

9(2)(a)

20 February 2026.

Dear 9(2)(a)

Re: Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your email on 8 February 2026, in which you requested information in regards to wood burners and the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme under the Official Information Act 1982. The full wording of your request is attached as Appendix 1.

I can confirm for you that wood burners are no longer an eligible heating option under the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme. On 9 January 2026, EECA officially stopped accepting any new applications for the installation of wood burners. We are now in the process of honouring the small amount of existing applications that were already underway.

In 2025, EECA commissioned in depth research on the health effects and costs of indoor combustion in New Zealand homes and was conducted in consultation with the Ministry of Health. This research was peer reviewed and published in September 2025 confirming the negative impact wood burners have on New Zealand homes through indoor air pollution, alongside wider community harms from particulate matter pollution (www.eeca.govt.nz/insights/eeca-insights/indoor-combustion-in-new-zealand-homes-health-effects-and-costs).

Off the back of this research, EECA has moved to no longer provide funding for the installation of wood burners under the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme. Please find attached, a copy of a memo to EECA's leadership team that reflects the basis for this decision.

The Warmer Kiwi Homes programme's main policy objective is to address energy hardship in vulnerable middle-low-income homeowners by helping to improve the energy performance of their homes. External independent evaluations have demonstrated that participating households are significantly healthier, warmer, drier and electricity usage is lower after receiving support from the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme.

Wood burners were originally included as one of the heating options under the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme to ensure support was available for the proportion of eligible households, especially in regional New Zealand, who prefer a wood burner over a heat pump. Often this preference reflected

the value of resilience in remote locations, genuine concerns about losing electricity supply during significant weather events and their access to an affordable wood supply. Many of these eligible households often had no fixed heating in their living area at all and these wood burners provided a significant positive impact for them. EECA's installation specifications also required our service providers participating in the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme to go up and beyond the National Environmental Standard for Air Quality and meet any more stringent council-based air quality/wood burner restrictions or building code requirements where applicable.

The proportion of eligible homes requesting a wood burner under the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme instead of a heat pump had significantly declined since the programme began in 2009. Over the last financial year for example, heat pumps represented more than 90% of the heating installations completed under the programme. Since 2009, heat pump technology has become much more widely accepted as the more efficient and healthier form of heating. I am happy to share that more than 70% of New Zealand households now heat their homes with heat pump technology.

I hope this information helps answer some of the questions you may have on this topic.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly at <https://www.eeca.govt.nz/about/news-and-corporate/official-information/> with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely



Murray Bell
Group Manager, Policy and Regulation

Appendix 1: Your Official Information Act Request

“1. Policy Basis for Subsidising Woodburners

- What is EECA’s policy rationale for including woodburners as an eligible or subsidised heating option under programmes such as Warmer Kiwi Homes?*
- What objectives (e.g. affordability, energy security, emissions reduction) are woodburner subsidies intended to achieve?*

2. Consideration of Air Quality and Health Impacts

- What consideration has EECA given to the health impacts of woodsmoke and PM_{2.5} when designing or approving heating subsidies?*
- What health or air-quality advice (including advice from Te Whatu Ora, the Ministry of Health, or other agencies) has EECA relied upon in deciding to subsidise woodburners?*
- Please provide copies or summaries of any such advice.*

3. Regional Application and Restrictions

- Does EECA apply any restrictions or exclusions on woodburner subsidies in:*
 - Urban areas,*
 - Areas with known winter air pollution,*
 - Regions considered “polluted” under the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality, or*
 - Areas without gazetted airsheds?*
- If not, why are such distinctions not made?*

4. Alignment with Public Health and Climate Objectives

- How does EECA reconcile the subsidisation of woodburners with:*
 - National and international evidence on PM_{2.5} health impacts,*
 - New Zealand’s commitments to improve air quality and protect public health, and*
 - The availability of lower-emission heating alternatives such as heat pumps?*
- Has EECA assessed whether subsidising woodburners undermines local or national air-quality goals?*

5. Review and Future Policy Direction

- Has EECA undertaken, or does it plan to undertake, any review of the inclusion of woodburners in subsidy programmes in light of public health evidence?*
- What criteria would prompt EECA to remove woodburners from eligibility, particularly in urban or polluted areas?*

