

A window to improving energy efficiency in your home

As with many things that effect the energy efficiency of our homes, a lot of it has to do with common sense. How did our predecessors cope with these problems before air conditioners or even electricity?

While a lot of this came down to design, much of it was due to the materials available and how they used them. For example, they saw cypress pine was termite-resistant so used it to build the frames of their homes.

They also hewed sandstone into blocks for their walls, creating thermal mass which helped keep their homes warm in winter and cooler in summer.

Over the last 10 years we have seen many developments in building materials. Some have had a very positive effect on improving the energy efficiency of our homes, some not.

It has been the advancement of the innovative design and application of one of our home's most common elements — windows — that has had the greatest impact on energy efficiency after insulation.

It started with the invention of Smart Glass.

This is not to be mistaken with tinted glass, which does have some applications in certain areas of the home, but not in every window as some would have you believe.

Windows are notoriously the weakest link in wall insulation, but the likes of Viridian Smart Glass and

Bradnam's Solar Comfort have been designed to deflect up to 39 per cent of winter heat loss back into your home and block solar heat from getting in, reducing internal heat gain in summer and thus reducing power usage year round.

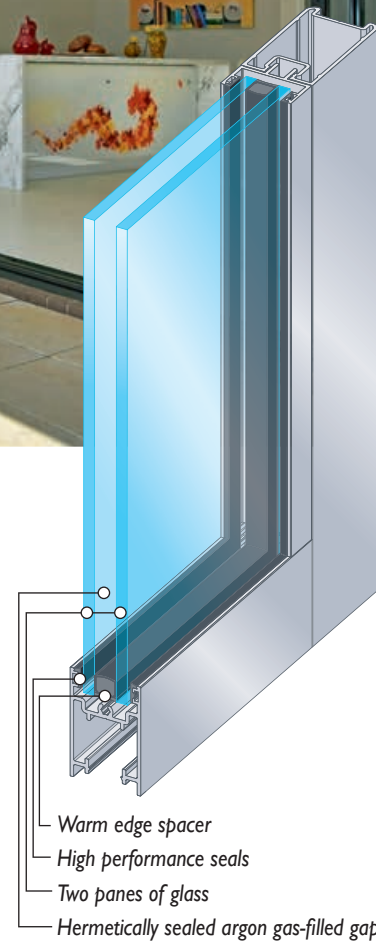
Double-glazed and thermal break windows have been available down south for a long time, so economically unviable for us here in Queensland, but will be available in Geoff Gibson Homes in the near future, with Bradnam's Windows and Doors announcing a new manufacturing facility here in Toowoomba.

The Bradnam's system will improve your glazing even further by hermetically sealing heat-blocking argon gas in the gap and putting a reinforced polyamide extrusion in the window frame, creating the energy-saving thermal break.

Using doubled-glazed windows alone can reduce your energy costs by as much as 23% while using thermal break windows can reduce those costs by as much as 27%.

With improvements in materials on this magnitude, energy efficient homes are becoming more accessible to everyone.

— Geoff Gibson



Look for this column in next month's Style... we'll be talking about how to cut back the power wastage of your home's biggest user of electricity — your hot water system!

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