

House Energy Ratings Demystified

House energy ratings are an important component of the Energy Smart Homes Policy – they allow all proposed residential developments to be compared on the basis of their energy efficiency. The energy rating process also identifies problem areas and makes it easy to refine house plans while in the design phase – this could result in a home that is more comfortable and may also help save on future energy bills which in turn save greenhouse gas emissions.

The Energy Smart Homes Policy requires a House Energy Rating using NatHERS or equivalent (currently there are no approved equivalents) or, in the case of single dwellings, the Energy Smart Scorecard.

What is NatHERS?

NatHERS stands for *Nationwide House Energy Rating Software*. It is a computer software program developed by the CSIRO that rates the energy efficiency of a home. A NatHERS rating is represented on a scale of 0 – 5 stars. A 0 star rating represents a poorly performing house, while a 5 star rating is excellent. A minimum of 3.5 star rating will meet the requirements of the Energy Smart Homes Policy.

What does a NatHERS assessment involve?

A NatHERS assessment must be carried out by an Accredited NatHERS Assessor. A list of assessors is available from the House Energy Rating Management Body (HMB).

During an assessment, a NatHERS assessor will input information from your house plans into the NatHERS computer program. This information includes postcode (from which a climatic zone will be derived), orientation of the building, building materials, window placement and type, any shading mechanisms, insulation and more.

Where can I find an assessor?

There are over 250 accredited NatHERS assessors in NSW. A list of assessors is available from the HMB at the following contacts:

Web : www.fbe.unsw.edu.au/units/solarch/hmb/ (click on “Find an assessor”)

Email : hmb@unsw.edu.au

Phone : 02 9385 5593

Fax : 02 9385 4507

Why 3.5 stars?

The Energy Smart Homes Policy requires a House Energy Rating of at least 3.5 stars. This is by no means the most energy efficient home that can be built, simply the minimum standard that has been set. A 3.5 star home should be able to maintain acceptable levels of comfort without excessive use of mechanical heating and cooling.

How can I find out how to improve the energy rating of my house plans?

Many accredited NatHERS assessors will be able to advise on house design. Also, the Energy Smart Information Centre is always happy to speak to people about how to improve the energy efficiency of their home. Whether it is an existing home or simply a plan, they have a wealth of knowledge that is available free of charge.

They are open Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm. Phone 1300 363 768

What is the Energy Smart Scorecard?

The Energy Smart Scorecard is a paper-based, simplified version of NatHERS. Although it does not have the same degree of flexibility or accuracy as NatHERS, the Energy Smart Scorecard allows anyone to calculate the energy rating of a single detached dwelling or alterations and additions to single dwellings.

The Energy Smart Scorecard is available at the end of DCP108 and can be freely copied. It may also be downloaded from the SEDA Web site: www.seda.nsw.gov.au