

DARRYL Johnston (Letters, June 23) correctly notes that the ACT government is committed to phasing out wood heaters by 2045. However, any reasonable person, upon reviewing the evidence, would agree that the deadline should be brought forward.

Imagine if a new product came on the market today that would be Canberra's primary source of man-made air pollution, contribute to still births, asthma, child and adult cancers, heart attacks, strokes and dementia, fill neighbours' homes with toxic chemicals, create more pollution on a relative basis than burning coal, disproportionately contributing to climate change, and, when used, create more pollution than 450 homes using gas heating.

Would such a product be permitted to be installed in our suburbs? It seems unlikely, particularly as almost every Canberran has access to safer forms of heating.

Wood heaters, according to an enormous quantity of peer-reviewed research, do all of these things. They are a public health disaster, and the phase-out date should be brought forward in recognition of the community's right to safe air.

Calum Paterson, Isaacs

Follow the science

When science concluded that cigarette smoke causes life-threatening illnesses, big tobacco unsuccessfully attempted to deny it.

Scientists have for decades warned that tobacco and wood smoke share some harmful properties, leading to respiratory and cardiovascular problems, like heart attacks and strokes.

It would be expected that most people, particularly our leaders, are by now aware of these facts. Defying reason, the ACT government apparently disregarded the science when, in 2023, it yielded to a minority holding a nostalgic attachment to wood fires' ambience by allowing them to continue polluting until 2045.

I have two burning questions:

1) How could a matter of fancy for a few prevail over a matter of public health for all?

2) Why shouldn't the ACT government own up to and reverse this mistake, followed promptly by a health-enhancing ban on wood heaters?

Any additional taxpayers' compensation to transition to electric heating must consider the potential savings in health expenses to the public purse.

Jorge Gapella, Kaleen

Letters to the Editor
Canberra Times
25 June 2025