Green tape and energy efficiency standards have contributed to the sharp decline in tropical designs with building a tropical home now firmly in the “too-hard basket”.

Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment Peter Chandler will make the case that allowances be made to accommodate tropical living in the National Construction Code at a meeting of Building Ministers in Sydney today.

“As Australia has become more energy conscious, our building regulations have become more stringent, basically forcing people to live in an Esky,” Mr Chandler said.

“While these designs work well in the southern States and do in fact save energy, the reality is it doesn’t always work here in the Top End.

“The allowance for an energy efficiency rating tool that better considers our tropical climate should result in more tropical designs better suited to our region.

“A traditional Territory home, with large verandas, louvres, well-designed airflow and utilising modern building materials will use far less energy than a sealed-up concrete box reliant on an air-conditioner.

“However building these homes to current energy efficiency standards has become too complicated and expensive.

“I’m not saying that tropical cities be excluded from meeting energy standards, it is important to reduce our impact on the environment, however I think there needs to be some recognition that we have a unique climate and there are alternatives.
“I expect to walk out of today’s meeting with my Southern colleagues thinking differently about the North and having a better understanding of tropical conditions.”

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