

MEDIA RELEASE

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Improve Launceston's air quality with education, not elimination

Winter air quality is of concern to us all, but replacing wood heaters is not the answer, education is, says the Australian Home Heating Association (AHHA).

Wood smoke levels in Launceston have continued to decrease for the past 10 years. General Manager of the AHHA Demi Brown says they attribute this success to community education programs and initiatives.

In 2004, from an original 800 residence issued with a notice for excessive household smoke from the Launceston City Council only 100 required a second warning. Currently, the Launceston City Council has advised that there are only 20 households in the Launceston area that are problem users.

"Education on the correct usage of wood heaters is vital to minimising wood smoke, including the use of dry, seasoned wood and purchasing wood from a reputable supplier. It has been shown in Launceston that educating consumers in how to use their heater correctly definitely lowers smoke levels." Ms Brown says.

Ms Brown said suggestions of wood heater bans in Tasmania were alarmist and unnecessary.

"To ensure continued consumer right to choose the best home heating solution, all factors affecting community air quality need to be considered. This includes evaluating the pros and cons of all home heating options and the total pollution effect. All heating appliances contributed to pollution."

Brown said that exclusion of certified clean burn wood heaters in previous buyback schemes in Tasmania has slowed down improvements in wood smoke levels.

According to ACNielsen research commissioned by the AHHA in two areas where buyback schemes operated, including Tasmania, 83% of the respondents felt buyback rebates should apply to certified clean burn wood heaters.

Ms Brown said if buyback scheme upgrade options included certified clean burn wood heaters along with an education program, consumers who preferred wood heating could upgrade their old wood heaters for certified ones – meeting the needs of both consumers and environment bodies much sooner.

“Rather than banning clean burning models, owners of older models should be encouraged to upgrade,” she said.

The AHHA maintains that certified wood heaters produce up to 80% less smoke and particle pollution than earlier models, due to substantial technological advances over the past ten years. Australia has some of the toughest wood heater standards in the world and there are approximately 300 clean burning wood heaters on the market with AS/NZS 4013 certification.

“Not only is wood heating one of the most efficient forms of home heating, it is also one of the cheapest ways to heat your home, and this must be considered for lower income families and the elderly.” Ms Brown said.

Product information, operation advice and a list of AHHA member manufacturers can be found on the AHHA website www.homeheat.com.au