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H&G advice

BUYER'S GUIDE

Showerheads

The unsung heroes of the bathroom, today's showerheads deliver both luxury and energy savings.

They may be small and unassuming as far as fittings go, but today's showerheads represent a watershed in modern thinking: they are mostly aesthetically pleasing and deliver a luxurious feeling shower, all while using a modest amount of water.

Years of drought and water restrictions have changed the way Australians shower – we're more mindful than ever of keeping them short – and technology has kept pace with our wish to conserve water.

"Thankfully, that hasn't meant you have to compromise on the quality or look of your shower," says Belinda Ceels, Bathroom Marketing Manager for Reece. "Recent surveys we've done have found that the shower is now the most important fixture in the bathroom – not many of us have time to have a bath on a daily basis. So people tend to be happy to invest in a good showerhead."

Awash with choice

There are a few things to consider when you're selecting a showerhead. First, how will you use the shower? A hand shower (where the spray nozzle is at the end of a length of flexible hose) can be good for washing children's hair; a rail shower (which has a shower arm that can be moved up and down a rail fixed to the shower wall) offers plenty of height adjustability, or, if pampering is important, you might consider a generous overhead shower fitting.

Text by Sarah Pickette. Photograph by Maree Homer/ACP Digital Library.



'By choosing a showerhead with a three-star WELS rating you can save up to 14,500 litres of water a year, and that means about \$150 off your annual water bill.' NIGEL FINNEY, CEO, SAVEWATER ALLIANCE

BY NIGEL FINNEY

According to Nigel Finney, CEO of the Savewater Alliance, the past five years have seen a flood of innovations that have allowed showerheads to deliver ever-improving water efficiency. Methven and PerfectFlow, which makes a showerhead that uses only 5.5 litres per minute, are among the brands to watch, he says.

Installing a water-efficient showerhead is the best and most cost-effective way to keep a lid on your household water consumption. Showerheads are relatively inexpensive in comparison to a toilet or washing machine, which are the home's other big water users and a water-efficient showerhead won't take long to pay for itself, says Finney. And the good news, he says, is that homeowners can expect to see showers become even better: "There's still room for further improvements, so it will be interesting to see what manufacturers release in coming years."

Next, decide on a spray pattern that suits. "These days, showerheads offer everything from massaging jets to gentle rain-like droplets or a combination of both," says Ross Cass, Managing Director of bathroomware supplier Cass Brothers. Visit a showroom to assess and compare spray options, styles, shapes, features and finishes, and to work out which models are within your price range.

On trends

The creativity you'll find in the latest showerheads is quite impressive, says Tradelink National Product Manager, Peta Fray. "Manufacturers have become very innovative with technology."

If you like – and the budget allows – you could install a series of Gessi shower roses that cluster elegantly on the ceiling, or a Newform showerhead that illuminates when in use. There's also a shower from Methven that uses vitamin C cartridges to minimise chlorine in the water, thereby helping to prevent eczema flare-ups. And a Kohler model that allows you to change the spray type simply by flipping it over.

Geels says there has been a shift away from standard overhead and fixed-arm showers. "Rail showers are popular now, especially twin-rail showers that have both overhead and adjustable showerheads. These types of showers allow a lot of flexibility."

Practicalities aside, the shower remains a haven for many people and plenty of showerheads are designed to deliver luxury. "It's a place where people unwind and de-stress," says Cass. "To reflect that, showerheads that incorporate

chromotherapy [colour therapy] and music therapy are starting to emerge."

Ways with water

Conserving water should be front-of-mind when buying a showerhead. Happily, determining the water efficiency is quite straightforward. Every shower on the market in Australia must have a Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme (WELS) star rating – and the more stars, the more water you'll save. You should also take into account the litres per minute of any models you're considering.

"By choosing a showerhead with a three-star WELS rating you can save up to 14,500 litres of water a year, and that means about \$150 off your annual water bill," says Nigel Finney, CEO of the Savewater Alliance.

Today's water-saving showerheads generally fall into three categories:

Air technology Up to three litres of air can be blended with every litre of water in a mixing chamber to create the sensation of increased water volume. Good example: Hansgrohe Raindance.

Turbine technology An internal turbine in the showerhead spins the water at a high velocity to increase the pressure. Good example: Nikles XL, Cubic and Techno.

Collision technology Droplets of water are bounced off each other to give the effect of a fuller spray. Good example: Methven Satinjet.



