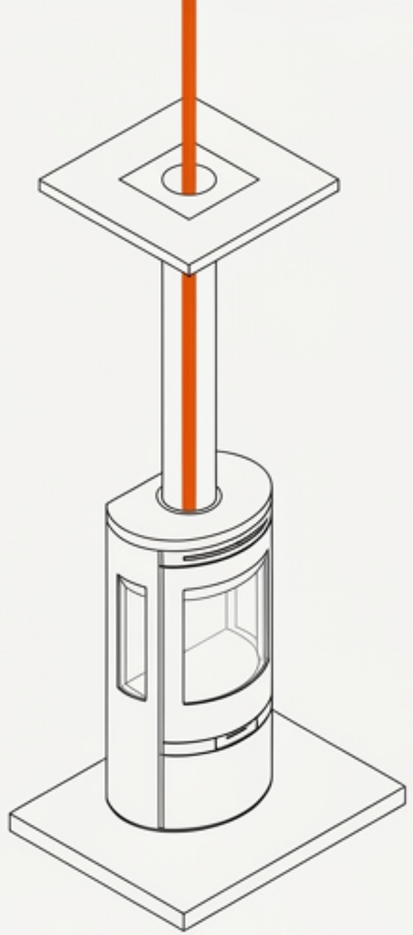
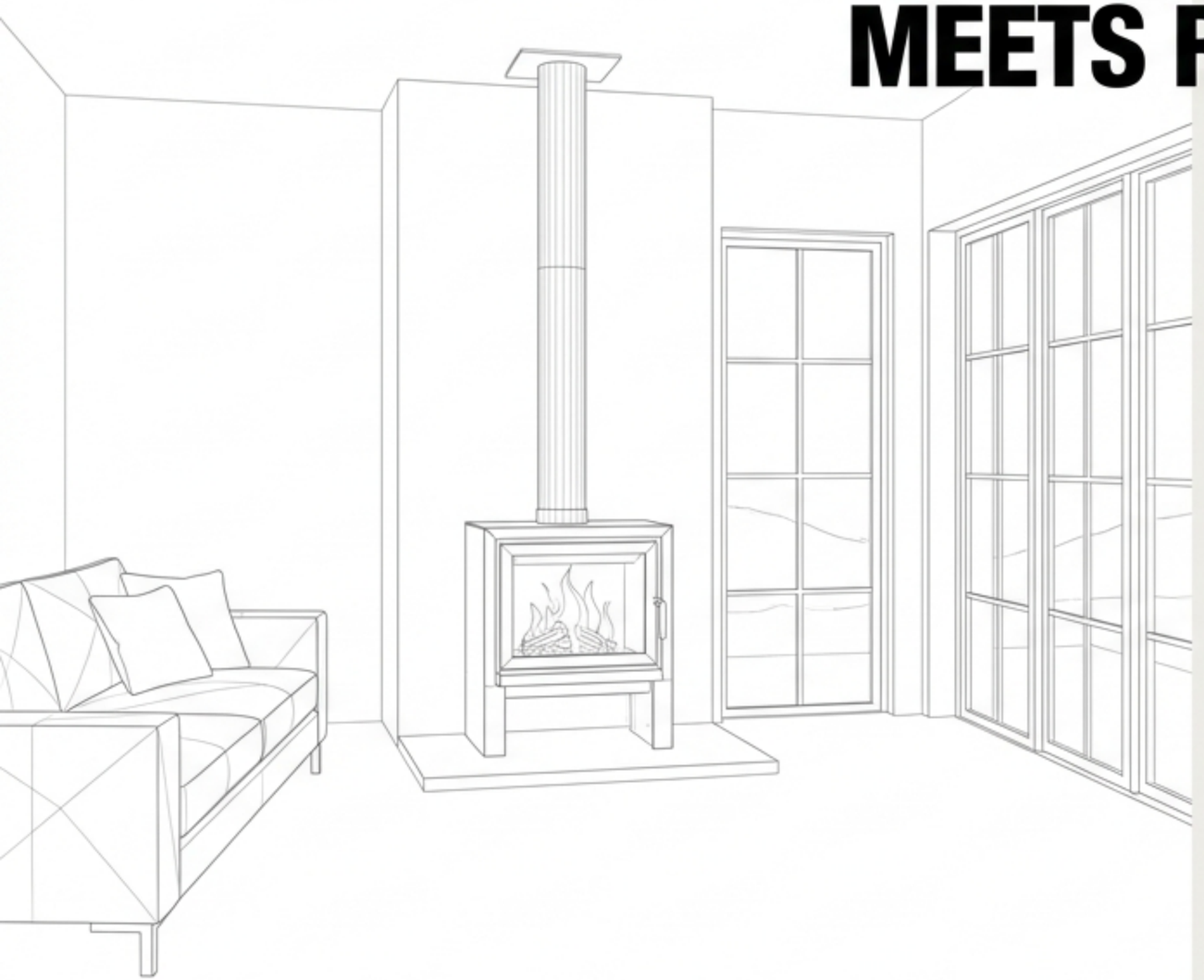


Mastering the New Zealand Wood Burnrer Installation

A definitive playbook for homeowners: navigating compliance, costs, and certified execution.



THE AESTHETIC DESIRE MEETS REGULATORY REALITY

Switching from a gas fire to a wood burner offers long-term cost savings, a rustic aesthetic, and an eco-friendly heating option. However, installing a solid fuel appliance in New Zealand is restricted building work.

