



## NSW Government response to the Riverina Community Firewood and Home Heating Taskforce report and recommendations

### Maximising the firewood resource available for collection under the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Domestic Firewood Collection Program

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
1. NPWS to modify its firewood collection guidelines to maximise the volume of firewood available without compromising environmental measures (i.e. reduce the trigger for collection zone closure from 60 tonnes per hectare (t/ha) of coarse woody debris to 45 t/ha).	<b>Adopt.</b> To ensure maintenance of environmental values associated with coarse woody debris, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) will undertake compliance and monitoring, and shall close firewood collection zones prior to coarse woody debris levels falling below 45 t/ha.
2. NPWS to implement appropriate compliance strategies to address reported illegal collection of firewood, or collection of excessive quantities.	<b>Adopt.</b> NPWS has a broad range of compliance strategies in place, including joint targeted compliance operations with NSW Police.
3. NPWS to open former forestry snig tracks to improve access by firewood collectors to the firewood within the collection zones.	<b>Adopt.</b>
4. NPWS to open a firewood collection zone in Yanga National Park.	<b>Adopt.</b> The NPWS has developed a domestic firewood collection program based on stockpiled residue from logging operations that occurred prior to the purchase of Yanga as a national park. The program is due to commence in August 2014 and will only involve removal of stockpiled logging debris.
5. NPWS to review whether there is sufficient coarse woody debris above 45 t/ha in Euston Regional Park to support the opening of a firewood collection zone.	<b>Adopt.</b> NPWS has conducted a review of coarse woody debris in Euston Regional Park. The level of coarse woody debris remains below 45 t/ha.

## Extending the firewood available from national parks by providing access to coarse woody debris arising from any ecological thinning trial or program

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
6. NPWS to ensure debris from the proposed ecological thinning trial is made available for the NPWS Domestic Firewood Collection Program.	<b>Adopt.</b> A public environmental report relating to the ecological thinning trial was placed on public exhibition during February and March 2014. Progressing the ecological thinning trial remains subject to Commonwealth approval.
7. NPWS to ensure debris from any ongoing program of ecological thinning is made available for the NPWS Domestic Firewood Program.	<b>Adopt.</b> If the ecological thinning trial results lead to an expansion of thinning activities, the residue could be made available for domestic firewood collection.

## Improving access to firewood resource available on western lands leases

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
8. Forestry Corporation re-establishes a permit system for community members to collect firewood from western lands leases, subject to lessee consent.	<b>Not supported</b> , due to operating and compliance issues regarding access to leasehold lands following consultation with the Minister for Primary Industries.

## Access to the significant firewood resource available from state forests

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
9. Forestry Corporation communicates, particularly within the Murray area, the ongoing availability of firewood for domestic collection from Central Murray state forests.	<b>Adopt.</b> This is a component of taskforce recommendation 13.
10. Review of the coarse woody debris 'photo standard' in the IFOA for River Red Gum state forests.	<b>Supported.</b> The review of the 'photo standard' will be undertaken as part of the statutory review of the Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) in January 2016.

## Improving access to firewood on other public lands

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
11. Collection of domestic firewood on the Balranald Permanent Common be considered through appropriate trustee provisions.	<b>Support in-principle.</b> Implementation of this recommendation is a matter for Balranald Shire Council.

## Improved domestic firewood collection communications

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
12. Riverina councils communicate within their respective communities the importance of domestic firewood collectors adhering to collection guidelines.	<b>Support in-principle.</b> OEH is able to support Riverina council communication by directing them to the collaborative document referred to in recommendation 13.
13. NPWS work with other public land managers to review, update and circulate the collaborative document that provides public information on firewood collection across all Crown land.	<b>Adopt.</b> OEH, the Forestry Corporation of NSW, and Local Land Services have updated the existing 'Domestic firewood collection from public land in the Riverina – 2014' document for public circulation, including on the OEH website. Visit <a href="http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectedareas/riverredgums/14371rivfirewd.pdf">www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectedareas/riverredgums/14371rivfirewd.pdf</a>
14. Provide information to the public about the potential for consumers to achieve energy savings by comparing the prices of alternative energy suppliers.	<b>Adopt.</b> To be delivered as a component of the community assistance measures as outlined in response to taskforce recommendation 17.

