



Media Release
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Consumer Choice –Wood heater education, not elimination is the key, says AHHA

Winter air quality is of concern to us all, but replacing wood heaters is not the answer, education is, says the Australian Home Heating Association (AHHA).

Air quality in Tasmania can be improved through the inclusion of certified clean burn wood heaters in buyback schemes and education on their proper use – without the need to resort to unnecessary bans – according to the Australian Home Heating Association (AHHA)*.

AHHA General Manager Demi Brown said suggestions of wood heater bans in Tasmania were alarmist and unnecessary.

“To ensure continued consumer right to choose the best home heating solution, all factors affecting community air quality need to be considered. This includes evaluating the pros and cons of all home heating options and the total pollution effect. All heating appliances contributed to pollution.”

The key to reducing wood smoke in Tasmania was education about the correct operation of wood heaters and the responsible change over from older style wood heaters to certified clean burn models.

“Education on the correct usage of wood heaters is vital to minimising wood smoke, including the use of dry, seasoned wood and purchasing wood from a reputable supplier. It has been shown in Launceston that educating consumers of how to use their heater correctly definitely lowers smoke levels.”

The exclusion of certified clean burn wood heaters in previous buyback schemes in Tasmania has slowed down improvements in wood smoke levels.

According to ACNielsen research commissioned by the AHHA in two areas where buyback schemes operated, including Tasmania, 83% of the respondents felt buyback rebates should apply to certified clean burn wood heaters.

If buyback scheme upgrade options included certified clean burn wood heaters along with an education program, consumers who preferred wood heating could upgrade their old wood heaters for certified ones – meeting the needs of both consumers and environment bodies much sooner.

Rather than banning clean burning models, owners of older models should be encouraged to upgrade.

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“Not everyone wants to trade their old style wood heater in for a gas or electric option. If AS/NZS 4013 wood heaters were also included in buyback programs, I believe we’d see more and more older style wood heaters out of action – which is what the AHHA, and air quality programs all want.”

In total, over 75% of those who used wood heating in the ACNielsen survey, said their heating costs would rise if wood heaters were no longer permitted.**

“During the year a number of factors can affect the air we breathe such as bush fires, burning of winter crop stubbles, summer storms, motor vehicle use and the topography of the land around us.”

The AHHA believes arguments for renewable resourcing and reducing greenhouse gas emissions have fallen in the shadow of particulate arguments in the wood heating debate, and its view for the future is to educate not eliminate.

The use of fossil fuels such as gas and coal for the production of electricity has wider global effects affecting everyone. By using these fossil fuels you simply shift your pollution to someone else’s backyard.

Education

“The AHHA supports the removal of older style wood heaters and open brick fire places to reduce wood smoke and supports education on how to operate wood heaters properly and upgrades to certified clean burn wood heaters.”

The AHHA has produced a DVD on the correct operation of wood heaters to facilitate this. The AHHA maintains that modern wood heaters produce up to 80% less smoke and particle pollution than earlier models, due to substantial technological advances over the past ten years.

Australia has some of the toughest wood heater standards in the world and there are approximately 250 environmentally responsible wood heaters on the market with AS/NZS 4013 certification.

“Not only is wood heating one of the most efficient forms of home heating, it is also one of the cheapest ways to heat your home, and this must be considered for lower income families and the elderly.”

Tips on how to operate wood heaters correctly and how to minimise wood smoke, can be found on the AHHA’s website www.homeheat.com.au.

Consumers can contact the Australian Home Heating Association for their FREE copy of the Clear Skies DVD.

**The Australian Home Heating Association (AHHA) represents the manufacturing, retailing, installation, maintenance and firewood sectors of the home heating industry nationwide.*

*** According to ACNielsen research, Australians in rural and regional areas want to keep wood heaters as their primary heating source, because of their ability to cost-effectively heat an entire home in the winter months. More than more than 75% of those who use wood heating also felt their heating costs would rise if wood heaters were no longer permitted.*

ACNielsen conducted a telephone poll of residents in Armidale (NSW) and Launceston (Tasmania). Interviewees were randomly selected from the Online White Pages. The research determined the incidence of wood heating, feelings towards wood as a home heating option, running costs associated with wood heating and consumer choice in relation to upgrade options offered by the schemes.

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