

Sustainability declaration reference guide

A reference guide to assist in the completion and interpretation of the sustainability declaration.

Version 2
4 February 2010



Top five things to remember when you are completing the sustainability declaration

1. Don't know—don't tick

Sellers must complete a sustainability declaration to the best of their ability and knowledge. If you do not know the answer to any question, please leave the box blank.

2. Do it yourself

There is no need to engage a building professional to complete the form.

3. Check product labels

Labels on appliances such as hot water systems and air-conditioners may help answer some questions.

4. Check your receipts

Check your receipts for any appliances in your home, such as insulation, water efficient tapware and showerheads or energy efficient lighting, as this may help to complete the form.

5. Sign and date

Remember, the seller must at least fill in the address of the property as well as sign and date the declaration.

The sustainability declaration is a compulsory form that must be completed to the best of the seller's ability and knowledge before a house, townhouse, duplex (class 1a buildings) or unit (class 2 building) is offered or marketed for sale from 1 January 2010. The declaration will help inform buyers about the 'triple bottom line' (environmental, social and economic) sustainability features of the property and help raise community awareness of the value of these features.

A sustainable home helps occupants save money, energy and water as well as easily move around their home and feel safer. A sustainable home will better meet the occupant's needs through all stages of their lives and help improve the resale value of the property.

The declaration identifies the sustainability features of a home in three key areas:

- energy
- water
- access, safety and other features.

Advertising and open house inspections

A home cannot be advertised for sale (by a seller or a seller's agent) unless the advertisement contains information about where a potential buyer may obtain a copy of the completed sustainability declaration. This could be as simple as a statement announcing that the declaration is available from the agent's office. This does not apply to newspaper advertisements, magazine advertisements or generic signage which has not been prepared specifically for the property.

A copy of the completed sustainability declaration must also be conspicuously displayed whenever a home is open for inspection by the seller, such as an open house.

Privacy

If a seller has privacy concerns about a sustainability declaration being made available for advertising purposes and open house inspections, the personal details section on the declaration may be blanked out, providing the property address and date are still visible. The signature section can instead read 'seller has signed this form'. However, the seller will still need to sign the original copy of the declaration and a signed copy must be given to the buyer. The seller's agent can retain this copy in their office until it is required.

The Queensland Government has no involvement with collection or storage of any information contained on the sustainability declaration forms.

1. Energy

This section outlines some key features that can contribute to increasing the energy efficiency of your home. Installing all or some of these features can help reduce your household electricity usage and costs and consequently reduce your total household greenhouse gas emissions.

E1—Alternative power source

Solar energy systems are easily identifiable as either ground level stand-alone solar panels or a collection of solar panels located on the roof of your home.

If you know how many kilowatts your solar system produces, please indicate this in the space provided on the sustainability declaration. If you don't know this information, leave it blank.



Solar power systems can be identified by a collection of solar panels on the roof

Savings for solar power in the sustainability declaration have been estimated based on an average 2 kilowatt system producing 9.2 kilowatts per day. Actual electricity generation will be dependent on external factors.

E2—Greenhouse efficient hot water systems

Check the label on your hot water system to see if it identifies the type of system you have—i.e. solar, gas, electric or heat pump.

Hot water system savings used in the sustainability declaration were estimated based on comparisons with a 340 litre electric resistance hot water system*.

Estimated potential electricity savings for solar hot water is based on a gas-boosted system. Potential savings for electric-boosted solar hot water systems could be slightly lower.

Solar hot water systems will generally have solar collector panels located on the roof. A water storage tank may be mounted on the roof, at ground level or inside the roof.

Heat pump hot water systems may look like electric systems but have a fan and evaporator incorporated into the top section. The fan grill will be visible (see image below). Sometimes it will be a 'split system' where the fan and evaporator will be split from the main water storage tank (see image right).



A solar hot water system will generally have solar collector panels on the roof



A heat pump hot water system with fan and evaporator incorporated



A split system heat pump hot water system

Gas hot water systems can be either a storage system where the water storage tank is at ground level (storage) or a small box mounted to the side of the house (instantaneous). It will be distinguishable from an electric system as it will have gas lines running from a meter or gas cylinders into the system.



An instantaneous gas hot water system

* An electric resistance hot water system is the most common form of electric hot water system. These systems were commonly installed in houses and townhouses built before 1 March 2006.



