

PLUG THE WHOLE

By Jeanette Leigh

400 words

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To achieve an optimally performing home that doesn't leak cash, energy or the elements, take a holistic approach. Cover all the holes.

Conduct a household audit and you may notice plenty of ways in which your house is haemorrhaging energy and lacking the "green" factor.

Susan Knight, Senior ESD consultant at, Cundall, sustainable design engineers, advises that addressing energy and water consumption must happen alongside modifying household habits and lifestyle.

"To maximise a home's performance you need to monitor consumption. Compare your base line energy performance with the condition of your home. Your utility bills are a good place to start."

What kind of heating do you have? Gas is more economical than electricity and switching a heater on and off uses more energy than leaving a heater on.

Susan Knight says that people might experience discomfort in their home because it is drafty, or too hot in summer, however they don't know how to fix the problem.

"Drafts coming from under doors and unsealed windows, means the house is not thermally stable and heating bills are probably much higher than they need to be. Sealing gaps can save up to 20% on heating and cooling costs. Install high performance window frames, double glazing, or low e coating on glass to prevent heat loss."

If you have relatively new furniture that has not been GECA (Good Environmental Choice Australia) certified it could well contain nasty chemicals such as formaldehyde, which is used widely in the manufacture of building materials and numerous household products. These chemicals off-gas for long periods after installation, and can severely affect your health.

Because we can't smell many of the VOCs and pollutants in our homes, a device such as the low energy Nuair positive input ventilation system installed in the ceiling replaces stale, damp, toxic air with fresh air up to twenty times a day, at an annual cost of less than \$30.

Do you throw all your rubbish in one bin? Landfill is an overstretched resource so consider employing a compost bin, and if your council allows, have a few chooks in the backyard. It is very satisfying and great for the environment. Sustainability Victoria's Resource Smart site provides good information on how to recycle.

Indoor plants are a lovely feature and they filter the air. This is good for those who suffer from bronchial problems. It is well documented that there is less absenteeism due to sickness when offices have indoor gardens.