

LAUNCESTON DOMESTIC WOOD SMOKE PLAN

ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

AUGUST 2026



City of
LAUNCESTON

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About the Project

The City of Launceston's Domestic Wood Smoke Plan sets a framework to improve community health and wellbeing by reducing air quality impacts from domestic wood heating, while recognising the important role wood heating continues to play for many households.

Between March and June 2026, the City of Launceston undertook a two-stage engagement process to better understand community experiences of domestic wood smoke, air quality concerns, and feedback on proposed actions to improve winter air quality in the Launceston urban area. The engagement also helped further develop and refine the draft Domestic Wood Smoke Plan, ensuring it was informed by local knowledge, community priorities and lived experience.

Strategic Goal 1.3: Launceston's attractive employment opportunities, enviable lifestyle and our reputation as a forward-thinking city make it the destination of choice for professionals, entrepreneurs and innovators

Objective 1.3(c) Establish Launceston as a national leader in sustainability through our achievements in circular economy innovation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Engagement at a Glance

Stage 1 - Community Survey

Dates: 25 March – 12 April 2026

Participation Overview:

- 1,050 contributors
- 1,150 survey responses
- 671 additional written comments

Survey responses were received from residents in 40 of the municipality's 52 suburbs, providing insights from a diverse range of urban and rural communities.

Responses were analysed alongside SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas) data to better understand how socio-economic factors may influence household heating choices, needs and experiences.

Published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), SEIFA scores measure relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, with lower scores indicating greater disadvantage and higher scores indicating greater advantage.

Responding suburbs based on highest number of responses

SUBURB	RESPONSE	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	RESPONSE RATE	RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED OWNING A WOOD HEATER	RESPONDENTS USING WOOD HEATING AS PRIMARY HEATING	SEIFA SCORE
Trevallyn	104	2,128	4.9%	65	45	1034
Launceston	86	1,776	4.8%	63	49	1002
West Launceston	80	2,043	3.9%	49	36	1016
South Launceston	75	2,343	3.2%	50	38	969
Newstead	62	2,552	2.4%	34	18	1010
Invermay	58	1,628	3.6%	35	28	888
East Launceston	55	1,033	5.3%	42	30	1049

Responding suburbs based on lower SEIFA scores

SUBURB	RESPONSE	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	RESPONSE RATE	RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED OWNING A WOOD HEATER	RESPONDENTS USING WOOD HEATING AS PRIMARY HEATING	SEIFA SCORE
Rocherlea	8	465	1.7%	6	6	592
Ravenswood	25	1,711	1.5%	21	20	718
Mayfield	12	671	1.8%	8	7	741
Waverley	23	736	3.1%	14	12	794
Mowbray	45	1,721	2.6%	28	24	846
Newnham	51	2,795	1.8%	39	32	871
Invermay	58	1,628	3.6%	35	28	888

Household figures are based on 2021 Census private dwelling counts and are provided for context only. Survey responses do not represent unique households, as more than one response may have been received from the same household.

Key Findings from the Survey

- The survey received 1,150 responses. Of these, 1,080 included suburb information, representing residents from 40 suburbs across the municipality.

- 750 respondents reported having a wood heater.
- 581 respondents reported using a wood heater as their primary source of heating during winter.
- Responses were received from communities across a broad range of SEIFA scores, including some of the municipality's more disadvantaged areas. This reinforces feedback received throughout the consultation about the importance of heating affordability, cost-of-living pressures and practical transition pathways.

Overall, the survey feedback helped shape a draft Plan that recognises both the need to improve winter air quality and the need to support households through realistic, affordable and fair actions. The feedback has informed a stronger focus on education, targeted regulation, practical support, and longer-term transition pathways rather than relying on a single or blanket solution.

Stage 2 - Draft Plan Consultation

Dates: 4 May - 14 June 2026

Participation overview:

- 140 contributors
- 509 written comments
- 2,511 people viewed the draft Plan

Participants provided written feedback on the draft plan's proposed goals, actions and implementation priorities.

Community Sentiment Overview

During the Stage 2 consultation period, Council received 509 submissions through Council's engagement platform Tomorrow Together, along with 23 emailed submissions.

Feedback demonstrated that the issue of wood smoke generates strong and often competing views within the community. Participants expressed a wide range of views, highlighting the need to balance improvements in air quality and public health with considerations of affordability, practicality and household choice.

A high-level review of submissions to the Plan found that:

- Approximately 50% of submissions were broadly supportive of the draft plan and its proposed actions.
- Approximately 12% of submissions expressed concerns about or opposition to the draft plan.
- Approximately 25% of submissions contained mixed views or were neutral in nature, often supporting some actions while raising concerns about others.
- Approximately 13% of submissions provided constructive feedback, suggestions or recommendations to help strengthen the Plan.
- Conflicting opinions regarding how Council can address the health impacts from domestic wood heating smoke, with some participants expressing strong views for immediate bans and stronger compliance measures, with a larger proportion of feedback indicating a preference for a staged approach to stronger regulation, moving towards informed and staged bans, following data gathering, educational campaigns and targeted regulation activities, and a smaller proportion of participants expressing concern for any bans to using wood heaters.

