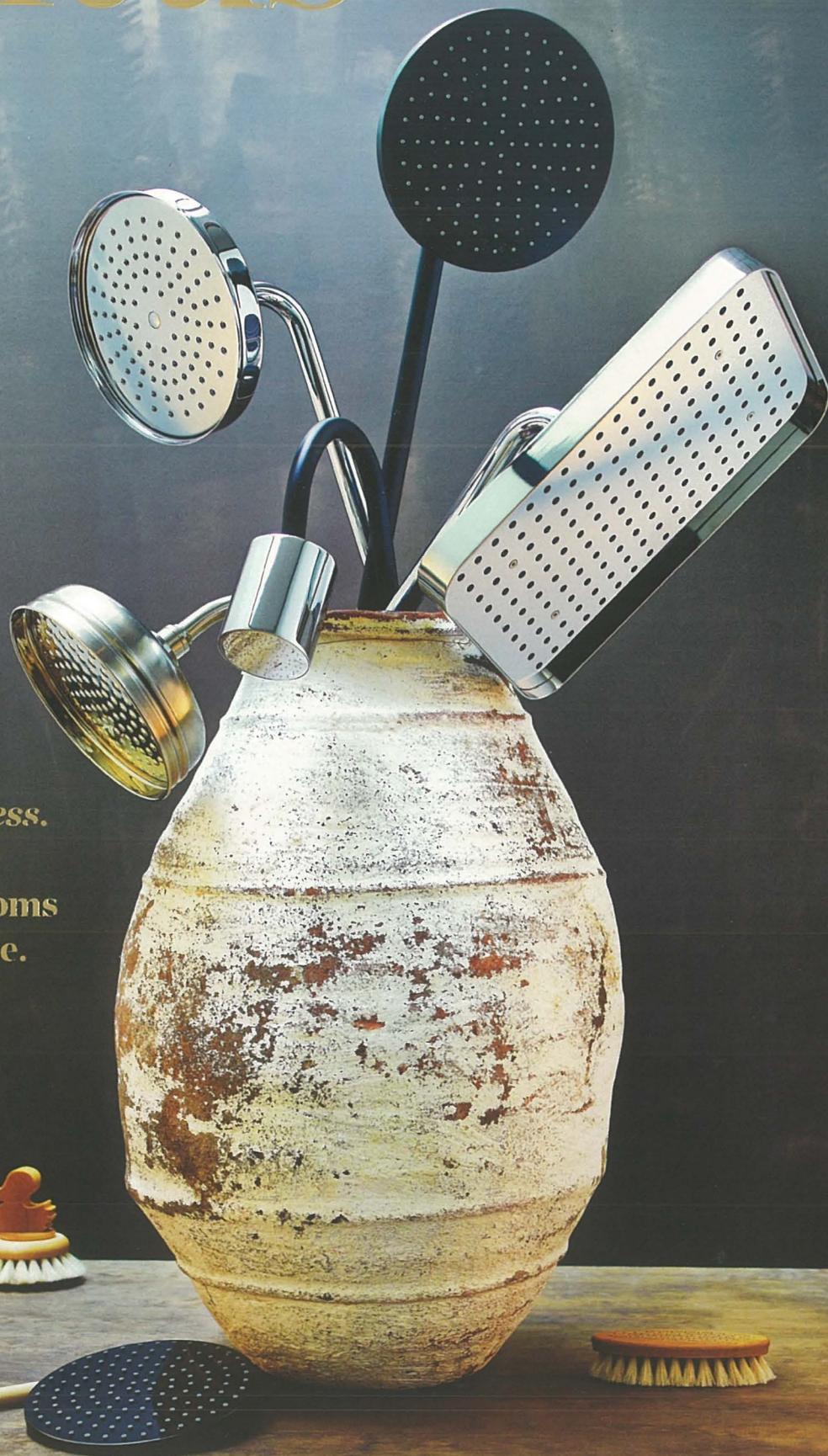


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A black dress is displayed on a mannequin against a textured, light-colored wall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of the dress and the texture of the wall. The overall mood is sophisticated and classic.

classic | ICON

THE SMEG CLASSIC • WHILE FASHIONS MAY COME AND GO, STYLE REMAINS ETERNAL

Guide to eco-living

Sustainability in the kitchen and bathroom is not just about using ‘eco’ products, although it certainly involves this. Sustainability expert John Gertsakis navigates the murky green waters of eco-living with a discussion on efficiency.

