

Appendix A: Analysis of Wood Heater Policy in Australia

This document is a supporting attachment to the Council Report *Petition – Wood Smoke Pollution*. It aims to give an overview of the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government to implement policies to reduce harm from wood heater use.

Policy challenges

There are challenges to implementing effective policy to address wood heater smoke pollution. In many existing dwellings, wood heaters are the primary mode of heating, and they can be prevalent in economically disadvantaged areas. Implementing measures to phase them out is costly, could cause disproportionate financial burden on low-income households and can be unpopular.

Despite these challenges, there are a number of policy options available to governments.

Roles and Responsibilities

Federal Government

The federal government is well suited to implementing market mechanism policies such as taxes and buy-back schemes. Options such as introducing a sales tax on new wood heaters and legislating requirements on imported wood heaters could be best implemented at a federal level. The federal government can also provide funding for more localised initiatives. For example, the federal government funded a program in Launceston, Tasmania between 2001 and 2004.

State government

State government is responsible for the broader policy on wood heater smoke. In Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is the primary regulator, who administer the Environment Protection Act (1970). Beneath the Act, sits the Waste Management Policy (Solid Fuel Heating) which was gazetted in 2004. This Policy is the primary piece of legislation which specifically covers wood heaters. It includes requirements such as all wood heaters made and sold in Victoria must comply with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 4013:2014. This policy was amended in 2017 and a Policy Impact Assessment was conducted which considered a range of regulatory options.

The state government is well suited to implementing voluntary buy-backs and regulatory policy options such as bans and gradual phase outs.

Local government

Local government is responsible for responding to complaints about pollution from residential wood heaters as wood smoke is considered a nuisance under section 39A of the Health Act (1958) but does not have the ability to change those regulations.

Local government is best positioned to work with state government in a supporting partnership role to implement broader policies.