WALL MOUNTED



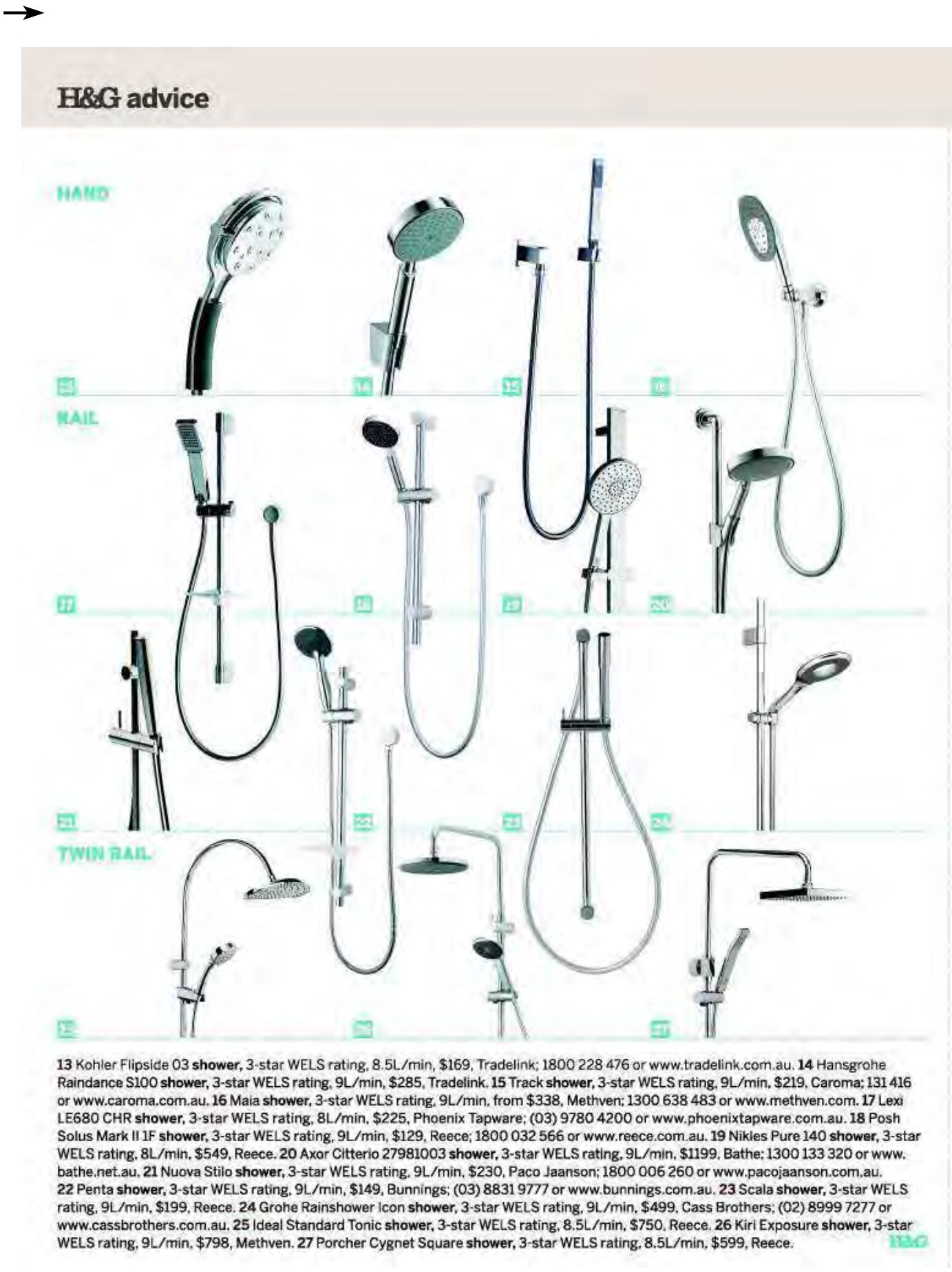
OVERHEAD



1 Spin Soft shower (rose only), 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$595, Rogerseller; 1300 781 966 or www.rogerseller.com.au. 2 Axor Citterio M3461003 shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$693, Bathe; 1300 133 320 or www.bathe.net.au. 3 Ultimate shower, 3-star WELS rating, 5.5L/min, \$25, PerfectFlow; 1300 420 7283 or www.perfectflow.com.au. 4 Vivid Conikal shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8L/min, \$135, Phoenix Tapware; (03) 9780 4200 or www.phoenixtapware.com.au. 5 Gessi 33051 shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8L/min, \$1430, Abey Australia; (03) 9747 7777 or www.abey.com.au. 6 Drop shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$250, Paco Jaanson; 1800 006 260 or www.pacojaanson.com.au. 7 Hansgrohe Raindance Classic shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$1155, Bathe. 8 Adesso Cielo shower (rose only), 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$305, Tradelink; 1800 228 476 or www.tradelink.com.au. 9 Ranea Oval Drencher shower (rose only), 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$538, Methven; 1300 638 483 or www.methven.com. 10 Newform Total Light shower (rose only), 0-star WELS rating, 12L/min, from \$3630, Cass Brothers; (02) 9569 5555 or www.cassbrothers.com.au. 11 SVS01 shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8.5L/min, \$270, Abey Australia. 12 Rainlight Quadro shower with LED light, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$1495, Rogerseller.

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HAND

NAIL

TWIN RAIL

13 Kohler Flipside 03 shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8.5L/min, \$169, Tradelink; 1800 228 476 or www.tradelink.com.au. 14 Hansgrohe Raindance S100 shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$285, Tradelink. 15 Track shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$219, Caroma; 131 416 or www.caroma.com.au. 16 Maia shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, from \$338, Methven; 1300 638 483 or www.methven.com. 17 Lexi LE680 CHR shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8L/min, \$225, Phoenix Tapware; (03) 9780 4200 or www.phoenixtapware.com.au. 18 Posh Solus Mark II 1F shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$129, Reece; 1800 032 566 or www.reece.com.au. 19 Nikles Pure 140 shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8L/min, \$549, Reece. 20 Axor Citterio 27981003 shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$1199, Bathe; 1300 133 320 or www.bathe.net.au. 21 Nuova Stilo shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$230, Paco Jaanson; 1800 006 260 or www.pacojaanson.com.au. 22 Penta shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$149, Bunnings; (03) 8831 9777 or www.bunnings.com.au. 23 Scala shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$199, Reece. 24 Grohe Rainshower Icon shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$499, Cass Brothers; (02) 8999 7277 or www.cassbrothers.com.au. 25 Ideal Standard Tonic shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8.5L/min, \$750, Reece. 26 Kiri Exposure shower, 3-star WELS rating, 9L/min, \$798, Methven. 27 Porcher Cygnet Square shower, 3-star WELS rating, 8.5L/min, \$599, Reece.