



# laundry love affair

The forgotten room no longer, laundries can be not only serviceable but beautiful spaces.

In generations gone by we treated our laundries seriously, making them a large and practical separate room. Then we went through a phase of thinking they could be crammed into a cupboard but as anyone who can run a washing machine will tell you, that just doesn't, well, wash for families. It may, however, suit a professional single in an apartment.

Thankfully, laundries have regained their status, and many are being designed by professionals and sometimes in conjunction with a new kitchen or bathroom.

In planning a laundry, designers start with a list of questions which helps form the brief. You should do the same. First, think about the tasks that you want to use your laundry for, then consider the amount of space you have to play with, says Robyn Labb of Kitchens by Design in Auckland. You should also allocate a budget so your wish-list doesn't get out of hand.

"Is it simply a space to hide the washing machine and drier? Or are you going to use it as an ironing and folding station; for hobbies; as somewhere to arrange flowers in vases, as well as a place to air and drip dry clothing?"

Consider your family's needs, says Celia Visser of Celia Visser Design. "How many children do you have and how much washing do they create?"

Resene  
Alabaster

Resene  
Cararra



**Above and left** Having a good-sized laundry which was comfortable to spend time in was part of the owners' brief during their recent renovation. Hence, there's a television, a skylight, a pull-out ironing board, and heated floors. A clever device is the row of baskets, one for each member of the family, in which washed and folded clothes are placed ready to take to each bedroom. The room and cabinetry were painted in Resene Cararra, with Resene Alabaster trims, to further enhance its light and airy feeling.

People on rural properties often treat the laundry as a mud room, says Celia. The larger space is “the room they come into first from the garden. So there must be space for storing coats, hats and boots. They may want their keys placed on the wall. Often the dog sleeps and eats there so there must be room for the basket and bowls.”

If you’re planning a new home, position the laundry near the washing line outside in a hidden utility area. You may also have to include storage for things like your central vacuum system, with its bulky vacuum hose, a second fridge/freezer and somewhere for clothes to land from the laundry chute above, if there are bedrooms upstairs.

What you put into the laundry depends on its location in the home. If it’s in the garage, you probably won’t want it to include an ironing station. But if it’s near the kitchen, it’s a different story, says Celia. Is there adequate storage elsewhere in the house? It helps to write a detailed list of everything to go in there.

There are many great storage ideas to choose from. Pull-out baskets on shelves, bulk bins for soap powders or canvas bags for sorting laundry hanging from hooks are all good ideas.

“In a smaller space, keep cabinets open as tall cabinets tend to close the space in,” says Robyn. “Some people prefer a cluttered, open look while others like everything neat behind closed doors. Doors that open out tend to get in the way when you’re standing there folding, so sliding doors are a great option in small areas.”

Some people prefer a freestanding ironing board that can hang up against the wall. Otherwise, there are boards that pull out on a rack from a drawer or fold down from the wall.

For many, the laundry is just a functional space, whereas others opt for a laundry that looks just as beautiful as their kitchen. Celia has found laundries are becoming a lot more elegant. “Once, people requested the cheapest materials possible. Now they’re using Corian and granite as they’re working in them all the time. They want them to be nice, not dingy and dark.”

Do your research when choosing appliances to find out exactly which ones best suit your needs and budget. If space is tight, both Robyn and Celia recommend an under-bench front loading washer and drier to maximise bench space above. This leaves room for a hanging rack – handy for drying smalls and shirts – and cabinets above.

### Which appliances?

One of the main decisions you’ll make when planning your laundry is whether to choose a top or front loading washing machine. Top loaders are cheaper and they come in bigger sizes, says Sandra McGowan at Kouzina Appliances in Auckland, but front loaders give a better washing quality, plus energy efficiencies, using less water and detergent. “They rinse better, scooping and ladling the water so you don’t get detergent smears.”

She says some people prefer top loaders because the wash cycles tend to be shorter. Some front loaders take up to two hours to wash. However, if you set the wash temperature to 40 degrees or less, it normally takes around 40 to 45 minutes, about the same as a top loader.

The other advantage of using a front loader is the appliance sits under the bench giving more useable bench space and looking neater. If you don’t like to bend down to take your clothes in and out of the wash you can raise the front loader onto a substantial plinth.

Most driers these days are condensers with sensors which detect the amount of moisture in clothing and dry it accordingly. Because they don’t require ducting they can be placed >



**Above and below** Adjoining a second small bathroom in a brick villa, this laundry not only fulfils the task of clothes washing and drying but is also a spill-over storage space for the bathroom – as well as a sleeping spot for the owners’ standard poodle. In return, the bathroom basin does double duty as a laundry tub. The cabinetry is painted Resene Seashell. The floorboards are painted in Resene Black, then polyurethaned for extra protection, and are complemented by a black Formica bench.



- Resene Black
- Resene Mischka
- Resene Seashell

anywhere on internal laundry walls. But the big advantage, says Sandra, is you don't get condensation building up in the laundry. Most come with units plumbed directly into the drain. "Though they are quite expensive, they last longer and cost you less in the long run than ordinary vented driers. You can't wall-mount them as they are too heavy. But you can stack the appliances by putting a shelf between them, which is good for those people pushed for space."

With many hot water cylinders put into roof cavities these days, many appliance manufacturers also make drying cabinets. These are a good idea for people who do a lot of outdoor activities and need space to dry shoes, coats and other gear. They do require venting and need to be positioned close to an external wall. Specially designed heaters are also available to put into any cupboard for airing clothes and linen. **H**

**Did you know?** Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen Kitchen & Bathroom combines anti-bacterial silver protection and MoulDefender mould inhibitor, perfect for minimising unwanted nasties in kitchens, bathrooms and laundries.

## Planning précis

- > What do you want to use it for – just washing and drying, or more?
- > How much laundry do you and the family create?
- > How big a space can you allocate?
- > Where in the house is it; next to which rooms?
- > What do you want to store and include in the laundry?
- > Does it need to look good or just function well?



## Think again...

We're all guilty of laundry stereotypes – it's just that cluttered room, cupboard or corner of the garage with a couple of white boxy appliances. Nothing too exciting, and one washing machine is much like the next, isn't it?

Well, no. Aside from the recent increased awareness of the eco-friendliness of front loading washing machines, which use less water and less detergent, there are many other innovations being seen in the laundry, as Electrolux marketing manager Rosalie Davison notes from the company's own observations and products:

Modern washing machines and dryers are very quiet, so why banish them to a corner of the garage or a back room? Our European cousins have always included laundry appliances in their kitchens so with kitchens becoming more open-plan there's a growing trend towards including the laundry in, well, our living areas, as shown in the photograph above. And why not? Then you can keep an eye on the kids, and fold and iron in front of the TV.

Some people don't like front loaders because of the stooping involved, but now you can get 'inclined access' washers where the front of the appliances is sloped backwards. Or you can buy a pedestal to raise the appliance up, and which also includes a handy drawer to store detergents etc, and can come with a collapsible laundry basket.

But if you're stuck on top loaders, there are now models available with great water efficiency – check out the various water and energy ratings at your appliance retailer.

Sick of ironing? There's a dryer that also becomes an ironing aid – you pop in the dry crumpled clothes and they come out with most wrinkles gone. The machine also has a refresh cycle for smoky or smelly clothes.

For your chance to win great Electrolux laundry appliances, see opposite.