## Improving natural gas connectivity in the Riverina

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
15. Government support for Riverina councils in their pursuit of connectivity to natural gas, in particular the extension of the existing line from Finley through to Deniliquin, and further south to the Murray.	<b>Support in-principle.</b>

## Wood heaters in social housing

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
16. Family and Community Services conduct a review of policy relating to social housing to encourage the replacement of wood heaters with non-wood forms of heating in the Riverina.	<b>Support in-principle.</b>

## Supporting local community members to transition to an alternative form of home heating, particularly vulnerable households.

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
<p>17. NPWS Domestic Firewood Collection Program permit-holders be provided with assistance measures, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An in-home power assessment by a Home Power Savings Program energy expert, who will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ provide advice on steps the household can take to reduce energy use</li> <li>○ install a package of energy savings devices</li> <li>○ provide advice on purchasing an alternative home heater, including heating capacity and relative costs, as part of OEH's Smarter Choice Program</li> <li>○ provide advice on the EPA's Stay Warm; Breathe Easy Program on the health implications of wood heaters and how to reduce heating bills</li> <li>○ provide information and assist eligible households who want to apply for a no interest loan to purchase a new heater under the No Interest Loans Scheme</li> <li>○ provide information and assist eligible households who want to apply for rebates or payments to offset the cost of purchasing non-wood-burning home heaters (see recommendations 18 and 19)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A follow up in-home visit by a Home Power Savings Program energy expert after a new heater has been purchased and installed, to provide the household with advice on the use of the new heater.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Adopt</b> OEH will develop and implement a program of community assistance to eligible permit holders modelled on the recently concluded OEH Home Power Savings Program. Commencement of the program can occur in August 2014 however; the bulk of program delivery will be timed to coincide with the exhaustion of firewood from NPWS managed lands in 2015/16 and 2016/17.</p> <p>Assistance will be offered over a two year period, and households who have held a NPWS firewood collection permit between July 2010 and September 2013 will be eligible to receive an in-home power assessment by an energy expert. OEH will make publicly available a range of information regarding energy efficiency and home heating.</p> <p>As a guide, the types of assistance that could be offered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an in-home power assessment by an energy expert, who can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ provide advice on steps the household can take to reduce energy use</li> <li>○ install a package of energy saving devices</li> <li>○ provide advice on purchasing an alternative home heater, including heating capacity and relative costs, as part of OEH's Smarter Choice Program</li> <li>○ provide advice on the EPA's Stay Warm; Breathe Easy Program regarding the health implications of wood heaters and how to reduce heating bills</li> <li>○ provide information and assist eligible households who want to apply to purchase a new heater under the No Interest Loans Scheme</li> <li>○ provide information and assist eligible households who want to minimise the cost of purchasing non-wood-burning home heaters.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Taskforce recommendation	Minister's response
<p>18. OEH to establish a payment or rebate scheme to support NPWS Domestic Firewood Collection Program permit-holders who wish to change from wood heaters to an alternate source of home heating. The support would be provided to all permit holders irrespective of whether they are additionally eligible for rebates or payments under the No Interest Loans Scheme or the EPA's Wood Smoke Reduction Program.</p>	<p><b>Support in-principle.</b> This will be considered as part of a comprehensive assistance package to be developed in response to taskforce recommendation 17.</p>
<p>19. Riverina councils be encouraged to apply for up to \$60,000 in funding and offer to community members as rebates for replacing old polluting wood heaters and fireplaces with cleaner alternatives (as part of the EPA's Wood Smoke Reduction Program).</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> The EPA implemented a state-wide Wood Smoke Reduction Program in 2014. Two councils in the Riverina have successfully received support under the 'Community education programs about the health impacts of wood smoke pollution and how best to operate wood heaters'. This support will continue over the next two years.</p>
<p>20. NPWS to restrict future domestic firewood collection permits to only those households that have previously held a firewood collection permit under the NPWS Domestic Firewood Collection Program.</p>	<p><b>Not supported.</b> In response to the public exhibition of the taskforce report, OEH received a number of submissions expressing concern about the potential impact of this recommendation.</p>
<p>21. Government funding be provided to assist social housing providers to carry out 'sustainable' improvements to housing stock to improve thermal efficiency.</p>	<p><b>Support in-principle.</b></p>