



# From sculptor to environmentalist

**M**aking more of a wave than a ripple, former sculptor Tracy Bialek is working to create a better environment with her business, Ripple Products.

With numerous national awards to her credit, Bialek is making her presence felt by designing products and creating environmental awareness through behavioural change programs.

The journey began when Bialek sold her car to finance Ripple Products, a company that aims to spread water-saving and energy consumption messages by promoting practical products.

That meant giving up sculpting to focus on her business and the environment. "I was 30 years old and the time was right," she recalls.

Bialek had also worked as a waitress, nanny and spent several years at a stationery business (where she went on to become general manager), lived in Europe and worked in online merchandising during the dotcom boom years.

She credits her varied work experience to aiding her in running her current business and now does everything from managing staff and export markets, to working with clients on environmental campaigns and designing products to fit a particular message.

For Bialek, creating art and product design have their similarities, albeit with the difference in personal expression. "As a sculptor I worked with objects rather than figurative forms to give them a new life, in a new material ... so in a way, I was already

'recycling', taking old objects and turning them into something new," she explains.

"Working with my hands was stimulating but I wanted a more strategic big-picture role in my life ... now, I express myself through my business, which is reflected in every product we create."

With no formal training, Bialek says it has been a challenge. "I have been lucky to have had good mentors and role models but all my business skills have been learnt on the job," she says. "I believe if you have a true passion for what you do, the rest follows."

Bialek also draws upon her past experience as a sculptor, working independently and trusting her instincts, while maintaining a passion for creating environmental art and focusing on her new goals to grow her business.

Her clients include environment agencies, water and energy companies, government departments, schools, corporations and retail stores. "Essentially we provide product-based solutions for environmental campaigns," she explains. "It necessitates being able to get inside heads in order to understand strategies and goals."

Another part of the business is conducting research within the environmental sector to better understand new technologies and identify future demands. "I use this information in brainstorm-type scenarios with my clients to help deliver outcomes," Bialek says.

Having the courage to take risks, maintain self-belief and find the balance between being the boss



**THEN**

**NOW**

**SALARY** About \$30,000, supplemented by working as a nanny and waitressing.  
**HOURS** Weekdays only, where her time was her own.  
**LOWS** "Like most people ... the lows usually revolve around finances," says Tracy Bialek.  
**WORK-LIFE BALANCE** When not sculpting, Bialek was working other part-time jobs that kept her busy.

**SALARY** About \$100,000.  
**HOURS** 10-hour days, plus weekends in her office at home.  
**MISS** Welding and wearing a pair of overalls.  
**WORK-LIFE BALANCE** Always thinking about work when not at work – this does impact on the life balance.

**LINKS**  
[rippleproducts.com](http://rippleproducts.com)



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**Fresh start ... (above) Tracy Bialek with her new products; and with her sculptures.**

and part of a team has been a challenge that is paying off. "Yes, hard work does pay ... and patience really is a virtue," she says.

"We entered the market before it was ready for a business like Ripple Products but I know we are now making a strong impact."

Though she misses creativity for creativity's sake, Bialek says her new passion is being in a position to make a difference for humanity.

**YVONNE NICOLAS**

Know someone who's made "the switch"?  
 Contact [yvonnenicolas@bigpond.com](mailto:yvonnenicolas@bigpond.com).

**CORRECTION:** On the cover of last week's Environment and Sustainability feature the pictures supplied by Deakin and Monash universities were credited the wrong way around. The error occurred in production.