Energy Matters

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Cooling your House in Summer

..get your house cool over night... and keep it cool….

Inside this issue:

Its probably a bit late, but it is worth talking about keeping your house cool in summer. Most of it is fairly obvious, but sometimes the obvious is overlooked.

Get it cool. The cooler the house is first thing in the morning, the longer it will stay cool, so open all of the windows and doors and let the breeze blow through. This is free cooling and the cooler the house is in the morning, the longer you have before you need to turn on mechanical cooling!

Keep it cool. First thing in the morning, close all the windows and doors and close the blinds. This will keep the heat out and again delay the need for mechanical cooling. The biggest killer is direct sunlight through the windows. While internal blinds keep some of the sun light out, they tend to get hot, which heats the air between the window and the curtain which then circulates through the room. Outside blinds, trees or shade cloth are much better for keeping the sun out.

Close doors/open doors. The main way heat travels between rooms is through open doors. Normally some rooms heat up quicker than others. Firstly, try to live in the cooler rooms. Secondly, close the doors into the hotter rooms to trap the heat.

Be a fan of fans. Fans are the cheapest way to cool down. They drop the apparent temperature by 2-3 degrees, cost little to run and are cheap to buy. The one thing to be careful off is not to disturb any layers of hot air. In a normal room, the air at ceiling level can be up to 10 degrees hotter than air at ground level. This acts as a natural barrier to heat coming through the roof, and provided you are not really tall, hot ceilings are not a problem. (This is one reason why old houses with high ceilings stay cooler). So, don't turn your fan up high. Also, try to blow the air horizontally, not vertically. This is one of the problems with using ceiling fans during the day.

Use evaporative cooling. Evaporative cooling is generally much cheaper than reverse cycle air conditioning, although it breaks down on really hot or really humid days. An evaporative cooler is really just a fan blowing over a moist filter. They suck dry air from outside, add water (which cools the air down) then blow it through the house and out the window. Normally turning an evaporative cooler up fast has minimal advantage. It just uses more power. Experiment with it, but normally you find running it at a low speed is quite sufficient.

Is it worth cooling the house down early? While an air conditioner works better when the outside air is cooler, turning your air conditioner on early to "get the house cool" is generally not worth it. The stored "coldness" escapes quicker from a cold house. It is far better to delay turning on the air conditioner as long as possible.

The Green Loans program

.. By the end of March, the Green Loans Program will no longer contain Green Loans..

You may have seen articles in the Newspaper lately about the Green Loans program. Although it has not attracted the same excitement as the Insulation program, it has had its fair share of problems.

Fortunately, most of these problems have effected the assessors, rather than those being assessed.

The root of the problem again has been the "gold rush" mentality. There have been many people who have got into the industry because they saw it as easy work. The government talked about having 1,000 assessors. They ended up with nearly 5,000. The government planned to have free assessments for 300,000 assessments over 5 years. There have been 200,000 assessments in 7 months.

This has made it very difficult to be able to place booking on the Green Loans phone line (you can be on hold for several hours) and reports are taking much longer than the promised two weeks!

Recent changes may help since assessors have been limited to assessments a week, making it a part time job, rather than a career. They have increased the number of houses to be done by 600,000, but assessments done after the 20th March will not be able to apply for Green Loans. This shouldn't effect those still waiting for reports, except that some of the financial institutions are no longer offering the loans.

The Sustainable Living Festival and Ethics

..we will not get world agreement until we at least recognise that our cuts must be significantly greater than other countries.....

I was fortunate to have time to visit the Sustainable Living Festival a couple of weeks ago and was very impressed with what was on offer. There were a lot of stalls and exhibitions, including one that offered double glazing fitted to existing windows, but the best part was the many talks that were put on.

The best that I found was by Peter Singer on the ethics of Climate Change. He strongly attacked our government's idea that we will only do "our fair share". His problem was the definition of "our fair share". Our government says we will only reduce our emissions by 25% if everyone else does the same. While this is reasonable when comparing our cuts to US cuts, it is unreasonable when compared to the underdeveloped country.

He argued that since we (on a per head basis) generated more of the CO2 pre-

sent in the atmosphere we should make bigger cuts now. The current imbalance where we emit 10 times the amount per capita as other countries is indefensible and by 2050 we should be aiming for all countries to have the same emissions per head of population of around 1 tonne per year. That is a 95% cut in our emissions, compared to a 0 percent cut for some other countries who are already at that level.

While I think it will be hard for countries like Australia and America to accept such ideas, we will not get world agreement until we at least recognise that our cuts must be significantly greater than other countries.