

Rebate

call intensifies

THE ACT GOVERNMENT IS TAKING STEPS TO ENCOURAGE THE INSTALLATION OF WINDOW COVERINGS THAT OFFER A GOOD THERMAL PERFORMANCE.

DAWN ADAMS REPORTS

SOME \$19.1 MILLION has been allocated over four years by the ACT Government for a program that includes rebates for the installation of energy efficient window coverings.

Funding for the Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) began at the start of the 2009/10 financial year and will end in 2012-13.

To be eligible for the rebate, an energy audit must be conducted and is designed to demonstrate how energy bills can be reduced as well as indicate how financial assistance can be used to invest in energy-saving options. The rebate is paid only on priority improvements recommended by the auditor's report. Home owners who spend at least \$2000 on these energy efficiency improvements are eligible for a \$500 rebate from the ACT Government plus a refund of the \$30 audit fee.

Some 32 per cent of Priority One (the highest priority) improvements completed so far involved installations of window coverings. For Priority Two improvements, 16 per cent installed window coverings. Window furnishings selected, under the program, have included honeycomb blinds, roman blinds, shutters and thermal-backed curtains with pelmets. Other window coverings that can be installed, when applying for the rebate, have been nominated due to their good thermal performance and include external shade cloth or awnings as well as duette or honeycomb blinds.

HEAT ADVICE

A FACT SHEET on the HEAT website (<http://www.heat.net.au>) points to window treatments as an essential way to achieve good thermal conditions especially in Canberra's climate where the temperature can vary 20 degrees Centigrade over a 24-hour period. It recommends home owners select the best windows and window treatments they can afford to obtain optimum thermal conditions. These include thick curtains that seal around the edges and drop down to the floor with blackout attached, but not bonded, and pelmets. Also suitable were honeycomb blinds fitted snugly within the window reveal or tight polystyrene shutters. "Minimise the air leaks around the windows to improve the insulation level," it said.

The fact sheet noted the best orientation in Canberra for living areas was north where large windows were appropriate. "If you intend to have large windows facing east or especially west then you must protect your windows with

good internal window treatments and external shading," it said. "You do not need to shade south facing windows. In winter, all other orientations apart from north have a net heat loss which means you lose heat through these windows increasing your heating energy requirements through winter."

HEAT recommended using adjustable or removable external shading where possible as Canberra was primarily a heating climate. "This reduces unwanted heat gain in summer while gaining the warmth during the winter months," it said.

The fact sheet offered suggestions for existing homes such as shading east and west windows vertically and shading northern windows with horizontal shading above the windows for summer. Also suggested was to instal well insulated floor-to-ceiling curtains, honeycomb blinds or air tight polystyrene shutters as well as fitting pelmets above existing or new curtains.

WWW.HEAT.NET.AU

BUILDING ENVELOPE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ACT

IMPROVEMENT	INSTALLATION COST	SAVINGS
Insulation top up to R4.5	\$1,626	Up to \$300/year
Wall insulation	\$3,278	Up to \$250/year
Underfloor insulation	\$2,798	Up to \$100/year
Seal gaps and cracks	\$100-\$600	Up to \$150/year
Double glazing	\$490-\$1,000 per window	Up to \$200/year
Lined curtains- pelmets\airtight blinds	\$370-\$1,000 per window	Up to \$200/year
External shading	Highly variable, \$10+	Up to \$100/year
Lighting upgrade	\$4 extra per light globe	Up to \$90/lightbulb (over the lifetime)
Change shower head to 9L/min AAA	\$30+	Up to \$100/year
Upgrade hot water system	\$1,500 - \$3,500	\$50-\$400/year (depends-consumption habits & system)