth supply of masks for those groups particularly sensitive to smoke are available from local pharmacies across Canberra. The masks are also available through Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service for their vulnerable clients.

***When will masks be available to collect from the Canberra Hospital?***

- Masks will not be available through the Canberra Hospital. They are available through local pharmacies across Canberra.

***What are the criteria for vulnerable people obtaining the masks?***

- Masks are available for people in the community particularly sensitive to the health impacts of smoke. This includes:
  - people with existing chronic lung and heart conditions, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, and heart disease
  - all pregnant women, and
  - people over 65 years of age.

***Where can inpatients obtain masks from?***

INSERT...

***Information about other masks suitable for the situation?***

- For further information on the appropriate masks to use, see the health advice on smoke on the ACT Health website.

***Is it safe to go outside?***

- Canberrans are advised to be in tune with their senses. During periods of heavy smoke – when there is a strong smell of smoke in the air and visibility is very poor – it is best to avoid prolonged exposure and all physical activity outdoors.
- People who are sensitive to smoke, especially those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, should take extra care and stay indoors where possible and take medication prescribed by their doctor.
- We are unable to provide individual health advice. If you have any concerns about your health, speak to a health professional.

***What is the advice for childcare centres relating to safety of children in care?***

- During periods of heavy smoke, to minimise the risk to children and educators:
  - avoid physical activity outdoors, stay indoors with windows and doors closed

- stay in air-conditioned premises and switch the air-conditioner to 'recycle' or 'recirculate' to reduce the amount of smoke entering the building, and
- do not use evaporative cooling systems as they import air from outdoors.
- Child Care Centre services should speak with families to ensure that medical plans for children with known conditions are up to date and that the correct medication is on hand.

***Where is information about air quality?***

- Information is on the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)).

***Is there a list of Canberra retailers who have masks available in stock?***

- Masks from Canberra retailers are at pharmacies, hardware stores and office/workwear suppliers. It is best to call stockists ahead of time to check availability.

***What advice is there for businesses regarding safety of their staff and closing due to smoke?***

- Advice for employers and workers is on the WorkSafe ACT website ([www.act.gov.au/worksafe](http://www.act.gov.au/worksafe)).

***Can children wear P2 masks, and how to protect children if they can't wear masks?***

- Unfortunately, P2/N95 masks are not available in sizes small enough for most children under 12 and ordinary paper masks are not effective at filtering smoke.
- The best way to protect children is to avoid exposure by staying indoors during periods of heavy smoke.

***What are the specific needs for vulnerable people susceptible to lung conditions?***

- We are unable to provide individual health advice. If you have any concerns about your health, speak to a health professional.
- The general health advice during periods of heavy smoke, is for people who are sensitive to smoke, especially those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, to take extra care by:
  - avoid physical activity outdoors and staying indoors with windows and doors closed
  - staying in air-conditioned premises and switch the air-conditioner to 'recycle' or 'recirculate' to reduce the amount of smoke entering the building, and
  - do not use evaporative cooling systems as they import air from outdoors, and
  - taking medication prescribed by their doctor.

**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 9:28 AM  
**To:** Douglas, Kirsty (Health); Barrett, Michelle (Health)  
**Cc:** Svoboda, Anne-Marie (Health); Johnston, Vanessa (Health); ACT Health, HPSOps; Behm, Claire (Health)  
**Subject:** RE: Distribution of P2 masks via GP as well as pharmacists

UNCLASSIFIED

Thanks Kirsty

Re gp's having masks, this was discussed however, at least initially, with limited supply that we need to closely manage and keep on top of we are concerned about spreading that supply too thinly...

Just to note the stockpile masks are N95 masks.

Thannsk, K

**Kerryn**

Public Health, Protection and Regulation | **ACT Health Directorate**  
 PH 5124 9442 | MOB [REDACTED]  
 25 Mulley Street, HOLDER ACT 2611 | GPO Box 825, Canberra City ACT 2601  
 E [Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au](mailto:Kerryn.coleman@act.gov.au) W <https://health.act.gov.au/>

**From:** Douglas, Kirsty (Health) <Kirsty.Douglas@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 9:24 AM  
**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au>; Barrett, Michelle (Health) <Michelle.Barrett@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Svoboda, Anne-Marie (Health) <Anne-Marie.Svoboda@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Distribution of P2 masks via GP as well as pharmacists

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Kerryn,

Following our chat yesterday I have talked to some more of my GP colleagues and the sense I have got generally is that GP land is slightly busier than usual in Jan but not overwhelmingly so. January, and particularly the first two weeks of Jan, are usually very quiet as people (including some GPs) are often out of town on holidays – some GP's have worked more as they are not at the coast and were concerned re need for extra appointments so that may have mitigated any effect. Certainly most I spoke to still had available appointments on the day or during this week available.

