

LOVING WHAT YOU DO

ni-night, a children's furniture, clothing and accessories business, is the brainchild of Majella Skansebakken from Sydney, Australia. Her family home in the eastern part of Singapore doubles up as the showroom where Majella's designs are translated into pieces of sturdy, kid-friendly furniture that "dress up" her three children's bedrooms.

While the majority of her items are produced in Vietnam, some of them are made in Cambodia at an orphanage and vocational training company that she supports.

"My husband and I adopted our eldest son from the orphanage about seven years ago and we have been donating to it ever since," says Majella, 37. The couple are also involved in an annual house-building project there.

The catalyst for her business? "After living and working in Singapore for seven years, I saw a market opportunity for good quality children's furniture, says Majella. "A lot of businesses use medium-density fibreboard and soft woods that don't last... so I designed a hardwood range to suit children of all ages."

The rubberwood she uses can better withstand changes in temperature if the furniture is moved overseas. Her children's furniture also adheres to the stringent standards set in Australia.

Running a business while juggling the needs of three young children, aged seven, five and almost two, does present challenges, but Majella admits she's been fortunate. Her "great husband" translates her ideas into drawings and travels to the furniture factory in Vietnam to check on samples.

"There are so many opportunities in Singapore for expat women. I have met some who've had wonderful ideas that have worked out really well for them."

Majella Skansebakken, owner of ni-night

For her, rising warehousing costs and rentals are the main challenges to any business in Singapore. But these should not be a deterrent to anyone thinking of setting up shop here, she says.

Her advice? "Get your branding right from the start. Also, you must love what you do!"

ni-night,
9 Margate Road

