



5 Star Mythbusters- 10 Common Mythconceptions

Myth 1 - Compliance is difficult

Achieving a 5 Star rating or beyond is not difficult or costly. Compliance is simply about good design. The 5 Star standard is a flexible performance based standard. It does not require exotic technology but uses conventional readily available building materials and techniques. This means homeowners, builders, and designers have considerable choice in the design and construction of their homes.

There are a range of options available to achieve 5 Star, such as increasing the level of insulation, draught-proofing, orientation of the building, internal design and use of high performance glazing.

Myth 2 - Building or renovating to a 5 Star energy efficiency level is expensive

The capital cost of energy efficient design is modest compared to overall project cost. The considered design and building principles that 5 Star requires will see your initial investment recovered with lower electricity, gas and water bills.

Independent research shows that 5 Star energy and water measures add just two per cent to the average upfront cost of building a house in Victoria. However, these upfront costs are offset in a short period of time. Research also shows that the average household will have budget savings with energy bills cut by about \$200 and water bills by \$50 each year.

Myth 3 - 5 Star is the highest standard a home can reach

5 Star is a minimum national regulatory standard in the Building Code. In fact, the rating scale goes up to 10 Stars. A 10 Star home requires zero energy to be used for heating and cooling.

This is achievable and already some Victorians are realising the economic, health and environmental benefits of a home that is cool in summer and warm in winter without electrical or gas appliances for heating and cooling.

Myth 4 – a good energy rating guarantees lower utility bills

House Energy Rating tools assess the relative energy efficiency of the building's envelope at the design phase using a standardized methodology. Ratings do not predict actual energy consumption; nor do they assess the energy used in lighting your home; energy used for water heating; or energy used by appliances such as your refrigerator. Rating tools do not deliver energy efficiency: you do as the home occupant and operator.



Myth 5 - A 5 Star home will automatically deliver energy conservation and save you money

Your behaviour and how you use your 5 Star home's energy saving features will determine how much you save. The more carefully you use your 5 Star home's energy efficiency features the more energy you'll save.

A 5 Star home uses 36% less energy for heating and cooling when compared to the pre-regulation house. These are only average savings. Residents of 5 Star homes and apartments who use these energy efficient features wisely can save much more.

Myth 6 – If you live in a 5 Star home, you can do what you want without harming the environment

A 5 Star home can be harmful to the environment if it is used poorly. A 5 Star home with plasma televisions and other power draining appliances that use great amounts of standby power are greenhouse guzzlers. Couple this with the trend to build even bigger homes with more consumer goods and a 5 Star home like this will do even greater damage. A 5 Star home does save energy so long as you use it wisely.

Myth 7 - Timber-floored homes can't comply with 5 Star

Because 5 Star is a performance-based standard, a wide range of options are available for homeowners, builders and designers to achieve the required House Energy Rating, irrespective of the building construction type. Timber-floored homes are able to comply with 5 Star. Good design is the key to achieving the full 5 Star standard.

Energy raters can give you a range of options to consider without compromising the design or having to change from a home with timber sub-floor construction. With good design, a home with timber sub-flooring should be able to achieve the 5 Star standard at reasonable cost and without major changes to standard construction techniques.

Myth 8 - 5 Star is an inflexible, onerous regulatory requirement

The process for achieving a 5 Star rating is very flexible, while there is no single formula for obtaining the required energy rating; a range of features can be used.

Most important of these are:

- Optimizing building orientation,
- Adding wall, ceiling and underfloor insulation – a most cost-effective approach
- Attention to window type, size, positioning, and window shading.

Good design is the key to the 5 Star standard.



Myth 9 - Renovations and relocations of homes won't have to achieve 5 Star

From 1 May 2008, the 5 Star standard will be extended to cover renovations and relocation of homes. As a result, Victorians will enjoy new and renovated homes that are:

- better quality and more comfortable
- cheaper to operate
- environmentally sound
- good for Victoria's economy.

The national energy efficiency standard will apply to all relocated homes and alterations to an existing home.

On 1 May 2008, when home renovations and relocations must meet a 5 Star energy efficiency level, like new homes do already, it is unlikely to lead to substantial increases in building costs.

Achieving 5 Star performance is straightforward with good design, adding little to the cost of building while greatly benefiting the environment.

The new standard for alterations and relocations of homes will not require a rainwater tank for toilet flushing or a solar hot water system.

With over 40,000 homes anticipated to be renovated, extended or relocated each year, the 5 Star energy rating requirement for the building fabric will further reduce greenhouse gas emissions while delivering home occupants greater comfort and lower energy costs.

Myth 10 – You have to use the FirstRate software to comply with 5 Star

There are a range of energy rating tools available. New generation House Energy Rating tools provide additional design options to achieve the 5 Star standard. Throughout Victoria over 1,000 House Energy Raters have been trained to rate new homes to a 5 Star standard using a range of sophisticated software tools that meet the requirements of the Building Code.

Additionally, house designers can also use the prescriptive Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions of the Building Code of Australia to demonstrate compliance – without even having to carry out an energy rating.

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