

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
References Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Inquiry into the Energy Efficiency Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 37
Topic: House Fires – Locations & Dates
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator Barnett asked:

With respect to the 93 house fires linked to the HIP, please advise exactly where and when these fires occurred?

Answer/s:

Please refer to the table below for dates and locations of the 93 house fire incidents as at 19 February 2010. These fire incidents have been confirmed as linked to the Home Insulation Program.

It is worth noting that not all fires result in substantial property damage. For the purposes of the Home Insulation Program the definition of a fire incident includes any flames, burning, charring, smouldering or smoking insulation.

The Department does not have a breakdown of the number of fire incidences by the nature of the event at this time.

Note that in some instances the Department has not been provided with the date of the fire.

Dates & Locations of House Fire Incidents – as at 19 February 2010

SUBURB	STATE	POSTCODE	FIRE DATE
Curtin	ACT	2605	27-Dec-09
Fadden	ACT	2904	19-Jan-10
Lyneham	ACT	2602	26-Nov-09
Marayong	NSW	2148	30-May-09
Kings Park	NSW	2148	31-Jul-09
Mt Druitt	NSW	2770	25-Oct-09
Edensor Park	NSW	2176	14-Jan-10
Regents Park	NSW	2143	5-Feb-10
Kings Park	NSW	2148	14-Dec-09
Thornton	NSW	2322	3-Aug-09
Abbotsbury	NSW	2176	17-Feb-10
Greenfield Park	NSW	2176	5-Nov-09
Dean Park	NSW	2761	Date not Available
St Clair	NSW	2759	25-Nov-09
Hebersham	NSW	2770	30-Oct-09
St Clair	NSW	2759	21-Nov-09
Buff Point	NSW	2262	6-Dec-09

Rooty Hill	NSW	2766	18-Aug-09
Seven Hills	NSW	2147	15-Sep-09
North Wahroonga	NSW	2076	24-Oct-09
West Pennant Hills	NSW	2125	14-Dec-09
Port Macquarie	NSW	2444	Date not Available
Illawong	NSW	2234	12-Nov-09
Narwee	NSW	2209	9-Dec-09
St Marys	NSW	2760	Date not Available
North Rocks	NSW	2154	27-Oct-09
Botany	NSW	2019	23-Oct-09
Cranebrook	NSW	2749	
Kyeemagh	NSW	2216	29-Sep-09
Rooty Hill	NSW	2766	7-Oct-09
Marsfield	NSW	2122	18-Oct-09
Cambridge Park	NSW	2747	Date not Available
Glendenning	NSW	2761	16-Oct-09
Baulkham Hills	NSW	2153	23-Aug-09
Tahmoor	NSW		19-Sep-09
Punchbowl	NSW	2196	25-Aug-09
Bossley Park	NSW	2176	9-Nov-09
Macquarie Fields	NSW	2564	12-Feb-10
Bossley Park	NSW	2176	6-Oct-09
Greenfield Park	NSW	2176	31-Oct-09
Hinchinbrook	NSW	2168	26-Aug-09
Dharruk	NSW	2770	30-Nov-09
Wavell Heights	QLD	4012	12-Jan-10
Carina Heights	QLD	4152	Date not Available
Ferny Grove	QLD	4055	4-Oct-09
Mount Beppo	QLD	4313	11-Dec-09
Wellington Point	QLD	4160	28-Aug-09
Wongawallan	QLD	4210	9-Jun-09
Scarborough	QLD	4020	29-Jan-10
Kiingston	QLD	4114	15-Feb-10
Alderly	QLD	4051	6-Jan-10
Arundel	QLD	4214	14-Dec-09
Collinsville	QLD	4804	4-Feb-10
Beenleigh	QLD	4207	11-Nov-09
Woodridge	QLD	4114	12-Dec-09
Munruben	QLD	4125	12-Oct-09
Boondall	QLD	4034	1-Nov-09
Cannonvale	QLD	4802	31-Jul-09
Roma	QLD	4455	15-Feb-10
Grange	SA	5022	22-Dec-09
Netley	SA	5037	18-Jan-10
Heidelberg West	VIC	3081	Date not Available
Cranbourne	VIC	3977	29-Jan-10
Cranbourne	VIC	3977	5-Nov-09
Doncaster	VIC	3108	13-Jan-10
Corio	VIC	3214	2-Dec-09
Mornington	VIC	3931	27-Jan-10

