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School heaters . . . Safe or not?

St Jamen Ethics centre forum

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Unflued gas heaters prominent in Yass schools

26 May, 2010, Yass Tribune.

Only one school in the Yass township is free of the controversial unflued gas heaters which have caused a public outcry amidst fears of their negative effects on children's health.

The Asthma Foundation of New South Wales joined calls from the Greens for the NSW State Government to release the results of a 2009 NSW Department of Education [DET] study into the safety of gas heaters in schools.

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Parents, and children, have a right to breathe easy

MATT MARTEL, May 26, 2010, Sydney Morning Herald

My daughter Lottie attends a very good public school. She's five years old and loves drama and maths best. But she also spent her first five years with chronic lung conditions that have, until last year, been impossible to properly diagnose.

She has been in and out of hospital, had far too many chest X-rays, as well as repeated cases of pneumonia, bronchitis and croup. She has spent at least two years on antibiotics to stop chest infections before they start. At one stage a specialist told us she would probably need a

lung transplant if she was to make it.

...

But what if Lottie's school is making her sick?

The decision by the state government to suppress the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research report into unflued gas heaters in schools is deeply troubling. In fact, I hate it. How can I possibly know what to do to keep my daughter safe if the government won't tell me the truth?

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Call to release unflued gas heater findings

BY SHANE DESIATNIK, Blue Mountains Gazette

26 May, 2010

Blue Mountains parents are asking the State Government what it has to hide by not releasing the findings of a taxpayer-funded study on the health effects of unflued gas heaters in classrooms.

The Government-commissioned study was undertaken by the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research at 20 schools, including Blackheath Public, in August and September last year at a cost of more than \$1.6 million.

Staff at the Department of Education have known the study's findings since March, but the Department's director-general Michael Coutts-Trotter said he will not authorise their release until a report is published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

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Interview on ABC radio 639, 26 May 2010

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Decision on school unflued gas heaters

26 May, 2010, Braidwood Times

Member for Monaro, Steve Whan, has welcomed a decision by the Keneally Government to install alternative heating in new projects under the Building the Education Revolution instead of unflued gas heaters.

Steve Whan said "over the last few months I have been making representations on behalf of parents at Bungendore and Braidwood Schools in particular regarding their concern about the installation of unflued gas heaters in their new class room facilities.

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Unflued School Heaters - Text of Speech from Hansard

Gordon Moyes, MP

Many studies have demonstrated that exposure to heater exhaust gases and particulate matter is bad for people's health. For example, it is responsible for the increased incidence and severity of asthma and respiratory irritation and the spread of the virus-borne diseases.

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Dangers of heaters in schools concealed

BEN CUBBY, Sydney Morning Herald

May 31, 2010

The secret government-funded study into the effects of unflued gas heaters on children in public schools seriously underestimates the level of pollution in classrooms, according to a scientist involved with the tests.

Air quality was measured in six-hour blocks, which masked dangerous peaks in nitrogen dioxide concentrations and is contrary to hour-long segments used by the World Health Organisation, said air quality consultant Len Ferrari, who is a member of the government's technical advisory panel.

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