

Energy efficiency for renters:

- Current Rental standards and 2027 changes
- Simple renter-friendly upgrades



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Welcome & acknowledgement

Presenter: Lucinda Flynn

- Accredited Residential Efficiency Assessor
- Trainer & presenter




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Outline of presentation

- The three aspects of comfort & energy efficiency
- How current & new rental standards apply to a range of building features and appliances.
- Further information & resources



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How we will look at rental standards

Current standards


Renter can do without permission

Renter can do with permission (rental provider can't refuse without a good reason)

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

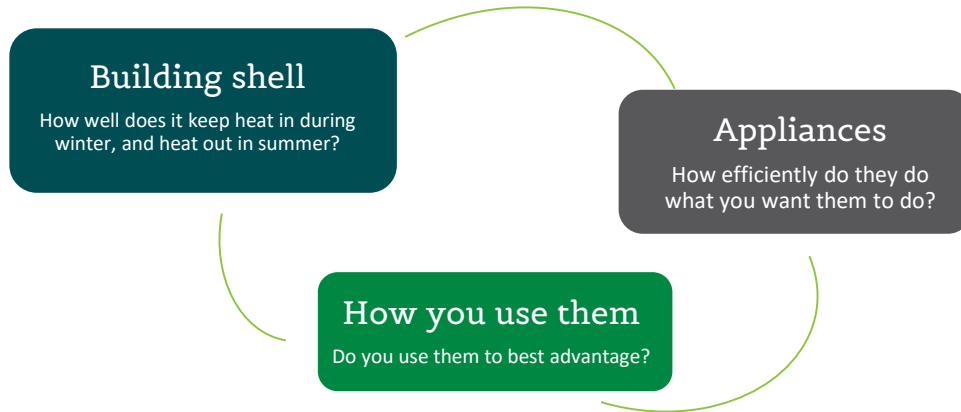
New standards from 1st March 2027 (some a bit later)

- These changes apply at the start of a new lease or when the lease changes to monthly



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Three aspects to a comfortable & energy efficient home



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Building shell upgrades

“The cheapest energy is the energy you don’t use”

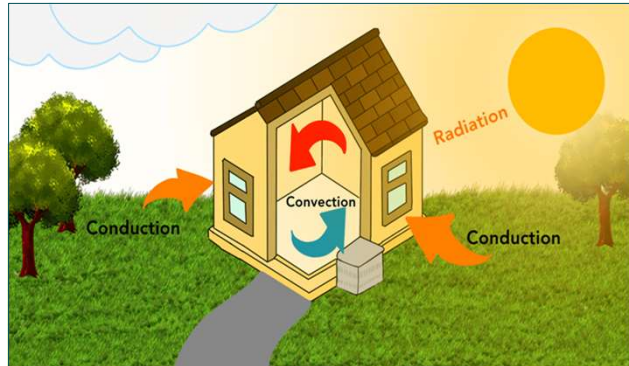


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Heat movement in our homes

Heat always moves from where it is warmer to where it is less warm

In our homes, improvements to our building shell help us manage how heat moves in or out of our home



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Good place to start: Think of your house in zones

- Heat & cool individual zones = save money
- If there are draughty areas, or unused areas, can you shut them off with a curtain?
- Note: if the heating is ducted, can only do this with unconditioned areas



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Zoning and rental standards

Current standards:

- None

Renter can do without permission:

- Hang curtains with removable telescopic poles, or other removable options

Renter can do with permission (rental provider can't refuse without a good reason):

- N/A

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- Fixed internal curtains, blinds or doors to separate areas

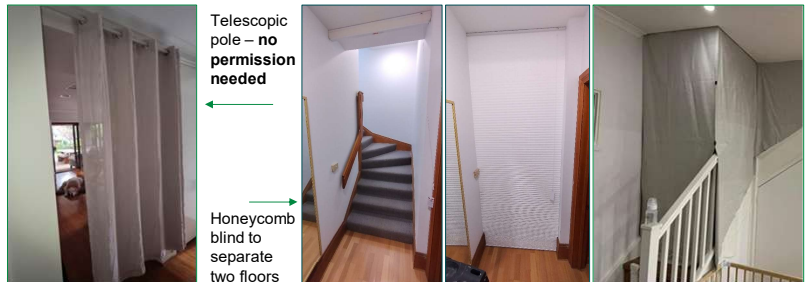
New standards from 1st March 2027:

