

Darren's on the fast track to success

MAKIN Trax is a business with a difference – it's all about designing and creating mountain bike, walking and multi-use tracks, and keeping them up to scratch.

"I'm a passionate mountain biker, and have done years of volunteer track building," says director Darren Stewart, whose background as a licensed builder and plant mechanic enabled him to transition to a professional role doing the work he had loved carrying out as a volunteer.

"An opportunity came up for me to do it professionally, in association with the new Stromlo Forest Park."

After the 2003 bushfires, the ACT Government commissioned the design and construction of an initial track network at the new park – and the fledgling Makin Trax was subcontracted to construct it.

Since then, the company has been contracted on its own account to design, build, maintain and remediate tracks.

"It's grown from there," Darren says. "As well as contracting to maintain the Stromlo site, we work at many other places in Canberra, from Mount Franklin to Mount Majura and everything in between."

He says Makin Trax is unique in that it's able to service the needs of all land managers responsible for mountain bike, walking and multi-use tracks, which are traditionally seen as distinct disciplines.

Being able to provide a "one-stop-shop" for the design, construction, maintenance and remediation of these track networks and related infrastructure (such as bridges) has been part of the secret to the company's success – the rest is down to their passion for what they do.

As well as building tracks, the company is also setting up special tools for unique construction approaches as well as prefabricated rock armouring for unstable track surfaces.

Makin Trax is developing design and construction techniques to control user groups on individual tracks, such as speed control for mountain bikers into corners to stop skidding and erosion.

Darren says it's a privilege to do what he



Makin Trax principal Darren Stewart (above and right) at play and work.

loves professionally, and that he's very excited about the upcoming Mountain Bike World Championships, to be held at Stromlo Forest Park in September.

"It's going to be a massive event."

Makin Trax is an innovative business model in a highly specialised market – something completely unique, Darren says.

"There aren't many people who have a business like this!"

"We're excited about the Telstra Business Awards because they're recognition of our having started something from nothing."

"We developed the business from a volunteer role, and now we're doing it professionally, which is wonderful – it's great to be a finalist as it's recognition of how well we're going and how unique we are."



In the trenches

MAKIN Trax has a second arm, Trenches and Transformations, which helps the general public as well as organisations make the most of their "patch of dirt".

"I have a background in heavy machinery operations including bobcats and excavators," says Darren.

"Trenches and Transformations is about helping people in the do-it-yourself market."

"Whether it be changing the levels of a customer's patch of dirt, removing trees, digging holes or trenches, we can make people's lives easier by taking the back-breaking part of the work out, ready for them to complete their landscaping projects."

There's an increasing interest in do-it-yourself home improvements such as vegetable patches, and

homeowners are increasingly willing to get their hands dirty and do their own landscaping, Darren says: Even if it's something as simple as removing a couple of trees.

Trenches and Transformations applies the same principles and techniques in excavating and improving front and backyards as Makin Trax does in its large-scale projects.

This involves a site survey, an assessment of the project's scale, a personalised brief or quote and, if required, the dirty work itself: moving dirt, rocks, grass and more to get a landscaping project underway.

For more information call 0418 632992 or visit www.makin-trax.com.au.