Many of us have had to manage people with exacerbations of asthma – most have been relatively easily managed with escalation of dosage, asthma education and updating an asthma education plan as well as debriefing about stressful events. The sorts of patients I have seen are those who have not been bothered by asthma since childhood who have suddenly found themselves affected so they come in for review, new scripts etc. Others who are chronic asthmatics are coming proactively to make sure they have meds and aske about need for steroids/antibiotics etc.

[REDACTED] has said that Companion House has had some more challenging cases they have referred to the ED – I guess their population are less likely to benefit from Public Health announcements given language barriers and may be more vulnerable to the fear and anxiety from the state of emergency and call of our ADF etc as well.

There has been a query from one of our senior GPs about whether or not at least some of the P2 masks could be made available to GP surgeries so the GP's could distribute directly to those most likely to benefit. She described a consultation with an elderly woman on Sun am – the surgery was open and seeing people but the local pharmacy was not so the woman would have had to travel across town to find an open pharmacy if she was to get access to the P2 mask whereas the GP could have directly provided one. Given the vaccine distribution network I thought this might be a relatively easy way to proceed.

Happy to talk further and wanting to make sure that Michelle and Anne-Marie are kept in the loop as I know we are all being asked questions re GP at different times.

At a later date I would like to meet with you and your team to talk about how we can more effectively integrate primary care into the disaster management plan of ACT so that these things are automatically enacted which disaster hits.

Cheers

Kirsty

Prof Kirsty Douglas MBBS, DipRACOG, MD, FRACGP, Grad Cert HE  
Director of Academic Unit of General Practice  
ACT Health Directorate  
&  
Professor of General Practice  
Australian National University Medical School  
College of Health and Medicine  
Australian National University



**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 2:25 PM  
**To:** Jelbart, Merryn (Health); Southwell, Hoami (Health); Walsh, Jack (Health); Pulli, Tracey (Health)  
**Cc:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health); Johnston, Vanessa (Health); Wijemanne, Naveen (Health); De'Ath, Michael (Health); Jonasson, Kylie (Health); DGACTHealth  
**Subject:** FW: Clearance process for State of Alert Communications - 8 January 1.30pm  
**Attachments:** CLEARANCE PROCESS FOR STATE OF ALERT COMMUNICATIONS.docx  
**Importance:** High

UNCLASSIFIED Sensitive

Hi all,  
 Please see below and attached email in relation to the approved clearance process for State of Alert Communications (via the PICC).

Thanks  
 Vanessa

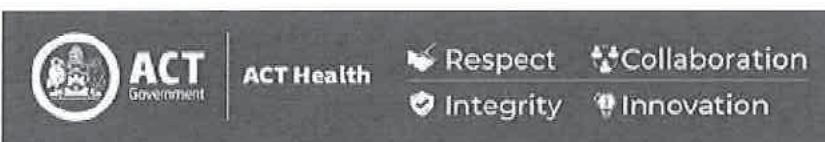
Vanessa Dal Molin, Executive Branch Manager

Ph: 02-5124 9401 | Mob: [REDACTED] Email: [vanessa.dalmolin@act.gov.au](mailto:vanessa.dalmolin@act.gov.au)

Office of the Director General | Communications and Government Relations | ACT Health Directorate

Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606

[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**From:** Stewart-Moore, Karen <[Karen.Stewart-Moore@act.gov.au](mailto:Karen.Stewart-Moore@act.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 1:59 PM