- None



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DIY, low impact zoning



Telescopic pole – **no permission needed**

Honeycomb blind to separate two floors

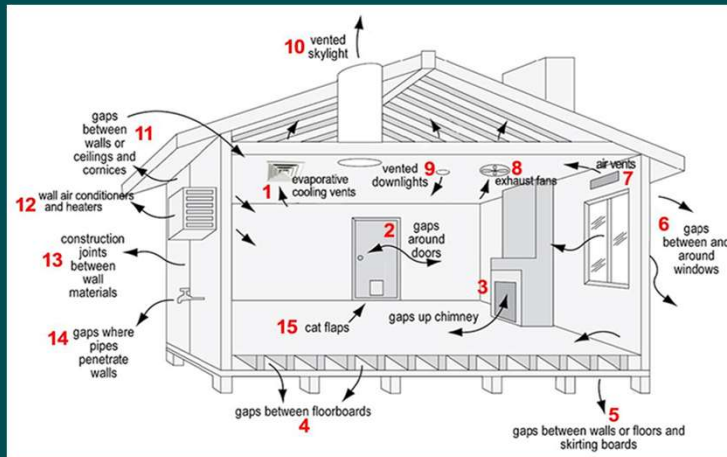
All other methods – permission needed, must be willing to return property to original state if requested

Curtains from op-shop, attached to ceiling with Velcro strips.



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Draught proofing



- Up to 25% heat loss in winter through draughts
- Draught sealing means physically blocking gaps
- Sealing draughts reduces need to re-heat (or cool) air – so it reduces energy bills



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Draught sealing and rental standards

Current standards:

- Must be weatherproof and have no major draughts

Renter can do without permission:

- Use removable products such as door snakes

Renter can do with permission (rental provider can't refuse without a good reason):

- Weather seal doors and windows
- Caulk and gap fill around windows, doors, skirting, floorboards
- Condition: as long as there is no open flued gas heating.

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- Seal gaps other than those above

New standards from 1st July 2027 (start date is delayed a bit):

- Weather seals on all external doors, windows & wall vents must be installed at the start of a new lease *(as long as there is no open flued heating)*



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NOTE: open flued gas space heaters

- Open flued heaters require constant ventilation to ensure that the combustion process is safe and efficient.
- Don't draught seal a zone when these are present

Unless you are **positive** a heater is closed flued, always:

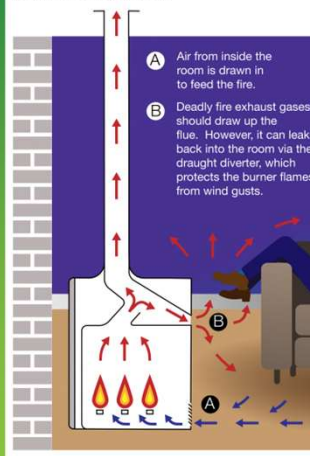
- Check if the heater is affected by a safety alert
- Never leave the heater on overnight or for long periods
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm as a backup
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

* Open flue wood heaters can also be problematic

OPEN-FLUED HEATERS

Draw air from the room to feed the fire.

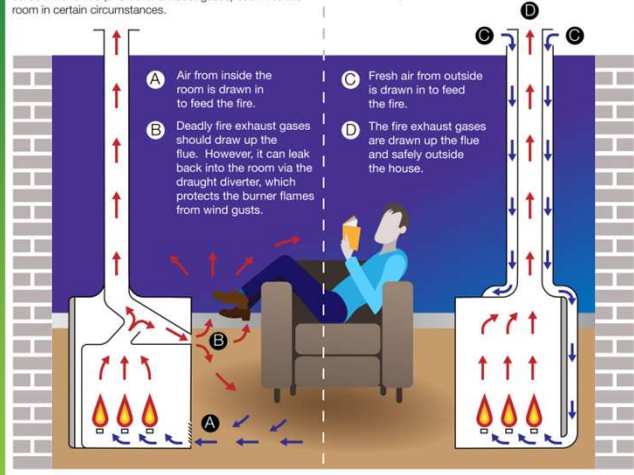
Inadequate ventilation and use of exhaust fans can draw carbon monoxide (and other exhaust gases) back into the room in certain circumstances.