The Stakes of Non-Compliance:

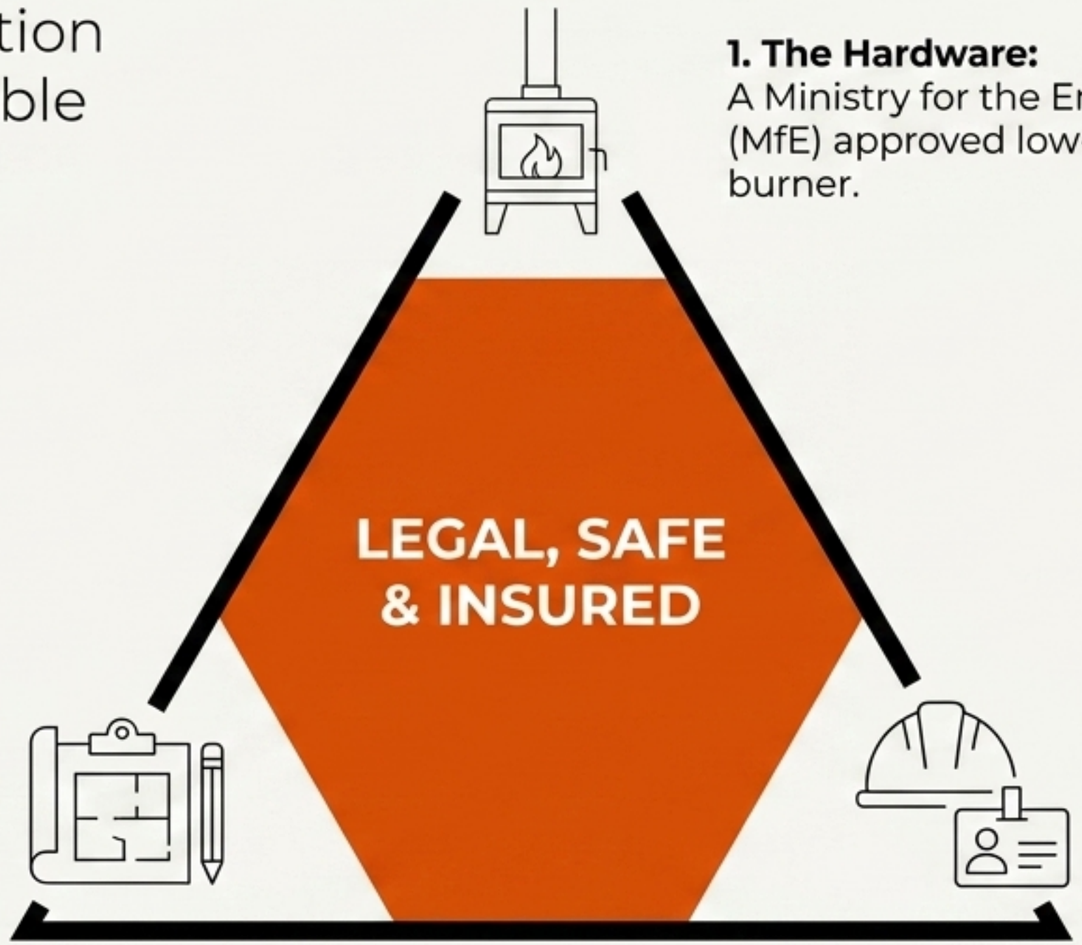
- Voided home insurance in the event of a fire.
- Council refusal to issue a Code Compliance Certificate (CCC).
- Severe indoor air quality issues and structural fire hazards.

EVALUATING THE SOLID FUEL DECISION

THE HEATING ALTERNATIVES MATRIX	AMBIENCE	RUNNING COST	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	MAINTENANCE
WOOD BURNER	HIGH (RUSTIC)	LOWER (IF WOOD SOURCED)	CARBON NEUTRAL	HIGH (CHIMNEY SWEEPS, ASH)
PELLET FIRE	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	CLEANER / AUTOMATED	MEDIUM
GAS FIRE	HIGH	HIGHER (FOSSIL FUEL)	LOWER RATING	LOW
ELECTRIC FIRE	LOW (SIMULATED)	VARIABLE	CLEAN LOCAL EMISSIONS	ZERO

THE COMPLIANCE TRIANGLE

A successful installation requires the intersection of three non-negotiable elements:

