

An additional concern is that the homes marketed and sold today will most likely be caught in the DA process when the legislation comes into effect, yet without detailed information from the department, the developers are unable to offer a complying design.

"When it comes to a standard contract house, to remain competitive in the marketplace we can't go sticking an \$8000 rainwater-harvesting system in a house when nobody else is doing it," Love says.

The chief architect of the BASIX assessment system, Rod Simpson, says it has been designed to encourage people to choose efficiency rather than rely on air-conditioners and heaters. He says well-designed smaller homes with proper insulation and energy-efficient appliances will find it easier and cheaper to meet targets.

#### all things being equal

As well as the environmental arguments, Simpson, whose work with Greenpeace set out the environmental guidelines for Sydney's Olympic Village, says there is also the issue of social equity.

"Anyone who doesn't have to use an air-conditioner is subsidising everyone who does, to the tune of two cents out of 10 cents per kilowatt hour."

BASIX, a web-based tool, has been designed to establish a zero point, which is the energy and water required for the average person to live in NSW or Sydney, factoring in variables such as climate.

If you score a negative rating on BASIX, you're consuming more than is reasonable. A rating of 100 would be a house that draws no power from the grid or water from the mains.

People will be able to choose from a shopping list of energy and water-saving designs and devices in order to reach the target; this commitment will be included with every development application.

Why not build a patio and have a house that is smaller and more interactive with the outdoors?

Anna Warne's home did not have to go through the BASIX assessment system, but it has been designed for comfort, which is inherent to passive solar design.

The kitchen and living extension faces north, and a wide eave over the timber deck provides full shade in summer and allows light penetration in winter.

High windows capture northern winter sun, making artificial lighting redundant during daylight hours all year, while louvres allow control of ventilation.

The west-facing weatherboard wall protects the house from over-heating during hot summer afternoons. Bi-fold doors integrate indoor and outdoor living, giving the appearance of size without making the house larger than necessary for Anna and her children Isabel, 3, and Tom, 6.

Rod Simpson says the ever-increasing size of houses is a big problem.

"The bigger the house the more you have to do to compensate," he says.

In the line of fire is the project-home industry, which has satisfied market demand for mansion-sized homes at affordable prices by paring back some of the quality items that create energy efficiency.

"People want a project home for \$160,000, then often spend another \$80,000 on discretionary extras," Simpson says. "Insulation is an extra, whereas it should not be an extra at all. Project homes will have to have insulation. They'll need good cross-ventilation, good shading, their windows laid out in the right way and a house open to the garden."

"The patio out the back is often the first renovation that people do. Why not do it first-off and have a house that is smaller and more interactive with the outdoors?"

"The industry is talking about (these regulations) adding about \$10,000 to the cost of a home but you can save that simply by choosing not to have the extra rumpus room. So instead of having a 262 sq m house, you have a 250sqm house. And is that so terrible if it is better to live in?"



**Left:** High windows capture northern sun, making artificial lighting unnecessary during the day, while louvres allow control of ventilation

**Right:** Folding doors, connecting interiors with the outdoors and creating an extra 'room', can give the illusion of space to smaller homes



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New from Italy, this dinnerware has clean, simple lines but is very heavy. Definitely an investment item! Them Round plates from \$248 per six-piece set from FY2K (02) 9281 1771.



Fine porcelain vases are often equated with large price tags, but this new collection offers a welcome change. These are \$79 and \$39 respectively from Papaya (02) 9362 1620.



These little dishes would make great gifts. Use them as salt and pepper pots, or for dipping sauces. \$17.50 a pair from Lanterne (02) 9380 7172.



This is an edited article from the March issue of INSIDEout, on sale now.

## into the green



**Building laws to cut water and energy consumption may hit our wallets at first, but will save us money in the end.** By **Jenny Wills**.

**W**hen Sydney solicitor Anna Warne planned renovations to her inner-west home, she didn't set out to be a crusader for the environment – she was simply seeking more space and comfort.

But her development application was one of the first to be subject to Leichhardt Council's new requirement for rainwater tanks in all new buildings and renovations.

"It's not something I thought about at the time," Anna says. "But I'm happy to do it; I think it's worthwhile."

Leichhardt Council's regulations are ahead of their time. Last year, in an effort to drastically reduce domestic consumption of water and electricity, the NSW Government announced that from July 1 this year, all new homes built in metropolitan Sydney will have to cut water use by 40 per cent and electricity consumption by 25 per cent. Now, home renovators will be forced to comply as well.

Sources in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources told *The Sunday Telegraph* the scheme will be expanded to include all alterations and extensions that require development approval from local councils. While there is no firm date for its introduction, it is understood the new building code will apply to renovations soon after July 1.

Builders estimate the changes to house plans to meet the new requirements will add between \$6000 and \$10,000 to building costs.

However, the department says the long-term savings will be substantial.

