



ACT Government

2003-2004 BUDGET

WOOD HEATER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM MEANS CANBERRA CAN BREATHE EASY THIS WINTER

The long-standing problem of air pollution caused by wood fires in Canberra's winter months will be dramatically reduced by a \$300,000 Wood Heater Replacement Program in the Stanhope Government's Budget.

The new Budget initiative will provide subsidies for wood fire owners to replace their heaters with gas or electric alternatives, and for the purchase of new equipment to monitor and interpret Canberra's wood smoke problem. The scheme is part of the Stanhope Government's popular 'Plan for a Sustainable Bush Capital in the New Millennium'.

"The problem of air pollution caused by wood fires has been ignored for too long," Mr Stanhope said. "I am glad to say that my Government's Budget delivers on our promise to tackle the problem, and provides relief to many people with breathing difficulties each winter.

\$100,000 will be used for the purchase of new equipment to measure air quality – the Partisol Gravimetric Monitor and nephelometers – while the remaining \$200,000 will be directly injected into providing subsidies.

"My Government will be providing subsidies to owners of wood fires who wish to upgrade to less polluting electric and gas heaters. This makes the gas and electric heaters more affordable, and will encourage Canberrans to help reduce air pollution.

"The scheme is based on the successful NSW model, which has seen a lowering of air pollution caused by wood fires. The ACT is only the third jurisdiction to implement such a scheme," Mr Stanhope said.

While Canberra generally has excellent air quality, the city suffers from a winter particle pollution problem due to emissions from wood heaters used for home heating. Suburbs of greatest concern are areas around Civic and Woden, with the highest pollution levels measured in the Tuggeranong Valley at the Monash monitoring station.

Subsidies of between \$400 and \$800 will be offered, depending upon the type of replacement heating system.

"Tuggeranong is an area of particular concern, and it is hoped that the subsidy scheme will result in a significant improvement in air quality," Mr Stanhope said. "We have budgeted for a high uptake of the subsidy, and if the scheme proves successful, the necessary funds for extension of the scheme will be included in future Budgets.

"This scheme is the product of my Government's desire to build better systems to protect our environment," Mr Stanhope said. "Successful Education Programs are already in place, and the licensing and regulation of fire wood merchants has resulted in better protection of the environment.

Statement ends.

Media Release



Released: 6 May 2003

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