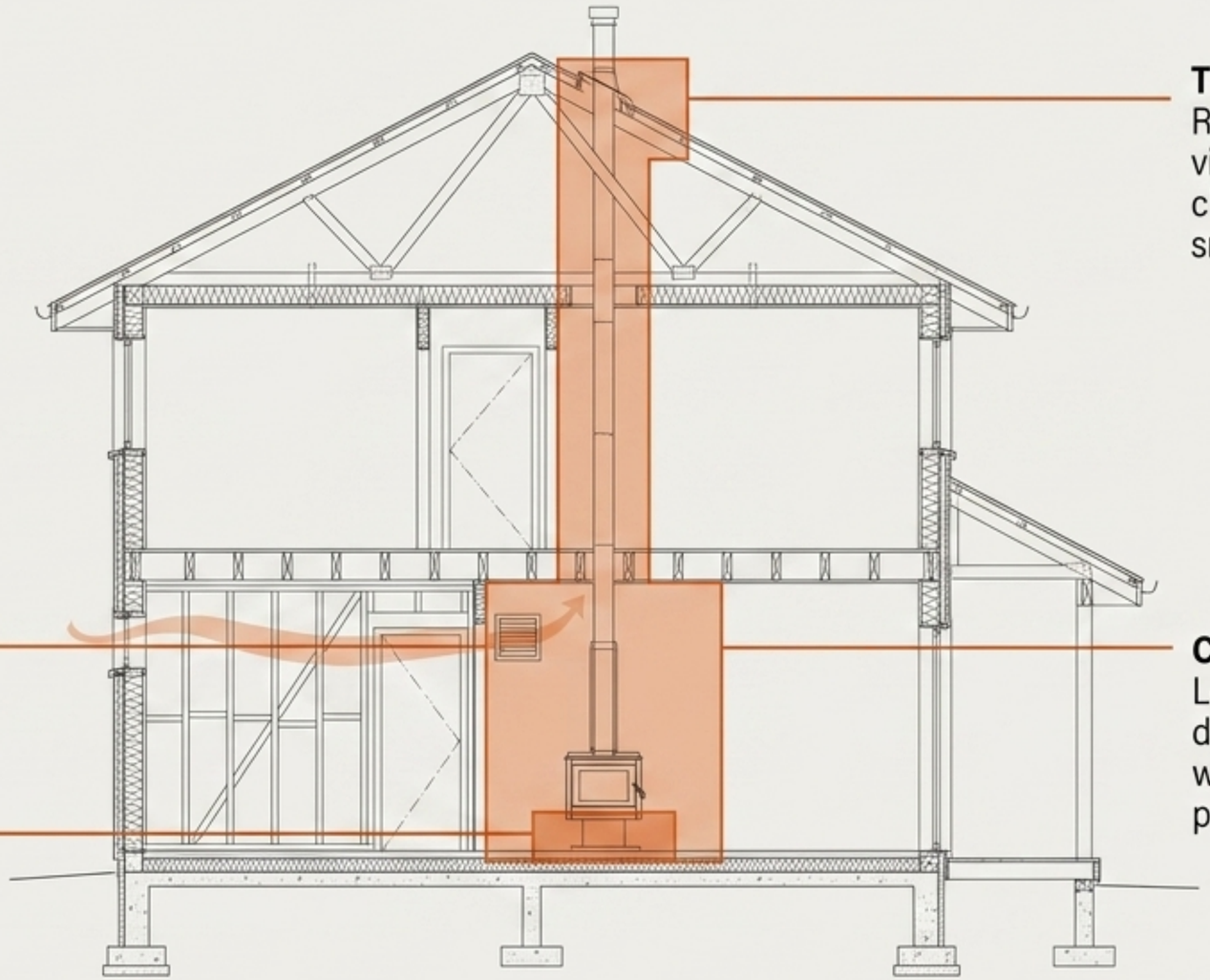


1. The Hardware:
A Ministry for the Environment (MfE) approved low-emission burner.

2. The Paperwork: An approved Council Building Consent and final Code Compliance Certificate (CCC).

3. The Practitioner: A New Zealand Home Heating Association (NZHHA) Certified Installer (SFAIT) issuing a PS3 Producer Statement.

THE PHYSICS OF COMPLIANCE (AS/NZS 2918)



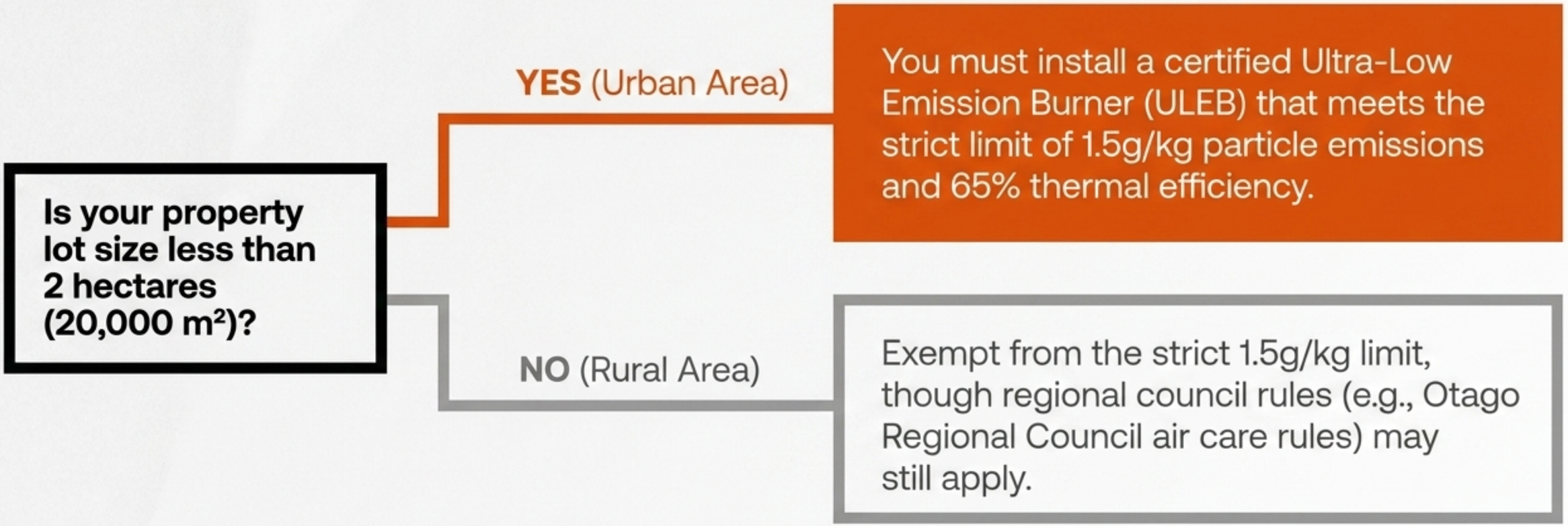
The Flue System:
Requires strict weather-tightness via roof flashing and vertical clearance to safely discharge smoke without downdrafts.