An example of a storage gas hot water system

E3—Pool and spa pump tariffs

To confirm if your pool or spa is connected to an off-peak tariff, check your electricity bill. Off-peak tariffs may be listed as ‘Tariff 31—night rate (super economy)’ or ‘Tariff 33—controlled supply (economy)’. If you are unsure contact your electricity supplier.

E4—Covered outdoor living areas

Areas such as decks, patios and pergolas help save energy by encouraging outdoor living rather than using air-conditioning. This is especially the case when they are connected to indoor living areas such as kitchens, living and dining rooms.

Electricity savings related to outdoor living areas in the sustainability declaration are based on two hours of outdoor living area use per day for 200 days per year, which then offset the use of a 2.2 kilowatt air-conditioning system during those times. Savings are based on a covered outdoor living area that is 12 metres square in size.

E5—Insulation

If you only have insulation installed in part of your home, tick the ‘partial’ box and state where it is located e.g. kitchen extension.

Roof/ceiling—if you can access your roof space, look for any insulation such as bulk fibres like wool, glass wool and insulation batts or reflective foil sheets on the ceiling or under the inside of the roof. Reflective foil looks similar to aluminium foil but is thicker and may be in single or multiple layers.

Walls—you may be able to see insulation in the wall cavities from inside the roof. It may look similar to that used in the ceiling.

Floors—this type of insulation is not commonly used in warmer parts of Queensland but if your house is suspended and not enclosed underneath, you could look under the house for insulation such as foil sheets. If your floor is enclosed you could check your building plans if they are available.



This example shows bulk ceiling insulation and reflective foil on the inside of the roof

E6—Pale or light coloured roofs

Light colours like white, cream, light grey, beige and dull galvanised steel reflect the sun’s rays and help reduce the heat entering your home.

E7—Roof ventilation

Check around your eaves and your rooftop to see if there is any visible ventilation, e.g. a whirlybird, eave vents.



Whirlybirds are a good example of roof ventilation

E8—Window shading

If the windows on the eastern and western sides of your home have reliable shading such as wide eaves, tree shading or external shutters, blinds or awnings, this can reduce the heat gain from a rising or setting sun.



Wide eaves that have vents can reduce heat from the sun by shading windows and help ventilate your home

E9—Energy efficient windows

Windows are one of the main ways heat enters your home. Treated windows, especially those on the eastern and western side of the home, can help decrease the amount of heat entering your home and reduce cooling costs.

If your windows have a grey, green or bronze colour to them, this will generally indicate that they are tinted or laminated. Alternatively, your building plans (if they are available) may indicate whether you have energy efficient windows.

Check if there is only a single pane of glass on all or some windows. If there are two or more panes separated by a cavity, this is double or triple glazing.

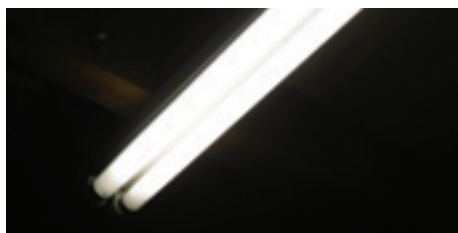
E10—Energy efficient lights

These include fluorescent tubes, compact fluorescent lamps (CFL), light emitting diodes (LED), neon and metal halide lights.

Count the number of fixed internal light fixtures (not individual globes) you have and write this information in the space provided on the sustainability declaration. If you have had the ClimateSmart Home Service visit your home, you will have been supplied with CFL globes to replace standard incandescent globes. Visit www.climatesmarthome.com to book this service.



Example of a compact fluorescent lamp



Fluorescent tubes are an example of energy efficient lighting

E11—Greenhouse efficient cooking appliances

Gas cooktop/oven—properties that have either natural gas or LPG bottled gas may have a gas cooktop and/or oven.

The key visual difference between a gas and electric cooktop/oven is that you will be able to see a naked flame when you turn the gas cooktop/oven on.



An example of a gas cooktop

Induction cooktops are typically distinguished by a flat, smooth cooking surface that is not hot to touch when the power is on. If you have a coil element or if the element radiates heat after you turn it off, this is not an induction cooktop.



Induction cooktops have a flat, smooth cooking surface that isn't hot to touch when the power is turned on



The main unit of an evaporative air-conditioner is usually located on the roof

E12—Energy efficient air-conditioners

Check the label on your air-conditioner if it is still affixed and note how many stars are on it. The more stars, the more energy efficient the system is—4 stars is considered energy efficient under the current ratings scheme. However, from 1 April 2010, a new ratings scheme will mean air-conditioners that are 1 star will be considered energy efficient for the purpose of the sustainability declaration.

