

Costly to miss drive for energy efficiency

LAST May, a new energy efficiency standard was introduced by the Building Code of Australia — and some property owners are still coming to terms with the demands of the new code.

The standards apply to all new commercial buildings.

Older or existing buildings aren't caught in the standards net, but if there is major renovation or alteration to an existing building that encompasses more than 50 per cent of the building then the new standard will apply.

Legal Matters

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Building surveyors, however, have some discretion to allow partial compliance.

They have to take into account factors such as amenity, structural adequacy, health and safety and fire risk.

Also, heritage buildings can attract "partial compliance discretion".

The Building Commission has published guidance notes for building surveyors to reference when they try to determine "what is reasonable in the circumstances".

The standard has vast applications and can embrace heating, cooling, lighting, ventilation requirements and so forth.

But the major thrust of the standard is to reduce the need for lighting, heating and cooling systems in light of their contribution to the greenhouse dynamic.

Designers have to recognise the new standard.

Once the design is generated, they have to submit the design for approval by a qualified person. The assessor inputs the design into a computer program to determine compliance.

Only after such approval is forthcoming can the design be submitted for building approval to a building surveyor.

Property owners, managers and designers need to be "full bottle" on the new energy standard.

Failure to regard the requirements could result in a civil legal suit, from

commercial tenants or even possibly future purchasers of the building.

Research indicates that there can be energy cost savings of between 8 to 9 per cent for the life of the building. This could translate into significant dollars.

Also, an increasing number of environmentally correct companies are looking to rent buildings that have had the 5 star treatments.

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