

# IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

Adam Cozzitorto is a proud third-generation tree worker, proving the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, nor does a good arborist.

Born and raised in Adelaide, Adam's heritage pretty much cemented him a spot in a tree. "My papa [grandfather] was a forester in Italy and my father, Vince Cozzitorto, owned Para Trees in Adelaide," he explained.

Adam has early memories of "always climbing trees" and even "breaking an arm at age seven after falling out of a *Pinus Radiata* pine tree".

From the age of 12 he was helping his dad, learning the ropes and earning some pocket money on the side. And after a stint playing with smaller flora, the youngest Cozzitorto officially joined the family business. "I was always going to

work in this industry," Adam relinquished. "It was a natural progression from working in a plant nursery to then work for my dad's tree business."

Keeping it in the family, it wasn't only his old man that coaxed Adam up a tree. "I worked alongside my older brother Jason, who taught me a lot about climbing whilst working for Dad," he revealed.

Even though he was a chip off the old block, Adam eventually wanted to fly the coop to see what was out there. At the age of 20 he set off on his own adventure. "I left home with a rope, a pair of spikes and my harness to travel around Australia, honing my craft and experiencing everything

Australian," he remembered. "Back then there weren't many arborist or climbers up North, so to climb a tree with ropes was a rare thing to see – they were still using ladders. My skills as a climber guaranteed me work anywhere, straight away."

Even though he's now based up in Townsville, over the years Adam has been privileged enough to experience all types of jobs, in all types of trees, all around the country. "I've worked for so many companies all around Australia during my travels," he elaborated. "In Adelaide, Broome, Darwin, Cairns, Airlie Beach, Jabiru, Port Hedland, Ingham, Mount Isa, Bowen and the Kimberleys..."



With a natural gift for scaling tall timber and a real passion for what he does, Adam was always destined to succeed in the industry. "I specialise in climbing difficult trees," he clarified. "That's what I love; the challenge."

Adam's biggest and most rewarding challenge came in 2008 when he decided to start his own business, Skilled Trees. "All I had was my old ute, climbing gear, chainsaws and passion," he recalled of the venture. "I charged \$100 per hour and did this for a year until I had enough money to purchase a truck."

Even though it was about setting himself up for future growth, Adam says "the down side of contract climbing is that you get the worst of the worst jobs that their climbers can't do, or don't want to do." However, after slogging it out and paying his dues, Adam built up sufficient collateral to further invest back into his business. "From there I purchased more equipment," he continued. "Three trucks, two wood-chippers, an EWP, a bobcat and a stump grinder. I

started to be recognised by clients from the contract climbs I had done for local companies and the workload increased."

"I guess my big break came when I started doing work for Townsville City Council in 2009. My boss then was Chris Cole and I think he could see the future

All I had was my old ute, climbing gear, chainsaws and passion.

benefit of my experience and invited us to tender on a Tree Maintenance Contract, which had not existed beforehand. We have now held this contact for six years. We've purchased a yard to house all our equipment and have four local boys full-time employed."

Adam attributes his own personal business success to both his work ethic ▶



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myself and my business," he praised. "I believe they are making a huge difference in educating the public on proper practices for tree work and encourage their members to continually learn."

It seems learning is a key factor in the Skilled Trees ethos. All staff are qualified QAA and AA Members, are quantified Tree Risk Assessment registered users and are always attending new courses to keep updated. "We pride ourselves on our approach to continual learning," Adam said with conviction. "Safety is also high on my agenda and instilled into my employees. We have had too many losses of lives in this industry and I want my boys to go home every single night to their families."

That is what it continues to be about for Adam Cozzitorto: family. At 43 years old there's plenty of time for him to pass on the baton. "I hope to be climbing until I'm 60," Adam concluded. "I don't see myself retiring, I would get bored and yes, I am training the next generation, including my children, all four of them." **AA**

and to a special someone closest to him. "I think the secret to my success is to work as hard as I did for my dad as for all the other companies I have worked for, including my own," he began. "Also I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for my wife who puts in hard yards in the office while looking after our four children."

While he is not afraid to take on any job, Adam believes that storm damage is by far the trickiest puzzle to crack. "Living up in North Queensland I have done lots of cyclone cleanup work," he said. "I find these most challenging due to the trees being unstable, half fallen, snapped or resting on buildings or other structures." From Cyclone Larry to Cyclone Yasi, Adam and his crew have helped clean up a lot of natural disasters over the years.

There have been many other highlights in Adam's career. One was when he got to fly around the Kimberleys in a two-seater plane for four days going to Aboriginal towns doing tree work. "That was an awesome job." Another was working with Townsville City Council Senior Arborist

Roxanne Taylor. "I was taking care of and preserving our iconic raintrees for our future generations. It gives me great pleasure to undertake this kind of work."

And another particularly memorable moment was when he was working in Jabiru in the Northern Territory for two months. "It was getting dark and we had to remove African Mahoganies close to a house," he began recounting the story.

It was exciting and memorable due to the storms approach and the speed of the swing. What an adrenalin rush!


"There was lighting strikes in the distance and it was stinking hot. Safety back then was nothing like it is today. I had a highline in a tree, topped out to the tree next to it. Instead of going down to the ground and climbing again I swung over to the last tree standing. It was exciting and memorable due to the storms approach and the speed of the swing. What an adrenalin rush!

That's what I love about my job."

Like many talented climbers that like to push themselves, Adam enjoys competition climbing as well. "I have been competing for 15 years or so," he said. "In my first competition I was flown from Cairns to New Zealand by my old boss. I competed in Adelaide in the SASA, in the QAA titles and in the Australian titles. I always did well, but my

older brother Jason always kept beating me. I did win the North Queensland Climbing Championships."

Adam is also a proud Member of the Queensland Arboriculture Association which he feels benefits him and his company on many different levels. "QAA are a fantastic organisation and have been very supportive and informative to



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