



## Smart thinking

Meet Sally Dominguez – award-winning architect, designer and judge for ABC TV's New Inventors.

Interview: Sarah Blinco Photo: Joe Burull

**Have you always been an 'ideas' woman?**

Sure have! I have always looked at things from an unusual perspective – from art projects through to buildings and product designs. I have a tendency to want to start from first principles to solve problems – sometimes a good thing, often a time waster, but I can't help it! I have a library of moleskin sketchbooks bursting with ideas and I am a voracious doodler.

**How did you get into the design and technology industry?** I come from a very creative family – dad is an engineer and mum writes musicals for schools. I graduated with an Architecture degree from Sydney University and set up my practice shortly after, in order to be up and running before I had kids. When I came up with a design for my Nest highchair after having Olivia (my first child), several of my architect peers suggested that I shouldn't try to be an industrial designer. I disagreed – some of my favourite product designers are architects. Nest got me noticed by the

design and technology industry in Australia and abroad. I now lecture for the NSW Board of Studies as a Design Technology specialist, which is great because I love to talk design with kids and teenagers.

**When did you become a judge on ABC's New Inventors?** I was originally contacted by the ABC to show my Nest highchair on the show, but I told them that my new product, the Rainwater HOG tank, was more inventive. I showed HOG in early 2005 – I didn't win but it didn't matter because it was lots of fun and terrific exposure. Later the ABC invited me to audition as a judge on the show. Such a great job to have!

**What's been your favourite New Inventors innovation?** John Dobozy and his Molecra tyre recycling system. He turns used tyres into rubber or fuel with no emissions. This is much-needed technology.

**What was the first thing you invented?** In Grade 5 I stayed at a Bilpin apple farm with a friend and created a huge multi-storey apple crate building in the pouring rain. Her mother was a Professor of Architecture and she told me that I was an architect in the making.

**What work achievement are you most proud of?**

With the production of my two main products, Nest and HOG, I battled long and hard with industry conservatives, from manufacturing to government and industry officials. I am proud of getting both products to market despite being discouraged. I am really happy to be able to pass my stories on to student designers and hopefully inspire them to refuse 'no' for an answer.

**What project are you currently working on?** I am hoping to start on my new invention, SunSprinkle, working with South Australia University students to develop a prototype of my pump-less solar irrigation system. I think it could be huge as a solution for developing countries and will ideally run as a not-for-profit business if I can get the funding right.

**What are some of your hopes for the future of your industry?** I think the time is ripe for sustainable designers. I hope designers will use their powers for good and say 'no' to creating cheap 'landfill' products.