Frankston	VIC	3199	21-Aug-09
Greensborough	VIC	3088	Date not Available
Lower Templestowe	VIC	3107	17-Jan-10
Noble Park North	VIC	3174	4-Oct-09
Bundoora	VIC	3083	28-Jan-10
Keysborough	VIC	3173	25-Sep-09
Springvale	VIC	3171	12-Sep-09
Sunshine West	VIC	3020	11-Jan-10
Boronia	VIC	3155	1-Aug-09
Vermont South	VIC	3133	9-Feb-10
Kings Park	VIC	3021	10-Nov-09
St Albans	VIC	3021	17-Dec-09
St Albans	VIC	3021	1-Dec-09
Albanvale	VIC	3021	30-Oct-09
Fawkner	VIC	3060	10-Nov-09
Dallas	VIC	3047	11-Nov-09
Mill Park	VIC	3082	5-Aug-09
Noble Park North	VIC	3174	21-Nov-09
Yallambie	VIC	3085	28-Jan-10
Broadmeadows	VIC	3047	25-Nov-09
Narrewarren	VIC	3805	26-Jan-10
St Albans	VIC	3021	26-Aug-09
Coolaroo	VIC	3048	7-Nov-09
Keysborough	VIC	3173	13-Oct-09
Clarinda	VIC	3169	16-Feb-10
Marangaroo	WA	6064	1-Feb-10

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Inquiry into the Energy Efficient Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 50
Topic: Calls to the call centres
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BARNETT asked:

Please advise exactly how many calls have been received on each of the government's hotlines and describe the nature of the call, the location of the caller and the actions taken to respond to the call?

Answer:

The Energy Efficient Homes general public call centre, 1800 808 571, had received 355,171 insulation-related calls as at 21 February 2010. Calls are handled in accordance with the approved call centre script. Any enquiries that the call centre is not able to handle are referred to the Department. The Department has a process for handling enquiries and complaints.

Calls generally fall within the following categories of enquiry:

- Eligibility;
- aged Care Eligibility;
- phase 1 Application follow up;
- installer Registration;
- two quote requirement;
- installer technical issue;
- program changes;
- register search;
- pricing Guidelines;
- audit/inspection request; and
- response to the Householder letter.

As the call centre also handles enquiries for the Solar Hot Water Rebate, it is not possible to separate insulation calls by state.

The Installer Registration, Claims and Payment enquiry line, 1800 029 686, had received 117,500 calls as at 10 March 2010. The calls are from insulation installers in relation to claims and payments, technical difficulties with logging onto the claims system or registration. The calls are handled in accordance with defined operating procedures. The origin of the calls reflects the national spread of insulation installers.

A dedicated Home Insulation Safety Information Line has also been established for households which had foil or non-foil insulated under the former Home Insulation Program (131 792).

Data has only been recently collected separately for foil and non-foil, however the nature of the calls received generally fall into the following categories:

- householders seeking general information about insulation safety and the Government's inspection programs;
- householders seeking a program reference number for an electrical inspection;
- electricians seeking information on the scope of the Government's inspection programs;
- electricians seeking information on the process for claiming, following an inspection;
- installers seeking information on the Government's inspection programs;
- householders wanting to arrange a non-foil safety inspection; and
- other general enquiries.

The action taken is dependent upon the nature of the call. The Department has processes in place to ensure that callers identifying urgent safety concerns receive priority attention.

