FACT SHEET

Energy Efficient Homes

Whether you're building a home or moving into a new one, there is plenty you can do to make it more comfortable and energy efficient.

1. Solar Orientation of the Home

How the home is placed on the land is important.

The 'ideal' home has the daytime living areas facing north with the long axis of the house running east-west.

In the real world, this is fairly rare, but the good news is that variations on the orientation can be up to 30 degrees to the east and 20 degrees to the west of true north, with no major effects on the solar advantage.

2. Design and Layout

Your home's design and layout also can play a significant role in reducing energy costs.

For instance, having daytime living areas facing north captures the winter sun. When you tile these areas, the rooms warm up even more in winter – while effective eaves and blinds keep them from being too hot in the summer.

Having an open plan style of home will also help. Not only does it make the best use of all available space, it should allow light to penetrate easily and air to circulate freely around the home.

However you should be able to close off areas to contain warmth when needed.

3. Insulation

Wall and ceiling insulation is another effective way of minimising the need for heating in winter and cooling in summer.

Up to 40 per cent of winter heat can escape through an un-insulated ceiling and about the same amount of heat can be stopped from entering the home during summer.

4. Windows and Shading

While north-facing windows and doors let in the winter sun, in summer you may need suitably designed eaves or pergolas to keep the harsh summer heat out.

In areas of extreme heat, external blinds or shutters are a great idea.

In the cooler months, our homes lose the majority of their heat through windows and sliding doors.

Close-fitting drapes, blinds or internal shutters trap a layer of insulating air between themselves and the glass and make a big difference to how much heat escapes.

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5. Landscaping

Out in the garden if needed, you can establish shady deciduous trees to help block the summer sun. Of course in the winter, they allow the sun through to warm and light your home.

Ideally place them as far from the house as possible so as to get shade but not constantly clean (out) gutters or create bush-fire danger.

If you've built pergolas, plant them out with attractive vines that again will allow sun to shine in Winter.

6. Heating and Cooling

Finally, the heating and cooling devices you choose for your home will have a major impact on your energy efficiency – and bills.

Choose a gas heater or high efficiency reverse cycle air conditioning system. If the system has adjustable louvers, adjust them towards the ceiling when cooling, and the floor when warming.

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