

## Call for 'Green' Property Incentives

The real estate industry has joined the call for comprehensive Government incentives for energy efficient retrofits of residential properties.

CEO of ERA South Africa property group Gerhard Kotzé says the first laudable steps in this direction have been taken with reports that Government is planning subsidies for solar powered geysers and the news that Eskom is planning a door-to-door giveaway campaign of energy efficient light bulbs to replace less efficient incandescent light bulbs.

“However what’s needed is a more widely embracing package with everything from hybrid geysers (a mix of electrical and solar) to stand-by batteries and generators, use of natural lighting, solar walls to provide solar heating throughout the home, roof insulation, heat recovery ventilation and other energy saving measures.

“Internationally laws are being introduced obliging homeowners to go ‘green’ and therefore more energy efficient. When selling in the UK for example, owners are required to provide an energy performance certificate (EPC) as part of a Home Information Pack (HIP).”

Kotzé notes that HIPs are now compulsory for all houses sold in England and Wales and while currently all new builds do not require them, stringent new ‘green’ building regulations have come in and HIPs will be applicable to new builds as well in the not too distant future – and this in a country which does not have a power shortage problem, in spite of having a population something like 25% larger than that of South Africa.

“Ignoring for a moment justified criticism surrounding the power outages in South Africa, we have to recognise that the era of abundant, cheap power in SA is over. Hence my call for a serious look by Government at incentivising energy efficient residential property retrofits as a whole and not merely piecemeal, either through tax allowances or direct subsidies to suppliers of equipment.”

Adding to this he says it could be argued that the pickle we find ourselves in is of government making and although we all recognise the need to be more energy efficient, the home owner/taxpayer should not be obliged to pay for government mistakes.”