

Tara crafts new role in showbiz

AS A 24-year-old assistant working behind the scenes on Nine's *Our House*, Tara Dennis never imagined she would one day have a starring role on the popular show.

But six years later, the Sydney-based designer finds herself in front of the *Our House* cameras.

Dennis, who has replaced Suzie Wilks, makes her debut tonight as the program's craft and decorating presenter.

And while she's relishing her time in the spotlight, she admits it's taking some getting used to.

"I really do wish I'd paid more attention all those years ago when I used to go and help out on the show," Dennis confesses.

"I was always so busy in the background, I never really took much notice of what was going on in front of the camera."

Dennis says she still suffers from the occasional case of pre-show jitters — not surprising, for someone who is quite shy by nature.

"If anyone ever gets a camera out, I'm always the first to run away," she says. "At school, I never took anything like drama as a class and I couldn't even get on the

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stage to receive a certificate without being a bundle of nerves.

"But I love it. It's fun because I'm doing what I really enjoy."

Dennis, who has always harbored a passion for all things arty and crafty, began her involvement with *Our House* in 1994 when she started giving product advice for the artists' paint company, Chroma, a firm for which she still works.

Two years ago, Dennis was asked to be a designer on Nine's zany renovating show *Changing Rooms*. It launched her TV career.

"What a gig that was," she says.

"Anyone who watches that show will understand how much fun it'd be to work on it. To be a part of it was really exciting and a huge challenge. It really stretched me, both professionally and personally."

Dennis combines her professional life with her role as a single mum to her eight-year-old daughter, Avalon.

Conceding it is a juggling act, the presenter says she has learnt to be as organised as possible in her day-to-day activities.



Good background: Tara Dennis has moved in front of the cameras.

"I have to be really focused and not worry too much if things slip," she says.

"If the ironing doesn't get done, I just have to think, well, OK, don't worry about it.

"My little girl and I grab moments wherever we can and do as many things together as possible. I always try and involve her in the research for the stories I'm doing, so they become together activities.

"Some days are a bit more manic than others but most of the time we

manage. And my daughter's pretty good — she muddles through with me. I think most people's lives are like this."

As for the future, Dennis is confident she's in for an exhilarating ride.

"Things are looking good at the moment," she says.

"I feel like I'm on a fantastic rollercoaster. I'm having a ball."

Our House, Channel Nine, tonight, 7.30pm.