TEXT JOHN GERTSAKIS

Some household spaces and products play a vital role in our daily lives. In particular kitchens and bathrooms serve a multitude of functions – practical and social, as well as the ritual aspects of preparing and consuming food. They are the epicentre of activity, depending on the time of day.

The environmental impacts associated with all these activities can be significant and typically relate to:

- Energy consumption and associated greenhouse gas emissions
- Water consumption and scarcity during times of drought
- Detergents and toxicity of cleaning agents
- The raw materials used in manufacturing panel products, surfaces and coatings

Of course it is not always just about the products and their inherent eco-impact. Our lifestyles and behaviours can also directly magnify the impacts through the choices we make – for example, long showers during drought periods, or taps running constantly while we wash fruit and vegetables. It is partly about choosing greener and more efficient products but it is also about smarter ways of using them, which includes maximising their eco features, ensuring full dishwasher loads and not over-using toxic cleaning agents.



section two

efficiency & sustainability



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A recent sustainability-related survey conducted by Electrolux highlights that two thirds of consumers consider the environmental impact of home appliances to be an important factor when purchasing a product. The survey was carried out as part of a wider brand scorecard study, and a total of 3,600 consumers were interviewed in Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, France and the United States. The results confirmed that a company's priorities on sustainability in appliances are important to consumers.

Furthermore, the responsibility to improve the environmental performance of appliances lies on the manufacturers, according to 67 per cent of those surveyed. Electrolux's top priorities in this area are to maximise energy efficiency and minimise the use of water and harmful chemicals, matching three of the four highest priorities as identified by the consumers.

The reality is that water and energy use are the big-ticket items we can address in order to create more efficient and low impact bathrooms and kitchens. By selecting appliances, fixtures and fittings that are water- and energy-efficient, yet still deliver high levels of functionality and convenience, we can start to really 'green-up' the kitchen and bathroom, including the toilet.

Low-flow showerheads have been clearly acknowledged as a key product in the ongoing campaign to reduce water consumption in the bathroom. While honourable attempts

have achieved more water-efficient shower roses, many of them have failed to deliver a comfortable or enjoyable shower. In recent years, the development of water-saving shower heads has come a long way as designers, engineers and manufacturers better understand the relationship between water-efficient technologies, shower comfort and product aesthetics.

A noteworthy expression of how one manufacturer has achieved success can be seen in Methven's SatinJet® 'extra sensory showerhead technology'. Conventional showers use single jets of water that can produce a narrow, needle-like spray, whereas Satinjet® uses twin jets of water that collide and turn into thousands of tiny droplets that feel soft enough for your face, yet strong enough for your entire body. Depending on actual user behaviour, Methven claims that Satinjet® can reduce water and energy use by 50 per cent or more while still providing a luxurious shower.

One of the single biggest changes you can make in the bathroom-toilet space is to install a water-efficient dual-flush toilet system. While there are several brands in the market, Caroma has been the stand-out pioneer of low flush toilets. Their products have been tested and finessed over many years and their attention to water conservation through good design and innovation is noteworthy. Indeed their dual flush toilets are exported across the Asia Pacific region partly because of their water-saving credentials.

For those seeking even more attention to high design, innovation and product quality, the Valcucine range of kitchen products deserves a closer look. Supplied in Australia through Rogerseller, this manufacturer has a well-developed approach to efficiency and sustainability in the kitchen. It is more than just stand-alone products, and includes a very considered technical and philosophical approach to creating spaces that are environmentally benign and functionally effective. Valcucine's four elements, which seek to encompass and address efficiency and sustainability, include:

- **Dematerialisation** – a smart way of doing more with less and avoiding waste from the outset;
- **Durability** – a strategy to resist and minimise visual deterioration, as well as damage to surfaces and overall product integrity;
- **Re-usability and recyclability** – keeping end-of-life in mind so components and materials can be effectively re-utilised and diverted from landfill;
- **Reduction of toxic emissions and hazardous substances** – a focus on eliminating and minimising human health impacts through careful attention of materials, substances, finishes and solvents.