



Media release

Rebecca Vassarotti MLA
Minister for the Environment
Minister for Heritage
Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services
Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction

Member for Kurrajong

Embargoed until 12:00am 24 August 2023

ACT Government moves to phase-out wood heaters by 2045

Today, the ACT Government has released its response to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's investigation into wood heater policy, in anticipation of tabling this response in the Assembly when it next meets.

Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Vassarotti, said the Government has now endorsed a plan to phase-out wood heaters in the ACT by 2045.

“Clean air is fundamental for a healthy environment. While we generally have favourable air quality in Canberra, experts agree there is no safe level of exposure to particulate matter in air pollution,” Minister Vassarotti said.

“I appreciate many of Canberrans grew up with woodfired heaters and they offer nostalgic charm and comfort. However, we need to confront the reality that the smoke they emit is a direct source of pollution in our homes, a clear and present danger to the well-being of our community in urban and suburban areas, and a looming threat to our natural environment.

“Wood heaters are already prohibited in many new development areas where planning studies show that they would have an adverse impact on air quality.

“The Government will now begin work on a plan for phasing-out wood heaters in all suburbs (excluding rural areas) in line with our ‘pathway to electrification’, to transition away from fossil fuel gas by 2045.

Part of the plan will be considering appropriate support for the community to ensure this phase-out of wood heaters is part of a just transition approach to electrifying our city.

“We are aware that high costs of living are placing financial stress on many and the Government will incorporate this consideration into our next steps to ensure we can best support the community in the phase-out process.

“As it stands, the ACT Government already offers incentives and support for Canberrans to replace outdated gas or wood heaters with electric alternatives through the Wood Heater Replacement Program and the Sustainable Household Scheme.” Work is already underway to trial ways to better tailor the Wood Heater Replacement Program to more effectively support households on low incomes.

Of the eight recommendations presented in the Commissioner’s report, the ACT Government has agreed or agreed in principle with four, and noted two.

The Government did not agree to two recommendations. After consideration it was decided that the costs to implement these recommendations would outweigh the proposed benefits this would bring to the community, particularly given our decision to move to phase out wood fire heaters.

The work to implement the agreed recommendations, including the air quality and regulatory impacts assessments, will be progressed through the second action plan for 2023-2025 under the Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy.

Find out how to ‘Burn Better’ when using wood heaters through the ACT’s Environment website.

Find out more information about the Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy on the ACT Government’s website.

Quotes attributable to Dr Sophie Lewis, ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

“I welcome the Government’s commitment to phase out wood heaters by 2045,” said Dr Lewis.

“My Investigation showed that there is no safe level of air pollution for human health. Wood heaters have no place in Canberra’s all-electric, 100% renewable energy future.

“I appreciate Minister Vassarotti’s dedication to Canberra’s natural environment in taking this step towards making Canberra the clean air capital year-round,” said Dr Lewis.

Statement ends

Media contact:

Ali Jaques or Jen Faerber M 0481 035 764