

Health concerns going up in smoke

By LUCY POSKITT

PEOPLE who use a woodheater in winter should feel guilty about the impact the smoke may be having on others, the Lung Foundation of Australia's air pollution spokesman says.

With winter fast approaching, Launceston respiratory physician and LFA spokesman James Markos says people often don't realise the impact their humble wood fire can have on others, especially in the Tamar Valley.

And he's not just talking about asthmatics, or people with lung conditions.

The World Health Organisation announced in October that outdoor air pollution — such as that from wood smoke particles — can also cause lung cancer.

"Every winter, this beautiful valley of ours is challenged by pollution from wood smoke," Dr Markos said.

"We get an inversion layer which ensures the pollution stays here — if there's fog, the air is trapped and whatever is in there will stay there."



The World Health Organisation announced in October that outdoor air pollution — such as that from wood smoke particles — can cause lung cancer. Picture: NEIL RICHARDSON

Dr Markos said while much had been done to remove woodheaters from homes, he knew of people returning to woodburning heaters in response to rising electricity prices.

"I can understand why people do that, but people should plan ahead and think about whether there's a cleaner way they

can heat their house and still afford it," he said.

Launceston City Council general manager Robert Dobrzynski said the council had not issued any fines for excessive wood smoke, but said the aim of the fines was educative.

"We have issued a number of informal warnings, and spoken to a number of homeowners

about excess smoke from chimneys," Mr Dobrzynski said. "Sometimes people just need some information and our environmental health officers are able to provide that."

For information on using woodheaters more efficiently visit www.epa.tas.gov.au/epa/domestic-smoke-management-program.