



# Not such a crazy idea after all

RECENTLY HONoured FOR THE INNOVATIVE USE OF STEEL IN MODERN TRAILER DESIGN, DENIS DI PASQUALE REMAINS HUMBLE AND FOCUSED AS HIS BUSINESS, **TUFF TRAILERS**, CELEBRATES ITS 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN 2014. LOOKING BACK AT THE JOURNEY, DENIS SAYS IT ALL BEGAN WITH ONE OF THOSE 'CRAZY' IDEAS.

In November 2013, Denis and his wife Nicole were invited to Sweden, where Tuff Trailers was one of four finalists nominated for the 2013 Swedish Steel Prize given out by steel company SSAB. At the end of the night, the Queensland-based business had placed second for its use of SSAB's steel on its innovative Monospine 'Load 'N' Lift' four-metre deck widening trailer. According to Denis, while the company's reception at the event was awe-inspiring, it was also a chance to reflect on just how far Tuff Trailers had come. "It made us stop and think that we are making an impact not just in Australia, but across the world," he says. "We knew the Monospine

design, which was built for a Queensland fleet transporting large machinery and equipment, would create a stir locally. What we didn't anticipate, however, was that the trailer would be talked about in international circles." It's safe to say Denis didn't anticipate his passion for trailer designing would take him abroad either. Especially when he thinks back to 1993, when he started off as a young, ambitious 20-year-old in a general fabrications company. One of Denis' first products was a trailer for a Toowoomba trucking company, SEDL Transport. But it wasn't until a chance meeting with SEDL's owner that Denis

could promote his own designs for a trailer featuring hydraulic widening decks and an airbag suspension. "Most of the places I visited, people thought it was a crazy idea, but the last place I stopped at was SEDL Transport," he recalls, pointing out that it all literally started the moment he ran into the son of the owner, who described to Denis SEDL Transport's requirements for a special quad-axle low loader trailer. Getting the business off the ground by convincing bankers and lawyers to help supply funds for his business plans wasn't easy, especially from someone still fresh from completing his boilermaker

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apprenticeship. But ultimately Denis did raise the money, while acquiring his own workshop along the way. "I designed it and built it as I went," he explains, pointing out that he worked all the hours possible during a six-week stretch. Once SEDL took delivery of Denis' innovative low loader, which he says had a 'Tuff Trailer' decal on the trailer's gooseneck, the brand was born. Two decades later, that same trailer is still in action, having run up more than five million kilometres, according to Denis. "I promote my business on a product basis, not on replacement business," he says. "Everything we manufacture, we build it to last." At present, Denis' 'crazy idea' has lifted Tuff Trailers to one of the most successful custom trailer manufacturers in Australia. Its product portfolio is considerably larger

than when Denis started off and can now offer any design from low loaders, drop decks and truck transporters through to dollies, dog trailers and flat tops. "We can do any type of design for large and oversize loads," Denis adds. "But even with such a broad offering, we're always on the lookout for more innovative concepts. If it doesn't exist, we need to invent it. We don't accept no for an answer." In January 2014, Denis again delivered on that promise, with Tuff Trailers releasing its first eight-rows-of-eight steerable low loader, in a range offering payloads from 50 tonnes to more than 200 tonnes. "We knew instantly we wanted to create the best 8x8 ever built in Australia," he recalls. "That's why I began looking at every single comparable design I could find, trying to learn more about what is actually needed when the unit is out in the field. Once we

start is designing and manufacturing the trailer, it's up to us to ensure that it's reliable and lasts the distance for the customer."

A boilermaker by trade, Denis knows best that using high quality materials only will help increase the longevity of each build – just like the SSAB steel he uses on all his trailers. After all, it's a premium product, efficiently and economically designed to help a customer's operation and ultimately lead to return business. "When we design, it is all about the best – not about dollars and cents," he emphasises. "If I can't build a quality product and get sales from building the best, then there is no point in doing it." Tough by name, and tough by nature, 20 years on from designing and building his first Tuff Trailer, forward-thinking Denis says there certainly is a method to his madness. 

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