



Picture: Mark Cranitch

BROTHERS Luke and Karl Trouchet went to university then bought out their parents' business

Big wheels rolling

By identifying and developing a niche market, the brothers behind the Apollo motorhome brand have quietly built a company ready to take on the world

LUKE and KARL TROUCHET
WORTH: \$65 MILLION

IT STARTED with one campervan in the backyard of their parents' bayside home, south of Brisbane.

Now, Luke and Karl Trouchet own the largest motorhome company in the southern hemisphere and aim to make it a global brand. "You have the likes of Avis and Hertz as global car rental companies and we want to be the first international RV (recreational vehicle) rental company," said Luke, who is chief executive of Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Brisbane's Northgate.

His parents, Gus and Carolyn, bought their first camper in 1985 with the idea of renting it out at weekends. They decided Luke and Karl could earn pocket money cleaning it – and the other campervans that were added to the family's fleet.

Luke, 33, and Karl, 32, joined the company after graduating from university. When they bought the company from their parents in 2001, there were 50 vehicles and four staff.

Since then the pair have built

the business to a fleet of 3300 vehicles and 250 employees. They have outlets around Australia and New Zealand and have pushed into the United States, buying a business in Los Angeles last year.

They now also have outlets in San Francisco and Las Vegas and plan to move into Vancouver and Calgary in Canada next year. Later on, they will explore opportunities in Europe.

Rentals have continued to grow by about 15 per cent over the past year, although the sales market has stalled in the recent tough economic times.

The company replaces vehicles every three years, and in 2006 the brothers set up Talvor Motorhomes as their own manufacturing arm.

Their success helped Luke win the Queensland Young Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2007.

"I believe that entrepreneurs are born and, fortunately for me, it has always been in my backyard as I was growing up," he said.

"I always say you are a long time dead so you might as well make the most of life while you are alive."

In May, Luke and Karl set up an advisory board of leading

business people to help guide future growth of the company.

"They can be a bit of a hand-brake when it's needed, but they also know when to turn up the throttle," said Luke.

Away from work, the brothers are keen skiers, hitting the snow slopes up to four times a year in Australia, New Zealand and Colorado.

And Luke is planning a holiday

to China, during which he will explore business prospects there.

Luke and his wife Angie live at Gumdale with their baby son, Riley. Karl and his wife Amanda live in Burbank with their one-year-old daughter, Madeleine, and are expecting another baby.

The Troughets are worth \$65 million, which ranks them 94th on *The Sunday Mail* 2009 Rich List.



THE family's first campervan had few frills, unlike the luxurious motorhomes the Troughets build today

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Keith Williams

WEALTH \$102 MILLION
WHAT DEVELOPMENT
WHERE GOLD COAST



A Gold Coast icon who developed Sea World. The 79-year-old stepped back from business late last year after a mild stroke to enjoy retirement with his wife, Thea. Son, Ben, now mostly runs the business, focused on the Port Hinchinbrook residences and marina in north Queensland.

LAST YEAR NO.76



\$46M FALL

85

Euan Murdoch

WEALTH \$97 MILLION
WHAT INVESTMENT
WHERE SCENIC RIM



The 61-year-old and his wife, Kaye, made their fortune when they sold their Herron Pharmaceuticals company in 2003. They sold their riverfront home at St Lucia in May for about \$8 million and now live at their 1100-hectare rural property near Beaudesert.

LAST YEAR NO.84



\$21M FALL

86

Chris and Virginia Anderson

WEALTH \$96 MILLION
WHAT DEVELOPMENT
WHERE REDLANDS



The New Zealand-born couple made a fortune out of property development in bayside suburbs, but now their focus is on building opportunities for children at an African orphanage.

Feature story on Page 13.

LAST YEAR NO.82



\$24M FALL

87

Doug Warbrick

WEALTH \$95 MILLION
WHAT SURF RETAIL
WHERE GOLD COAST



He co-founded surf gear company Rip Curl 40 years ago with Brian Singer. The 66-year-old has returned to his home state from Victoria, settling on the Gold Coast where he's a partner in a \$20 million luxury apartment complex at Rainbow Bay.

NEW ENTRY



88

Steve Ackerie

WEALTH \$88 MILLION
WHAT HAIR SALONS
WHERE BRISBANE



The man known just about everywhere as Stefan says it has been a "great year" for his 50 hair salons and his inner city restaurant Jo-Jo's. His wealth boost, however, is mostly due to the increasing value of his West End property holdings thanks to some key acquisitions.

LAST YEAR NO.95



\$7M RISE

89

Sarina Russo

WEALTH \$80 MILLION
WHAT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
WHERE BRISBANE



One of our most successful women celebrates 30 years in business next month. She used the loss of some government job services contracts to re-organise her business and plans to expand operations in the UK. She owns several Brisbane CBD buildings.

LAST YEAR NO.92



\$20M FALL