

H&G BATHROOM SPECIAL

4 INSET TO IMPRESS

By virtue of their lavish looks, freestanding baths sometimes hog the limelight, but the fact is that inset or drop-in baths are the mainstay of Australian bathrooms.

"Even if homeowners prefer the look of a freestanding bath, it's often the case that space doesn't allow for one, so an inset bath becomes the more practical choice," says Reece's Belinda Geels. "And many people simply prefer them."

In a 2013 Omnibus report undertaken for Reece, 61 per cent of consumers surveyed said they would be most likely

to install an inset bath, with only 10 per cent opting for a freestanding model.

"Inset baths are great for a renovation project," says Geels. "Recently we've been seeing sunken baths, complete with steps up to the bath rim and tiled with statement tiles around the tub area."

In recent years H&G has witnessed the popularity of the spa bath give way to freestanding models, and the market is turning. "We're seeing Australians looking for new and innovative ways to approach bathroom design, and that has given the freestanding bath gives way to inset," says Geels.

A high-contrast dark hob produces shades of greatness in a Lubelso home designed by Canny Architecture.

5 TECHNOLOGY TAKE-UP

"Technology has the power to enhance the bathroom experience by making things more efficient and enjoyable, and by personalising the space to the user's needs," says Geels.

We've already begun to dip our collective toes into the water, with Kohler reporting very strong interest in its Moxie showerhead (right), released in April. This Bluetooth-enabled fixture streams music, talk and podcasts directly into your shower. Cutting-edge bathroom mirrors will stream stations via touch-screen buttons and integrated speakers. Wi-fi enabled mirrors aren't far off, either. And stay tuned for Kaldewei's Sound Wave system, with a concealed Bluetooth

receiver that turns your bath into a soundbox and plays audio files from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

"There are diagnostic possibilities ahead, too" says Tradelink's Kristy Muir. "Imagine a wi-fi enabled mirror that uses iridology principles to scan your irises for signs you're unwell." Kim Duffin thinks we'll soon be using C-Bus smart home technology to control bathroom temperature to the exact degree and to set perfect lighting levels, whether for make-up application or relaxation.

And the offerings extend beyond music. On a more tactile level, early forays into haptic (or sensory) technology could lead to flooring that feels, for example, like sand underfoot. >