Airflow & Ventilation:
Calculated oxygen supply requirements, especially critical in modern, highly insulated homes.

Clearance Zones:
Legally mandated minimum distances from combustible walls, ceilings, and furniture to prevent radiant heat fires.

The Hearth: A mandatory fireproof floor protector capable of withstanding extreme heat and embers, tailored to specific flooring types.

Navigating MfE National Environmental Standards



WHO CAN LEGALLY EXECUTE THE WORK?

THE ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

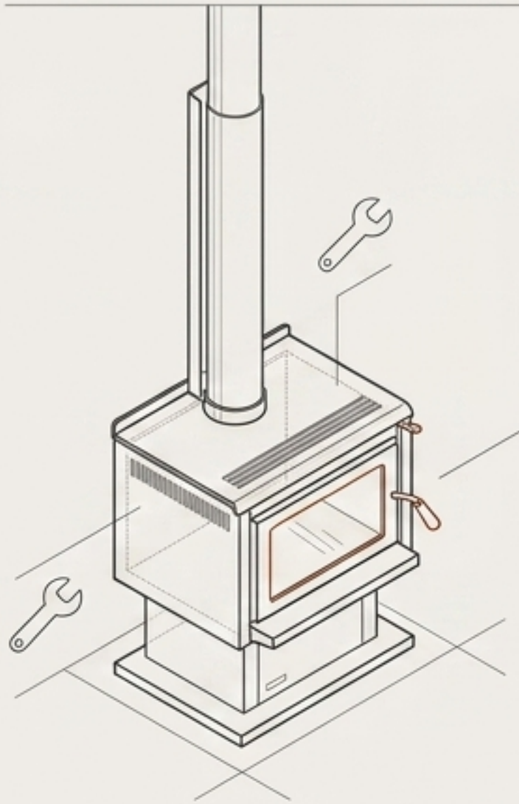
TASK	DIY HOMEOWNER	LICENSED BUILDER (LBP)	CERTIFIED SFAIT (NZHHA)
Construct the hearth base	✓	✓	✓
Frame surrounding walls	✓	✓	✓
Cut roof penetrations	✗	✓	✓
Connect appliance & flue	✗	✗	✓
Issue PS3 Producer Statement	✗	✗	✓
Sign-off for Insurance	✗	✗	✓

THE 5-STAGE PROJECT ROADMAP

Moving from concept to a fully certified, fire-ready installation requires navigating a strict sequence of events.

1 Stage 1: Appliance Specification & Durability

You cannot simply buy any fire. The Building Act specifies strict durability lifespans (Clause B2) independent of the building's overall life. — Second-hand appliances are heavily scrutinized and often require specific council waivers.

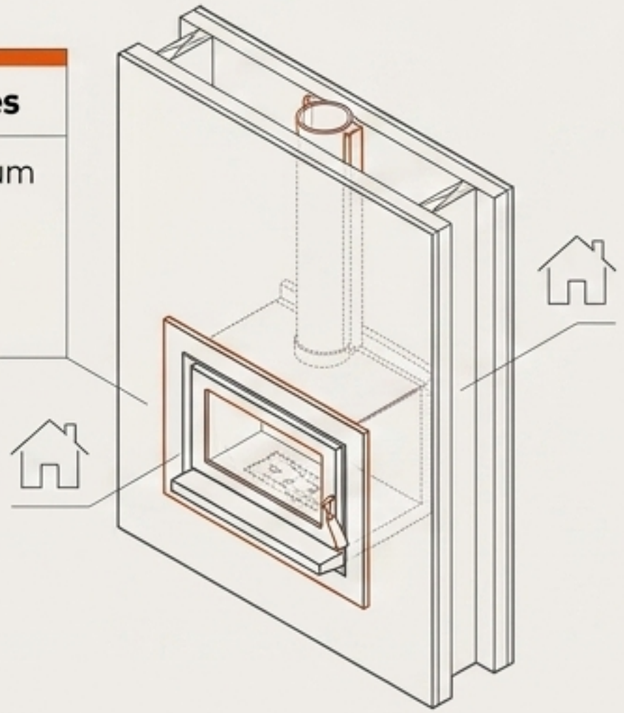


Freestanding Appliances

Must demonstrate a minimum durability of 5 years (as access, replacement, and detection of failure are easier).

Inbuilt Appliances & Flues

Must demonstrate a minimum durability of 15 years due to integration with the home's structure.