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February 2010

Question No: 51
Topic: Action against installation companies
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BARNETT asked:

Has the department taken any action against any installation companies? Please detail nature of action and outcome.

Answer/s:

Yes. The Department has taken action against installation companies.

The nature of the action taken is dependent upon the circumstances of the particular case, and this may range from audits of installations, suspension of payments, recovery of monies and deregistration under the former Home Insulation Program.

During the operation of the Program some companies were deregistered for non-compliance. Additionally, a small number of rebate claims have been repaid after compliance activities. Some companies have also been referred to the Australian Federal Police for further investigation.

Instances of non-compliance and fraud will be investigated and the Government will seek to criminally prosecute offending parties and recover funds.

The Home Insulation Program Review Office has been established in the Department and will take carriage of this work.

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February 2010

Question No: 54
Topic: Largest and smallest installations
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BARNETT asked:

What is the largest and smallest house insulated under the program and what is the average size of the house.

Answer/s:

The size of the area insulated under the Home Insulation Program*, as advised by installers at the time of lodgement of the claim is as follows:

- Smallest house insulated: 5.00 Sq metres
- Largest house insulated: 632.00 Sq metres
- Average house insulated: 107.72 Sq metres

*Data is for 1 July 2009 to 19 February 2010.

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Inquiry into the Energy Efficiency Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 56
Topic: Warnings relating to fire and safety
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BARNETT asked:

Exactly how many warnings did the Department or the Minister receive with respect to fire and safety and what was the Department's or Minister's response. Please provide dates and details.

Answer/s:

The Department received correspondence from a number of sources, including the states and territories and industry that raised the issue of fire and safety. In addition, general installer safety, occupational health and safety, fire and electrical issues were discussed in a number of workshops and meetings held with industry.

Date	Advice Provided	Action Taken
17 February 2009	Draft media release provided to the Department for consideration – issues relate to fire safety and electrical safety. Final was published 18/2/09	Incorporated input into the Program design
23 February 2009	Advice regarding fire risk for downlight covers.	Incorporated input into the Program design
24 February 2009	Raising issues regarding air-space surrounding downlights	Incorporated input into the Program design
9 March 2009	Fire risk associated with downlights, if insulation is incorrectly installed. Calls for minimum competencies and guidance to householders.	Incorporated input into the Program design
31 March 2009	Draft media release provided to Dept – issues regarding fires and safety standards	Incorporated input into the Program design
15 October 2009	Internal email was supplied to the Department emphasising employer responsibilities.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
16 October 2009	Safety concerns and recommendations for training improvements and calling for ongoing audits of completed jobs.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
20 October 2009	Electrical advice re stapling of foil, turning off mains power, downlight distances	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers

26 October 2009	Installer OH&S issues.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
30 October 2009	Calling for expansion of electrical safety inspections should a problem be found.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
3 November 2009	Commending decision to ban metal fasteners, mandatory downlight covers and the requirement for installers to undertake further training on the electrical risks of installing insulation.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
6 November 2009	Calling for compliance of companies to ensure the safety of installers	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
10 November 2009	Advice regarding fire, electricity in relation to insulation and installation standards.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
19 November 2009	Warning that training requirements are not being adhered to by some installers.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
27 November 2009	Turning the power off before installing insulation	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
Late 2009 – date uncertain	Correspondence regarding misleading claims of loose-fill insulation blowing around in ceilings spaces when properly installed.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
2 December 2009	Raising concerns regarding fire, dangers of installing over downlights, product quality and calling for an audit of foil installations	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
9 February 2010	Highlights problems associated with foil insulation products caused by stapling into electrical cables and foil surfaces coming into contact with damaged wiring.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers

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Inquiry into the Energy Efficiency Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 63
Topic: Warning to Government
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BARNETT asked:

Please list details of all the warnings the Department the Minister or the government received since the HIP inception and the government's response if any to each.

