

7 SEP 2011

39 Millers Road
ALTONA VIC 3018

4 September 2011

Residential Energy Efficiency Team
Dept of Climate Change & Energy Efficiency
GPO Box 854
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Re Building Mandatory Disclosure

Dear Sirs,

I am very much against sustainability certification for most existing properties for the following reasons:

1. People buying houses (other than being influenced by price) look first of all at location (near schools? shops? public transport? grandma?) and the size and personal appeal of the property. I am convinced that people interested in sustainability (I am) will look at the above aspects first, then buy and improve the one near the park and the railway station rather than the sustainable one on the edge of civilization.
2. It would be a useless and unkind extra to foist payments for sustainability certification on vendors of old houses which these days are normally torn down or undergo extensive renovations within a year or two of changing hands. The people living in elderly weatherboards are very often also elderly. When they sell it is usually because of maintenance issues or the need to pay for aged care. For most people who are no longer in the work-force every cent counts, so it would be very upsetting to pay unrecoverable money on a property which is almost to its use-by date unless a great deal is spent on it, and which can be expected to sell for land value.
3. Sustainability is every bit as much about how one lives as about the house itself. The young person who thinks it is nice to do housework in winter in a sundress in a fully centrally heated house (I know someone who does) is probably doing more harm to the environment than I am with draught stoppers against the doors and my little radiator drawing 1500 watts just while I am in the room. (My old thirteen square house lends itself very well to heating only single rooms because it is wonderfully full of DOORS, and has far less acreage than more modern homes.) Even without a twin-flush toilet we have mostly kept to the 155 litre a day water target through judicious saving of washing machine and shower water.
4. A house rated highly for sustainability may not stay that way. If a large house is built next door or neighbours plant shady trees, sun-catching windows may not do this any more. I have previous experience of living in an exceptionally well insulated house which did not catch much sun. For much of the year this house was disasterously cold in the daytime if no heating was being used. The fifty year old weatherboard I live in now which has only ceiling insulation actually warms up when the sun is out.

7 SEP 2011

- 2 -

In view of the foregoing my opinion is that legislating for mandatory sustainability certification for existing homes should not occur.

There is an argument for this certification for new homes where buyers are comparing otherwise similar properties and for older homes when they undergo major renovations and/or additions (say when \$100,000 or more is being spent on the changes) because these homes are unlikely to be demolished for some years, but for older homes generally, compulsory certification would be an unnecessary nuisance and expense for the vendor, would be unlikely to influence the buyer and there would be no environmental value because these homes would be unlikely to continue in their original state.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A Said", with a horizontal line underneath.

AUDREY SAID