

Drop in Standards for Energy Rating - BASIX

I am an Accredited Energy Rater and have been a participant in Energy Rating 6 years.

The present accepted software for Energy Rating in NSW is NatHERS.

This was introduced approx 10 years ago with considerable input from the CSIRO & universities.

Standard protocol & procedures manuals were set up for the carrying out of energy ratings with occasional audits to ensure standards were kept high. Thermal Energy Rating Protocols were then developed to ensure maintenance of Energy Rating Standards.

A second generation of energy rating software is now about to be released onto the market –called ACCURATE(CSIRO developed) with other software to follow –First Rate, BERS who will also use the CHEENATH revised CSIRO accurate engine.

However many energy raters are perceiving a disturbing drop in standards by another development – the introduction of BASIX in NSW.

The introduction of BASIX has allowed the introduction of Do It Yourself (DIY) software for mums & dads and others in the industry to be able to test their new house for thermal performance- this DIY is a stripped down simple yes or no procedure which when tested against accredited software(NatHERS) is showing margins of error of up to 50% (the allowable error margin in the industry is 5%)

The Association of Building Sustainability Assessors (ABSA) has made numerous submissions to the NSW Dept of Planning (DOP) to request a review of this DIY – all to no avail, the numerous requests and written complaints have been ignored so that now this DIY toole has been allowing legal acceptance of Basix certificates using this DIY toole since December 2005. If an untrained person achieves a Basix Certificate by button clicking the thermal DIY toole (making up figures and values) there is potentially very little that can be done once the building is completed(oh my 10 year old daughter carried out the Basix Certificate not me !).

ABSA has requested from DoP the details of DIY software to be able to independently test it. DoP refuses to even release the details. There has been no industry review of DIY unlike the introduction of second generation software(Accurate) which has had extensive Australia wide trials & industry peer review.

None of this has occurred with DIY under BASIX.

When contacting Building Code of Australia(BCA) about this topic – asserting that BASIX - DIY has not complied with BCA national Thermal Rating Protocol — the comment came back that BASIX & DIY doesn't have to comply with BCA Thermal protocol – BASIX is independent of national guidelines and therefore is managed by NSW Dept of Planning – in 2006 the BCA has taken housing to 5 stars – Basix is allowing housing to perform a 3.5 stars in NSW.

In short there is a serious error whereby NSW Department of Planning is allowing a serious drop in energy rating standards –it has seriously disrupted and interfered in the marketplace with the Certified and Accredited Energy Rating system and has ignored nationally accepted energy rating protocol and at present there is fear that they could be stalling the introduction of Accurate into NSW (it has already been accepted in other states – because of its high standard of performance) which is a highly refined energy rating software that is designed to help designers create energy efficient housing well beyond a minimum performance(designers are now getting houses to perform at 9 stars).Basix is only concerned with Minimal performance. There needs to be room for assessments which require the highest possible stand of energy rating performance.

The introduction of Basix has had many good achievements but when it starts to dominate to the degree that it then controls and protects its own patch for its own interests from private energy rating activity(which is not just involved with the minimum standard required but in increasing cases aims for a high standard) – then it is time this was quickly changed.

NSW should be subject to the same national energy rating protocol and Industry peer review when considering the introduction of new software.

I request that Standards review this disturbing situation. In short Standards are developed so that standards can be maintained –when this fails –what caused the failure should be rectified.

Yours sincerely

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