Answer/s:

The Department received correspondence from a number of sources, including the state and territories and industry representatives, that raised the issue of fire, safety or product quality (listed below). In addition, general installer safety, occupational health and safety, fire, electrical issues and product quality were discussed in a number of workshops and meetings held with industry.

Date	Advice Provided	Action Taken
9 February 2009	Concern over cheap imports and product that may not meet AS/NZS 4859.1:2002	Incorporated input into the Program design Departmental reply 16 April 2009
17 February 2009	Draft media release provided to the Department for consideration – issues relate to fire safety and electrical safety. Final was published 18/2/09	Incorporated input into the Program design
23 February 2009	Advice regarding fire risk for downlight covers.	Incorporated input into the Program design Minister reply
24 February 2009	Raising issues regarding air-space surrounding downlights	Incorporated input into the Program design
24 February 2009	Raising issues regarding the certification of products.	Incorporated input into the Program design
9 March 2009	Fire risk associated with downlights, if insulation is incorrectly installed. Calls for minimum competencies and guidance to householders.	Incorporated input into the Program design
24 March 2009	Raising issues of product compliance and information on 3 rd party certification for insulation products	Incorporated input into the Program design
31 March 2009	Draft media release provided to Dept – issues regarding fires and safety standards	Incorporated input into the Program design

24 August 2009	Email highlighting perceived deficiencies in insulation products meeting the labelling requirements of the Standard	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
25 August 2009	Concern over the compliance of products	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
15 October 2009	Internal email was supplied to the Department emphasising employer responsibilities.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
16 October 2009	Safety concerns and recommendations for training improvements and calling for ongoing audits of completed jobs.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
16 October 2009	Concern over imports that may not meet AS/NZS 4859.1:2002	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
20 October 2009	Electrical advice re stapling of foil, turning off mains power, downlight distances	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
26 October 2009	Installer OH&S issues.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
28 October 2009	Concern raised over the variance in testing under the Standard	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
30 October 2009	Calling for expansion of electrical safety inspections should a problem be found.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
3 November 2009	Commending decision to ban metal fasteners, mandatory downlight covers and the requirement for installers to undertake further training on the electrical risks of installing insulation.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
6 November 2009	Calling for compliance of companies to ensure the safety of installers	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
10 November 2009	Advice regarding fire, electricity in relation to insulation and installation standards.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
12 November 2009	Concern that change to assistance may lead to an increase in the use of low cost products that may result in health risks	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
19 November 2009	Warning that training requirements are not being adhered to by some installers.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
23 November 2009	Email stating that cheap products are flooding the market – concern over the level of formaldehyde in imported product – compliance/ audit not able to address product quality issue	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers

24 November 2009	Email stating cheap imported products have high levels of formaldehyde	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
27 November 2009	Turning the power off before installing insulation	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
Late 2009 – date uncertain	Correspondence regarding misleading claims of loose-fill insulation blowing around in ceilings spaces when properly installed.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
2 December 2009	Raising concerns regarding fire, dangers of installing over downlights, product quality and calling for an audit of foil installations	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
20 January 2010	Concern over product quality	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
1 February 2010	Concern about the efficiency of fibreglass and cellulose product	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
8 February 2010	Concern over product quality	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
9 February 2010	Highlights problems associated with foil insulation products caused by stapling into electrical cables and foil surfaces coming into contact with damaged wiring.	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
10 February 2010	Concern over products that do not comply with AS/NZS 4859.1:2002 and products that are not on the Approved List of Products	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
15 February 2010	Concern over product quality	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers
15 February 2010	Concern over the different methods of testing for product compliance	Incorporated into Program changes and provided information to installers

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February 2010

Question No: 64
Topic: Replacement program
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BARNETT asked:

Please provide full details of the revamped HIP and the time required to implement this new HIP and the total cost with a breakdown of those costs.

Answer/s:

On 22 April 2010 Minister Combet announced the Government would not proceed with an insulation rebate scheme under the Renewable Energy Bonus Scheme.

