



## #1 ENERGY PROBLEM

# Support aging parents

The decision for elderly parents to stay in their homes, or downside to a small home is a big decision. Leaving an area they may have been familiar with for many years can be really challenging and it can be hard to setup new community networks.

There are few situations where we love to help more than supporting older folks be more comfortable in their homes. Some years ago we had the privilege of working with a rural Victorian council to conduct thermal retrofits on the homes of 30 people who were elderly and / or infirmed. The work that we did was groundbreaking and we were honoured to be invited back and see for ourselves the amazing impact we had on that cohort. We always knew our products and installation methods were very effective, but in that community it was truly humbling to see the life changing impacts.

We know many elderly folk are frightened to turn on heating and cooling for fear of running up a huge bill. So in the winter, they will tend to go to bed very early and it may be one of the few places that they can get warm.

If your parents have chosen to stay in their existing home or have downsized, their home can be retrofitted to make then cool in summer, cosy and snug in winter and not frightened of high energy bills.

**Every home is different, so these are guidelines on the activities and the sequence that will make a huge difference.**

### 1 COCOONING OR WHOLE HOME

Define the scope of what you can achieve. If your parents' home is not at all energy efficient, and time or budget is an issue right now, you might want to consider a technique called "Cocooning" the main living space and bedroom. This means making just one or two rooms energy efficient so you can achieve steady temperatures regardless of the weather outside. If you have time and budget, by all means make the entire home energy efficient.

## 2 SETUP A SAFE HOME

- **SAFETY SWITCHES:** Does their home have safety switches installed? Circuit breakers and fuses only protect appliances and wiring from damage. They don't stop people from being electrocuted. Installing a safety switch, known as a Residual Current Device, or RCD, in the switchboard is an effective way to minimise the risk. RCDs have been mandatory since 1991, so if their home is older than that, it would be worthwhile getting a sparky out to check. While they are at your home, here is how to get a great energy efficient result from an electrician's visit to your home.
- **CARBON MONOXIDE:** If their home uses gas, install a carbon monoxide detector. Gas appliances should be checked by a licensed plumber every two years to ensure they are in good working order. However, it is possible that hairline fractures can appear and cause carbon monoxide gas to escape into a home. This article will explain [what they are and where to install them](#). As carbon monoxide is a heavy gas, if it is present, it will start accumulating at floor level. It is our very strong preference to remove gas from the home of elderly folk as leaving a gas cooker on can be easily done and may not be detected for some time.
- **FIRE ALARMS:** Check that fire alarms are compliant with current practices and are fully operational. Most fires that result in death start in the lounge or bedroom. So it makes sense to have fire alarms in each bedroom, rather than a hallway and have interconnected smoke alarms so that if one alarm goes off, they all go off.

## 3 CHECK YOUR COOLING / HEATING SYSTEM

Check that your heating and cooling systems are operating efficiently. Clean out the filters on air conditioning systems and have all gas appliances tested (as you would normally have done every 2 years to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning).

Being able to control the temperature of a room, or the whole home is important for the comfort and health of parents. Avoiding massive swings in temperatures can be achieved.

## 4 DRAUGHTS VERSUS VENTILATION

If their home is draughty, now is the time to address that. Draughts come in many places around a home from chimneys, exhaust fans, walls vents, around doors and windows and cracks around skirting boards, floor boards, architraves and over the tops of windows.

Choosing no or low VOC products is important to maintain safe indoor air quality for your parents. A room that has been draught proofed with a solvent based silicone will off gas for a while, might not support.

Do not draught proof a room that uses a gas appliance. The risk of carbon monoxide poisoning is real.

Effective draught proofing will enable you to take control of the ventilation in a room or a whole home. You decide when to ventilate and how. Otherwise the outside weather conditions will rule your home.

## 5 WINDOW SHADING

If the room that your parents sleep in faces east, north or west, you might want to consider what shading is in place at the windows. Avoiding direct sun strike in the summer is critical as it can increase the temperature of a room very quickly.

The best way to eliminate sun strike from a window is with external shading, such as light coloured canvas blinds or shade sails. However, the quickest way to eliminate sun strike from a window would be with effective window coverings and pelmets, or Invisible Pelmets. The cheapest way is to install [Renshade on the window](#). It can be removed in the winter to allow winter sun to warm their room, then reinstated in summer when the hot weather starts again.

## 6 CEILING INSULATION

Check the condition and level of ceiling insulation in the home. Without effective ceiling insulation a home simply cannot work effectively. If the home has existing insulation, it can be levelled and topped up with effective, people friendly insulation that is safe for your family. Choose insulation rodents don't like [such as this one](#).

## 7 UNDERFLOOR INSULATION

If your parent's home is on stumps and you can access underneath it, installing underfloor insulation is a great way to moderate the temperature of the home. Without underfloor insulation, the temperature of the floor boards will be pretty close to the temperature outside. With underfloor insulation, the floor boards will be much closer to the temperature inside.

Underfloor insulation will keep your parents feet warm and comfortable without that aching cold permeating up their legs.

## NEXT STEPS?

If this is all too much and you want some hand holding along the journey, you can start off by getting a deep insight into your parent's home's overall energy efficiency performance. We conduct a thorough ecoHome Assessment in various areas in Victoria. From there, we will craft a specific home retrofit plan for you which you can perform in increments based on your budget, or all at once, or help you take an informed DIY path.

If DIY is your thing, you can discover more energy-efficient draught-proofing solutions that bring in maximum thermal comfort in the home without draining pockets! Shop for a wide range of excellent home retrofit solutions for greater thermal comfort at [www.ecoMasterStore.com.au](http://www.ecoMasterStore.com.au)

To progress your journey towards an energy efficient home that loves your parents all year round and puts your mind at ease call 1300 326 627 or email [info@ecomaster.com.au](mailto:info@ecomaster.com.au).