

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Inquiry into the Energy Efficient Homes Package

Dear Secretary,

My wife and I are amongst the recipients of a subsidy for the installation of insulation in our ceiling. As retirees, we are very happy to have received a government subsidy to allow us to do this, and we can report that the insulation has made a significant difference to our summer comfort.

We decided to install the insulation in our house, we chose the companies from whom we obtained a quote, we engaged one of these companies to install the installation, we paid our share of the cost and we applied to the Government for the remainder as a subsidy. From our point of view, the only stage at which the Government was involved in this process was in providing us with the subsidy, but only after we acknowledged that the installation had been satisfactorily completed. We were not happy with one minor aspect of the installation process, so we held the installation company responsible and we had the company correct it. We did not see the Government as being involved in any stage of the installation process, so we cannot see what all of the present fuss is about.

Some in the Parliament and the media are claiming that Minister Garrett is responsible for the use of inferior insulation products by some installation companies, for the poor service and workmanship of some installation companies and for the deaths of four installers. In our case, and from our knowledge in all cases, the contract for the installation of insulation was between us, the householders, and the installation company, and not with the Government. It is our view that the responsibility for any problems that have arisen with respect to the quality of the materials, the workmanship or the health and safety issues lie entirely with the companies involved. They should be held accountable and not the Government.

The deaths of the four workers are most regrettable, but these deaths would appear to have been caused by a lack of proper care by the owners and managers of the companies who employed them. In my view these owners and managers should be charged over their lack of due care for their employees, and be prevented from owning or managing another company. Surely, these companies have not adhered to Government Regulations or they have misled the public, or both.

The company which installed the cellulose insulation in the ceiling of our house was a long established company working for many years in the insulation area. However, what surprised me was that the experienced installers did not turn off the electrical power to the house when they entered the ceiling. I questioned the wisdom of this policy. Also, why are some companies not performing safety checks when the job is completed? These procedures should be a matter of prudent company policy and not of Government regulation.

My wife and I are concerned that what has provided a successful stimulus to the economy and employment for many people is being discredited unjustly for political reasons. Keeping

people in work and helping the economy grow should be fundamental to a politician's duty, I would think. The tarnishing of the program could result in many people, including retirees like us, missing out on having our homes insulated and from basking in more comfortable home conditions.

Yours sincerely,
David Hill