



MEDIA RELEASE

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'MY GREEN HOME' FAMILY TAKE ON NO. 1 CHALLENGE: HOT WATER

The Ngewana family tackle their electricity-hungry geyser use from all sides

The family that is changing their home to help change the world has taken a multi-pronged approach to cutting their water-heating costs. Now they are offering the lessons they have learned to all South Africans.

Like most suburban families, Zwelethu and Bulelwa Ngewana discovered that they and their children had been using more electricity to heat the geyser than for any other purpose in the house. In fact, lighting, laundry and cooking combined used less than water heating. Now, with a mixture of no-cost changes and the latest technology, they are driving that consumption down.

This week the My Green Home website, www.mygreenhome.org.za, shows how they did it. In a video 'webisode', viewers can follow the Ngewana family from the bubble bath to the rooftop on their hot-water journey. My Green Home also offers practical advice on no-cost, low-cost and invest-to-save options to save on heating water, as well as a step-by-step guide to solar water heaters.

My Green Home is led by the Green Building Council South Africa, with main co-funding from the German government through the South African-German Energy Programme (SAGEN). It's also supported by the 49M campaign, the South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) and a range of product sponsors and partner organisations.

As one of the first 'no cost' steps in April, the Ngewana's son, Lutho climbed into the roof space, where he found the geyser thermostat set to an unnecessarily high 70 degrees. With the power to the geyser switched off at the DB board, he turned that down to just over 55, instantly cutting the geyser's electricity usage by about 20 percent. The family also started taking shorter showers and smaller baths, as a change in habits.

The green retrofit of their home is just finishing now, with a range of sponsored equipment. The main house has a sunny, north-facing roof, so a Solartech solar water heater now serves the bathrooms and kitchen. A separate cottage and laundry building was fully shaded, so a heat pump from Alliance was installed for more efficient water heating there. These geysers are well insulated with materials provided in a kit from Saint-Gobain, and Geyserswise and Homebug devices control the geysers timing and temperature setting, for added savings and convenience.

The HansGrohe low-flow shower heads installed reduce the amount of water and electricity needed for showering, and can pay for themselves in a matter of months. So they're using less water now, and then the shower water they do use is recycled for the garden through the grey water system from Water Rhapsody. The AquaTrip device detects any water leaks and automatically shuts off water supply to protect against damage and high water costs.

The Ngewanas have set goal of reducing their electricity consumption by 40 percent from April through August. Though this is an ambitious target, their wide-ranging efforts to tackle their home's biggest user suggests that they are well on their way.

Those who participate in the My Green Home journey stand a chance to win green prizes, including the grand prize: their own 'green home makeover'. Anyone who submits a 'selfie' photo showing some of the steps they are taking to address their hot water consumption – including the 'bucket test' in the shower – to the website or Twitter (@mygreenhomesa) is eligible for the week's prizes in a random draw on Monday 26th May, as well as the grand prize in early August. Details are available on the My Green Home website.

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