

Newer wood heaters not the answer

As Canberra endures another winter, the wood-heating industry has launched its latest campaign claiming the best way to reduce residential wood smoke pollution is for households to spend thousands of dollars upgrading to newer wood heaters.

Emissions testing for new wood heaters is conducted by industry engineers in controlled conditions, not in people's homes. These tests do not reflect everyday use.

Australian and international research has found that even modern, "low-emission" wood heaters can produce significant pollution once installed.

The industry also points to a town in Denmark where it claims wood-smoke pollution was reduced by an average of 40 per cent after residents upgraded their heaters. However, Denmark also offers an important warning.

The Danish Consumer Ombudsman recently ruled that marketing wood heaters, firewood and pellets as environmentally friendly or carbon neutral was misleading.

Perhaps Canberrans should follow this lead and recognise that reducing neighbourhood wood-smoke pollution requires more than replacing old polluting heaters with newer ones.

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