

Life lessons guide Kylie

After five children, a divorce and subsequent second marriage, a blended family, and a successful battle with thyroid cancer, Kylie Bishop wonders drily whether her career has "complicated her personal life".

"I chose to use my accounting degree and passion for business in the very male-dominated world of engineering and science projects," Kylie says.

"On very few occasions in my career have I felt my gender, or my decision to have a family, impacted negatively on my 'climb of the corporate ladder' or on my ability to 'back myself in and have a red-hot go'. This was probably testament to the companies and teams I was involved with, the general managers and CEOs I reported to, and my very high professional expectations of myself.

"My family is not an impediment to excellence. Truth be told, they are often the reason for it."

Kylie was a proactive employee for 15 years. The company she co-founded three years ago, LBW Environment, has established itself as a solution provider to clients with environmental components to their projects.

"I am fiercely passionate about the business and its people and my earlier relationships allowed me to understand the whole business, assume high levels of responsibility and to develop skills that stand me in good stead now as LBW's CEO and joint owner," she says.

"We have clients in oil and gas, mining, construction, government, waste management and property development. All of them want a nimble, pragmatic solution that is timely and within budget.

"All of them are different in their stressors, their project's objectives and requirements and the history of the land in question. We attempt to take all of these things into account in formulating possible solutions."

LBW specialises in contaminated land and water assessment, remediation and monitoring and currently works in metropolitan Adelaide, regional SA and southwest Queensland.

"While we will continue to grow this core business, we are exploring opportunities in NT and WA and would love to be able to offer flexibility of choice to clients from those states by applying our business formula there," Kylie says.

"We believe very strongly in our SA flavour and the benefits living here provides our staff and families, so we would be considering either a satellite office or a fly in fly out arrangement.

"I have recently started to accept mentoring assignments and am excited about the opportunity to extend LBW's consulting services in an area that I am very passionate about. Success need not be a secret.

"It is also very important to me to have an involvement in the community and I am proud to be the Chairperson of an International High School and manage a basketball team.

"Living with and/or raising teenagers and toddlers with a husband (who is also the MD of LBW) and an ex-husband (who is still integral in my life) has honed my ability to negotiate, communicate, mediate, set realistic goals and to share success with a cross-section of people with very different needs.

"I have also learned which battles are worth fighting and which just leave me exhausted and feeling unsuccessful. If not for my personal life I may not have these skills!"

In 2007, soon after Kylie and husband Jarrod decided to set up LBW, Kylie found a lump in her neck.

"After the cancer diagnosis, surgery and treatment I think I adopted a more philosophical approach to life. I became less critical of myself and probably less judgemental, but not less driven!" Kylie says. "While I considered my health problem not to be life threatening right from the start, it did make me consider what was really important in life."

LBW has a strong family friendly approach including an extra celebration day of annual leave; flexible work times; remote access; mobile phones and laptops; and a range of employment options.

Kylie expects LBW to continue to grow through projects with existing clients and to win new clients if markets remain "buoyant and progressive".

"I don't believe in growth for growth's sake but we will continue to grow in order to match demand if it means we can also deliver the service we subscribe to. Jarrod and I only ever planned to operate a SME so there are certainly no plans to go too crazy!" Kylie says.

"We will need to find a new place to live next year when our lease expires as we have just about outgrown where we are in Kent Town."

