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## ECAN MEDIA STATEMENT



### Christchurch Air Plan vital to city's future health

The Christchurch Air Plan which came into force in 2010 is critical to the delivery of clean air and better health in Christchurch.

Environment Canterbury Commissioner David Bedford says the plan's rules must remain in place if the National Environmental Standard for Air Quality, which are based on World Health Organisation standards, of three exceedances by 2016 and one by 2020, are to be achieved.

"An analysis of current air quality, and the progress made over recent years, indicates the city's ability to achieve the national targets is finely balanced," he says. "Air quality modelling undertaken since February demonstrates that any change to the air rules would compromise our ability to reach the targets."

"Clean air is a health issue. The community of Christchurch has made a huge investment in clean air and this has benefited the health of the majority.

"We know that 80% of the harmful particulate PM10 comes from solid-fuel heating appliances and this causes respiratory problems for many people, and can even cause premature death in vulnerable populations.

"Raising public awareness of this health issue and encouraging people to switch to cleaner home heating has resulted in a significant drop in the number of high pollution winter days in the city, helping to contribute to a healthier environment for all residents both now and in the future.

"We must continue with the commitment we have made to improving Christchurch's air quality. A large number of people who had their say on the future of Christchurch have identified this as an important part of a modern city," says Mr Bedford.

The air rules mean that people building a new home in metropolitan Christchurch because of the earthquake will not be able to install a logburner in their new home, regardless of whether they had one in their existing home.

"We know the earthquake has hurt many people, but this is not a reason to compromise the city's air quality aspirations and obligations.

"Since 2002 home owners have not been permitted to install wood burners in new homes, or in existing houses that did not previously have a solid fuel appliance. It would be unfair on home owners who have complied with the Air Plan to change the rules now.

"While the clean air rules were in place during this last winter, our priority was on ensuring people in earthquake-damaged homes could keep warm and healthy using whatever home heating was available.

"We appreciate that there will be some people who feel disadvantaged as they proceed to re-establish themselves and their homes after the earthquake. However, we believe there are acceptable options available for heating their homes that do not compromise the huge progress that has been made in cleaning up Christchurch's air and improving the health of the city's people."

While Christchurch people have become reliant upon solid fuel appliances to heat their homes, new homes built to current building code requirements include energy-efficient measures such as insulation and double glazing, he says. This means people live in warmer, drier and healthier homes, eliminating the need for solid fuel heating such as log burners.

"In the same way that new homes are built to new building codes, they must also meet current air rules."

Some people have expressed concerns around the reliability of electricity supply, when considering installing heat pumps or using electric heaters, Mr Bedford says. However local network providers have been working hard to maintain a secure service both for now and for the future as recent events have shown.

“So we have a number of good reasons to look at methods of heating other than woodburners,” Mr Bedford says.

However home owners do have options if they want to have a wood burner in their new house, he says. They can buy an existing home in Christchurch which has a compliant wood burner or they can build in an area outside the Christchurch Clean Air Zone 1.

Owners of houses built outside the Christchurch Clean Air Zone 1, may be able to install a compliant wood burner. This area includes Kaiapoi, Lyttelton and the rest of old Banks Peninsula District, the rural fringe of Christchurch city, Rangiora, Lincoln, Prebbleton and Akaroa. However this is not a simple process and they will need to apply for a resource consent prior to the installation, says Mr Bedford

Under the air plan, open fires and solid fuel burners which are 15 years or older are banned from use during winter from 1 April to 30 September each year.

Home owners who have an existing log burner and are repairing, not rebuilding, their homes can install a new, approved logburner to replace one which is outdated.

“Central government set the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality in 2004. We have to reach these to improve the health of the people of Christchurch.”

**For media enquiries: Kristi Gray, Communications Team, 027 5497 730**