

# Air-conditioners the scapegoat in power debate

Simple answers are never more attractive than when dealing with complex issues.

In your report "Homes must be energy efficient" (*AFR*, August 25, page 7) Mark Diesendorf of Murdoch University in Western Australia is quoted as saying governments should consider a levy on air-conditioners as a response to possible power shortages.

Apart from the practical and equity issues surrounding such an approach, it has to be recognised

that raising the price of air-conditioners across Australia by \$100, as is being proposed by the Total Environment Centre, for example, is unlikely to do anything to reduce demand for electricity.

The fact that you paid an extra \$100 for your air-conditioner is not going to make you use it less, and if such a levy were introduced across the board, would do little to dampen overall demand for air-conditioners.

Nominating a class of appliances is a superficially satisfying but

essentially erroneous approach to issues of energy demand and ultimately climate change.

The fact that, according to the Australian Greenhouse Office, 10 per cent of domestic electricity consumption relates to appliances remaining in standby mode indicates there are a lot of areas where we will have to get smarter.

But plonking a levy on air-conditioners is not one of them. Obviously better building design is essential if we are to have intelligent

and sustainable use of things like lighting and air-conditioning, as well as the other products we use daily.

A levy on air-conditioners will not address issues facing electricity suppliers and their customers, but merely provide a convenient scapegoat for a complex problem.

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