ROOM SEALED HEATERS

Draw air from outside the house to feed the fire.

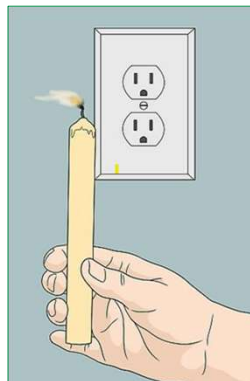
As they are sealed, exhaust gases are drawn up the flue and dispersed outside.



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Finding draughts

Feel draughts, see draughts, use a candle or incense stick to see flame or smoke movement



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Simple Draught Sealing for doors and windows

Common door bottom seals include:

Plastic stick-on seal



Brush seal



RP3 automatic drop-down seal



Note:

- The Victorian Energy Upgrades programme allows some of these to be installed FREE.
- Check that they seal the gap, and add more/improve the fit if necessary

Common perimeter seals for doors and windows include:

Foam or rubber stick on seal



V- seal stick on seal



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General gaps and cracks around the home

Gaps and cracks can be sealed with a caulking gun and/or foam filler rod

You'll need to ask permission, but the rental provider can't without a good reason



Water based caulk



Foam filler rod (comes in different thicknesses)



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Open chimneys

Open chimneys are a huge source of air loss and gain if unsealed, sometimes even if they have a damper.

There are several options for a temporary, removable seal, that can easily be removed when you vacate if the rental provider requests it.

NOTE: it is important to always place a tag or note in the fireplace to show that it is sealed, so no-one lights a fire by mistake.

Free VIC VEU seals



Chimney balloon



Chimney sheep



EcoMaster chimney seal



Watch the YouTube video by Ephe – “Cheapest way of making a Chimney Draught Stopper”



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Unsealed exhaust fans & evaporative cooler covers



- Add a Draft Stoppa cover (Free under the VEU scheme)
- Heat lamps are the exception – can't be covered with a Draft Stoppa



Evaporative cooler vent covers available FREE under the VEU scheme, or you can purchase, in clear or white.



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Draught sealing versus ventilation

When draught sealing, make sure you maintain good ventilation. Both are essential to a healthy home.

- Draughts = uncontrolled movement of air
- Ventilation = controlled movement of air



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Condensation management

How ... Daily activities that lead to condensation

Water vapour per day:

- Cooking = 3kg
- Dish washing = 1kg
- Cloths washing = 1kg
- Clothes drying = 5kg
- Showering = 1kg
- People = 3kg
- Pets = 1kg
- Gas heating = 1kg

10-20 litres per day



CSR

Rather than using draughts to manage condensation, manage moisture levels inside by:

- Installing and using properly sized rangehood and exhaust fans
- Not drying clothing inside
- Actively opening doors and windows daily to purge excess condensation
- If needed – use a dehumidifier



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Humidity sensor – low-cost way to track

Decrease in Bar Width Indicates Decrease in Effect

Optimum Zone

Per Cent Relative Humidity

* INSUFFICIENT DATA ABOVE 50 % rh

Optimal humidity range for minimizing adverse health effects

A low-cost Humidity sensor can help you track humidity in different zones of the home.

Source: Criteria for Human Exposure to Humidity in Occupied Buildings Sterling EM, Arundel A, Sterling TD

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Dehumidifier (if other methods are insufficient)

Check if your reverse cycle unit has a 'dry' mode – this dehumidifies and is a great option for warm weather.

Note: can make you colder if used in winter – this is when a dehumidifier might be a better option.