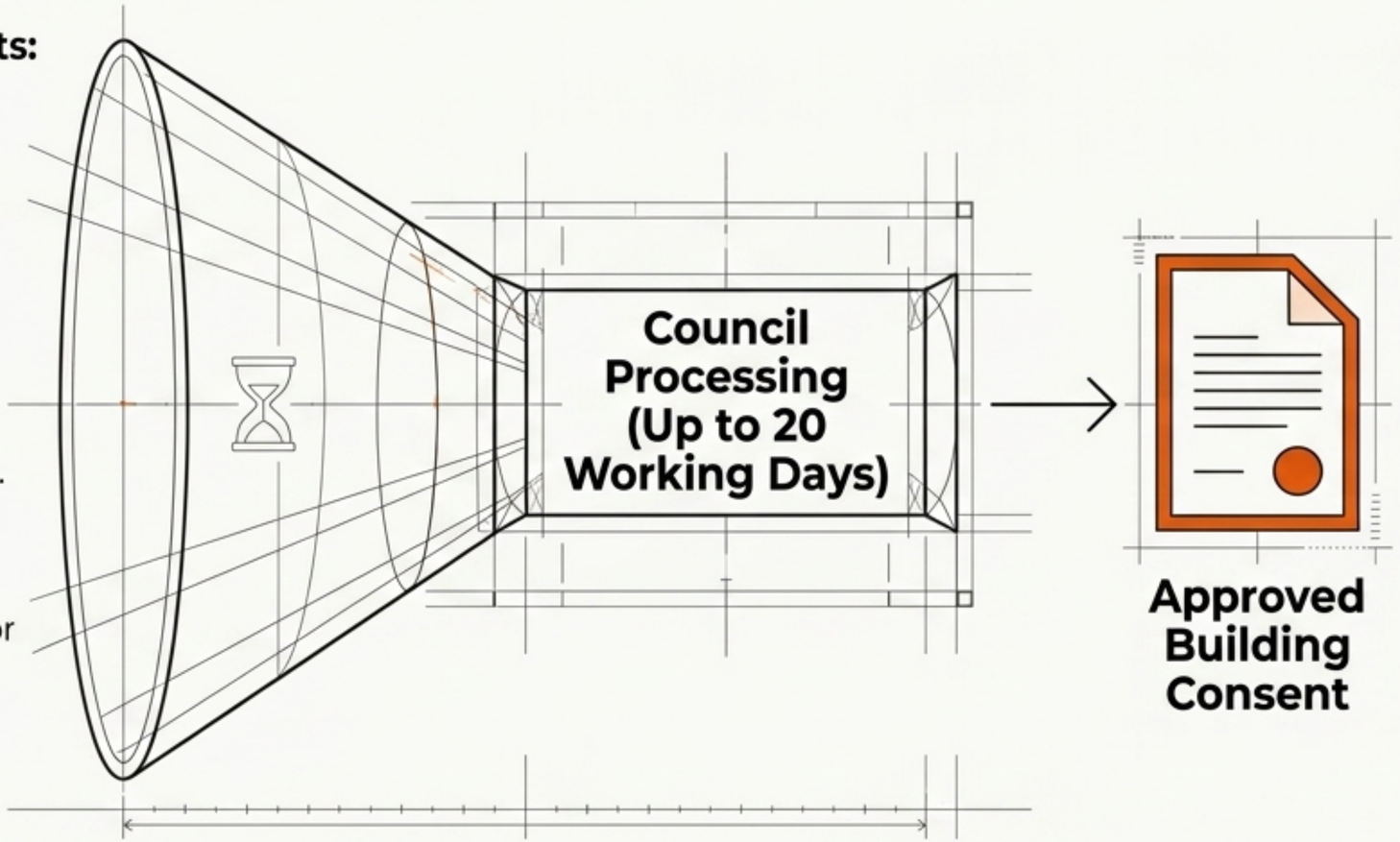


2 Stage 2: The Council Consent Bottleneck

Installing, replacing, or relocating any fire requires an approved building **consent** before physical work begins.

