

KEEPING WARMER IN WINTER

With winter now with us for the next three months, we can expect much colder weather than we have been enjoying so far this year. Master Builders director Michael McLean provides a few tips on how to keep your house warmer during winter and save on electricity bills at the same time.

ALL new homes are now required to be built to a minimum six-star energy rating based on a National Heating Energy Rating Scheme (NATHERS) or a similar 'deemed to satisfy' rating mechanism. New homes are therefore designed with energy-efficient features literally built into them, unlike older-style homes.

So if you're comparing your electricity or gas bills with your neighbour's and the age of your homes vary, don't be surprised if your accounts vary.

With electricity costs going up by Seven per cent in the 2018-19 State Budget (18 per cent over the last two years) some households might struggle to pay their power bills. But there are some simple things that you can do to reduce heat loss through air leakage from the inside of your home, which will help to reduce your power bills. For example:

1. Utilise the north winter sun to heat your home. Allow the winter sun to penetrate deep into your home. This will heat any thermal mass you may have in your home, such as concrete, brick walls or tiles.
2. Heat always travels to cold places, so close the drapes or blinds later in the day to trap the warmth in your home.
3. The biggest heat loss areas are your windows (glass and frame), so close them at night.
4. Close off unused parts of the house such as bedrooms, laundry or other areas.
5. Close off vents in your ceiling if you have evaporative air-conditioning ducts.
6. Keep your external doors closed to stop cold air coming in.

7. Remove shading and structures from around your home where possible.
8. Wear warm clothing to keep generated body heat close to your skin.
9. Check out carefully what type of heater would be the most effective and economical for your use. For those with a timer it can be a blessing in the morning when you wake up to a warm room.

Everyone has different circumstances, and a little bit of thought can change the comfort of your home to your best advantage.

Cost-effective measures can reduce energy consumption for heating and cooling by 50 per cent across a range of housing types and climates. This would also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The way homeowners live in their homes will have the biggest bearing on how energy-efficient their homes are. The same principle applies to how you drive your car in relation to fuel economy.

Master Builders welcomes the Australian Renewable Energy Agency developing a pilot grants program to subsidise the construction of zero-energy homes. New residential estates, aged care developments and residential strata buildings could be funded under this innovative pilot.

With electricity costs likely to continue to increase, homeowners should also consider the pros and cons of installing solar panels to reduce power costs in the years ahead.

If you are thinking about building your new home and would like to discuss energy-efficient designs and initiatives, contact Eddie Roe at True North Energy on 9581 2086.

