

A history of failure

Your story "Call for wood-fire heaters to be banned" (June 16) described the ACT government's response to the problem of residential wood smoke pollution as "woefully inadequate". History shows this is correct.

In April 1991, the ACT government's

Standing Committee on Conservation, Heritage and the Environment raised concerns about wood heater pollution in Canberra in its report, *The Burning Question*. In a further report in September 1991 the committee said: "It is clear that the extent of fuel wood heating in the ACT, coupled with poor heater operating practices and local weather conditions leads to significant levels of air pollution which causes physical discomfort for many residents, and in some cases, exacerbates health problems". That was 34 years ago.

Funds for a wood heater replacement program were announced in a media release in May 2003 by then ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, who said: "The problem of wood smoke has been ignored for too long."

We now know the wood heater replacement programs have not been effective. Many of our neighbourhoods are still filled with wood heater smoke pollution, and in the 22 years since, we have seen just 1350 polluting heaters removed. We have no idea how many new or second-hand ones have been installed and now included in the estimated 18,500 wood heaters across our city.

In its defence, the ACT Government has announced wood heaters will be phased out in suburban Canberra by 2045. But that's another 20 years away.

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