



Building newsflash

Changes to building energy rating software and NatHERS protocol for assessor accrediting organisations

Purpose

To advise of changes to energy rating software standards and to provide details of the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) administrator protocol for assessor accrediting organisations for energy rating assessors who use software to analyse the energy efficiency of class 1, 2 and 4 buildings.

Background

Compliance with the energy efficiency performance requirements of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) (Part 2.6 of Volume 2 or Section J of Volume 1) for residential buildings may be demonstrated using the following assessment methods:

- verification methods, including calculation of a building's annual thermal energy performance using a thermal calculation method
- documentary evidence described in Part A.2 of Volume 1 or Part 1.2 of Volume 2
- expert judgment.

If a verification method is used, thermal energy calculations must be made using energy rating software. The software must comply with the appropriate Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) protocol as part of the NatHERS framework that allows computer software tools to rate the energy efficiency of houses. NatHERS was initiated to provide a standardised approach to rating the thermal performance of houses throughout Australia and requires software to demonstrate its compatibility with specific minimum standards described in the ABCB's Software Accreditation Protocol.

Legislation

Sections 10 and 30 of the *Building Act 1975*
Sections 17 and 18 of the Building Regulation 2006

2nd generation software

In accordance with the Queensland Development Code Mandatory Part 4.1—Sustainable Buildings, only software that meets the requirements of the ABCB Protocol for House Energy Rating Software for Residential Buildings, Version 2006.1, commonly referred to as 2nd generation software (i.e. currently BERS Pro, AccuRate or FirstRates), can be used to demonstrate compliance with the energy efficiency requirements of the BCA.

A list of accredited 2nd generation NatHERS software tools can be found at www.nathers.gov.au/software/accreditation.html

Certifiers assessing building applications should be satisfied that the software being used complies with the appropriate protocol. Upon completion of the building, certifiers must be satisfied that the building has been constructed to the approved thermal design specifications used to obtain the original building approval.

Assessor accrediting organisations protocol and software user accreditation

To foster consistent and reliable assessments the NatHERS administrator (in the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts) has developed a protocol for the approval and operation of organisations that accredit users of NatHERS software for regulatory purposes. Assessor accrediting organisations that comply with the new 'NatHERS protocol for assessor accrediting organisations' are in turn accredited by the NatHERS administrator. The protocol for assessor accrediting organisations is available from:

<http://www.nathers.gov.au/assessors/pubs/assessor-protocol.pdf>.



Under sections 17 and 18 of the Building Regulation 2006, certifiers must decide whether a person is competent to assist with design or specifications. In this context certifiers may wish to consider whether an assessor has been accredited by an approved assessor accrediting organisation for using energy rating software to meet the energy efficiency requirements of the BCA.

Being accredited by an approved assessor accrediting organisation ensure that assessors:

- are qualified and have received appropriate training in the use of the software simulation and building thermal performance theory
- agree to operate under a professional Code of Conduct that is approved under a national framework
- hold adequate professional indemnity insurance to indemnify themselves for their role as an accredited assessor
- have access to technical support and continuing professional development training
- are quality assured for their for assessor practice.

A list of all assessor accrediting organisations can be found at: www.nathers.gov.au.

Currently, the Association for Building Sustainability Assessors (ABSA) is the only available accrediting organisation (www.absa.net.au). Other organisations may apply to become an accrediting organisation under the NatHERS protocol for assessor accrediting organisations.

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