ZERO CARBON TATURA

# PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR A LOWER ENERGY USE IN SUMMER

As we move into the hot summer months, keeping your home cool by keeping the sun out will reduce the cost of air conditioning as well as keep you and your family more comfortable.

In summer, sunlight contains around 1 kilowatt of energy per square meter. This means that if you have an unshaded window of, say, 2 metres by 2 metres in size, then it's like having a fan heater on its highest setting running in the room! West and East facing windows are the main culprits, but north windows without eaves are also bad. Especially if you have refrigerated air-conditioning, every extra watt of energy getting inside your house will make your air-conditioner use more energy to get it outside again.

So what can you do to reduce your summer energy costs (and help us get towards zero carbon)? It's very hard to change the way windows face once the house is built, but shading is the next best thing. Inside curtains, blinds and window tinting can help, but exterior shade works much better, stopping the heat before it goes in the window. If you are in a new house, look at getting exterior blinds installed now and plan for future summers by planting trees or vines to shade the windows naturally. If you have solar panels and can run your AC during the day, well done you, but reducing the heat load on your house will lower your energy demand, which means any excess solar you might generate can go to help the grid and the rest of Tatura.

What temperature you set your air conditioner to has a big impact on your running costs too. When it's 40 degrees outside, a room at 25 degrees will feel great in comparison. Going cooler will use about 10% more electricity for every degree cooler. Remember also that setting a low temperature to start with may seem to make the room cool faster, but it doesn't and there's a fair chance you'll forget to put it back up to 25 once you've cooled down and anyway, modern inverter ACs will cool at maximum capacity to start with and then cut electricity use once the desired temperature is reached.

Sustainability Victoria has some great information on improving home energy efficiency (www.sustainability.vic.gov.au) and locally, Zero carbon Tatura (www.zerocarbontatura.org) are very keen to work with the local community to reduce energy consumption, so drop us an email if you have any questions or comments at
info@zerocarbontatura.org

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