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They say necessity is the mother of invention. That was certainly the case for Larissa Bright who developed her own natural skincare range to combat Townsville's unforgiving climate. But what began as a little cottage industry has developed into a major production with fans across the country

Story by IAN FRAZER

LARISSA BRIGHT began experimenting with her own cosmetics about three years ago to cope with Townsville's famed 300 days a year of sunshine.

Today her company Diva Cosmetics produces a range of 32 aromatherapy, skin care and body care products under the Great Barrier Reef Essential Energy and Diva Cosmetics labels.

She estimates she has 6000 customers throughout Australia, 1000 of them in Townsville.

Larissa, 27, found her skin becoming drier after moving to Townsville from Sydney late in 1995, and that existing skin care products did not work properly in the tropics.

"I noticed that with the harsher climate here, products were not working as well as they had previously," she said.

"At the time she was working as a cosmetics consultant with no formal training in chemistry, but with an interest in "mixing lotions and potions" that began in childhood.

"I have used aromatherapy since I was 10," she said.

"My family was always into natural health remedies and natural healing.

"I have seen the results and I believe in it."

Larissa began making aromatherapy blends for her own use and decided to also try selling them at Townsville's Sunday morning showground markets.

She says she soon gained regular customers and found that many of them were also worried by dry skin.

Sensing a market for naturally-based



BRIGHT SPARK . . . Larissa Bright with some of the products from her Diva range of cosmetics

Photo by SCOTT RADFORD CHISHOLM

derived ingredients." The latest ones, launched this month are an anti-wrinkle eye cream and an aloe vera-based, aluminium-free, alcohol-free deodorant.

Larissa retails her aromatherapy range through island resorts and selected Myer department stores.

She promotes and sells her Diva Cosmetics through beauty workshops in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, and also sells by direct mail, aided by about 30 consultants. She has a staff of seven in Townsville.

About 70 per cent of the bodycare products are made in Townsville and the skincare products are made to her formula in other parts of Australia.

She hopes the workshops will help to demystify skin care, especially in Townsville.

"A lot of women feel intimidated when they go to the cosmetics counter and know nothing about it," she said.

"I have introduced a lot of new clients to skin care who have never used skincare products before."

"My philosophy is that all women are beautiful and all women can take care of themselves."

Larissa says satisfied customers have spread the word about the workshops.

She hopes to teach many more women what she calls the three steps towards beautiful skin: cleansing, stimulating and moisturising.

"I want to show how easy it is to look after your skin and have a radiant complexion," she said.

"Ninety per cent of ageing is due to the environment, that's why it's so important to protect and moisturise your skin in the North.

"Our products diminish the appearance of ageing.

"Looking after your skin is not being vain, it's sensible, like brushing your teeth."

Larissa, a political science graduate who worked as a consultant for two cosmetics companies in Sydney before moving North, said the venture had been a "huge gamble."

"It's a seven day-a-week job," she said.

"I get one day off in 28, but I am not complaining, it's rewarding and challenging and I love it."

For further information contact Larissa on 4779 1577.

a natural  
DIVA

skincare products, she quit her full-time job and spent a year developing what was to become the Diva Cosmetics range.

"The hardest part was finding something I could use on my skin and which I was 100 per cent happy with," she said. "I am very picky with skincare."

She tests all her products on herself and close friends and relations with hypersensitive skin. She enlisted southern contacts, whom she describes as key people in the cosmetics industry, to help with research and development of the Diva products which, she says, integrate "scientifically and naturally