A good quality desiccant dehumidifier can remove up to 10L of moisture daily.

It also generates some heat as a side effect.

Around \$500.

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Insulation: ceiling, walls and underfloor

Insulation reduces movement of heat through ceiling and wall materials

- 'R' stands for 'Resistance' to heat transfer
- Works by trapping bubbles of air
- Ceiling insulation is the most important insulation to have in a home



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Insulation and rental standards

Current standards:

- None

Renter can do without permission:

- Lay rugs on the floor

Renter can do with permission (rental provider can't refuse without a good reason):

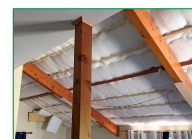
- Nothing specific, except the general catch-all:
"other things that are needed to make sure the renter is not too hot or too cold, and to reduce the energy or water bills"
- You could try to argue that ceiling insulation falls into this (35% of heat loss in winter if ceiling is uninsulated) , and perhaps negotiate paying ½ each

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- Install insulation to ceiling or underfloor, or 'rectify' existing ceiling insulation to fill in gaps

New standards from 1st March 2027:

- At the start of a new lease, ceiling spaces with less than R2 insulation must be upgraded to R5.0 rating, installed by an accredited professional.
- VEU rebate coming in mid 2026 – will pay about half the cost.
 - First offered to Social Housing, then from October for homes with less than R2
- * some exceptions – if requires substantial building work or excess expense (e.g. raked ceiling)



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Most common issue – gaps left by trades

5% gaps in coverage across your ceiling reduces the functional value of your insulation.

You could ask permission to have this rectified (before 1st March 2027).

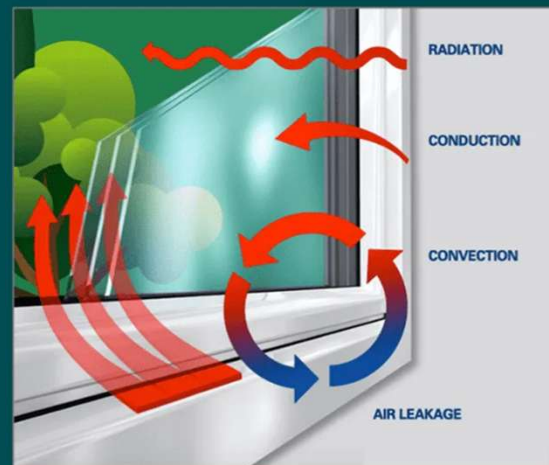


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Windows

Windows upgrades help us:

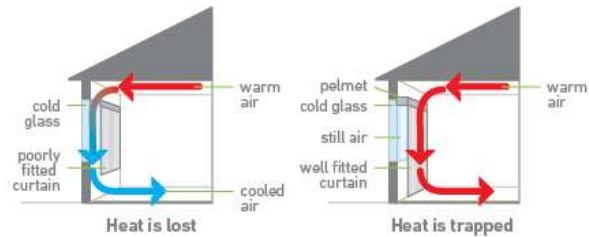
Reduce the heat moving in and out of our windows by radiation, conduction & convection



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Window treatments (curtains or blinds)

Reduce air flow across window,
which reduces movement of heat.



WINDOW COVERINGS

- Poorly fitted curtains lose heat
- Well fitted curtains with pelmet trap heat

Image: Sustainability Victoria



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Window treatments and rental standards

Current standards:

- Windows in rooms likely to be used as bedrooms or living areas must be fitted with curtains or blinds that can be closed, block light and provide privacy.

Renter can do without permission:

- Install your own curtains or blinds (but must keep the existing ones and replace them when you vacate)

Renter can do with permission (rental provider can't refuse without a good reason):

- N/A

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- Install internal window treatments to other uncovered windows (e.g. wet areas)

New standards from 1st March 2027:

- None in this category

Important: Installing thick, close-fitting drapes housed in a boxed pelmet can provide an insulating effect similar to double-glazing when the curtains are closed.

