

MEDIA RELEASE

Kiwi homeowners rush for Homestar™ ratings

AUCKLAND, 13 December 2010 – Homestar™, the comprehensive home rating system launched last month online at www.homestar.org.nz, has seen a rush by Kiwi homeowners for assessments on their houses.

More than 3,300 New Zealand homeowners have already assessed their houses with the free rating tool that aims to help them create a healthier, more comfortable and energy-efficient living environment.

The majority of assessments – more than 75 per cent – achieved a Homestar rating of less than 5 out of 10 stars and most homes currently sit at around 2 out of 10 stars.

Alex Cutler, CEO of the New Zealand Green Building Council, a Homestar™ joint venture partner who runs the tool, says that they are energised by the interest in the site and the number of completed assessments.

“To see this early demand for a tool like Homestar™ shows that there is a strong and growing awareness in New Zealand of the importance of building better performing homes and a need for reliable information on how to improve our existing housing stock,” says Ms Cutler.

Ms Cutler says that direct feedback from users about the usability of the site and the comprehensiveness of the assessment tool has been overwhelmingly positive.

She relates one comment fed back from a site user that says “*You don't have to go around your house counting your lightbulbs or anything fussy like that. Insulation came out as the top thing I need to do and I was expecting that. Was intending on getting an electrician in to check all the wires are good before the insulation and hadn't even thought about the couple of recessed downlights in our house so will get those fixed up too. Then onto the insulation with one of those government grants!*”

“Feedback like this is proving that Homestar is providing the information and impetus people need to make tangible changes to their homes that will help them live better – in a healthier, more comfortable and efficient home.”

“Homestar was developed to help the people who live in our one million homes that need to be improved”

Ms Cutler says the reason that most homes haven’t scored higher than a 2 out of 10 is that these homes are not suitably insulated.

“Ensuring that your home is properly insulated from top to bottom is still the single biggest factor that is keeping down the performance of New Zealand homes. Sorting this will immediately lift most 2-star homes to potentially 4-star ratings.”

The online assessment covers insulation, heating, water use, waste, ventilation and indoor air quality, among other things, and calculates a value rating, from 1 to 10 stars, based on these factors.

The online tool also provides useful information on cost-effective upgrades and other available options for improving home health, comfort and efficiency, including the grants available through EECA.

Ms Cutler says Homestar™ has now trained 100 industry Homecoaches™ who can provide assistance with the online assessment and tailor a set of recommendations specific to the homeowners needs. About 80 more coaches will be trained by March 2011.

She says Homestar™ information kiosks will also be available soon in selected PlaceMakers stores nationwide.

For more information about Homestar™, visit www.homestar.org.nz.

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For more information and/or analysis of the Homestar ratings, contact:

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About Homestar™

Homestar™ was developed by a joint venture partnership between BRANZ, Beacon Pathway and the New Zealand Green Building Council with the support of the building industry and key Government agencies, the Department of Building and Housing and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority. Homestar™ is officially supported by industry partners, including PlaceMakers, The Healthy Home Group, Pink Batts, Gib, Fletcher Aluminium, Stonewood Homes, Resene, Cavalier Bremworth, and Methven. Homestar is also working with industry organisations such as Certified Builders, Registered Master Builders, the Designers Institute of NZ, and the Concrete and Cement Association of NZ, amongst others.

How the Homestar™ online tool works

In the online assessment, should the house not achieve a minimum performance level in core areas of overall warmth and comfort (specifically the ability for the house to achieve healthy winter-time temperatures without using excessive energy), Homestar™ will provide the home owner with suggestions on how to make the home healthier and more comfortable, as well as being kinder to the environment. Some suggestions may involve simple actions that involve little or no cost, while others may involve investments that will pay for themselves through lower running costs or other benefits to the household. To gain a higher star rating the home owner will need to address the core issues highlighted in the initial assessment, and then reassess the house once the changes have been made.