



From far right:
Stan the Dog for
Civil Defence; The
Ruggerbees for the
New Zealand Rugby
Union and Clever
Baskets for New
World.

THE WORD IS OUT

The best in the business

The Costume Studio's work is always on display, in most cases larger than life. Ellie van Baaren talks to the owner about the Rugby World Cup, keeping secrets and the joys of doing business in North Harbour.

Denise Hosty can't tell me what she's working on at the moment. It's top secret. What she can tell me is that one of the business' latest creations is "absolutely enormous" and the biggest problem will be figuring out how to make it fit into a reasonably small car so it can be transported around the country during the Rugby World Cup.

The Costume Studio is the only New Zealand company that specialises in creating and making mascot costumes and now is an exciting time to be a part of it. Denise and her team are currently working with RWC sponsors, councils and the New Zealand Rugby Union, all of which will be using the tournament for some major marketing exercises.

You may have already seen some of The Costume Studio's work. Perhaps you saw the giant New World "Clever Baskets" cheering on the Silver Ferns at Vector Arena last month. Or waved at the giant Irvines pie at the latest Warriors game. You might even have spotted one of ANZ's walking ATMs.

"People say to me that I must have a great

job," Denise says, "and it is, it's fantastic!"

She started out creating theatre and mascot costumes as a 16-year-old in Manchester. When she took a holiday to New Zealand in 1999 it turned out those skills were in demand. She's been here ever since. The unusualness of her skills did have its drawbacks, however, as it took a long time for Denise to get residency and citizenship because she wasn't "qualified" – "you can't really get a qualification in mascot making!"

Until the end of 2005 Denise worked with another company making costumes for the Auckland Theatre Company and the New Zealand Opera. At her suggestion they started doing mascots as well. Because of her previous experience Denise took on that part of the business and developed it, even though the business itself wasn't hers.

When she broke her foot and had to be off work for a substantial period, the company shut up shop and she was made redundant. The only thing for it was to start up her own business using the reputation and contacts she had already built up. As time went on, the money in theatre dried up

and mascots and corporate events became the main source of income.

The economic downturn hasn't really affected The Costume Studio. The companies they work with were among the clever ones who continued to spend their money on marketing and advertising, so the work has remained steady. More than steady.

She now has a team of nine and they're moving into bigger premises just a few doors down from their current building. "I've got a great team, really loyal and hard working and they're all as passionate about what we're doing as I am."

Being based in North Harbour means Denise is closer to where she lives and while a lot of her suppliers used to be in the city, she has slowly found suppliers on the Shore. "We use a lot of local industries and it saves us a lot of money with couriers into and out of the city. Now we can visit our suppliers on a regular basis and they often come along just to have a look at what we're doing."

The Costume Studio

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