Sustainability Victoria Energy Efficiency Retrofits report, 2019



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Thermally protective internal window treatments



Box pelmet /
invisible pelmet



Honeycomb blinds installed
inside the window frame



Heavy drapes installed so there is minimal air
gap with the ceiling



Close fitting roman blinds

These reduce the amount of air that moves across the window, reducing heat flow by convection.

Curtains need to create a still airspace. To do that, they need to:

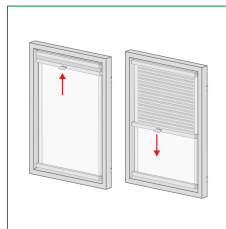
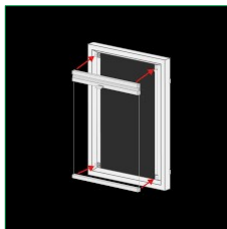
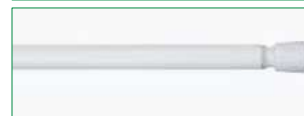
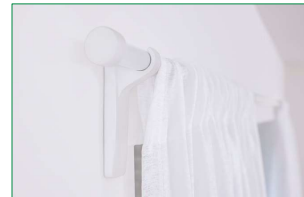
- Hit the ceiling or a pelmet
- Be close fitting to the sides
- Hit the floor
- Or be installed within the window frame with less than 3mm gap on each side.



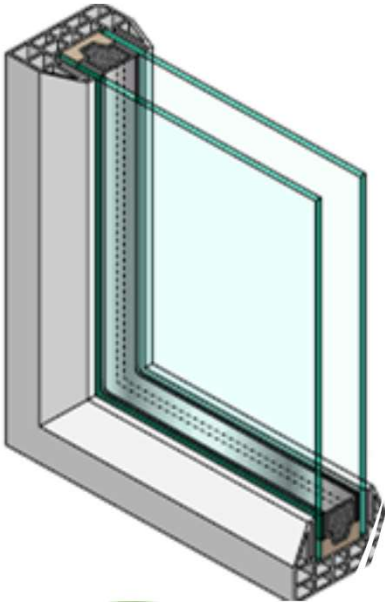
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No drill options for renters

- Command curtain rod hooks (hardware store)
- Telescopic tension rod (Spotlight)
- Stick to fit Honeycomb blinds (Blindsonline)
- A range of other non-drill methods



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Glazing upgrades

Aim: To create an air gap between two panels, to reduce movement of heat through the glass



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Window glazing and rental standards

Current standards:

- None

Renter can do without permission:

- Official text: "Non-permanent window film on glass for insulation, reduced heat transfer or privacy"
- Bubble wrap, removable panels
- Clear comfort adhered to window frames with temporary tape (tape detaches in 6-12 months). Note: you may need to repaint frames if tape causes damage to paintwork when removed.

Renter can do with permission (rental provider can't refuse without a good reason):

- N/A

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- N/A

New standards from 1st March 2027:

- None in this category



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Low cost, temporary secondary glazing

- Bubble wrap
- Removable panels - read *Renew* article renew.org.au/renew-magazine/diy/diy-insulating-aluminium-windows/
- Temporary film – Clear Comfort
 - Must use temporary tape
 - If you use permanent tape, it may damage paintwork when removed



Images: (top left) Renew, (top right) Unknown source, (bottom) Renew

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External shading and rental standards

Current standards:

- None

Renter can do without permission:

- Attach removable physical shade over windows

Renter can do with permission (rental provider can't refuse without a good reason):

- N/A

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- Install fixed external shading / grow a deciduous plant

New standards from 1st March 2027:

- None in this category



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External shading

- reduces heat gain from radiation

- Adjustable is best to you can pull it back in winter to allow free solar heat gain
- You need to actively use it
- Every m2 direct sun on glass = bar radiator
- Reflective 'Renshade' foil – not shading, but does reflect heat away from windows.
 - Applied with Velcro dots, or in removable frames



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User behaviour - Windows

Hot weather recommendations:

- Pull down external shading, close windows and close curtains
- This will minimise radiation and conduction through windows.
- After a hot day, open key windows & openable skylights to purge heat overnight

Cold weather recommendations:

- Close internal treatments at night to reduce loss of heat (convection through air, conduction through windows)
- Re-open treatments to allow passive solar gain from radiation when the sun is shining on them, particularly for north windows. Consider leaving some curtains closed on cold days.



