

ESV media release

ESV welcomes Coroner's findings

The Victorian Coroner has released her findings following an inquest into the death of Sonia Sofianopoulos who was killed by carbon monoxide poisoning in July 2017.

"This is a very sad time for the Sofianopoulos family and I extend my condolences to them," Director of Energy Safety, Paul Fearon said.

In her findings, Coroner Hawkins said a combination of events caused Ms Sofianopoulos' death including:

- A faulty draught diverter in the open flue heater which caused carbon monoxide spillage from an open flue space heater into living areas
- The sealing of Ms Sofianopoulos' unit which significantly reduced ventilation
- The operation of exhaust fans which created what is known as a 'negative pressure' environment where carbon monoxide was drawn into living spaces

The Coroner has made a number of thoughtful recommendations many of which are already subject to comprehensive work between government, ESV and other agencies. This includes training of gasfitters on carbon monoxide spillage as well as increasing industry and community awareness.

Mr Fearon said ESV would continue to work with Government as it gives careful and serious consideration to all the recommendations.

"Most importantly, Victorians need to have their gas appliances serviced by a qualified gasfitter once every two years. I cannot stress the importance of servicing enough, particularly for open flue heaters. Gas heating is generally a safe and efficient way to heat your home but heaters need to be managed and servicing is a vital element of that," he said.

People also need to make sure there is adequate ventilation and be careful leaving exhaust fans running (such as that in the bathroom or the kitchen rangehood) when the heater is on.

Servicing should include an inspection that looks at the appliance and its installation more broadly, including testing for carbon monoxide spillage.

Finally for addition assurance householders should consider installing a CO alarm that meets the European or US standards.

For more information go to: www.esv.vic.gov.au

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