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Inquiry into the Energy Efficiency Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 65
Topic: Communications with families of deceased installers & house fire victims
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to the HIP please detail all or any communications between the Government and the families of those who died, and all or any communication between the govt and the families affected by the 93 house fires. Is the Department aware of any other house fires linked to the HIP?

Answer/s:

Departmental officials, Ministers Garrett and Combet and their staff, the Prime Minister and his staff have been in contact with the families of the deceased. The nature of these communications is subject to appropriate privacy considerations.

For a house fire to be formally linked to the Home Insulation Program (the Program):

- the address where the fire has been reported has to be verified as an address where insulation has been installed under the program; and
- it has to be demonstrated that the fire was caused by a non-compliant installation under the program.

The Department cooperates with the fire services in each state and territory, and investigates all reports of fires linked to insulation installed under the Program. The Department also follows up on reports received from householders and the media, as well as working with fire services.

When the Department is notified of a fire and it has been verified that the fire is linked to insulation installed under the program, the Department undertakes compliance action. The figure of 93 house fires was correct as at 19 February 2010. At the hearings of 25 March 2010 there had been 120 fires linked to the Program.

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Inquiry into the Energy Efficiency Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 66
Topic: Electrocutions and fires
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

How many electrocutions that have occurred could be linked to the Home Insulation Program? How many fires that have occurred could be linked to the Home Insulation Program? On what evidence are these statistics based?

Answer/s:

As at 17 March 2010, the Department is aware of three electrocutions linked to the Home Insulation Program (the Program).

At the hearings of 25 March 2010 there had been 120 fires linked to the Program.

For a house fire to be formally linked to the Program:

- the address where the fire has been reported has to be verified as an address where insulation has been installed under the program; and
- it has to be demonstrated that the fire was caused by a non-compliant installation under the Program.

The Department cooperates with the fire services in each state and territory, and investigates all reports of fires. The Department also follows up on reports received from householders, other sources, as well as working with fire services.

When the Department is notified of a fire and it has been verified that the fire is linked to insulation installed under the program, the Department undertakes compliance action.

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Inquiry into the Energy Efficiency Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 70
Topic: Cost recovery
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

What cost recovery will be undertaken in instances of non-compliance? What funds does the Commonwealth estimate it may recover?

Answer/s:

Cost recovery has occurred under the Home Insulation Program (the Program) where installers have self-identified an error in their claims and repaid funds, and a small number of rebate claims have been repaid after compliance activities.

Fraud and non-compliance under the Program will be investigated and where possible action will be taken to recover money and, if necessary, referrals made to the police or other authorities for potential prosecution.

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Inquiry into the Energy Efficient Homes Package

February 2010

Question No: 71
Topic: Risk management updates
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

In relation to the Risk Register and Management Plan, who was responsible for approving changes and updates? Who was responsible for implementing and monitoring mitigation plans and strategies? Please explain the values given in the “Likelihood”, “Consequence” and all “Risk” columns.

Answer/s:

The risk manager identified against each risk was responsible for updating the register and implementing the strategies identified in consultation with their senior executive officer. The risk register and risk plans were provided to the Project Control Group where the reports were endorsed.

The key codes for the register are:

E - extreme risk

H - high risk

M - medium risk

L - low risk

Level 5 - the most likely with Level 1 the least likely to occur.

Contact
Clearance

Ex:
Ex:

AS CMS Sig:
FAS PCD Sig:
SEC/DEP SEC Sig:

Date
Date
Date

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Question No: 73
Topic: Briefings to ministers
Hansard Page ECA: In writing

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

Did any briefings provided to Minister Garrett, Senator Arbib or the Prime Minister canvass a start date to the Home Insulation Program later than 1 July 2009?

Answer/s:

The Department has no record of any briefing to Minister Garrett, Senator Arbib or the Prime Minister which canvassed a start date to the second phase of the Home Insulation Program later than 1 July 2009.