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Appliance efficiency



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Heating and rental standards

Current standards:

- For rental agreements from March 2023, this must be a fixed energy efficient heater in the main living area, such as:
 - A room air conditioner or gas space heater with a 2 star or above energy rating
 - a ducted heating or hydronic heating system with an outlet in the main living area
 - a domestic solid fuel burning appliance, such as a fireplace or wood burning stove.

Renter can do without permission:

- Use plug in electric resistive heaters, plug in FAR Infrared heaters, personal heating devices

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- Install portable reverse cycle air conditioning
- Install fixed heating in additional rooms (ideally, sign a contract that they will not need to be removed when vacating)

New standards from 1st March 2027:

- When the current heating needs to be replaced, it must be replaced with a 2 or more-star electric heater
- (this will necessarily be a reverse cycle air conditioner as no other electric heater has star ratings)



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User behaviour: Use the most efficient heater you have

Reverse cycle air conditioners

- most efficient form of space heating available
- will provide you between 3-5 times the heat energy per kW of electricity than a plug-in heater

If you have one of these already, use it for heating whenever you can



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Portable reverse cycle air conditioners

Pros:

- Portable! (good for renters, moving room to room)
- Lower cost to purchase, and no wiring is needed
- Can have various modes and timer functions

Cons:

- Noisy (57-74dB on high setting - conversation is 65dB)
- Less efficient than a fixed unit
- Require a duct through a window for expelling heat extracted from the room air (can cause draughts/tricky to move around)



Keep in mind:

- Not recommended to use an extension cord - high power draw can cause overheating of the cord
- Warranty - from 1-7yrs
- Cost (med room) \$350-\$1200, plus running cost +/- \$200/summer



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Low-cost heating for your body

Personal Heating devices:

- Easy to find
- Cheap to run
- Cheap to buy
- In all sizes and shapes

And remember - rug up and wear slippers!



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FAR Infrared heater

- Directly warms people and things with radiant heat like the sun's rays
- \$400-\$800
- Only suitable for small spaces or over a desk/couch



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Cooling and rental standards

Current standards:

- No cooling system is required.

Renter can do without permission:

- Use plug in fans, use doors and window for ventilation

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- Install portable reverse cycle air conditioning or evaporative cooling
- Install additional fixed cooling or ceiling fans (ideally, sign a contract that they will not need to be removed when vacating)

New standards from 1st March 2027:

- If there is no cooling, a fixed cooling system of 3 or more stars must be installed in the main living area, or a 2 star equivalent central cooler.
- If there is a cooling system, when it fails/needs replacing it must be replaced with the above.
- From 1 July 2030, efficient electric cooling must be installed in the main living area of all rental homes, irrespective of whether a new lease has been entered into (and whether the old unit has failed).



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Fixed or or plug in ceiling fans

- 3-degree cooling effect
- Different sizing for different sized rooms
- Pedestal, desk fans, battery operated fan for a blackout



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Evaporative cooling

- Is energy efficient to use if you have it.
- Not so effective in humid or very hot weather.
- Wet towel and a fan - same function but DIY



Reverse cycle unit

- Efficient to use – especially individual ones
- Use along with fans
- Will gradually be required in main living area (by 2030 at latest)

Image: Sustainability Victoria



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Efficient heating & cooling tips

- Set the thermostat to 18-20 in winter, 24-26 in summer
- Wear clothing that suits the season
- Heat by zone (close doors)
- Appliances serviced and cleaned
- Building shell upgrades reduce heating & cooling costs



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Hot water heating, showers & rental standards

Current standards:

- Showers must have a shower head with a WELS 3-star water efficiency rating (if not, renter can install if they keep the original one – FREE under VEU scheme).
- If one cannot be installed, then a shower head with a 1- or 2-star rating is acceptable.