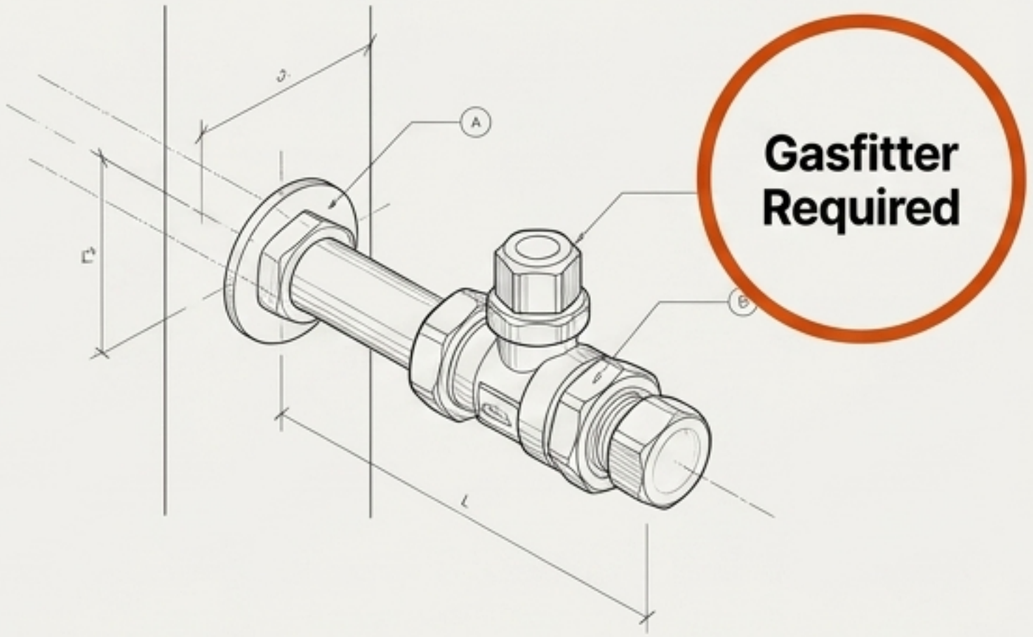
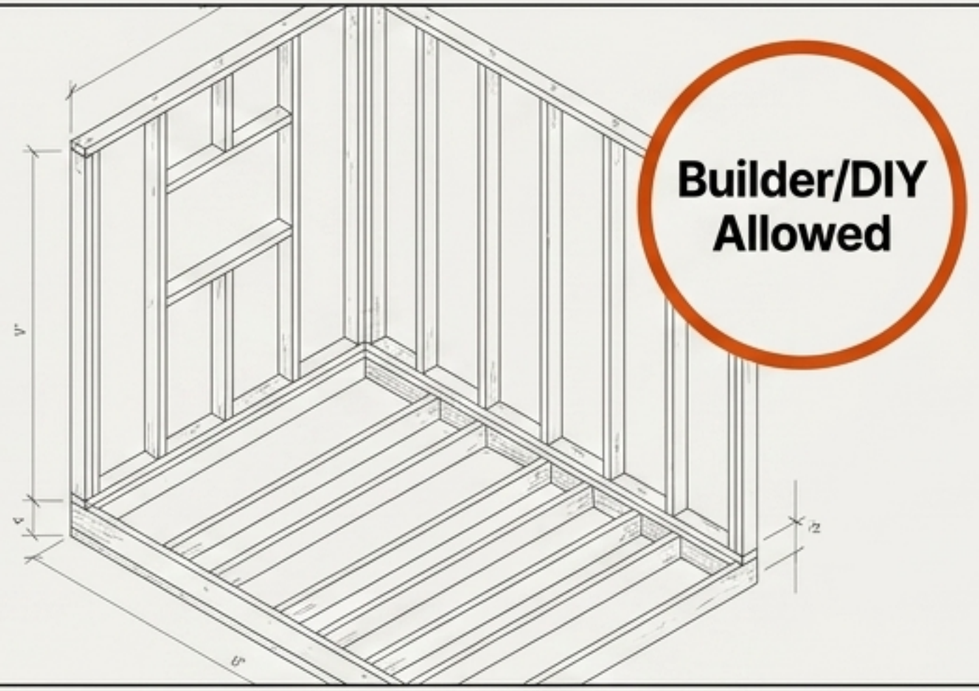
Required Application Inputs:

- Manufacturer's precise installation instructions.
- Detailed site and room layout plans showing clearances.
- Structural details for seismic restraint provisions.



3 Stage 3: Site Prep and Safe Extraction

Before the new burner arrives, the site must be made safe and structurally ready.

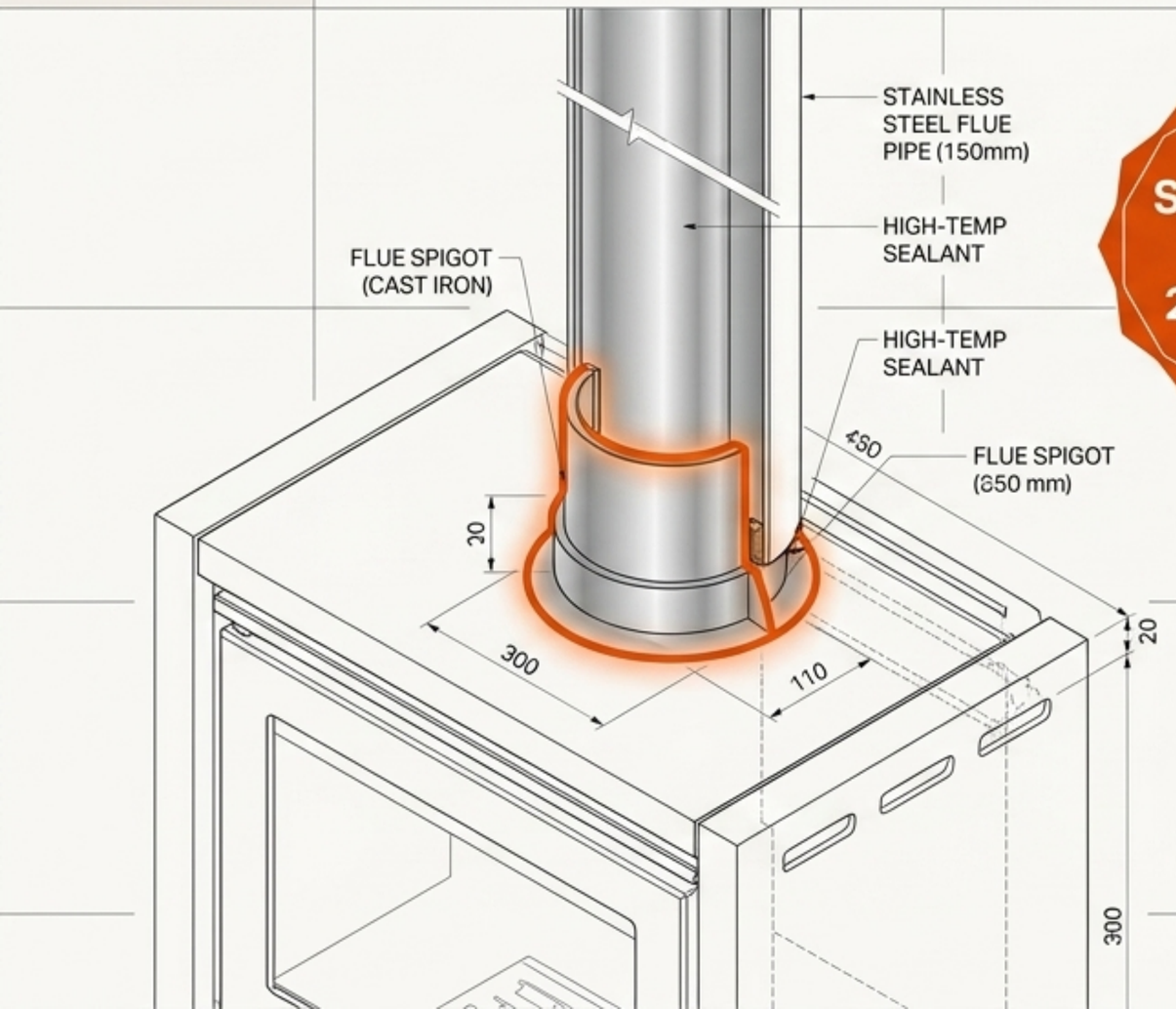
Extraction	Preparation
 Gasfitter Required	 Builder/DIY Allowed

