

Tasmania's current bioenergy status

The most common application of bioenergy in Tasmania is the use of wood to heat homes where approximately one quarter of Tasmanian households primarily relying on this type of heating.

Current emission requirements for new wood heaters achieve the required rating by increasing the combustion process which generates high heat output even on its lowest burn rate. The heat output is a cleaner burn, better for the environment than previous standards however the heat cannot be reduced to what the household requires.

A modern wood heater generates more heat than older models which restricts their application in typical homes making the public reluctant to upgrade older wood heaters to a more modern cleaner burning wood heater. New homes are unable to utilise wood heaters due to the increased thermal efficiency of the home not requiring the amount of heat that new wood heaters produce.

Pellet Heating negates this overheating problem due to clean efficient combustion and controllable heat output making it a more attractive bioenergy heater solution than a new compliant wood heater in most applications.

The Tasmanian Government could encourage the move away from older slow combustion wood heating technology to more efficient and controllable pellet heating technology which will provide a more suitable upgrade path for those who wish to continue heating their home with bioenergy.

The retail pellet heating industry in Tasmania is small however already employs more people than the established wood heating industry because pellet heaters require more technical support than wood heaters. Increasing pellet heater appliances in Tasmania will create employment at a rate of around 1 extra person for every 500 heaters sold. If just 20% of the domestic heating market converted to pellet heating over 80 new jobs would be created just to service the market annually in Tasmania.

Many countries have introduced financial incentives to convert domestic heating to modern bioenergy pellet heating solutions with varied success. It could be in Tasmania's interest to investigate schemes to encourage the conversion from older firewood heaters to new pellet heating which will also support the investment in pellet mills already made by Oak Industries, Neville Smith Forrest Products and EcoPellets in Bell Bay.

Rob Douglas

Pellet Fires Tasmania