Evaporative air-conditioners use water to cool your home. The main unit is generally located on the rooftop and cool air is ducted into rooms. These air-conditioners are also energy efficient.

An **energy efficiency ratio (EER)** can be determined by contacting the manufacturer of your system and giving them the model number.

E13—Ceiling fans

Write the total number of bedrooms and/or living areas with ceiling fans, if any.

2. Water

This section lists some features that can help boost the water efficiency of your home. Water efficient taps, toilets and showerheads can significantly reduce water usage in your home and help you save money on your water bills throughout the year.

W1—Rainwater tank

New homes generally have a rainwater tank located above ground. In some instances they are located underground and generally require a rainwater tank pump.

Some homes also have signs displayed on the property and on taps located inside and outside the home indicating rainwater is in use. You can also check your building plans if they are available. If you know how many litres your rainwater tank stores, please add this in the space provided on the sustainability declaration.

W2—Greywater treatment systems

These are generally used for toilet flushing, laundry use and garden irrigation.

These systems will generally be identified through the use of signs located on taps which advise 'do not drink'.

Purple pipes also indicate greywater is being used in the home. If you know how many litres your greywater storage treatment system stores, please add this in the space provided on the sustainability declaration.

W3—Water efficient garden irrigation system

A water efficient garden irrigation system has a flow rate of no more than 9 litres per minute.

The flow rate (litres per minute) can be measured by placing a container/bucket under the emitter (dripper/spray nozzle), turning the source tap on full for 10 seconds and catching the water.

After this time, turn off the tap and measure how much water is in the container and multiply by six to see how many litres are used in a minute.

If you have 1.5 litres or less after 10 seconds your system is considered to be efficient (1.5 litres x 6 = 9 litres).

W4—Water efficient showerheads

The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme uses a star rating system to outline the efficiency of water fixtures (and some appliances) that use water. It is based on the flow rate (litres per minute) of the fixture or appliance. The higher the star rating, the more efficient the fixture is.

The table below outlines which star rating is applicable to which flow rate.

WELS Rating	Flow rate
0 star	More than 16 litres per min (L/min)
1 star	More than 12 but not more than 16 L/min
2 star	More than 9 but not more than 12 L/min
3 star	More than 7.5 but not more than 9 L/min
4 star	More than 6 but not more than 7.5 L/min
5 star	More than 4.5 but not more than 6 L/min
6 star	More than 3 but not more than 4.5 L/min

Houses, townhouses and units approved on or after 1 March 2006 will have 3-star WELS rated showerheads (previously AAA rated). This is considered a water efficient showerhead. If you have had the ClimateSmart Home Service or Waterwise Home Service visit your home, you will have been supplied with one water efficient 3-star WELS rated showerhead.

Flow rates (litres per minute) can be measured by placing a container under your showerhead and turning the tap on full for 10 seconds.

After this time, turn off the tap, measure how much water is in the container and multiply by six to see how many litres are used in a minute. Check this against the table above to determine the WELS rating.

For example, if the water in the container/bucket is 1.5 litres or less after 10 seconds, your showerhead is 3-star WELS rated (1.5 litres x 6 = 9 litres).

W5—Water efficient tapware

Houses, townhouses, duplexes and units approved on or after 1 March 2009 will have 3-star WELS rated tapware. This is considered to be water efficient.

Follow a similar procedure that is outlined in W4 to determine the efficiency of your tapware.

If you cannot fit a container under your tap you may use the following procedure:

- place a plug in the sink, basin or trough
- turn the tap on full for 10 seconds (this will need to be timed carefully)
- mark the level of the water with masking tape and empty the water out
- replace the plug and, using a measuring jug, refill to the mark and record the volume of water used
- check the volume of water against the table on this page to determine the WELS rating.

W6—Water efficient toilets

If your toilet has two flush buttons, it is dual-flush and you can specify you have a dual flush toilet.

W7—Water recirculation devices

These devices use a pump to deliver hot water quickly so that water is not wasted while you wait for it to heat up.

They are connected to the hot water tap pipe and are generally located under the sink in areas such as kitchens and bathrooms.

They have a box-like appearance and are usually labelled appropriately.



Water recirculation devices are usually located under kitchen or bathroom sinks

Access and safety features

Access features help make homes more adaptable for occupants during different life stages and reduce the occurrence of injuries, such as trips and falls in the home. Safety features such as smoke alarms and electrical safety switches help protect occupants from hazards such as electrocution and household fires.