Key Findings from the Consultation

Wood Heating Remains Important

Most survey respondents rely on wood heating during winter. Among respondents, 69% reported having a wood heater or open fireplace, and 77% of those households use wood heating as their primary source of winter warmth. Daily use during winter was common, and most respondents were not considering replacing or removing their wood heater in the next 12 months.

Air Quality and Health

While many survey respondents rated winter air quality as good, some reported concerns about smoke impacts. Respondents described experiencing smoke odour, needing to keep windows and doors closed, reduced enjoyment of outdoor areas, and health impacts such as coughing, eye irritation and asthma flare-ups.

Informed Decision Making

Community feedback to the draft Plan supported future decisions about domestic wood smoke being informed by stronger evidence, clear communication and transparent decision making. Participants welcomed the proposal to increase air-quality monitoring and asked that local data, further community feedback and practical cost-benefit considerations be used to guide future action. They also reinforced the importance of explaining how decisions are made, how community feedback has and will influence the Plan, and how any future transition can be staged, affordable and achievable for households that rely on wood heating.

Practical and Staged Action

Community feedback also reinforced the need for implementation to be staged, practical and supported by smarter regulations. Feedback on the draft Plan centred on any transition to low-emission wood heating or removal of wood heaters needing to be achievable for households, particularly where affordability, housing quality and reliable heating options remain significant barriers. They also supported a balanced regulatory approach that prioritises education, clear expectations and targeted compliance for persistent smoke issues, as a priority over broad or immediate restrictions.

Community Priorities

The most supported actions focused on:

- Education about health impacts and correct wood-heater operation
- Practical assistance for switching to cleaner heating options
- Real-time air-quality information and alerts
- Improved compliance with existing smoke regulations
- Ensuring new regulations are staged, informed by data and ongoing community engagement and specialist input

What We Heard

Across both stages of engagement, community members expressed a wide range of views. While many supported efforts to improve air quality, they also highlighted the importance of affordable and reliable home heating. Common themes included:

- Balancing health and air-quality outcomes with household affordability

- Consideration of how changes to heating sources may affect renters and households with poor energy efficiency
- Preference for education, awareness and targeted action before introducing additional regulation
- Support for practical transition pathways, incentives and assessment of the costs and benefits of proposed measures
- Improving access to air-quality information, monitoring and community understanding of air-quality issues
- Taking a balanced approach that recognises differing community circumstances and needs
- Concerns from some community members about government overreach and potential restrictions on household heating choices
- Concerns about transparency in the process, including perceptions of bias or a pre-determined outcome, and the need for community feedback to be clearly reflected in decision-making
- Concerns about the fair use of public funds, with some participants questioning whether community money should be used to support private households when the health impacts of wood smoke are experienced by the broader community
- Some participants felt the Plan was too conservative, expressing concern that implementation timeframes may delay improvements to air quality and associated health outcomes
- Recognition that domestic wood smoke is one of several factors that can contribute to poor air quality, and that other emission sources should also be considered
- Support for a targeted approach focused on high emitters, repeat non-compliance and proactive monitoring in areas with vulnerable populations.
- Support for collaboration with government agencies, universities, businesses and the community, including citizen science initiatives, to strengthen the evidence base and inform future implementation and regulatory decisions
- Support for phasing out non-compliant wood heaters and restricting the sale and installation of non-compliant models
- Support for a staged approach to implementation, guided by evidence and ongoing community engagement, to allow households time to adapt and prepare for future changes.

How Community Feedback Helped Shape the Plan

Community feedback played an important role in refining and strengthening the Plan. As a result, the Plan now includes:

- A stronger focus on clear communication and transparent decision-making.
- Better use of monitoring and air quality data to guide education, awareness and compliance activities.
- Further investigation of the costs, benefits and practicality of incentive programs before future decisions are made.
- Ongoing collaboration with specialists, industry representatives and the community during implementation.

- Improved access to information, evidence and data to support community understanding of domestic wood smoke issues.
- Additional review points and ongoing monitoring have been incorporated to ensure any future decisions are informed by increased local evidence, data and community feedback before further regulatory measures are considered.

The community supports the shared goals of cleaner air, healthier homes and protecting vulnerable residents. The feedback received has helped shape a more balanced, practical and evidence-based Plan for the future.

What's Next?

1. **Finalise the Plan**
Feedback from both engagement stages has been reviewed and has helped refine the final Domestic Wood Smoke Plan.
2. **Council Consideration**
The final plan will be presented to Council for consideration and endorsement.
3. **Implementation**
Following adoption, Council will begin delivering priority actions identified within the Plan.
4. **Ongoing Communication**
The community will continue to be informed about progress, including education initiatives, air quality information and any future opportunities to be involved.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views throughout the consultation process. The feedback received has helped shape a practical and balanced Plan that aims to improve air quality while recognising the diverse needs and circumstances of households across the Launceston municipality.





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