



the 321 Water bottle prototype

business

Filtering water – in a bottle

Design Victoria's business immersions program has been described as a wonderful opportunity for small businesses with big ideas by one of its delighted project clients, 321 Water.

Half A Teaspoon is a Melbourne based product development business committed to sustainable product design. It's called Half A Teaspoon in order to draw attention to the shrinking amount of drinking water in the world, while the project for the Design Victoria program – 321 Water – is also based on the company's philosophy of caring for precious resources, such as water.

Gretha Oost, the director of Half A Teaspoon, said the company had benefitted from the experience of developing 321 Water, especially from the guidance and grant from Design Victoria. "The project has opened new doors and possibilities for the business."

The design challenge was to design a reusable drink bottle that filters tap water, is visual and practical and educates the user on environmental impact.

According to Oost the most difficult part of the process was coming up with a filter technology that met Australian standards and did not compromise the design or feel of drinking bottled water.

The background to the 321 Case Study lies in the focus on environmental sustainability in product design and with global warming linked to greenhouse gas emissions, the emphasis has been turned to designing products that keep emissions to a minimum from conception and production, to transportation.

The project was also part of the need for a new approach to bottled water. In the developed world most tap water is of a high quality and safe to drink. However, more and more people have been enticed to buy and drink bottled water. Worldwide, more than 150 billion litres of bottled water is consumed per year. Bottled water involves the production of a large amount of greenhouse gas emissions, excess water and waste to landfill.

Oost and Half A Teaspoon recognised that the current situation was unsustainable, and that the focus market – Generations X and Y – value being hydrated and carrying water around with them. They identified an opportunity to design a re-usable bottle that purifies tap water – so readily accessible for Australians.

The final product derived its name – 321 Water – from the enormous ratio of water that is required to manufacture one litre of bottled water: three to one (3:1). The name itself seeks to raise awareness of water consumption.

Half A Teaspoon worked closely with design partner, Charlwood Design, to ensure the product met all criteria including the impact on the environment. Both companies had worked together previously having created the award-winning ShowerWatch.

All parties were delighted with the project solution and outcome, a working prototype that meets the requirements of the brief for water purification and stylish aesthetic and sustainable manufacturing. A product patent has been lodged and a registered design is being applied for, with options around marketing now being considered.

Oost said she was delighted with the outcome and the support of Design Victoria as a facilitator. A representative of Design Victoria undertook the facilitation role, ensuring the client's expectations were understood and managed throughout the project.

"Being a small business with exciting ideas, it is really difficult to move to the next phase," Oost said. "This grant has made it possible to go out and speak to interested parties. We are now not just talking about an idea, we have an actual prototype to show." ■