**To:** Benson, Andrew <[Andrew.Benson@act.gov.au](mailto:Andrew.Benson@act.gov.au)>; Brennan, Bernadette <[Bernadette.Brennan@act.gov.au](mailto:Bernadette.Brennan@act.gov.au)>; Cant, Amanda <[Amanda.Cant@act.gov.au](mailto:Amanda.Cant@act.gov.au)>; Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health) <[Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au](mailto:Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au)>; Dolan, Fiona <[Fiona.Dolan@act.gov.au](mailto:Fiona.Dolan@act.gov.au)>; Dunbar, Brien <[Brien.Dunbar@act.gov.au](mailto:Brien.Dunbar@act.gov.au)>; Gombar-Millynn, Helen <[Helen.Gombar-Millynn@act.gov.au](mailto:Helen.Gombar-Millynn@act.gov.au)>; Harris, Jacqui <[Jacqui.Harris@act.gov.au](mailto:Jacqui.Harris@act.gov.au)>; Howard, Scott (Health) <[Scott.E.Howard@act.gov.au](mailto:Scott.E.Howard@act.gov.au)>; Larkin, Lyn <[Lyn.Larkin@act.gov.au](mailto:Lyn.Larkin@act.gov.au)>; Lewer, Felicity <[Felicity.Lewer@act.gov.au](mailto:Felicity.Lewer@act.gov.au)>; Magee, Alexandra <[Alexandra.Magee@act.gov.au](mailto:Alexandra.Magee@act.gov.au)>; Mahar, Nicole <[Nicole.Mahar@act.gov.au](mailto:Nicole.Mahar@act.gov.au)>; Marshall, Liz <[Liz.Marshall@act.gov.au](mailto:Liz.Marshall@act.gov.au)>; Paviour, Mark <[Mark.Paviour@act.gov.au](mailto:Mark.Paviour@act.gov.au)>; Perkins, Anita <[Anita.Perkins@act.gov.au](mailto:Anita.Perkins@act.gov.au)>; Polglase, David <[David.Polglase@act.gov.au](mailto:David.Polglase@act.gov.au)>; Pretorius, Dion <[Dion.Pretorius@act.gov.au](mailto:Dion.Pretorius@act.gov.au)>; Stewart-Moore, Karen <[Karen.Stewart-Moore@act.gov.au](mailto:Karen.Stewart-Moore@act.gov.au)>; Virtue, Geoff <[Geoff.Virtue@act.gov.au](mailto:Geoff.Virtue@act.gov.au)>; Wilden, Karen <[Karen.Wilden@act.gov.au](mailto:Karen.Wilden@act.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Dynon, Kaarin <[Kaarin.Dynon@act.gov.au](mailto:Kaarin.Dynon@act.gov.au)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] PICC01 <[PICC01@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC01@act.gov.au)>; PICC02 <[PICC02@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC02@act.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Clearance process for State of Alert Communications - 8 January 1.30pm

**Importance:** High

## UNCLASSIFIED Sensitive

Dear all

Please find attached the agreed clearance process (via SEMSOG) for State of Alert Communications via the PICC. Please share with your teams.

I hope this provides clarity in relation to clearance processes for all incident related topics and also for general government communications.

Please maintain a heightened sensitivity to the State of Alert when carrying out routine government communications, please ensure it is focused on government priorities.

Please also note that should the operational situation change, we may need to again cease routine government communications at short notice.

This process will be reviewed in 48 hours to ensure it is working as intended. If you are in doubt please feel free to check in with the PICC anyway. [PICC01@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC01@act.gov.au) and [PICC02@act.gov.au](mailto:PICC02@act.gov.au) are the best email addresses.

If we find other topics come up that need clarity we will add as required.

Kaarin, I would be grateful if you could please provide to the Ministerial offices.

Kind regards

Karen

Karen Stewart-Moore | A/g Executive Group, Communications and Engagement/Public Information Coordinator

Phone: 02 6205 2855 | Mobile [REDACTED]

Communications & Engagement | Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate |

ACT Government

Level 5, Canberra Nara Centre, 1 Constitution Avenue, Canberra City | GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601 | [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au)

Please note: I finish at 2.30pm on Wednesdays



I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the ACT the Ngunnawal people, and their continuing connection to land and community. I pay my respect to them, and to the Elders both past and present.

**CLEARANCE PROCESS FOR STATE OF ALERT COMMUNICATIONS IN THE PICC (8 January – 1.30pm)**

**Clearance process for the PICC:**

(Media releases, social media, media responses, videos and talking points)

**State of Alert/Bushfire Communications: Approval by Emergency Controller Georgeina Whelan**

Including but not limited to:

- Bushfire operations
- Smoke (weather)
- Extreme Heat (if Extreme Heat Plan is enacted)
- Availability and eligibility of P2/N95 masks
- Evacuations
- Road closures
- Transport management with the incident
- Energy-reduction measures/load shedding/energy supply related to incident
- Horses
- Parks closures
- Police ops related to incident
- Respite/Recovery Centre
- Driver revivers and associated
- SES support operations
- CFU operations

**Incident related support: Approval by responsible Statutory Officer/Executive**

**FYI to the Emergency Controller, Georgeina Whelan**

Including but not limited to:

- Hospital services/operations (CHS Executive)
- Air-quality reporting (Statutory Officer - CHO)
- Smoke (health effects) (Statutory Officer - CHO)
- Health advice on use of masks (Statutory Officer - CHO)
- Water/Energy Service interruptions (Evo Energy – Icon Water – pushed out through normal Evo/Icon channels)
- Workplace Safety (Statutory Officer – WorkSafe commissioner)
- Childcare centres/holiday program closures (Education executive)
- Vulnerable Canberrans – support being provided because of the incident (CSD Executive)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health support – (Health Executive)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Routine government operations related to the incident: Cleared by relevant executive/PIC</b></p> <p>Including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pool closures due to smoke</li> <li>• Service changes (bins, service centres)</li> <li>• Changes to city operations</li> <li>• Changes to routine transport services</li> <li>• Open/closures of services</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Government Communications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise reactive media</li> <li>• Should focus on priority government communications</li> <li>• Should continue with a heightened sensitivity to the State of Alert and that the situation may change at short notice at which time other routine government communications may need to cease at short notice.</li> </ul> <p>If in doubt, check with the PICC.</p>

