

Sustainability Declaration

From 1st January 2010 it will be compulsory to receive a Sustainability Declaration as part of selling documentation for any house, townhouse (class 1a buildings) or unit (class 2 building).

This declaration will inform you, the buyer, about the sustainability features of a property outlining the value of those features in your new home.

The declaration will identify the home's environmental and social sustainability features in four key areas:

- Energy
- Water
- Access
- Safety

This process is designed to help buyers understand both how to make homes more sustainable and what the potential may be for ongoing savings associated with sustainable features.

When assessing a potential property for purchase, you'll now be given information such as:

Energy

- Number and percentage of fixed internal energy efficient lights
- Size of solar power generation facilities
- Solar water heating products
- Window treatments
- Insulation material and Rating Value

Water

- Rainwater tanks (number and size)
- Number of shower heads (including rating)
- Size and WELS rating of toilets

Access

- Size of door openings and hall ways
- Number of step-free showers and grab rails
- Style of entry facility (ramp, flat ground, etc)

Safety

- Installed smoke alarms and number
- Electrical safety switch
- Pool / spa fencing

The declaration will ask for the annual cost of electricity and water, and will calculate the number of kgs of Greenhouse Gas Emissions produced by the household for the previous year.

As a prospective buyer, it is important for you to keep in mind that these figures are indicators only and will reflect personal usage patterns of the current occupiers. If someone chooses to use the air-conditioners for more than 6 hours per day, with the doors and windows open, doesn't necessarily suggest that the house is a hot house and needs this style of cooling.

You may be somewhat more conscious of good sustainable practice and only run the air-conditioners for 2 months of the year, 1-3 hours per night and at optimal temperatures (24°C in summer and 20°C in winter). This alone will reduce associated electricity costs by 30% or maybe more.

There may be teenagers living in the household currently, and they may shower twice a day for 20+ minutes per shower. This alone has a huge impact on household water consumption. The average 8 minute shower, with a water saver rose still uses 68 litres of water.

What's the point of this?

There is growing concern about the impacts of climate change and the need to improve existing housing stock. Encouraging you, as a prospective buyer, to make informed choices about the sustainability performance of your home is becoming increasingly important.

Properties with a greater number of sustainability features potentially have lower energy costs and use less water. They can also be more comfortable to live in and generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

Did you know that the average Australian home produces the equivalent to 10 balloons of greenhouse gas every 20 seconds? And the biggest contributor to that is electricity usage.

Things to look for...

Insulation – new guidelines being introduced in 2010 suggest that insulation will need to achieve a minimum of R3.0. This rating is dependant on the type of product chosen, and will be dependant of the style of house it is being installed into, including the installation method. Be sure to understand what is the best product and installation method for your prospective house.

Hot water systems – check that an off-peak meter has been installed. This may not be in place in older homes, which may also have older hot water systems. It can be expensive to have a second (off-peak) meter installed, but then it can be very expensive to have your inefficient hot water system charged at peak rates...

When looking at your prospective homes' hot water service, be sure that you match your household hot water needs with the type and size of the system. If you need to upgrade the system as part of the purchase plan, consider the type of systems available; solar, heat pump and instantaneous.

Air conditioning units – if the house doesn't have air conditioning installed, you may have found yourself a naturally cool home which doesn't need additional cooling.

Solar power – is certainly a huge benefit, but check the placement of the cells for effectiveness. Also check the capacity of the installed inverter as it may limit the potential for future expansion of the system.

Environmental surrounds – what is the level of radiation from neighbouring homes? Are there exposed windows within your prospective property that will allow the passage of a high degree of sun radiation? Exposed windows may radiate as much as 10°C hotter than normal. Close fitting heavy weight curtains (with enclosed pelmets) assist with managing this heat flow. Verticals and venetians are not the most effective because heat waves radiate through openings.

Check impacted walls for insulation and consider your opportunities for reducing this heat impact.

Shading – is an important element for reducing the heat transfer into homes. That always hot western wall may be 5 - 10°C cooler with the planting of a deciduous tree (providing shade in the summer and heating in the winter). Consider also external structures that may provide heat relief.

Energy efficient lighting – incandescent light bulbs are no longer available for purchase but existing fittings will take a number of newer styled energy efficient bulbs. You have the choice of halogen and compact fluorescent bulbs and some new generation LED's coming into the market.

Be sure that recessed fixtures (lights, fans, etc) don't exceed more than 20% of the ceiling surface as this can impact the effectiveness of any installed insulation.

For more information contact:

Lisa Erhart, Principal Dynamic Solutions

T: 07 3878 7113 | F: 07 3378 6535 | M: 0418 822 108 |

Lisa.Erhart@dynamicecosolutions.com.au

www.dynamicecosolutions.com.au