

Media Release

From the Building Commission

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6 Star Mythbusters- Common myth-conceptions

Myth 1 – House Energy Rating software must be used to comply with 6 Star requirements

There are a number of ways to comply with the energy efficiency requirements of the National Construction Code (NCC). One option is a House Energy Rating tool using accredited software (plus a solar hot water system or rainwater tank). Another option is to meet deemed-to-satisfy (DTS) provisions of the NCC. Compliance with the DTS provisions provide the building designer with several ways to meet the 6 Star performance requirements.

DTS provisions contain five essential elements for a building designer to meet the 6 Star performance requirements. They involve:

- 1 Building fabric (floors, roof, walls) +
- 2 External glazing units of windows or doors or skylights +
- 3 Sealing of building (draught stoppers) +
- 4 Air movement (ventilation openings) +
- 5 Services, such as insulation around ducts and pipes and lighting.

In addition to meeting these requirements, a rainwater tank connected to all toilets or solar hot water system is required.

There is also the option to develop an alternative solution to meet the performance requirements of the NCC.

It's a bit like getting to the football - whether by bus, tram, train or on foot there a number of ways that will get you to the game.

Myth 2 - Compliance is difficult

Compliance is simply about planning early for good design.

Achieving 6 Star energy efficiency or beyond is not difficult or technically complicated.

The 6 Star provisions are flexible and performance based requirements. They do not require exotic technologies or construction processes but call for conventional, readily available building materials and techniques. This means homeowners, builders, and designers have considerable choice in the design and construction of new homes to comply.

Options available to the designer to achieve 6 Star performance include: increasing insulation levels; optimizing the building orientation; modifying window size and location; use of high performance glazing systems; and fine tuning the building's internal design.

Myth 3 - Building or renovating to a 6 Star energy efficiency level is expensive

The capital cost of energy efficient design is modest compared to overall project cost.

Leading builders are already offering competitively priced new homes with energy efficiency well in excess of the 6 Stars requirements.

The sound design and building principles that 6 Star requires will see the homeowner's initial investment recovered with lower electricity, gas and water bills.

6 Star Mythbusters continued

Myth 4 - 6 Star is the highest level of energy efficiency that a home can reach

6 Star is the *minimum* national regulatory requirement in the NCC. In fact, the rating scale goes up to 10 Stars.

A 10 Star home requires zero energy to be used for heating and cooling.

That a 10 Star design is achievable in practice has been demonstrated by the fact that some Victorians are *already* realising the economic, health and environmental benefits of a home that is cool in summer and warm in winter without electric or gas appliances for heating and cooling.

Myth 5 – A good energy rating automatically results in lower household energy consumption and lower fuel bills

Not true. The construction of the home and how an occupant uses a home's appliances and services determines whether there is lower energy consumption and lower fuel bills.

Myth 6 - If you live in a 6 Star home you can behave as you wish and not consider the consequences.

A 6 Star home can definitely have a large carbon footprint if it is operated poorly by its occupants. It can be expensive to operate as well.

The trend to building bigger homes leads to proportionately larger carbon footprints and running costs – something the energy efficiency standard does not attempt to address since house size is a matter of consumer choice.

Large screen plasma televisions and other power draining appliances operating on standby power are also greenhouse guzzlers.

A 6 Star home has great potential to save energy compared with the average Melbourne home, which probably has performance below a 2 Star level. So long as the 6 Star home is operated sensibly and used by those who live in it.

Myth 7 – Mud brick and timber-floored homes can't comply with 6 Star

Not true. Because 6 Star is a performance-based standard a wide range of options are available for homeowners, builders and designers to achieve the required level of energy efficient at design stage, irrespective of the building construction type.

Not only is this true for the typical project home with brick veneer and concrete slab construction, but also timber-floored designs, mud brick designs, transportable homes, and other non-conventional building types.

An accredited House Energy Rater can provide the designer with a range of cost effective options without compromising home owner needs or expectations.

Myth 8 - 6 Star is an inflexible & onerous regulatory requirement

The process for achieving a 6 Star rating is very flexible. Although there is no single formula for achieving the required energy rating, a range of design features can be used.

Most important of these are:

- Optimizing building orientation
- Adding wall, ceiling and under-floor insulation – a most cost-effective approach
- Attention to glazing performance, frame type, size, positioning, and window shading.

Good design is the key to meeting the 6 Star Standard.



6 Star Mythbusters continued

Myth 9 – Owners of existing homes don't need to be concerned about energy efficiency improvements

While it is correct to say that the mandatory 6 Star requirements only apply to new building work, there are good reasons why the owners of existing homes also need to consider energy efficiency upgrades.

Firstly, there is the matter of *rapidly escalating energy prices*, which have been well documented in the media lately, not to mention the looming Carbon Tax. The best way to insulate yourself against rapidly increasing energy bills, and avoid paying the Carbon Tax altogether, is by improving the energy efficiency of your home, your appliances and your family's transport modes.

Secondly, introduction of the national scheme for *Mandatory Disclosure of Residential Energy Efficiency* is expected to also impact on the resale value of existing homes when they come onto the market. A similar scheme has been operating in the ACT for over a decade.

Experience with the Canberra scheme suggests that each additional energy efficiency rating star can add up to \$9,000 to the resale value of an established house.

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