Approved: Chair of SEMSOG, Richard Glenn \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2020

Approved: Emergency Controller, Commissioner Georgeina Whelan \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2020

**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Pulli, Tracey (Health) on behalf of Health Media  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 2:47 PM  
**Subject:** ACT Health media doorstep: Air quality update

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

UNCLASSIFIED



# Media release

---

Wednesday 8 January 2020

## ACT Health media doorstep: Air quality update

Chief Health Officer Dr Kerryn Coleman, along with ACT Health Public Health Physician Dr Vanessa Johnston, will be available this afternoon to provide an update on the smoke conditions and air quality monitoring in the ACT.

Chief Psychiatrist Dr Denise Riordan, will be available to provide comment on ways Canberrans can look after their mental health and wellbeing during this time.

**TIME:** 3.45pm

**WHERE:** Health Protection Service, 25 Mulley Road Holder

**SPOKESPEOPLE:** Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerryn Coleman  
Chief Psychiatrist, Dr Denise Riordan  
ACT Health Public Health Physician, Dr Vanessa Johnston

**Statement ends**

**Media contact:**

**ACT Health Directorate**      **M** 0403 344 080      **E** [healthmedia@act.gov.au](mailto:healthmedia@act.gov.au)

**ACT Government | ACT Health Directorate**



GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601



0403 344 080



[www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)

**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Pulli, Tracey (Health)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 January 2020 6:10 PM  
**To:** PICC02; PICC01  
**Cc:** Canberra Health Services Media; Coleman, Kerryn (Health); Johnston, Vanessa (Health); Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health)  
**Subject:** Access Canberra and Canberra Hospital Switch script  
**Attachments:** AC and CH switch information - Heavy smoke and masks - as at 200108 FINAL.doc

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Karen and Sally-Anne

We understand a request from Canberra Hospital switch and Access Canberra for a better script on smoke. I have finalised this with Kerryn Coleman and Vanessa Johnston today.

I hope this helps going forward. Will now leave with the PICC to get approved and continue to update. However, let me know if you need any further from health.

**CHS media** – for info on where this is at. If you can let Donna know that would be great.

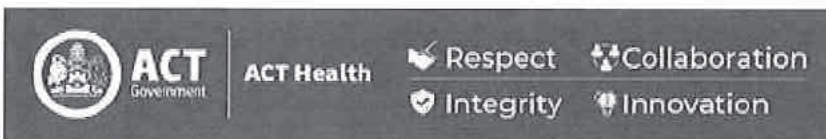
Cheers  
Tracey

**Tracey Pulli | Senior Director of Media**

Ph: (02) 5124 9444 | Email: [tracey.pulli@act.gov.au](mailto:tracey.pulli@act.gov.au)

**Communications and Government Relations | Office of the Director-General | ACT Health Directorate**  
Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606

[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



## Information for Access Canberra/Canberra Hospital Switch

**ISSUE:** HEAVY SMOKE IMPACTING CANBERRA AND P2 MASKS

**UPDATED:** *As at Wednesday 8 January 2020*

---

### Referral Points

- **If the caller is after general information on the smoke:**
  - The heavy smoke affecting the ACT is expected to continue while fires continue to burn across the border.
  - This dense smoke is impacting the air quality across a large area of our region and South East Australia, not just the ACT.
  - During these periods of smoke, all Canberrans are advised to minimise their levels of prolonged or heavy physical activity outdoors. When there is heavy smoke in the area it is best to avoid all physical activity outdoors.
  - People who are sensitive to smoke, especially those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, should take extra care and stay indoors where possible and take medication prescribed by their doctor.
  - Encourage the caller to go to the “Health alerts” section of the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)) for relevant health advice, or to follow the ACT Health Facebook and Twitter social media accounts.
  - Encourage the caller to stay updated on when smoke is coming into the ACT via the ESA website ([www.esa.act.gov.au](http://www.esa.act.gov.au)) and follow ACT ESA on Facebook and Twitter.
  
