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Home energy-saving retrofits backed as part of post-COVID-19 stimulus: survey

JIM MALO  REPORTER | MAY 17, 2020

Energy-saving home features have won strong support as a potential post-coronavirus crisis stimulus measure ahead of a long, cold winter

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But experts warn the furore over the GFC-era Pink Batts program still looms large more than 10 years later and could sabotage efforts to get the proposed stimulus included in any government measures.

Almost all the respondents to an Environment Victoria survey, 83 per cent of 899, said they wanted to see household power bills reduced by stimulus, campaign manager Nick Aberle said.

Possible measures could include home insulation, draught sealing and solar as Victorians shiver through the cooler months.

“If we have any kind of [coronavirus] restrictions in place, people will be spending more time at home and they’ll need to spend more money on their energy bill,” he said. “Improving the energy efficiency of the building shell and the appliances in those homes is a really important part of dealing with those energy bills.”

Dr Aberle said it would pay the wages of tradies, and also permanently improve homes.

“Governments would be better poised to make their money back by investing in energy efficiency solutions, you’re in a better place to recoup that money,” he said. “This would be money that improves these homes for good, it would help people for now and forever on.”



Nunawading

2 1 1



\$950,000 - \$1,045,000

Nunawading

4 3 2



\$899,000

Nunawading

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Carlton North, Vic

NICHOLSON REAL ESTATE



er Rickard and Kathy Leitch have struggled to make their
Nunawading home as warm as they would like, and are looking for the
government to help with stimulus measures. Photo: Stephen
Kenzie



Nunawading retiree Peter Rickards said he'd
done some work on making his home more
energy efficient and warmer in winter, but was
still colder than comfortable and he struggled
to afford his power bills if he used heating.

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"We put Pinks Batts in the roof, that made a
h  difference, we tried to put draught
stoppers on the doors and windows, we put a
t  yer of plastic sheet over the windows,"
he said. "Despite all that, it's freezing bloody
cold."

"In an old house, it can help, but it's hard.
Particularly if the house isn't oriented to the
north, which our house isn't."

layers of socks to keep our heating bill down.”



Jecca Newman and partner Drew Echberg have made their house more efficient. Drew hopes the government will consider helping others do the same. Photo: Stephen McKenzie

Coburg North resident Drew Echberg had done the same, and he's happy with how it's turned out so far, but said low-income Australians should have the same access to thermal efficiency improvements too.

“I think it should be done. Australia's housing stock is just terrible,” he said. “Not only would it make a difference to everyone's comfort and bills but it would reduce our emissions.”

Mr Echberg said even if people could afford it, they might not realise that insulation could be an effective fix for thermal efficiency.

“There would be a lot of people who have the money but are saving for big ticket items like solar,” he said. “They don't think of draught sealing and insulation, which give you more bang for your buck.”

But experts warn of the political stumbling blocks.

...time being the measure as a stimulus was a good idea economically and socially, it would be hard to convince the federal government, which had led the charge to establish a royal commission into former prime minister Kevin Rudd's Pink Batts scheme, emeritus professor of global, urban and social studies at RMIT David Hayward said.

The insulation installation initiative was a stimulus to steer Australia's economy through the GFC, but led to the untimely deaths of some of the installers.

"It got slammed," he said. "Very unfairly, I might add.

"It ended up insulating a lot of the homes in Australia, saving a lot of power for people on low incomes along the way.

"The review said it was a successful program, but there were so many buildings done there were bound to be some failures."

Professor Hayward said the Victorian government would struggle to find the cash to fund an enterprise.

The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio said in a statement the state government was already working on retrofitting some Victorian homes.

"Since coming to government we have delivered programs that help businesses and households save energy, cut bills and reduce emissions while also creating jobs and stimulating the economy, including the Solar Homes Program and Victorian Energy Upgrades."

A spokeswoman for Ms D'Ambrosio said any new stimulus measures would be announced in due course.

The Environment Victoria survey was conducted on May 2 and 3.

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Western	estate	Melbourne rental	Lower North Shore	Privacy policy	Brisbane Times
Australia	Brisbane real	properties	East Melbourne	Financial Services	WA Today
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