

## Control the climate

It's no good having a lovely home, if 'chilling out' means feeling frozen. It's warmth and relaxation that make a house a home. Air conditioning units/heat pumps dehumidify, keeping air drier and easier to heat and are rated by the Ministry of Environment as one of the best heating systems. Reverse cycle air conditioning provides up to three times the energy efficiency of conventional heating appliances, cutting your heating costs, and your budget. Heat pumps take the free heat from the outside air (external temperature is irrelevant) and transfer it inside the home to keep you warm in winter. They have the double advantage of providing controllable, steady warmth over winter, then switching to air cooling in summer when the temperatures soar. There is an extensive feature rich range to ensure there is a model to meet your needs, whilst contemporary styling will compliment any interior. All this with the whisper quietness you have come to expect from Mitsubishi Electric.

The traditional open fire improved in both energy efficiency and health aspects when enclosed fireplaces came on the market, eliminating smoke within the living areas. Rural residents (over 5 acres/2Ha) can install slow burner fires, but these are banned in urban areas by the Clean Air Emissions Act. Wood burners are a double combustion source when used in conjunction with heat transfer systems or radiators. With the addition of a wetback, a fire provides water heating. Add solar panels and your home can be provided with a year round supply of free hot water.

The outside stone theme of schist can be extended as an attractive fire surround and there are many options available for the traditional wood burner. The appeal of flame is universal and the introduction of pellet fires offers a way to luxuriate in tradition, without the fuss. Ecofires and pellets offer no mess, no cutting wood and instant flame. Pellet fires are just like normal fires and are great for older people, with pellets available in Pukekohe. Pellet fires are the only fireplaces permitted to be installed in Christchurch because they are clean burning.

### Lap up the sun

Guess what is the most energy efficient form of home heating? Grandly called Passive Solar Design, it simply means – pull back the curtains on the sunny side to catch the day's rays and close them to prevent trapped heat escaping out the windows as the temperature drops toward evening. Consider thermal curtain materials to retain the heat. Modern design builds houses to take advantage of northern aspects, needing far less heating, an important point often not thought about when homes were built in the 1950s.

Many homes in New Zealand are exposed to 10-15 times more energy from the sun than what they use in electricity or gas, 50 times more than what is required to heat an entire household's hot water supply. Solar collection panels and storage cylinders are used for heating water. Using solar power lessens greenhouse gas emissions and excess power generated is stored in batteries and can be sold back to the electricity supplier.



### Wait – there's more!

Nightstore heaters store cheaper electricity at night for slow release during the day. These can be replaced by floor console heat pumps. Floor heating is popular in tiled areas of new homes, like kitchens and bathrooms. Convection heaters are the least efficient source of winter warmth because they warm the air, so are suited more to a "quick response" for short-term heating - like in the kitchen, first thing in the morning.

Gas and oil fired heaters should be vented to the outside to avoid condensation and pollution of indoor air.

### Insulate! Insulate!

Trials have shown that people living in insulated homes have lower fuel bills, significantly fewer days in hospital and less days off work and school. Insulating your home pays. Take time to check if your ceiling, walls and floors are insulated. Then take a look at the hot water cylinder to see if there is unnecessary heat loss. New curtains, blinds and thermals look good and are efficient as insulation for windows, particularly the specially backed thermal curtains. Wrap your home up warm – and all the family will be cosy within!

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