- **If the caller is after information on P2 and N95 mask availability:**
  - From 7 January 2020 a supply of P2/N95 masks provided by the Commonwealth Government are available to those particularly sensitive to smoke through local pharmacies.
  - The masks are also available through Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service for their vulnerable clients.
  - The groups of particularly sensitive individuals who will be able to access these masks, if they choose, include:
    - people with existing chronic lung and heart conditions, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, and heart disease
    - all pregnant women, and
    - people over 65 years of age.
  - Each eligible person will receive two masks at the pharmacy.
  - In regard to retail sales of masks, some are available at Canberra pharmacies and hardware stores. Encourage caller to call local stockists ahead of time to check availability.
  - Encourage the caller to go to the “Health alerts” section of the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)) for further information.
  -
  
- **If the caller is after information about working outdoors:**
  - With the heavy smoke affecting Canberra’s air quality, people who are required to work outdoors should avoid prolonged or heavy physical activity while they are working outside.



- Refer the caller to WorkSafe ACT for further advice on working outdoors in smoky conditions.
  - Employers should conduct a risk assessment of the potential exposure of their workers to the smoke. Heavy or strenuous activity should be eliminated or at least limited where the activity cannot be avoided. This is the same for hot conditions which may also coincide with reduced air quality from smoke.
  - Encourage the call to go to the WorkSafe ACT website ([www.act.gov.au/worksafe](http://www.act.gov.au/worksafe)) for advice for employers and workers.
  - Encourage the caller to go to the “Health alerts” section of the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)) for relevant health advice, or to follow the ACT Health Facebook and Twitter social media accounts.
- **If the caller is after information about childcare centres:**
    - Encourage the caller to contact their childcare centre directly for further advice on arrangements being put in place in facilities.
    - Reiterate general health advice (above).
    - Encourage the caller to go to the “State of Alert” section of the ACT ESA website ([www.esa.act.gov.au](http://www.esa.act.gov.au)) and follow ACT ESA on Facebook and Twitter.
- **If the caller is a journalist/media:**
    - Put them through to the Public Information Coordination Centre on 6205 1693.
- **If the caller needs medical assistance or emergency care:**
    - Anyone with concerns about their health should seek medical advice from their doctor (General Practitioner).
    - Anyone experiencing wheezing, chest tightness or difficulty breathing should seek urgent medical attention and in the event of a medical emergency call triple-zero (000).
- **If the caller needs information on the State of Alert:**
    - To prepare the community for the extreme weather conditions forecast for the ACT and region, a State of Alert has been declared for the ACT.
    - The State of Alert will ensure our emergency services and broader ACT Government services are able to be as responsive as possible to the needs of the community.
    - Encourage the caller to stay updated via the ESA website ([www.esa.act.gov.au](http://www.esa.act.gov.au)) and follow ACT ESA on Facebook and Twitter.

---

## Additional Question and Answer

### *Where can the masks be sourced from?*

- The Commonwealth supply of masks for those groups particularly sensitive to smoke are available from local pharmacies across Canberra. The masks are also available through Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service for their vulnerable clients.

***When will masks be available to collect from the Canberra Hospital?***

- Masks will not be available through the Canberra Hospital. They are available through local pharmacies across Canberra.

***What are the criteria for vulnerable people obtaining the masks?***

- Masks are available for people in the community particularly sensitive to the health impacts of smoke. This includes:
  - people with existing chronic lung and heart conditions, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, and heart disease
  - all pregnant women, and
  - people over 65 years of age.

***Information about other masks suitable for the situation?***

- For further information on the appropriate masks to use, see the health advice on smoke on the ACT Health website.

***Is it safe to go outside?***

- Canberrans are advised to be in tune with their senses. During periods of heavy smoke – when there is a strong smell of smoke in the air and visibility is very poor – it is best to avoid prolonged exposure and all physical activity outdoors.
- People who are sensitive to smoke, especially those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, should take extra care and stay indoors where possible and take medication prescribed by their doctor.
- We are unable to provide individual health advice. If you have any concerns about your health, speak to a health professional.

***What is the advice for childcare centres relating to safety of children in care?***

- During periods of heavy smoke, to minimise the risk to children and educators:
  - avoid physical activity outdoors, stay indoors with windows and doors closed
  - stay in air-conditioned premises and switch the air-conditioner to ‘recycle’ or ‘recirculate’ to reduce the amount of smoke entering the building, and
  - do not use evaporative cooling systems as they import air from outdoors.
- Child Care Centre services should speak with families to ensure that medical plans for children with known conditions are up to date and that the correct medication is on hand.

***Where is information about air quality?***

- Information is on the ACT Health website ([www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)).

***Is there a list of Canberra retailers who have masks available in stock?***

- Masks from Canberra retailers are at pharmacies, hardware stores and office/workwear suppliers. It is best to call stockists ahead of time to check availability.

