



Katy Gallagher MLA

CHIEF MINISTER

MINISTER FOR HEALTH

MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

Mr Peter Thornton

Dear Mr Thornton

Thank you for your email of 22 February 2013 seeking advice regarding wood-fire based heating in the ACT.

The ACT Government is strongly committed to preserving and protecting our environment and our air quality. Smoke from domestic wood heaters is the largest source of air pollution in Canberra. While Canberra's overall air quality compared to other cities is excellent it does experience elevated particle pollution during winter because of emissions from domestic wood heaters. The ACT Government is continually working towards addressing the issue in an informed and measured manner to try and effectively balance the needs of the community.

The reason the ACT Government is targeting the replacement of wood heaters with other forms of heating at present, is because of their emissions and associated health impacts. Even used correctly, modern wood heaters still emit significantly more particle pollution than other forms of heating. As an example, per megajoule of heat delivered, gas heating only emits approximately 0.006 grams of particulate matter while new wood heaters emit over 0.8 grams of particulate matter. This can be significantly higher for an incorrectly operated wood heater, all of which has a direct impact on the air we breathe. New more modern wood heaters are not included in the Wood Heater Replacement Program (WHRP) because while they have become more efficient, they are still a significant cause of pollution.

For your information, 90% of the heaters currently certified to AS/NZS4013 have efficiency less than 67% based on laboratory certification. In service, efficiency would most certainly be less than this due to the optimal operational procedures of the certification process not accurately reflecting real world operation.

I note your concerns about increasing energy costs, which is why the Home Energy Advice Team is funded by the ACT Government to provide free, independent, expert advice on how to improve the energy efficiency of homes. In relation to comparative costs, I should mention that over the last 10 years there has been a threefold increase in the cost of firewood purchased from licensed merchants, with the cost of good quality hardwood rising from approximately \$100 to \$300 per tonne. It is expected that this fuel source will continue to rise in price.

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The ACT Government does not support a blanket ban on existing wood heaters. Wood heating is an allowable source of home heating and is a regulated activity under the *Environment Protection Act 1997* and the Environment Protection Regulations 2005. However the Government supports their prohibition in new development areas where planning studies show that they would have an adverse impact on air quality. The Government has taken this approach for the development of the Molonglo Valley, and previously with the suburbs of Dunlop and East O'Malley.

Thank you for raising your concerns with me. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Katy Gallagher MLA
Chief Minister

25 MAR 2013