

Military zeal in camper trailers

By LLOYD MARSHALL

THE Down Under Campers operation at Forrestfield is a picture of military-like efficiency, with the manufacturing area neat and functional.

That's not surprising, considering that proprietor Paul Fromont and his wife, Tania, were in the air force before setting up business.

Much of Mr Fromont's work involved liferats, parachute harnesses and special-purpose tarpaulins.

Originally established as a canvas manufacturing- and -repair operation, Down Under Campers expanded into camper trailers five years ago.

"We couldn't find a camper trailer that we really liked at an acceptable price, so we decided to build one ourselves," Mr Fromont said.

"We were already making the canvas components for some local camper-trailer manufacturers.

"We buy trailers whose shells have been made to our specifications, then we do everything that's required to produce campers with prices that are at least 20 per cent under similar units from the major companies.

"Around half our orders come from our advertisement in *The Sunday Times* and half from word of mouth."

He said about a quarter of his customers bought their own "bare bones" trailer and gave it to him to be fitted out.

The operation produces about 50 camper trailers a year and Mr Fromont said he didn't really want the business to get much bigger.

"A little big bigger would be OK, but not so much that we lose the personal touch that we have with our clients," he said.

"People like to deal with the owners of the business, I think, because they are confident that we are the ones doing the work and that we'll take a lot of care, which is exactly what happens."

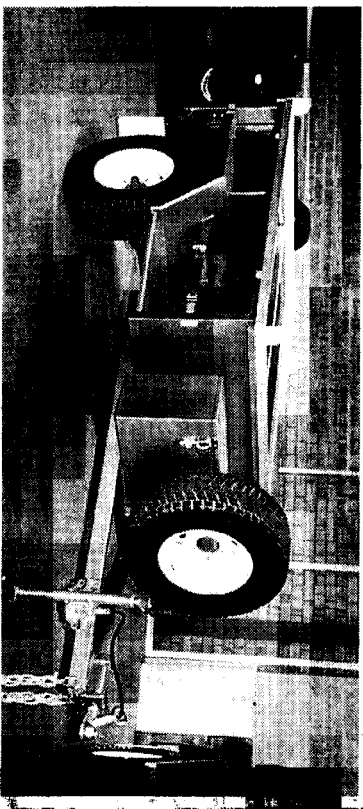
He said customers were encouraged to visit the factory to check on their trailer during the manufacturing process.

"It works really well because people pick up on things that they hadn't previously thought of and we are able to make any changes they require before the job is finished," Mr Fromont said.

Mrs Fromont said people appreciated attention to the small details in the company's trailers.

She said all joints were sealed, including car-door seals on the tailgate and sponge-rubber seals under the bed base.

"And many people have told me that they appreciate the door stay that ensures that the tailgate stays open when 'omitted'," she said.



TOP: A trailer before conversion to a camper trailer.

LEFT: Paul and Tania Fromont assemble a camper.



Canopies fold out easily, with two telescopic, galvanised tube poles positioned for easy assembly.

The floor is sealed into the unit and the canopy folds back into the trailer with a minimum of fuss. Very much like a piano-acordion effect.

A zippered tonneau cover made from honeydew fibre Dura-Fibre

neatly over the top of the trailer and its overlapping edges are secured by bungee straps to ensure there is no movement.

The tent area is available in two sizes and there is a light hanger and a zipper to snugly seal the power-cable entry point.

burners, sink and cooking preparation area pulls out of the trailer's rear and that area can be equipped with an awning with walls and a floor panel.

The basic trailer weighs about 450kg and comes with 12 months registration.

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