***What advice is there for businesses regarding safety of their staff and closing due to smoke?***

- Advice for employers and workers is on the WorkSafe ACT website ([www.act.gov.au/worksafe](http://www.act.gov.au/worksafe)).

***Can children wear P2 masks, and how to protect children if they can't wear masks?***

- Unfortunately, P2/N95 masks are not available in sizes small enough for most children under 12 and ordinary paper masks are not effective at filtering smoke.
- The best way to protect children is to avoid exposure by staying indoors during periods of heavy smoke.

***What are the specific needs for vulnerable people susceptible to lung conditions?***

- We are unable to provide individual health advice. If you have any concerns about your health, speak to a health professional.
- The general health advice during periods of heavy smoke, is for people who are sensitive to smoke, especially those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions, to take extra care by:
  - avoid physical activity outdoors and staying indoors with windows and doors closed
  - staying in air-conditioned premises and switch the air-conditioner to 'recycle' or 'recirculate' to reduce the amount of smoke entering the building, and
  - do not use evaporative cooling systems as they import air from outdoors, and
  - taking medication prescribed by their doctor.

**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Barr, Conrad (Health)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 January 2020 9:44 AM  
**To:** SupportHPS  
**Cc:** Kneipp, Jason (Health)  
**Subject:** RE: FOR CLEARANCE CONRAD - FW: COMPLAINT THROUGH DDG - [REDACTED] RE: Inappropriate averaging of air quality data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL

Hi Bec  
 More than happy for Jason's well written and appropriate response to go to CHO for clearance.  
 Cheers  
 Conrad

**Conrad Barr AFSM | Executive Branch Manager**  
**Health Protection Service | Public Health, Protection and Regulation | ACT Health**  
**PH 025124 9262 | FAX 026205 1705**  
 25 Mulley Street, HOLDER ACT 2611 | Locked Bag 5005, Weston Creek, ACT, 2611  
 E [Conrad.Barr@act.gov.au](mailto:Conrad.Barr@act.gov.au) W [health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**From:** Moroney, Rebecca (Health) <Rebecca.L.Moroney@act.gov.au> **On Behalf Of** SupportHPS  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 January 2020 9:30 AM  
**To:** Barr, Conrad (Health) <Conrad.Barr@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** SupportHPS <ED-HPS-support@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FOR CLEARANCE CONRAD - FW: COMPLAINT THROUGH DDG - [REDACTED] RE: Inappropriate averaging of air quality data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]  
**Importance:** High

UNOFFICIAL

Hi Conrad  
 Jasons draft email, for your clearance please. I will ask Kimberly what the process is for this, I think it was part of the Incidence Management Team , of which I don't really know much.

Thank you – Bec 😊

Rebecca Moroney | Personal Assistant to Executive Branch Manager, Health Protection Service  
 Ph: 5124 9252 | Email: [ED-HPS-support@act.gov.au](mailto:ED-HPS-support@act.gov.au)  
**Business Management Services, Health Protection Service, Public Health, Protection & Regulation | ACT Health Directorate**  
 25 Mulley St, Holder, ACT 2611  
[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)



**From:** Kneipp, Jason (Health) <Jason.Kneipp@act.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 January 2020 9:26 AM  
**To:** SupportHPS <ED-HPS-support@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: COMPLAINT THROUGH DDG - [REDACTED] RE: Inappropriate averaging of air quality data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL

Hi Bec,

Please find below my draft response to [REDACTED] in relation to his email dated 6.1.20 (see below).

Please note that [REDACTED] email came through the DDG and as such requires her to be cc'd into the response when it is vetted. Could the email below please be run past Conrad and then forwarded on to Kimberley for CHO clearance.

I've taken the local government approach, less is more on this one and just provided an answer rather than enter into a discussion.

Thanks,

Jason

Good morning [REDACTED]

Thank you for your recent email, dated 6 January 2020, detailing your concerns about the air quality data provided on ACT Health web pages. I can advise that similar feedback has been provided by many other Canberrans over the past 72 hours.

Given the significant demand within the community to provide hour particulate data, ACT Health has moved to update it's website to meet this demand.

Hourly particulate concentration levels can now be found at <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/environmental-monitoring/monitoring-and-regulating-air-7>

I trust that the information contained within the amended webpage addresses your concerns.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below.

