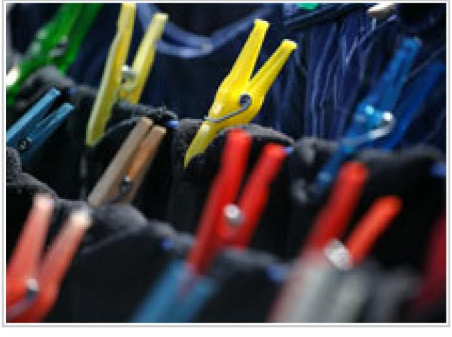
Article

Drying cupboards have hit Australia at last

Drying cupboards have long been popular overseas, but we're only now realising their benefits.



Most people think there are only two ways to dry clothes: outdoors on a clothesline or indoors in a dryer. But there is a third way and it falls somewhere in between - a drying cupboard or room.

Drying cupboards have long been associated with alpine resorts, but they're now inching their way into suburbia. And you don't need oodles of space - or money - to create one. Chris Reardon, of Suntech Design, says that creating a drying cupboard can be as simple as building a bigger, insulated cupboard around the storage unit of your hot water service. Just install a couple of clothes racks and ensure there's a vent or a gap at the top and bottom of the door for air circulation.

If that doesn't suit, he suggests the system he uses in his own laundry: a drying rack suspended from the ceiling, where all the hot air gathers, and hoisted up and down as required.

Another alternative is a purpose-made drying cabinet. Asko national marketing manager James Vogdanos says the Swedish company makes the only one sold in Australia. He attributes the growing popularity of drying cupboards to our changing lifestyles, lack of space for clotheslines, the difficulty of drying delicates, and sun damage to clothes. "Drying cabinets have been around in Sweden for more than 30 years, but they've only recently made it to our shores," he says. A lot of architects create drying cupboards using moisture-resistant materials constructed around ducted heating outlets. James says the Asko model is a purpose-built alternative with much more flexibility - the cabinet is about 60cm deep and wide by 1.7m high, fits about 16m of line and comes with an external ducting kit.

A solar-powered drying and ventilation system, known as SolarVenti, is another eco-friendly way to dry clothes inside. These units hail from Denmark, where they were designed to reduce dampness, mould and mildew by heating air and then circulating it around the home. As it happens, they're also handy for creating drying rooms or cupboards. These all-in-one units sit on the roof or wall and comprise two photovoltaic panels, which power a fan that draws fresh air into the solar air collector for heating before it's recirculated. An additional photovoltaic panel can be installed in the unit to power an exhaust fan in the drying room. "We have about three times more sun in the darkest months of the year than Denmark, so it works fantastically well here," says Australian distributor Arne Hachmann. He says he's used a larger unit to create a drying room about 1.8m by 2.4m.