Gas Extraction: If replacing a gas fire, a registered gas fitter is legally required to safely cap off and disconnect the existing supply to prevent catastrophic leaks.

Structural Framing: A licensed builder can alter the surrounding walls and build the foundational substrate for the hearth, ensuring the space matches the exact dimensions required by the consent plan.

4 Stage 4: Certified Execution

The physical connection of the appliance is classified as restricted building work. A Solid Fuel Appliance Installation Technician (SFAIT) must execute this stage to comply with AS/NZS 2918.



SFAIT Only: AS/NZS 2918:2001

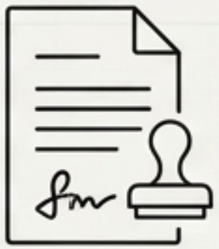
Key execution steps include:

- Fitting internal chimney liners if required for heat protection.
- Completing roof penetrations and installing weather-tight flashing.
- Executing the final appliance connection and ensuring required ventilation airflow is achieved.

5

Stage 5: Final Inspection and the CCC

Physical installation does not equal completion. You cannot legally or safely light the fire until the bureaucracy is finalized.



1. The Producer Statement

The SFAIT issues a PS3 (Producer Statement Construction), legally certifying their work matches the consent plans.

2. Council Inspection

A council official conducts an on-site visual audit against the PS3 and consented plans.

3. Code Compliance Certificate (CCC)

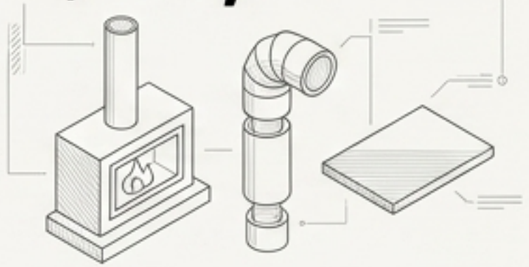
The ultimate prize. This legally validates the project, securing your insurance policy and property value.

Deconstructing the Investment

The Three-Pillar Investment Breakdown

Pillar 1: **Hardware**

$1,500 – $30,000+



Covers the MfE-approved burner unit, specialized flue system, and heat-resistant hearth materials.

Pillar 2: **Execution**

$2,500 – $5,000

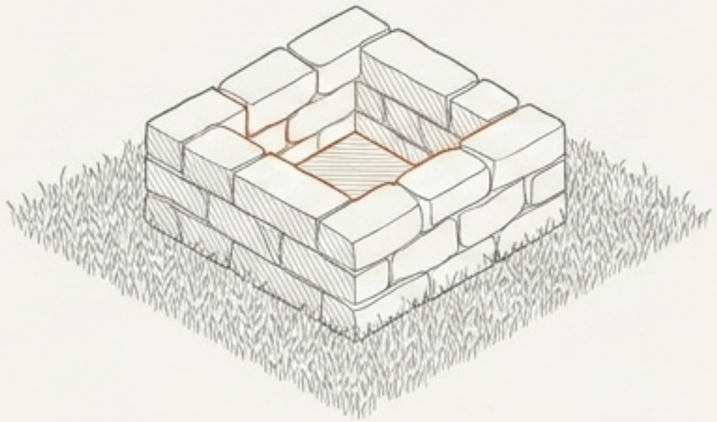
Covers SFAIT skilled labour, roof penetrations, chimney sweeping, and gas-fitter disconnection fees (if retrofitting).

