



Catherine Williams

Wheel women

These fast females love their engines for work and play, writes **Barbara Lynch**

Girls are getting greasy with mechanical jobs and hobbies that used to be a guy's domain. Many Townsville women are jumping into dirty situations faster than you can say "can I have some hand sanitiser with that?"

Wydine Van Der Merwe loves nothing better than the smell and feel of grease.

"I'm going to blame my dad for getting me to wash his junkyard cars and for getting me to help with power tools to cut off the roof and doors for a bush bashing," she laughed.

The apprentice mechanic and part-time model is part-way through her apprenticeship and hopes to continue in the grease-filled environment.

"It's such awesome fun . . . cars are just a big machine and they're like a big puzzle," the 19-year-old said.

When she was younger she used to be the studious type who loved nothing more than having her head in a book.

Now she prefers to solve the puzzle of cars and find out how they tick.

"Part of the fun of it is I love grease," the Mount Louisa resident said.

"I'm from South Africa and I'm used to hunting and getting dirty and cleaning up afterwards and doing it all again.

"I'm not too obsessed about staying clean and it's a lot easier if you can do what you want to do then worry about that later."

Wydine drives a 2009 Jeep Wrangler and admitted the car was too new to do anything to it just yet.

Another girl who loves fast things is Marika Sanson who only discovered a love for motorbikes in September last year when she bought her first one.

"I'd never really had my own hobby and my husband and I used to ride around on his bike," she said.

"When he'd have a break I'd jump on his bike," she laughed.

Marika wanted to start off with something smaller so she bought a Honda CRF 150 motocross bike, but has since traded it in for a Honda CRF 250.

"I love the fact you can get on it and ride at whatever speed. You can be with a group of people but the focus is on yourself and it's good to go outside and do something that makes you feel good," the 27-year-old said.

Marika and her husband Troy are both in the army and she said riding motorbikes was something else they could do together.

"It's a huge thing for us to enjoy the same activity . . . it makes him (Troy) very proud."

The pair live at Bohle Plains and like to ride behind their house and also at Keel Bottom Creek near Herveys Range.

Having worked on cars since she was in primary school, Catherine Williams, 18, is now in the third year of her mechanical apprenticeship. Her father and brothers are also mechanics.

"I enjoy it — I've been around cars my whole life," she said.

"I'm the only girl in the workshop, but I'm not treated any differently.

"I enjoy the challenge, it's something different."

People are usually surprised when she tell them what she does for a living.

"Everyone has a reaction to it, but it's always positive," she said.

"I enjoy doing all types of mechanics, each car is different and there's always something new."



Marika Sanson



Wydine Van Der Merwe
Photo: ASHLEE PATTERSON

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