

## Questions and answers for 5 Star standard

### **Q1 How do I construct a house to comply with the 5 Star standard?**

A1 The design software for achieving 5 Star is very flexible, so for each design there are many different techniques for obtaining a house energy rating. An accredited rater will be able to advise the designer on the various options available. To obtain the maximum cost benefit, the rater should be involved in the design from the earliest stages.

The technical detail on rain water tanks, solar hot water system and water saving features can be found in the Plumbing Regulations 1998. Contact the Plumbing Industry Commission on telephone 1800 015 129 or visit [www.pic.vic.gov.au](http://www.pic.vic.gov.au)

### **Q2 What does a relevant building surveyor do at final inspection stage if no carpet, Holland blinds, draught seals or weather strips are installed?**

A2 If these components are part of the means of achieving a house energy rating of 5 Star, then this is no different from any other compliance issue arising at final inspection. The relevant building surveyor must be satisfied that the building is suitable for occupation before issuing an occupancy permit. The relevant building surveyor should consider whether he/she is able to issue an occupancy permit, issue the occupancy permit with conditions, or issue an occupancy permit concurrently with a building notice.

### **Q3 Can a relevant building surveyor refuse to issue an occupancy permit if 5 Star provisions are not in place?**

A3 The relevant building surveyor must be satisfied that the building is suitable for occupation before issuing an occupancy permit. It is considered unlikely that non-compliance with 5 Star design elements would lead to the refusal of an occupancy permit.

### **Q4 What do I have to do in the case of a relocated existing house?**

Until 30 April 2008, there is no change to the requirements for a relocated existing building. It must achieve either a 3 Star rating or comply with Vic Table 1, Victoria additions, Volume 2 of the Building Code of Australia (BCA). Regulation 608 of the Building Regulations 2006 provides discretion to the relevant building surveyor not to require full compliance with the regulations in certain circumstances.

**Q5 Does the 5 Star standard apply to an extension or alteration to a dwelling?**

A5 The 5 Star standard currently applies to a new home. From 1 May 2008, the 5 Star standard will extend to home renovations and relocations, by implementing the change through the BCA 2008 alterations.

**Q6 What about satellite habitable buildings such as sleep outs or bungalows? Do they have to comply with the 5 Star standard?**

A6 A satellite bungalow could be regarded as an alteration. This means that currently a 3 Star rating or compliance with Vic Table 1, Victoria additions, Volume 2 of the BCA would be required. From 1 May 2008 the 5 Star Standard will also apply to a satellite bungalow.

**Q7 What do you do when software recommends that window sizes be reduced below the minimum area required by BCA?**

A7 Compliance with the BCA and lighting ventilation provisions is still required. The design software is very flexible so other options provided by the software for achieving a 5 Star rating should be investigated.

**Q8 When considering Class 2 buildings, how do you get an average of 5 Stars?**

A8 The building as a whole will need to achieve a 5 Star average rating, with no individual apartment rating less than 3 Stars. The average 5 Star rating for a Class 2 building is determined by finding the average energy load in MJ/m<sup>2</sup>, the average point score (not the average Star rating). The 5 Star average must fall within the 5 Star levels and the rating for any sole occupancy unit in a Class 2 building must fall within the 3 Star levels, both set out in Table A in the Appendix to Practice Note 2007-55.

**Q9 What do you do if it is not practical to have a rainwater tank or solar water heater system?**

A9 An Alternative Solution can be considered under the performance-based BCA or an application can be made to the Building Appeals Board for a modification.

**Q10 What do I do if the contract was signed after 1 May 2008 and the relevant building surveyor will not approve my design under section 10(2) of the Building Act 1993?**

A10 The Building Act provides that the relevant building surveyor may approve a design for a renovation or relocation where substantial progress was made on the design of the building prior to 1 May 2008. It is still at the discretion of the relevant building surveyor to accept such a design. If refused there are 3 options—  
change the design to comply; or  
apply for a modification from the Building Advisory Board (BAB) or to the BAB;  
or  
appeal the decision of the relevant building surveyor.

**Q11 Can an existing rainwater tank and existing roof area be used for compliance with 5 Star?**

A11 Yes, so long as the rainwater tank is connected to all of the sanitary flushing systems in the house. Installation, tank volume and roof catchment area must still meet the technical requirements of the Plumbing Regulations 1998.

**Q12 If the relevant building surveyor is an accredited energy rater, can he or she prepare a 5 Star design?**

A12 The relevant building surveyor cannot undertake the design. However, a relevant building surveyor who is also an accredited rater may check a design as part of the normal approval process, and where a design does not comply, may use their skills to provide advice on options for the designer to consider incorporating to achieve a 5 Star rating.

**Q13 What documentation should the relevant building surveyor receive at the building and occupancy permit application stages?**

A13 At the building permit stage for a Class 2 building, the RBS should receive a copy of an energy rating report showing the Star rating for each dwelling and a copy of the Star rating report should also be provided showing an average 5 Star rating for the whole building. For a single dwelling, a copy of the Star rating report should be provided. Ratings conducted will need to have an additional statement from the energy rater showing the area adjustment for Victoria.

At building permit stage, sufficient design detail is required to convince the relevant building surveyor that the 5 Star standard is met.

At occupancy permit stage, it depends again on which option has been used. Refer to Practice Note 2007-55.

Should the plans be revised as a result of the permit process, the applicant will be required to resubmit the Star rating reports.

**Q14 Can a relevant building surveyor approve of a design produced from software developed in another country?**

A14 The use of other software may be accepted by the RBS as meeting the relevant Performance Requirement. It is recommended that such software should not be accepted unless it meets the requirements of the Australian Building Codes Board's Protocol for House Energy Rating Software and training is available for users that meet Sustainability Victoria (SV) accreditation requirements for energy raters.

**Q15 Do I have to comply with the 5 Star standard for an extension to an existing 5 Star house?**

A15 Yes, you must at least achieve the same rating as the existing building.

**Q16 Who is responsible for the maintenance of the 5 Star provisions after the project has been completed?**

A16 It is the owner's responsibility (and it is in their own interests) to maintain the 5 Star provisions once the building is occupied.

**Q17 Do I need to install internal window coverings before a final inspection?**

A17 In undertaking a rating, a default setting of 'Holland blinds' is used in FirstRate to represent that there is likely to be some type of window covering installed either prior or after occupancy. However, there is no requirement on the part of the builder to install curtains in order to meet the standard, unless required under the contract to construct the building.