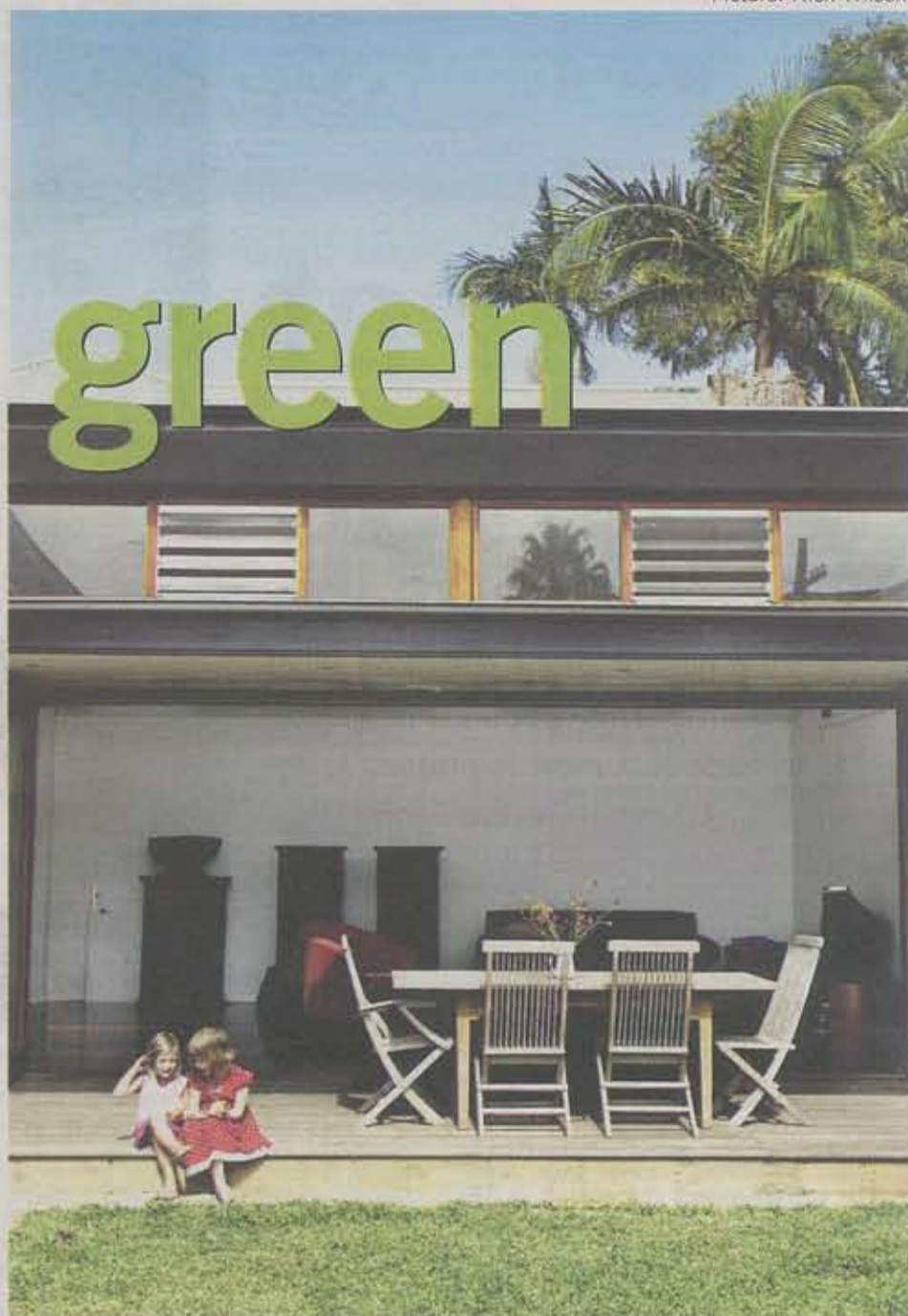
"For an average family in an all-electric household, the combined water and energy savings are likely to be approximately \$300 to \$600 a year," a spokesman says.

### back to BASIX

The department is developing a building sustainability index, called BASIX, to allow homeowners, as well as architects, builders and developers, to rate home plans and assess the energy and water use of the design.

For water use, all developments approved from July will have to meet a BASIX rating of 40, which means reducing mains water usage by 40 per cent.

To reach this target, all new projects will have to install a rainwater tank or a system to recycle grey water in addition to AAA-rated shower and tap nozzles.



### how to make savings

The new building code will require houses to reduce water consumption by 40 per cent and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy use by 25 per cent, rising to 40 per cent in 2006.

To reduce water use by 40 per cent you will need to:

- install a rainwater tank for use in flushing toilets and outdoors, or recycle grey water
- fit AAA-rated showerheads and taps

Extra ways to increase water saving:

- install a dual-flush toilet
- collect and treat stormwater run-off
- reduce swimming pool size and use a pool cover
- use a front-loading washing machine
- plant your garden with species that don't require a lot of water

The initial target for energy saving is a 25 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases from July, which can be easily reached by installing a solar water-heating system.

But from July 2006, the target will be increased to 40 per cent, which will involve a major shift in house design, and act as a disincentive to those with "McMansion" aspirations.

President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Caroline Pidcock says houses that pay no regard to passive solar design – naturally cool in summer and warm in winter – will no longer be able to be built.

"It is really time that Australians started to understand how to work better with the environment to produce better houses and not be wasteful with energy and water," Pidcock says. "The fact that this is happening is the

To reduce energy consumption by 25 per cent you will need to:

- convert to solar water heating

For additional comfort at a 40 per cent target, you will need to consider:

- good insulation
- shading through eaves, pergolas, awnings
- correct window placement to capture winter sun and protect from western summer sun
- energy-efficient lighting
- double glazing
- cross-ventilation by placing openings at opposite ends to enhance natural cooling
- thermal mass to store heat in the cold months
- alternative energy supplies
- garden landscaping to create shade

stick we have been trying to avoid in the hope that carrots will work."

While large land developers and project home builders have expressed support for reducing the environmental drain of housing, they are concerned at the extra cost and the lack of information that would allow them to be fully prepared for the introduction of the new building code.

### designs on efficiency

Cosmopolitan Living managing director David Love estimates new home buyers will be paying an extra \$6000-\$10,000, depending on land size, house size and council requirements.

While the company, which builds about 160 houses in NSW each year, supports the legislation, it says it is having to deal with anomalies in different local government areas.