If you have any access or safety features, please note them in the 'access, safety and other features' section of the sustainability declaration.

Entry and main living area access

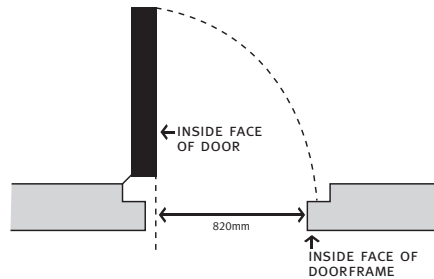
One of the most fundamental aspects of an accessible home is that the entry and main living areas can be easily accessed by all occupants.

A house will be more adaptable to meet an occupant's changing needs if there is at least one accessible entry that provides easy access to the main living areas of the home (i.e. kitchen, living room and at least one bedroom, bathroom and toilet). An accessible entry provides access to these areas by either:

- level access (no greater than 10mm at the entry) or
- no more than three steps or
- a ramp or
- a lift.



An example of a shower with a level entry



Wide doorways provide easy access for occupants

Once inside the home, if there is level access (no greater than 10 mm) between and within the main living areas, both the entry and main living areas are considered accessible.

Wide doorways and hallways

Wide doorways and hallways provide occupants easy access to the main living areas of the home throughout different stages of their lives.

Doorways are considered accessible if they have a clear opening of at least 820 mm wide. The clear opening of doorways is measured horizontally from the inside face of the door (when it is fully open) to the inside face of the door frame on the opposite side of the doorway (see above diagram).

Hallways that access the main living areas are considered accessible if they are at least 1200 mm wide.

Accessible bathroom

A shower with level entry (step-free) can help avoid trips and falls when entering the shower.

An accessible bathroom may also have grab rails installed in the shower. Grab rails can provide leverage and stability for occupants while they are taking a shower. Unlike towel rails, correctly installed grab rails are designed to take the weight of a person. It is essential that grab rails have been installed correctly and safely by securely attaching them to a masonry or reinforced wall.

Smoke alarms and smoke detectors

These are usually round white devices mounted to ceilings or walls.

If your house, townhouse, duplex or unit was approved on or after 1 July 1997, it is required to have at least one hardwired smoke alarm installed.

Since 1 July 2007 all existing (built before 1 July 1997) houses, townhouses, duplexes and units need at least one 9-volt battery powered smoke alarm installed.

If you sell a property, you need to determine whether a smoke alarm or smoke detector is installed. This must be declared on the standard sales contract and Form 24—property transfer.



If your home was built before 1 July 1997 it will require at least one 9-volt battery powered smoke alarm

Electrical safety switch

Homes built on or after 1 June 1992 must have electrical safety switches installed on power circuits.

If you sell a property, you need to establish whether a safety switch is installed. This must be declared on the standard sales contract and Form 24—property transfer.

Check your meter box or switchboard for a test/reset button to determine if you have a safety switch.



Check your meter box or switchboard to see if you have an electrical safety switch

Pool safety barriers

If the home has a pool or spa on the property, it must have a properly maintained and compliant pool safety barrier.

A properly maintained pool safety barrier includes:

- a self-closing gate (and sometimes a doorset for pools built before 1991)
- no deterioration to the structural elements or panels of the pool barrier
- no climbable objects that may enable a young child to gain access to the pool area.

For further information on pool safety laws and your swimming pool go to www.dip.qld.gov.au/poolfencing

Hot water tempering valve

A tempering valve ensures that hot water is delivered to hot water outlets at a maximum 50 °C to prevent scalding.

Hot water systems installed on or after 30 April 1998 are required to have a tempering valve fitted.

Tempering valves can be identified by either a blue, green, orange (solar systems) or black plastic cap.



Tempering valves can be identified by either a blue, green, orange or black plastic cap

Visible property number

A visible property number can help enable a home to be easily identified by emergency services. Visible property numbers should contrast against their background and be large enough to be easily seen from the street.



A good example of a visible property number

Guide to savings calculations used in the sustainability declaration form

Potential savings in electricity costs and water consumption used in the sustainability declaration have generally been estimated based on an average Australian household size of 2.5 people, typical electricity and water consumption of the selected features/fittings, and electricity charges (Tariff 11) of 16.29c/kWh, where applicable as at 1 December 2009.

Energy and water savings indicate estimated potential savings from typical household use and are presented as a guide only. Actual savings can vary significantly depending on household location, type, size and householder usage. Estimated savings in electricity costs do not take into account any additional costs related to gas supply.

For further information:

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