Kind Regards,

**Jason Kneipp | Public Health Officer | Director Environment and Radiation Safety**  
 Ph: 02 512 49118 | Email: [jason.kneipp@act.gov.au](mailto:jason.kneipp@act.gov.au) | W [health@act.gov.au](http://health@act.gov.au)  
**Health Protection Service | Public Health, Protection and Regulation | ACT Health Directorate**  
 25 Mulley Street, Holder ACT 2611 | Locked Bag 5005, Weston Creek ACT 2611



**IMPORTANT:** This email, and any attachments, may be confidential and also privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete all copies of this transmission along with any attachments immediately. You should not copy or use it for any purpose, nor disclose its contents to any other person

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 6 January 2020 11:40 AM  
**To:** Health Feedback <HealthFeedback@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Jonasson, Kylie (Health) <Kylie.Jonasson@act.gov.au> [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Inappropriate averaging of air quality data [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hello,

I'm writing to enquire/complain about the Air Quality data presented on the page at:  
<https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/environmental-monitoring/monitoring-and-regulating-air>

At this terrible time, the public are using this as an authoritative source for information on the state of air quality and using it to make decisions about when to venture out, stay indoors or take other actions.

I am firmly of the view that the data are being presented in a way that actually encourages people to make poor decisions. I had tracked it quite closely myself and noticed that the values published on the above website changed quite slowly in response to very noticeable changes, such as when the smoke can literally be seen rolling in and the air quality deteriorate in mere minute. Then a colleague observed that the site uses as **24 hour rolling average**. It is written in the text of the page, but on the legend to the graph (labelled "*Real Time* Graph") the text is only shown completely when you hover the cursor over the text so won't be seen by many people.

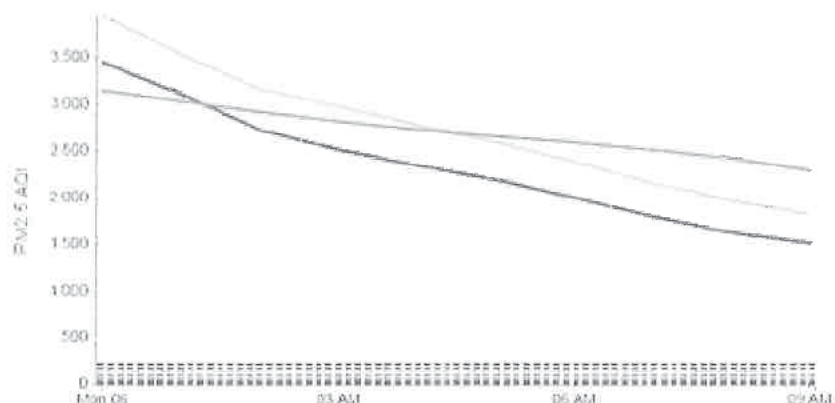
I strongly believe that this presentation is delaying appropriate action by people who wish to use the information to guide their choices. For example, the screen shot below shows the site as at approximately 10:30 this morning (noting that the data go only to 9am so are also 1.5 hrs behind). The lowest value shown is approximately 7-8 times hazardous levels. Clearly this is a level that suggests people should stay indoors. And yet when I woke up at 6am this morning the air was very much improved and I rode to work at 8:30am and the air was clear. I've just been outside (at 11am) and it remains clear and obviously not hazardous. Thus if I follow this official site for guidance I'd be delaying activity for at least 6 hours.

Similarly, I have noted several times when I have literally watched the smoke roll in over our house (in Aranda) and seen the site reporting reasonable air quality for some time afterwards.

PM<sub>2.5</sub>PM<sub>2.5</sub> AQI Real Time Graph

PM<sub>2.5</sub> AQI values from each station. AQI values are the rolling average calculated from the...

Filters (2)



