



**Gas Appliance  
Manufacturers  
Association of  
Australia**



As you would be aware, Mrs Sonia Sofianopoulos died in July 2017.

Following a far reaching Coronial Inquest, Coroner Jacqui Hawkins handed down her findings yesterday.

Coroner Jacqui Hawkins concluded in findings handed down on Wednesday morning that the cause of the fatal carbon monoxide poisoning was by a Vulcan Heritage gas heater, manufactured 25 years ago, but that there were also a “confluence of events” at play on the day that Ms Sofianopoulos died.

Ms Hawkins said 2008 renovation works to install weather seals at the bottom of the front of the back doors created inadequate ventilation, which meant that with the windows and doors closed, “the unit would have been sealed tight”. She said while the design of the heater may have complied with Australian standards a quarter of a century ago, the design of the Australian home had fundamentally changed in that time.

As part of Coroner Hawkins findings, she made eight recommendations as set out below:

1. I recommend that Chris Wealthy, the Chief Executive Officer of The Australian Gas Association and Paul Fearon, the Chief Executive Officer of Energy Safe Victoria, collaborate to implement a strategy and plan to phase out all OFG heaters.
2. I recommend that John Bradley, the Secretary of Department of Environment Land Water and Planning, conduct a Regulatory Impact Statement to consider the implementation of a system of mandatory continuous professional development training for Type A Gas Appliance plumbers and fitters as a condition of being registered or licenced.
3. I recommend that Timothy O’Leary, the Chief Executive Officer of Climate Technologies Pty Ltd. as the manufacturer of the Vulcan/Pyrox Heritage OFG Heater, publish an article in The Age and the Herald Sun warning the public, especially those that have this type of heater installed in their homes, about the necessity of regular servicing and maintenance. This is to ensure that it operates in a safe and efficient manner and does not expose residents to carbon monoxide poisoning under the conditions that have been identified in this Inquest.
4. I recommend that Paul Fearon, the Chief Executive Officer of Energy Safe Victoria, publish an article in their quarterly newsletter about the importance of testing for carbon monoxide spillage and provide guidance as to appropriate detection equipment to use to obtain the most accurate results and to ensure the safety of the users.
5. I recommend that Sue Eddy, the Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Building Authority, consult with relevant industry stakeholders and review its requirements for the provision of Certificates of Compliance to the extent that they relate to the servicing, testing and maintenance of OFG heaters.
6. I recommend that Enzo Alfonsetti, as Chairman of the Standards Australia – Committee Responsible for Australian Standard: 4575 Gas Appliances – Quality of Servicing to consider amending that standard to incorporate Appendix R of AS5601 as soon as practicable.
7. I recommend that Paul Fearon, the Chief Executive Officer of Energy Safe Victoria, conduct a review on the best way for Energy Safe Victoria to communicate guidelines, changes to legislation and industry updates to relevant stakeholders using all forms of modern technology including phone applications, social media and YouTube videos.
8. I recommend that Paul Fearon, the Chief Executive Officer of Energy Safe Victoria, conduct a widespread media and public awareness campaign on the dangers associated with OFG heaters, especially in the context of negative pressure and lack of adventitious ventilation and the need and importance of servicing and maintaining OFG heaters.

We understand that Coroner Jacqui Hawkins’ full finding will be posted on the Coroners Court of Victoria website and can be viewed [here](#). GAMAA is actively working with Government and Industry stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for all parties. We will keep members informed of further developments.

**GAS**  
**Connections**