Meeting Date	17/11/2025
Subject	Wood/pellet burners and the Warmer Kiwi Homes Programme
Purpose	To propose the removal of wood/pellet burners as a subsidised heating installation option under the Warmer Kiwi Homes programme.
Action sought	Agree to the removal of wood/pellet burners from the WKH programme and the timing of the associated process.
Prepared by	Tim Roser, Policy and Engagement

EECA should consider removing wood/ pellet burners from the WKH programme

1. Both heat pumps and wood/pellet burners are currently offered to eligible households under the Warmer Kiwi Homes (WKH) programme.
2. However wood/pellet burners:
 - a. Are not as energy efficient compared to heat pump technology¹
 - b. Provide more health risks compared to heat pump technology
 - c. Are more expensive and less cost effective from a programme delivery point of view².
 - d. Are only the preferred option for a small portion of households³ in particular circumstances⁴.
3. New research funded by EECA⁵ has established that wood/pellet burners have a negative impact on homeowners through indoor air pollution, alongside wider community harms from particulate matter pollution. Wood/pellet burners in NZ households were found to be responsible for ~101 premature deaths and 446 cardiovascular and respiratory hospitalisations a year.

¹ Heat pumps deliver a high COP (~3.5), whereas wood/pellet burners are much less as they involve inherent energy losses through combustion and flued ventilation

² Wood/pellet burners were behind only \$1.46M in claimed grant funding last financial year however this amount could have instead been used to fund 640 more heat pumps or 490 more insulation retrofits.

³ ~70% of NZ households already heat their homes with an efficient heat pump. Wood/pellet burners were only ~7.8% of the total heating installations completed under WKH between 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

⁴ E.g. rural areas with access to cheap firewood.

⁵ [\(Indoor combustion: health effects and costs \(NZ\) | EECA\)](#)

Benefits

4. Removing wood/pellet burners from the WKH programme would provide the following benefits:
 - More efficient and healthier heating outcomes for eligible WKH households.
 - More effective use of WKH grant funding in line with the purpose of the programme⁶
 - The proportion of the households who would have chosen a wood/pellet burner under the WKH programme would be quite small⁷.
 - Such households can still choose to purchase and install these if they wish to but this would be without the support of grant funding.
 - Without grant funding, the higher upfront price may encourage such households to move towards a healthier more efficient heat pump instead⁸.

Risks

5. The wood burner installations completed under the WKH programme are currently serviced by ~30 service providers. These businesses may see a reduced demand for this type of installation as more households consider the total upfront cost and may choose cheaper and healthier efficient alternatives.

Timing:

6. How and when to remove wood/pellet burners from the WKH programme needs to be considered and will require a communications plan.
7. EECA will need to provide an appropriate notice period to the public and relevant service providers before terminating their contracts. Too long a notice period however, may risk an influx of applications just before applications are no longer accepted. While this is likely to only be relatively small amounts⁹, this would result in these households locking in a sub-optimal heating solution.
8. Once EECA stops receiving applications, the associated new claims would be expected to cease approximately three months later¹⁰.
9. To ensure all claims can still be paid and for administrative ease, we recommend that EECA keeps the relevant service provider contracts in place until they expire on 30 June 2026. An early termination of contracts could provide reputational risk and inhibit the ability to pay any late remaining claims.

⁶ Wood/pellet burners represented \$1.46M in claimed grant funding last financial year.

⁷ Less than 2.4% of all NZ homeowners do not have any source of heating in the home (2023 census data) and only ~7.8% (~570) of WKH's heating installations completed in the last financial year, were wood/pellet burners.

⁸ The total installation cost for a wood burner is ~\$5.5K compared to ~\$3k for a heat pump installation.

⁹ Less than 600 wood/pellet burner installations were completed over the last financial year.

¹⁰ There is a typical ~4 month period between application and claim (takes time to secure consent).

10. Given the considerations above, we recommend that EECA begins this process in January 2026, closing any new claims in March.

Recommendations

It is recommended that LT:

- Agree to remove wood/pellet burners from the WKH programme.
- Agree that the WKH programme will stop accepting applications for wood/pellet burners in January 2026.
- Agree to stop accepting any new claims/accepted quotes or preliminary claims, for wood/pellet burners under the WKH programme in March 2026.
- Agree to not renew contracts with the relevant wood and pellet burner service providers (let them expire in June 2026).
- Note that a communications plan will be developed to support this change.
- Note that we will inform the Minister and the Board of our decision via regular reporting.