

## West Heidelberg homes switch from winter icebox to summer heat box

Most Victorian homes waste more than half the energy they use for heating and cooling due to leaky doors and windows, no external window shading and poor insulation.

For the 1.9 million Victorian homes built from the late 1800s until 2004, the average efficiency rating is less than two stars. As late as 1990 most new homes were built at a standard of [1 star](#).

What is it like living in a 1-star home? Beth Akister lives in a single brick house built for the 1956 Olympics in West Heidelberg. She said most of the houses in her neighbourhood were, like hers, poorly designed or equipped for Melbourne's hot summers and cold, damp winters.



A typical 1950s single brick home in West Heidelberg.



Beth and Jango enjoying the back yard.

“I’ve done what I can to block the worst gaps. In summer I close it all up, but there’s not much I can do to stop it really heating up after a few hot days. There is only one heater in the lounge, so in winter I rug up to keep warm.”

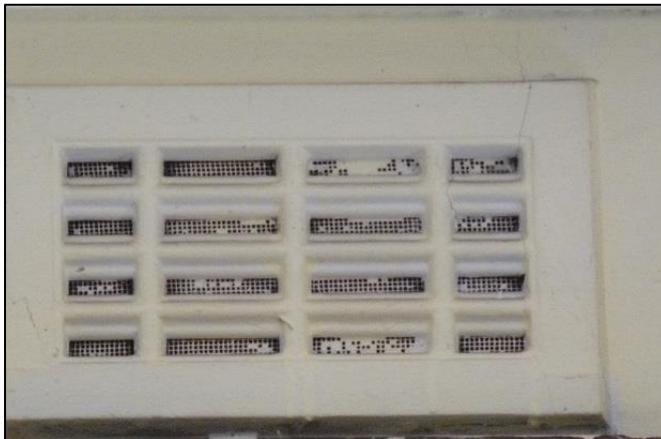
One Million Homes research shows that most of the older home types across Victoria can be raised from 1.5 stars to close to 4 stars for around \$5,000. That is a huge step towards reaching the government's goal of a 5-star average.



Gaps and cracks around doors are typical in older and inefficient homes. Gaps around doors and windows can have the same effect as having a large window permanently open.

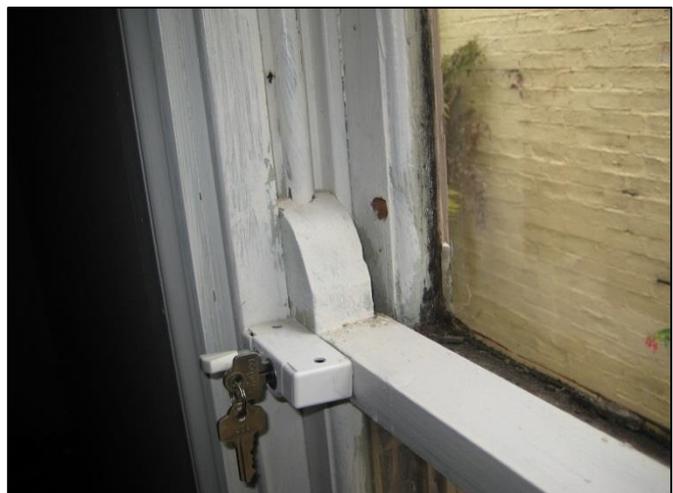
The three main areas needing improvement in older homes are high quality weather and draught sealing, roof insulation and window treatments (which includes heavy curtains or blinds and pelmets on the inside, and external blinds or other shading on the outside).

Improving the performance of older Victorian homes makes sense on a number of levels: because it helps deal with the rising cost of living, improves the comfort of homes and takes a big chunk out of our greenhouse gas emissions.



Wall or cornice vents used to be mandatory when homes with unflued heaters or wood heaters were common. They are a major potential heat loss point in winter and can be safely blocked in homes without unflued heaters.

“The old sash windows and cornice vents means the house leaks like a sieve”  
Beth Akister says.



Ahead of the 2010 State election the Victorian Coalition promised that if they were elected they would improve the average standard of Victorian homes to 5 stars as soon as possible. Little has been done to deliver this election promise over the past three years.

Electricity prices in Melbourne have risen by 84 per cent in the last five years, and gas prices are following. So action on this significant promise is now well overdue.

