

HOW IN-"ACCURATE" IS IT?

A recent, and subsequent articles, in the "*Australian*" newspaper has brought into question the credibility of the nations energy modelling software AccuRate.

The article highlights concerns about errors in AccuRate raised by energy efficiency expert, Professor Terry Williamson of the University of Adelaide, which CSIRO have acknowledged do exist.

Timber Queensland have maintained for a long time that results of running the energy rating software for some house designs in a number of climatic zones produces outcomes that are not rational.

For example, recent assessments on a well designed, lightweight modern style Queensland achieves 8 Stars in Townsville (with a little winter heating) but the exact same house orientated exactly the same etc only achieves 2.5 stars on the Sunshine Coast.

Why? Because the software predicts that it needs significant winter heating from May through to September. Maybe Terry Williamson is right when he calls for withdrawal of the software until it is fixed.

CONCERNS OVER ACCURATE

A3P has written to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, the Hon Greg Combet MP, expressing concerns about the energy rating software "AccuRate", which is used by home designers and builders across Australia as a tool for meeting the energy efficiency requirements of the Building Code of Australia (BCA).

Peter Juniper of A3P says AccuRate requires urgent attention to ensure buildings constructed using its outputs will, within reasonable tolerances, deliver the thermal performance (star ratings) it defines and that building materials are not assessed unfavourably because of inaccuracies in the software that have now been identified.

"Action is now required to rectify the identified shortfalls and prevent further penalties being incurred daily by the timber and house building industries across Australia," he stated.

A3P has asked that the Government assigns an immediate high priority on addressing this issue by appropriating the necessary funding for CSIRO to rectify the problems with AccuRate, and provide for any further necessary research to facilitate this process as soon as possible.

SIX STAR STANDARD

From May 1, 2011, all new homes, home renovations, alterations and additions in Victoria and Western Australia will need to comply with a 6 Star Standard when it comes into effect in the Building Code of Australia.

This requirement was phased in with Queensland, ACT and South Australia commencing in 2010, with the remainder of the states and territories set to come on stream in 2011.

According to the Building Commission Victoria, the 6 Standard applies to the thermal performance of a home, renovation or addition; plus the installation of either a solar hot water system or a rainwater tank for toilet flushing.

Some simple building work, not requiring a building permit, will not be affected by the new regulations.

However all new homes and building projects, involving home extensions and major renovations, will need to comply with 6 Star.

10 STAR CHALLENGE

The Building Designers Association of Victoria (BDAV) has announced a 10 Star Energy Challenge, offering the Victorian building design fraternity the opportunity to design 10 Star energy efficient homes, and to compete for an award for the best 10-star design.

Although 10 Star houses are probably only appropriate for those in the community who are totally committed to 'making a difference', designers who 'know what it takes' will design cost-effective 6, 7 and 8 Star houses with ease.

Whilst the BDAV envisages this 10-Star Challenge will be an on-going campaign, entrants wishing to be considered for the first wave of recognition must submit their entries to the BDAV by 4pm on Monday, 30 May 2011; to info@bdav.org.au, with '10-Star Challenge Submission' in the subject line. Any queries may be directed to the BDAV at info@bdav.org.au or by phone on (03) 9416 0227.