

BUYING AND INSTALLING A WOOD HEATER



THE FIREWOOD ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA INC.

Why buy a wood heater?

Wood fired heating is growing in popularity all over the world. In Australia, wood heater sales continue to grow steadily. The rising cost of gas and electricity is one reason, but the charm of a wood fire is a major motivation, along with a growing recognition that firewood qualifies as a renewable, sustainable energy source. Ducted heating or reverse cycle air conditioners may give “flick of the switch” convenience, but they cannot replicate the simple pleasure of sitting beside, or standing before, a wood fire.

Whether you are a first time buyer or looking to upgrade, there are a few things you need to consider before buying and installing a wood heater.

What type of wood heater?

There are several options to choose from when selecting a wood heater. Free standing slow combustion heaters, which typically have a clear glass door so the fire can be seen, are probably the most common. Fireplace inserts which fit into open fire places are also popular. These retain the charm of an open fire while yielding more heat. Modern heaters transfer heat into the room in three ways, by radiation, by natural convection and by fan forced convection.

Your choice should be governed by what you want the wood heater to do. Is it your main source of heating throughout the house, or is the look and feel of the fire more important? Do you want to use the heater for hot water? Do you want a hot surface so you can boil a kettle? The options are many and the heater you choose can be tailored to your needs.

For professional advice, contact your nearest Australian Home Heating Association (AHHA) member. Go to www.homeheat.com.au or call AHHA on 08 8351 9288.

Is it certified?

You must check that the heater complies with the Australian Standards AS/NZS 4012 and 4013. Complying heaters are designed for Australian conditions and Australian firewood.

Many overseas heaters are designed to burn softwood and are not suited to our Eucalypt hardwoods.

Certified heaters have a Compliance Plate showing the AS/NZS numbers as well as important information on the heater's efficiency and thermal output.

Uncertified heaters may be poorly constructed and badly sealed, creating a fire hazard. If the heater is designed and built well enough to comply with the standards, then it will almost certainly be certified.

Buying an efficient heater will save you money in the long run, as it will use less wood. It is important to buy the right size heater for your situation. Too small and you won't get enough heat, too big and it will have to be run on minimum most of the time. The size of heater you need also depends on how well your house is insulated and how well the heat can be distributed. As with selecting the best type of heater for your situation, it is best to seek expert advice on buying the right size of heater.

Installing a wood heater

All wood heaters need to be installed in accordance with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 2918 and must comply with the manufacturer's instructions and the Building Code of Australia. You should contact your local council to check on building regulations, local covenants and any required permits. You need to consider your neighbours and ensure that smoke from your flue does not enter their living space or impact on their air quality. Even if the new heater is replacing an existing one it is strongly recommended that you get the heater installed by a qualified professional, such as a plumber licensed for solid fuel heating installations. Your local AHHA member should be able to recommend a qualified installer. Even if you do a DIY installation you should get the completed installation signed off by a qualified person, otherwise you may void your house insurance. To comply with the “duty of disclosure” requirements in most insurance policies, you will need to notify your insurance company if you are installing a wood heater for the first time.

Look for the distinctive FAA membership logo which is displayed by FAA members or call **1300 131 481** for your nearest member.

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