

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## RECALL FAULTY WOOD BURNING HEATERS NOW!

Environmentalists and health experts have demanded an Australia-wide recall of thousands of faulty wood burning heaters following a Federal Government report that suggests the majority fail to meet national air pollution standards.

The Department of Environment and Heritage tested 12 of the most popular brand-new slow combustion wood heaters as part of a National Audit Program. Nine of the 12 differed substantially from the design prototype used for air pollution testing. In one case, the baffle plates were changed, causing the heater to emit 3 times as much pollution as the model used for air pollution testing.

In seven other cases, retail models had smaller primary air inlets than those used in the air pollution tests. Smaller air inlets mean the fire can be starved of oxygen, making it burn longer. This may be more convenient for owners, but oxygen-starved fires cause excessive pollution. One new heater emitted 10 times more pollution than the version sent for air pollution testing.

Respiratory Physician and Chairman of the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Lung Foundation, Dr James Markos, said that woodsmoke pollution has immediate and serious health effects, especially on those people with lung disease.

"There is no safe level of exposure to particle pollution. Over many years, exposure has similar long-term consequences to environmental tobacco smoke, including the risk of lung cancer and heart disease," Dr Markos said.

Even heaters satisfying current emissions tests can, if operated incorrectly, emit 10 times more smoke than the Australian standard – as much particulate pollution in a single evening as the average passenger car emits in an entire year. Consequently, the Asthma Foundation of Tasmania believes that a ban on woodheaters may be the only solution.

Spokesperson Cathy Beswick said: "Despite all the money poured into education programs to teach people how to reduce the incidence of woodsmoke from their heaters, and programs and incentives to replace them with more efficient and environmentally friendly alternatives, we seem to have taken two steps back rather than one step forward."

Environmentalist and Armidale Air Quality Group Spokesperson, Dr Dorothy Robinson was also concerned that governments had spent millions on woodsmoke reduction programs to remove older heaters and protect our health, only to find that that the majority of the new ones on sale were no better.

"Car manufacturers issue product recalls when a serious fault is found in a vehicle that may affect public safety; pharmaceutical companies issue recalls when a product may affect public health.

"They advertise in the national media providing details of their affected products; they offer to fix the problem for free or provide a full refund to consumers.

"This Government Audit has found these wood burning heaters are a threat to public health and the environment. Therefore, why shouldn't the wood heating industry now be required to recall all its faulty products?" she asked.

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Dr James Markos  
Australian Lung Foundation  
Ph 03 6334 4676  
www.lungnet.com.au

Cathy Beswick  
Asthma Foundation of Tasmania  
Mob: 0407 869 767  
www.asthmastas.org.au

Dr Dorothy Robinson  
Armidale Air Quality Group  
02 6773 3209 or 02 6772 6475  
<http://www.3sc.net/airqual>