

'Gyrofocus'
freestanding
fireplace,
\$19,990, Focus
Fireplaces.



Above left: 'Universal 850' low wood burning fireplace, from \$3500, Jetmaster. Above right: 'A750' zero-clearance, heat-circulating open fireplace, from \$3200 with flue kit, Heatmaster.

woodburning fires

"The ambience and beauty of an open fireplace is unbeatable," says Daniel Belnick from Jetmaster. Choose your design carefully, though: traditional brick fireplaces can be expensive to build and much of the heat escapes from the chimney. In contrast, slow-combustion wood heaters sealed with a glass door offer up to eight times more heat.

Woodburners can be inbuilt, wall-mounted or freestanding, and most provide both radiant (where the closest objects are heated) and convection (where the air is warmed) types of heat. "As a rule, freestanding wood heaters are more efficient than inbuilt, and closed fires allow for slow burning, meaning better efficiency overall," explains Daniel. At peak operation, most medium-sized woodburning fires can generate about 16kW of heat, warming up to 25sqm. That said, they do require constant attention. "I always recommend wood as a secondary source of heating because of the work you have to do," says Simon Guyon from Focus Fireplaces.

With inbuilt fires, the firebox is recessed into the wall, so it can be slotted into an existing fireplace with minimal brickwork, or you can build a mock fireplace to conceal the flue. If you're renovating or building from scratch, consider a space-saving, zero-clearance fireplace, which can be placed directly up against combustible materials. Models such as the Jetmaster 'Universal Wood Inbuilt', from about \$2500, and the Heatmaster 'Open Wood Fire', from about \$2000 (both excluding installation and flue), are also designed for easy cleaning.

Wall-mounted fires sit flush on the wall and only produce radiant heat, while freestanding models such as Agnews' slow-combustion 'Kemlan Tempo Stack', from \$2500 plus installation and flue, and the 'Gyrofocus', \$19,990 plus installation, from Focus Fireplaces, are relatively simple to install – and wonderful to look at.

Due to smoke and air pollution, all wood heaters must meet Australian standards concerning particle emissions. The key to clean burning "is using well-cured firewood from sustainable sources," says Daniel. The Firewood Association of Australia lists certified suppliers on its website, firewood.asn.au. Prices vary enormously but expect to pay between \$150 and \$350 per tonne.

Design darlings of the indoor fire world, biofuel fires are *clean-burning* and beautiful to look at



'650SS' bio ethanol
fireplace, \$4295,
EcoSmart.

biofuel fires

The design darlings of the indoor fire world, biofuel fires are clean-burning and beautiful to look at, but can be expensive to run. "We are in the good-looks business," admits Stephane Thomas, director of The Fire Company and creator of EcoSmart Fires. "But the technology behind EcoSmart is also very important."

Run on ethanol (a pure methylated spirit), biofuel fires don't smoke or pollute the air, making them a sound eco option. They also don't require a flue or chimney, so recover much of the heat lost from wood and gas fires. "The energy they burn may have less heat than a woodburning fire, but you have better efficiency because all the heat stays in the room," says Stephane. Designed to be a secondary heat source, biofuel fires will warm at least 5-10sqm. Portable

freestanding models, such as the EcoSmart 'STIX', \$1795, can go outdoors.

Biofuel fires also offer plenty of creative possibilities. EcoSmart burners, starting from about \$450, can be installed into any non-combustible material with suitable clearance, so you can essentially design your own fireplace. Wall-mounted models, such as the bookshelf-style 'Wall Flame I' from Ambience Eco Fires, \$2350, and the circular Cocoon 'Vellum' from Agnews, from \$3650, transform a fireplace into a dramatic feature.

A biofuel burner with a three-litre capacity will roar for about eight hours, and five litres of ethanol fuel will set you back about \$15, equating to about \$1.20 per hour to run – more expensive than gas, but in line with woodburners. The price of ethanol should fall with increased demand, plus biofuel fires burn themselves out, meaning less worry if you leave them on accidentally.

electric fires

Simple and economical to buy, electric fires provide about 2kW of instant heat, enough to warm an area about 5sqm. "Electric fires are ideal for a spare room, bedrooms and rooms that don't have a gas line," says Anthony Azzopardi of Dimplex. "Plus, you can take them with you if you move out."

Most electric fires work like a convection heater, with a fan that blows warm air out. For safety, the flame panel is cool to touch – and, these days, the flame effect is realistic.

Electric fireplaces start at about \$300. The Optiflame and Agnews electric fires, designed to be wall-mounted or recessed into a fireplace, cost about \$1400 plus installation. The freestanding 'ElectraFlame' by Dimplex is about \$1699, ready built with mantle and surround. Running costs will vary, but expect to pay from 34 cents an hour. >



Left: 'Cube' electric fire, \$299.95, Dimplex.

Below: 'VioFlame' ethanol fireplace, \$899, Black & Stone.



Above left: Cocoon 'Vellum' fireplace, \$3650, Agnews. Above right: 'STIX' fireplace, \$1795, EcoSmart. Stockists, page 205