Pillar 3: **Bureaucracy**

$327+ base

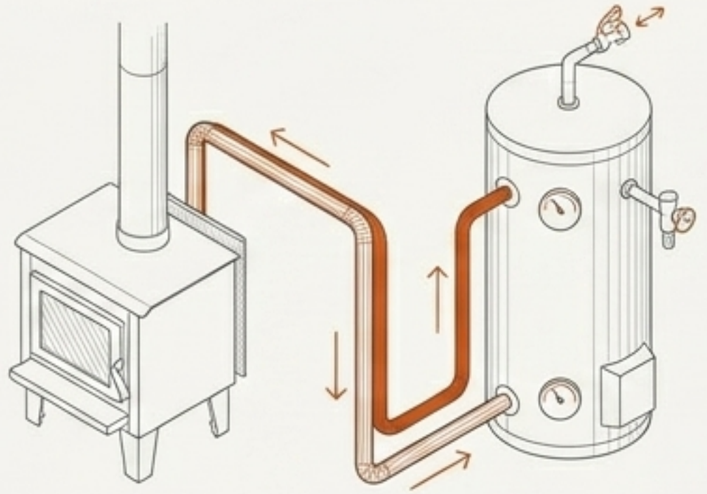
Fixed council fees for the consent application, plus separate deposits for mandatory inspection activities (e.g., ~$195 per inspection).

Navigating Specialized Installations



Outdoor Fireplaces

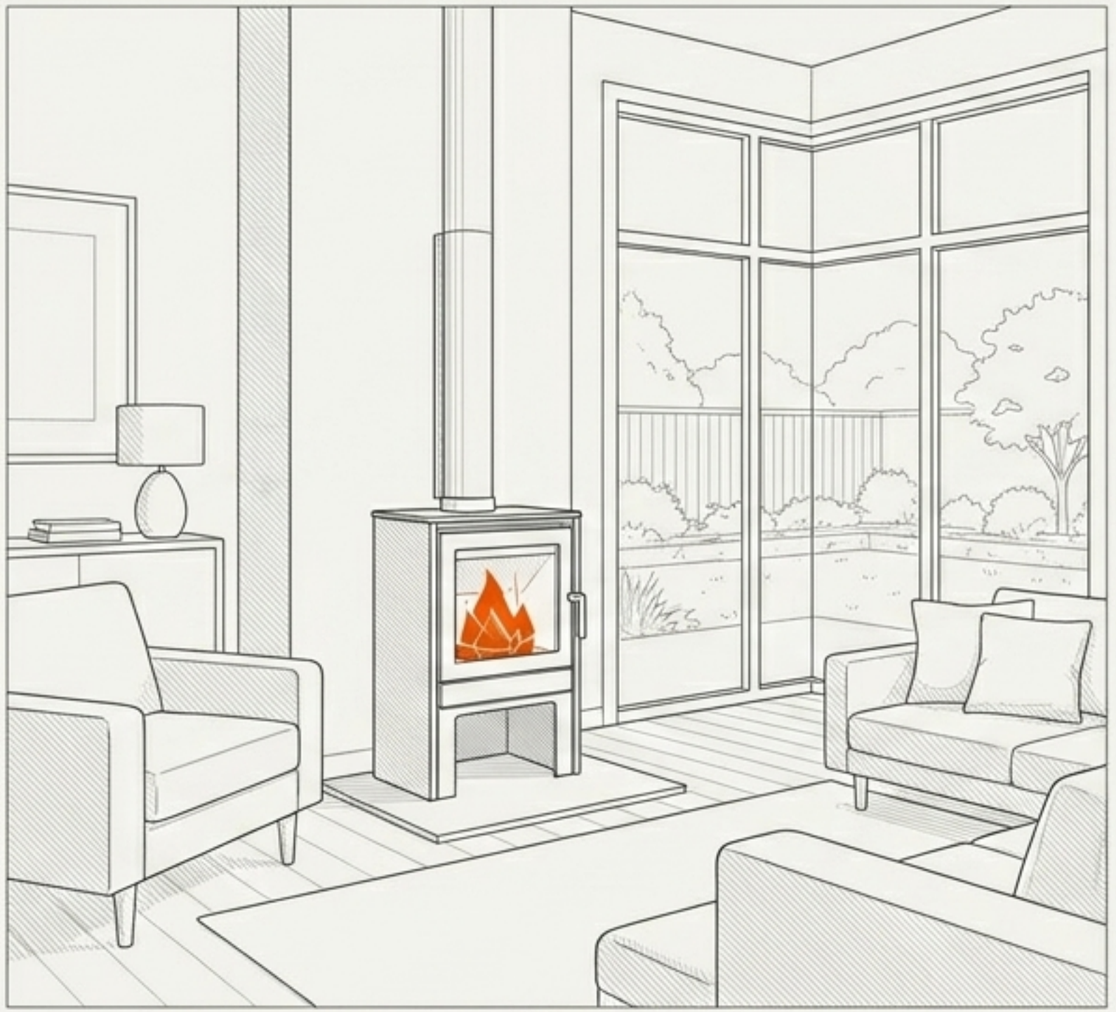
Exempt from building consent ONLY IF: built directly on the ground, unroofed, max 2.5m high, max 1m² cooking surface, and situated **at least 1m from any boundary or building**.



Wetback Systems

Always require a building consent. Because water is being heated by the fire, the installation must be carried out by (or under the direct supervision of) a certifying plumber to ensure safe water temperatures and pressure management.

Protecting the Ambience



A compliant wood burner is more than an aesthetic upgrade; it is a structural modification to your home's thermal and safety envelope.

By securing an approved MfE appliance, navigating the council consent, and trusting execution to a certified NZHHA SFAIT, you ensure that the warmth of your home is matched by the absolute certainty of your investment.

Ensure your ongoing safety by committing to regular chimney sweeping and maintenance.