

B.E.E.

So we all live happily ever after



PASSIONATE: Brigid Hardy takes a heartfelt approach and hopes her eco-friendly products will help save the planet.

Busy-bee high-flier wants to clean up

From Hawke's Bay to Harvard, Brigid Hardy has always been full of ideas. PETER GASTON reports.

Brigid Hardy, formerly of Havelock North, is tackling the \$300 million annual household cleaning product market.

Backed by investors, her company B—E—E (Beauty Engineered for Ever) has launched four products and is preparing to roll out others.

Ms Hardy has spent more than \$1 million and two years developing eco-friendly dishwash, surface cleaner, whitener and delicate laundry products.

She said her range was initially marketed in Auckland and Wellington but was now extending her outlets to five Hawke's Bay stores — New World in Waipukurau, Havelock North and Hastings, Woolworths in Napier, and Cornucopia in Hastings.

Ms Hardy attended Woodford House before graduating from Otago University with degrees in law and English literature. Her first job involved working on reforming domestic violence legislation.

She then won a scholarship to Harvard Law School in the United States, where she specialised in international law and human rights.

Back in New Zealand, she worked for former cabinet minister Sir Douglas

Graham in constitutional law as his private secretary at the height of his career. She moved in to the business world when he retired.

Her experience in the US, in the Beehive and even working with the UN made her realise that power resided in the business world and that you had to understand it to change it.

She joined global consultancy firm McKinsey in 1999, becoming the first woman in the firm's New Zealand office.

Through 2½ years with McKinsey, Ms Hardy was immersed in MBA-style training around the world and work with leading New Zealand companies and multi-nationals globally.

She said for most of her career she had been a little in "save-the-world" mode.

That drive to do business differently combined with her passion for social, environmental and cultural causes lead to the founding of B—E—E.

"It is a combination of three quite different parts of me," she said.

The "save the world side" was B—E—E's commitment not just to environmentalism, but also to ethical business; the business side was the chance to

apply world-class business practice from McKinsey; and the third was that "I just love beautifully designed things."

"Design is at the core of the B—E—E business model because if environmentally sound products are designed well enough, people won't be able to resist them."

Ms Hardy said she had surrounded herself with a diverse bunch of experts — chemists, formulators, dermatologists and even a French perfumer.

Their aim was to produce products that were gentle on the skin, the environment and out-performed others on the market. The company aimed to create stylish and eco-friendly products and they were the only cleaning products on the New Zealand market with Environmental Choice accreditation, a tough international eco-standard that's endorsed by the New Zealand Government.

All the products use natural ingredients such as coconut, palm oil, sugar and even New Zealand kawakawa.

"So it's more than just soap to me," she said. "Beautiful things that make life better and help save the planet."