



OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND
THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr Ben Ponton
Director-General
Environment, Planning and
Sustainable Development Directorate
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Ponton

Re: New Investigation by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

I am writing to inform you of my intent to conduct an investigation into woodfire heater use in the ACT. This is an investigation under Section 12.1(c) of the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993* (the Act). It will result in the preparation of a Special Report as described in Section 21 of the Act.

A number of factors have contributed to my decision to investigate this matter, including:

- a number of enquiries to my Office from members of the public regarding domestic woodfire heater smoke and its effects on their health, amenity and the environment.
- a growing body of evidence about the harms to environmental and human health resulting from woodfire heater use.
- anecdotal accounts of an increase in woodfire heater installation in both renovations and new builds in the ACT.
- a lack of evidence regarding the success of the ACT Government's efforts to reduce woodfire heater use in the ACT, including its Wood Heater Replacement Program and public education campaigns.
- a lack of evidence that the ACT Government has considered the impacts of continued woodfire heater use in the Territory in the context of more frequent, extended and severe bushfires predicted (and already in evidence) as a result of climate change in its policy settings.

As part of this investigation, my staff will consult extensively with EPSDD staff regarding the policy and programs that are in place in relation to woodfire heater use. They will require access to documents and information relating to this matter, as provided for in Section 17 of the Act. Technical experts will be consulted if needed. It is anticipated that this investigation will take under three months depending on how quickly the requested information is provided.

Commissioner: Dr Sophie Lewis
GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

ABN: 66 893 463 785

T: (02) 6207 2626 E: envcomm@act.gov.au W: www.envcomm.act.gov.au



This Office is independent of, but funded by, the ACT Government.

A written report on my findings will be provided to you following the investigation. This report will also be provided to the Minister for tabling at the Legislative Assembly. You will be given the opportunity to review and comment on a draft of the report before it is finalised.

If you wish you meet to discuss this investigation further, please contact my Executive Assistant, Megan Reichstein, on either 6207 2626 or email Megan.Reichstein@act.gov.au

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you wish you provide further information in relation to this complaint, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Sophie Lewis
Commissioner for Sustainability and
the Environment

30 September 2022