

# What to look for in a Home



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With rising energy costs, water shortages and growing environmental awareness, more and more people are now looking for energy efficient and 'green' features in homes.

Why? Because they simply cost less to run and are likely to bring better market prices in the very near future.

Such homes have certain features, so here's some tips on what to look for next time you move.



Given that heating and cooling can be the cause of up to 50% of your energy bills, closely followed by hot water, here's some things to look out for.

**North Facing Living Areas** – With north facing living areas (depending on the property) you should be able to take advantage of passive solar heating (free heat from the sun) to help keep your home warm in winter. This can significantly reduce your heating costs which is why it's a highly desirable design feature.

**Heating systems** – Passive solar (as above) is great but won't always cut it in our climate. Look for a heating system that can be zoned, has a timer and is highly efficient (check the star labelling). Gas is generally cheaper than electricity and can be a good option. Electric under floor heating costs a small fortune to run. If a home has this type of heating (even the efficient models), don't use it and find another heating source.

**Draft Seals & Insulation** – You can easily check for draft seals around external doors and windows as you look around a home. Good draft proofing will help keep the indoor temperature comfortable and works best in conjunction with good insulation. Insulation is not so easy to see but you can always ask. Ideally you'd want a minimum insulation level of R3.5 value in the ceiling, R2 in the walls. Anything higher than that is all the better.

**Hot water systems** – Hot water can make up 25% of your energy bill. Solar hot water, gas boosted is the cheapest to run. Alternatively gas instantaneous or gas storage (in that order) is the most cost effective. If you find the home of your dreams and it has an electric hot water system, consider changing it when you move in.

**Pools and Spa's** – Nice to have but these use a significant amount of energy. To help minimise costs look for solar pool heating (gas boosted), covers that are easy to use and ideally use of ionisers to control water algae (they also help reduce the amount of time a filter needs to run).

There are many more things you could consider and it really does all depend on the house. An efficient house will give you great opportunities to minimise your living expenses which means you'll have more money for the fun things in life!

If you want to know more about a house you're considering moving to, think about getting a pre-purchase sustainability review done. It will tell you what the house already has and how you could improve it further should you choose to. It's always good to know what you're getting into!

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