

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
References Committee
Inquiry into the Green Loans Program
Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Portfolio
Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

Answers to questions on notice
June 2010

Question No: 5
Topic: Air leakage
Hansard Page ECA: 97

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—In terms of the tool, if you like, that is the basis of the actual energy efficiency assessment, why is air leakage not a fundamental part of that assessment when anyone would tell you that that is one of the first things you would need to do?

Mr Thompson—I have heard those concerns previously. As I understand it, though, there is a range of views about whether that is fundamental. I am not a technical expert in this field so I do not think that I can add much more.

Senator MILNE—I would like you to take the question on notice, because I do not know any technical experts who would not tell you that if you do not block the holes and the air leaks in your house not much else you do will have an improved efficiency gain.

Mr Thompson—I can say that there have been changes made to the assessment calculator in the past to improve it, and there is ongoing work in the contract that we have with RMIT to continue to improve the calculator.

Senator MILNE—Who makes the suggestions to RMIT about how to recalibrate that calculator and on what basis do they do that?

Mr Thompson—As I understand it, it is a two-way conversation with RMIT.

Senator MILNE—I would appreciate it if you would table to the committee any correspondence or documentation with regard to air leakage in the calibration of that program.

Mr Thompson—Sure.

Answer:

RMIT advises that the tool has always included both questions relating to the level of air leakage in the dwelling and recommendations to improve this aspect of the dwelling as is appropriate.

Air leakage loss/gain forms one part of the algorithm that calculates building thermal load. The tool asks a number of questions relating to the air leakage features of the house, including gaps around doors and windows, number of wall vents, exhaust fans and chimneys. Each of these features is associated with a particular air change rate,

which is used along with the dwelling volume and a location factor to calculate the air leakage loss/gain.

Air leakage has always been considered as part of the building thermal load calculation (heating and cooling), and this module has been subject to upgrades during delivery of the program.