

ATTACHMENT A

23 December 2016

MEDIA RELEASE

Decorative alcohol fuelled burners banned in the Northern Territory

Decorative alcohol fuelled burners designed for table-top use are the subject of an immediate 60-day interim product safety ban throughout the Northern Territory. The ban will remain in place while the burners undergo further assessment by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and other consumer agencies nationally.

The Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Mr Gary Clements said "As a result of this ban these burners cannot be offered for sale in the Northern Territory from 23 December 2016."

The action follows more than 100 reported injuries and 115 fire incidents since 2010. In October 2016, a 28 year old Perth woman suffered serious burns to her face and upper body after an ethanol burner exploded in the backyard of a Safety Bay home. This was closely followed by two people being injured on Queensland's Sunshine Coast in an ethanol burner accident.

"These burners are especially dangerous when they are being re-fuelled. When the fuel is low, the flame can appear blue or clear, making it difficult to see. Re-fuelling when a flame is present or the device is still warm can lead to an explosion. There is also a risk of the burner being knocked over by children or pets and causing serious burns to people nearby as well as damage to property". Said Mr Clements

The interim ban only affects portable (or table-top) devices designed for domestic use producing a flame using alcohol as fuel. The burners are primarily decorative but are also sold for heating and display purposes. The fuel is typically ethanol in liquid or (less commonly) gel form. The most common form is methylated spirits (ethanol and around 10 per cent methanol) which may also be marketed as bio-ethanol or eco-fuel.

Ethanol fireplaces that require installation in a fixed position are not included in the ban, however, further investigations into injuries are being carried out. In the meantime, caution is strongly recommended in the use of these fireplaces. The interim ban also does not affect products with a power output of more than 4.5 kW and those used in the heating or warming of food.

Retailers and online traders based in the Northern Territory must take the banned products off their shelves or delete them from online catalogues and cease sales immediately. There are tough penalties for selling banned products with individuals facing a maximum fine of \$220,000 and corporations facing a maximum fine of \$1.1 million

NT consumers who have an ethanol-fuelled burner in their home should stop using it immediately. In most cases, if these products are determined to be unsafe and are permanently banned, they will be able to be returned to the retailer for a full refund.

Reports of ongoing sales of these items or general enquiries should be reported to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission through their Product Safety website at productsafety.gov.au or by phoning 1300 302 502.