Renter can do without permission:

- Limit shower times, insulate (lag) hot water pipes (this is removable)

Renter can do with permission (you need to return property to original condition if requested)

- N/A

New standards from 1st March 2027:

- There should be a WELS 4-star shower head
- When the hot water system needs replacing, it should be replaced with either a solar hot water system with electric boost, or an electric heat pump



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Rooftop Solar for renters

There are no rental standards that relate to the installation of Rooftop Solar, however:

- It is possible to install rooftop Solar
- The Rental Provider is the one who must install it (and apply for rebates and interest free loans through Solar VIC).
- Solar Vic has ready-to-use agreement forms that can be signed by renter and owner, to make sure there is benefit for both – see www.solar.vic.gov.au/information-renters
- Energy.gov.au also has information about how to create win-win agreements for both renter and owner: www.energy.gov.au/solar/switch-solar-power/solar-households/solar-rentals-and-multi-occupancy-properties



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Financial support & further resources



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Energy Assistance Programme

One on one support to:

- apply for eligible concessions and grants
- access your retailer's hardship programs
- find, compare and switch energy offers
- understand energy bills and get in payment plans
- receive energy efficiency advice
- include free energy audits and energy efficiency appliances
- provide referrals to other services like financial counselling.



To access the program, you need to:

- hold a Commonwealth Government Concession card; or
- be struggling or expecting to struggle to pay your energy bill.
- <https://www.anglicarevic.org.au/our-services/financial-counselling/energy-assistance-program/#EAP-form>



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For households with low income / other concessions

The Utility Relief Grant Scheme offers up to:

- \$650 for each electricity, gas or water utility in a 2-year period, or \$1300 if your home has only one source of energy (e.g. electricity)
- <https://www.energy.gov.au/rebates/utility-relief-grant-scheme>

CHECK YOUR CONCESSIONS (17%) ARE BEING APPLIED ON EVERY UTILITY

Medical cooling concession – a further 17.5% off
Life support concession as well

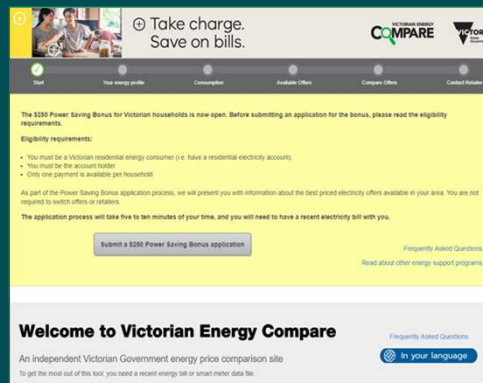


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Compare your electricity and gas rates

Energy rates rise every
January & July

<https://compare.energy.vic.gov.au/>



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Are you on the best plan?

Did you know 80% of households could be on a cheaper energy plan?

Energy companies are required by law to tell you whether they can offer you a better rate.

This is shown on every bill.

The screenshot shows an Origin Energy electricity bill. At the top right, it says 'Electricity' with a lightbulb icon. Below that, 'Issue date' is 05 Aug 2024 and 'Tax invoice' is present. A 'Need help?' section lists 'Faults and emergencies' (Endeavour Energy 131 023) and 'Energy Orbuldenan' (1800 246 545). The website 'originenergy.com.au' and phone number '13 24 61' are also shown. The main section is titled 'Here's your bill'. Under 'Account details', there are fields for 'Supply Address', 'National Metering Identifier (NMI)', and 'Account number'. To the right, a box shows 'Amount due' of '\$754.98' debited on 23 Aug 2024. A highlighted box asks 'Could you save money on another plan?' and states: 'Based on your past usage, you are on the best plan we can offer you. The Australian Energy Regulator requires us to include this information. You can compare plans from other retailers on the Energy Made Easy website at energymadeeasy.gov.au'.



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Resources for renters & rental providers

Consumer Affairs Vic:

www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/

Tenants Vic:

<https://tenantsvic.org.au/>



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Thanks for listening

Questions?

