



Heating your water... what's best?



What do taps, toilets and hot water systems all have in common? That's right, water, and if you buy it in plastic it's more expensive per litre than petrol.

We are lucky in Queensland as the Government has mandated that all tap ware, shower heads and toilets must be up to a minimum WELS Star rating to help ensure water conservation. The quality of tap ware can vary greatly — brands like Argent & Hansa come with up to a 15-year manufacturer warranty, whereas some of the supermarket brands have virtually no warranty at all.

Hot water systems are another story. There is a massive range of different types of hot water systems and if used in the right situation will all make your water hot. Some can even save you money.

The least cost-efficient are the old electric storage type systems, as these systems maintain the water temperature in their tanks by running regularly. You can reduce this running cost by connecting to an off-peak tariff.

A wrongly positioned solar hot water system can be almost as expensive to run as the old electric storage systems. If the optimum water temperature is not reached using the sun's energy, the system will then have to finish the job by running on its electric booster.

Solar, evacuated tubes, heat pumps and continuous flow gas hot water systems can all be very efficient if used in the right application.

Solar panels or evacuated tubes should be in a north-facing position. It is also important to ensure the panels or tubes are not shaded by trees or neighbouring buildings or you will be back running on your booster to heat your water. Instead of an automatic booster you can have a manual booster installed, putting you in charge of when you feel your water temperature needs a boost.

Heat pumps work on the similar principle to an air-conditioner, compressing air to get heat exchange. This energy is used to heat your water.

Continuous flow gas hot water systems are very good, if you have a large distance between bathrooms, ensuites, kitchens or laundries. Heat is lost through your pipes while water is travelling the distance from tank to outlet. Sometimes it is cheaper and more efficient to install two small continuous flow gas hot water systems.

With continuous flow systems you only pay for the gas you are using when the hot water is turned on. These types of systems do not have a storage tank.

I hope this information helps you as there is lots to consider when choosing a hot water system that is right for your application. Always remember, the cheapest to buy may not be the cheapest to run.

— Geoff Gibson



Look for this column in next month's Style... we'll be talking about how to really make the 'heart of your home' more than just the space where the cooking gets done!

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