



**CONSERVATION
COUNCIL** ACT REGION

Submission to National Capital Authority

Floating Sauna, Lake Burley Griffin

August 2024

The Conservation Council ACT Region is the peak non-government environment organisation for the Canberra region. Since 1981, we have spoken up for a healthy environment and a sustainable future for our region. We harness the collective energy, expertise and experience of our more than 40 member groups to promote sound policy and action on the environment.

We campaign for a safe climate, to protect biodiversity in our urban and natural areas, to protect and enhance our waterways, reduce waste, and promote sustainable transport and planning for our city. Working in the ACT and region to influence governments and build widespread support within the community and business, we put forward evidence-based solutions and innovative ideas for how we can live sustainably.

At a time when we need to reimagine a better future, we understand that the changes we need will only happen with the collective support of our community.

For further information please contact:

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Introduction

The Conservation Council ACT Region appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the National Capital Authority regarding floating saunas on Lake Burley Griffin.

The Council has no strong views on the construction or location of floating saunas per se.

However, the Council opposes the use of wood-burning fires on the structures.

The ACT Government has a clear policy and program to phase out wood-burning heaters.

While a traditional wood fire in a sauna would

“offer nostalgic charm and comfort, ... the smoke they emit is a direct source of pollution ... , a clear and present danger to the well-being of our community in urban and suburban areas, and a looming threat to our natural environment. Wood heaters are already prohibited in many new development areas”. (media release by Minister Vassarotti¹)

The ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment is quoted in the same media release, saying “there is no safe level of air pollution for human health. Wood heaters have no place in Canberra’s all-electric, 100% renewable energy future.”

The Council also objects to wood-burning heaters on the basis of the damage to native habitat and biodiversity from unregulated firewood collection and sales.

It would be inconsistent and hypocritical for any ACT authority to approve the use of wood-burning heaters for these saunas, especially in such a public installation, when new wood heaters are already banned in parts of Canberra.

Australian Sauna & Steam Rooms, for example, offers a variety of electric sauna heaters, perfectly effective and ambient for the purpose. This would be a simple substitute to allow the floating sauna to go ahead. The proponent will need to amend plans to show the power supply (perhaps rooftop solar and battery).

Summary and Recommendations

The Conservation Council recommends that the wood heaters be replaced with electric heaters.

¹ ACT Government, 2023, ‘ACT Government moves to phase-out wood heaters by 2045’, Media release: Minister for the Environment,
https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/vassarotti/2023/act-government-moves-to-phase-out-wood-heaters-by-2045