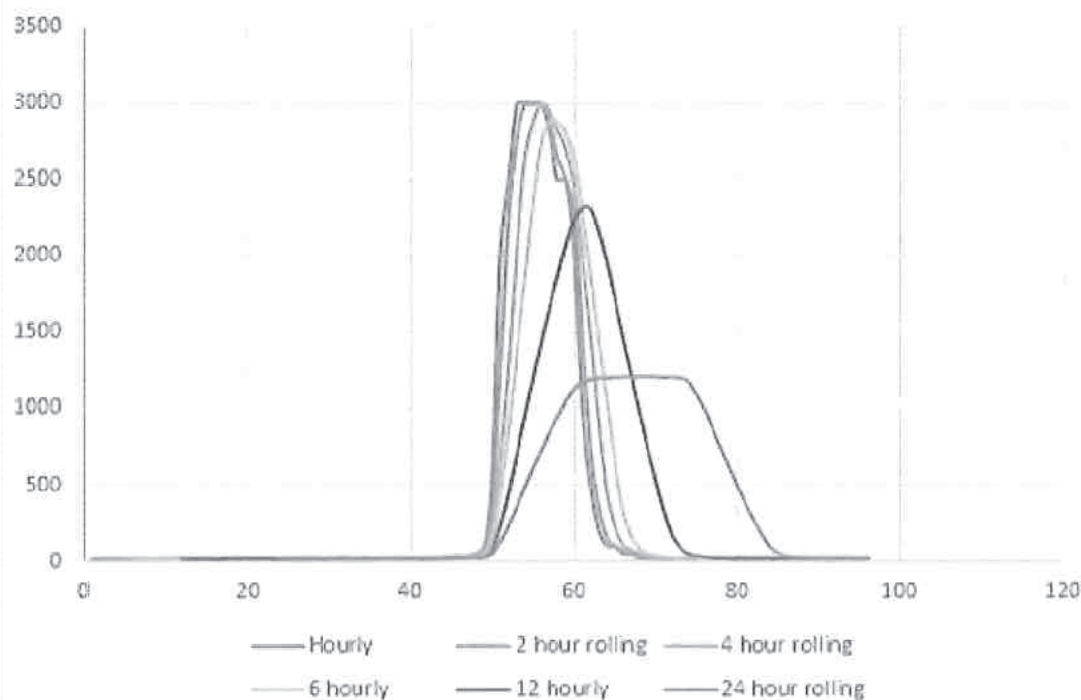
View Source Data

Legend

To illustrate my point, I actually graphed some hypothetical data to show the effect of long periods of rolling averages (below). I took a simple set of data with similar values to those reported on the page and applied different lengths of time over which to average the data. Two very important things emerge from this exercise:

1. As I've noted above, the peak in poor air quality is shifted by a significant period (in fact, it can be by so much that any window to enjoy good air quality is lost entirely).
2. It obscures the true peak value. That is, the data shown include a peak value of 3000, lasting for four hours. However, using a 24 hour rolling average (as your site does) reduces this peak to less than half that value, so it hides the true level of exposure to pollutants.

### Effect of different rolling average periods on identifying peaks in air quality data



So I'd like to request that your site be modified to either narrow the period of the rolling average (to 4 hours or less) and/or include some clearly identified/highlighted text on the graph itself to both explain why such a long period is used and explain that this may cause delays in the reading. I certainly can see no sensible reason to do so and would very much appreciate at least an explanation.

I'd also note that several people I know have lost their trust in this webpage as a result of the above and are now using a range of available Apps to access more timely data (e.g. Air Rater). It is very hard to determine whether these sites provide reliable data, but at least they are congruent with direct observation. I note also that a website (canberraair.com) is apparently publishing ACT health hourly data (without the rolling average).

Thanks very much,





**Pond, Aleks (Health)**

---

**From:** Johnston, Vanessa (Health)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 January 2020 2:51 PM  
**To:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health)  
**Subject:** FW: Direct Relief P2/N-95 Masks - Free Donation & Distribution

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

UNCLASSIFIED

Need to talk about this one at some stage...

---

**From:** Rucinski, Gul (Health) <Gul.Rucinski@act.gov.au> **On Behalf Of** DGACTHealth  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 January 2020 2:16 PM  
**To:** ACT Health, HPSOps <ACTHealthHPSOps@act.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Coleman, Kerryn (Health) <Kerryn.Coleman@act.gov.au>; Johnston, Vanessa (Health) <Vanessa.Johnston@act.gov.au>; Pulli, Tracey (Health) <Tracey.Pulli@act.gov.au>; Dal Molin, Vanessa (Health) <Vanessa.DalMolin@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: Direct Relief P2/N-95 Masks - Free Donation & Distribution

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi All

Please see below for action as necessary.

Thank you  
 Gul

**Gul Rucinski | A/g Executive Assistant**  
 Ph: (02) 5124 9400 | Email: [gul.rucinski@act.gov.au](mailto:gul.rucinski@act.gov.au)  
**Director General | ACT Health Directorate**  
 Level 5, 6 Bowes Street Phillip ACT 2606  
[health.act.gov.au](http://health.act.gov.au)




---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 January 2020 12:59 PM  
**To:** DGACTHealth <DGACTHealth@act.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Direct Relief P2/N-95 Masks - Free Donation & Distribution

Hello,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am an Emergency Response Manager with Direct Relief, a global non-profit and supplier of medical aid. We are currently working in the fire-affected areas distributing P2/N-95 masks to

communities and staff in NSW and VIC. We are working with organizations and government entities like yourself (ex: Victorian Department of Human Health and Services) to equip them with free donations of respirator masks.

We would like to extend the offer of free donation to you to see if you are in need of any support regarding P2 masks. We have a large stockpile of over **300,000** masks that are ready to deploy if need be. We will handle and pay for logistics and distribution all under your direction.

Please reach out to me anytime and I would be happy to jump on a call to discuss details. Thank you for your continued work, we are ready to help and serve in any way we can.

Kind regards,

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

 Direct Relief