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# BREWERIES + DISTILLERIES

## SPECIAL REPORT



# Locals develop a taste for distilling gin

Three WA distilleries are launching new products, new venues and raising capital as they seek to grow the industry.

**DIRECTION:** Paul White says he hopes to be able to deliver investors a return within three years. **Photos:** Attila Csaszar



**Tori Wilson**  
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## 6-PAGE FEATURE

**W**ESTERN Australia's craft spirits market is showing early signs that it will follow the overseas experience and mature as consumers become more conscious

of provenance and willing to experiment.

To ride the wave of enthusiasm for locally produced spirits, Paul White is in the midst of an equity crowdfunding campaign to bolster marketing efforts and working capital.

Director of Margaret River-based **The West Winds Gin**, Mr White said there was a surge in craft spirits overseas matched by interest from larger distilleries in buying craft operators, particularly in the US.

He expects a similar pattern will likely develop in Australia.

West Winds is aiming to raise \$3.5 million through the crowdfunding platform Equitise, on

the back of a forecast increase in sales to \$4 million in FY18, up from \$2.7 million in FY17.

The offer went live last month, with private investors able to gain a stake in the business from as little as \$500. About \$620,000 has been raised thus far, with the offer closing on July 17.

Mr White told *Business News* he hoped to deliver investors a return within the next three years.

"We want to ensure we continue to build a profitable business so there is potential for dividends down the track, or a trade sale, or potentially an IPO (ASX listing), but at the moment the focus is on continuing to

build the business and raising the capital," he said.

Mr White said distributing shares via Equitise was far simpler than listing on the ASX, involving fewer requirements and lower overhead costs.

"It's a good way to increase brand awareness and gain a spread of investors, so in the event that we do decide to go public, we've got a spread to start with," he said.

Mr White said West Winds had a few projects in the pipeline, including two new gins – one to be announced within the coming weeks and the second to be released around Christmas.

It will also be launching The

West Winds Gin Bar at Bill's Bar and Bites in Leederville within the next six months.

"Bill's is an existing bar in Leederville so we'll be running a separate bar down one end in a separate room and it'll be open to the public on weekends," Mr White said.

"It's a way for us to showcase our products and teach people about gin."

West Winds intends to set up a small distillery at the site to offer educational make-your-own-gin experiences to the public and host training events within the industry.

## Distillery in Freo

The team behind Bread in Common, Strange Company bar and Ronnie Nights bar, all in Fremantle, has also caught wind of the potential of craft gin, and are planning to establish a gin distillery by the end of the year, called **Republic of Fremantle**.

Long-time Fremantle locals Jason Townes, Matt Giudice and John McVeigh plan to launch what will be the port city's first distillery in part to reinvigorate the west end.

Republic of Fremantle is expected to launch its first two gins by the end of the year, before opening a bar and restaurant at the same warehouse location by late 2019, where it will offer gin-making classes.

"When I was 18 to 25 knocking around in Fremantle, the high street was full of bars," Mr Townes told *Business News*.

"But over the last few years I've found myself going out of Fremantle more and more to Northbridge and Perth."

Mr Townes said he was interested in bringing the small bar experience back to Fremantle.

"In our business plan we're gearing towards exporting and want to be a successful brand overseas, but I firmly believe you have to have a heart and soul wherever you are," he said.

"We're from Fremantle and are in Fremantle and want that to be the beating heart of the brand."

Mr Townes said the trio had been developing its recipes for the past few years and would be using grape spirit as a base for its gins, to be distilled using copper stills from Germany.

"The Republic of Fremantle is building on the legacy of wine merchant pioneer Lionel Samson," he said.



**“We’re from Fremantle and are in Fremantle, and want that to be the beating heart of the brand”** -Jason Townes

“Founded in 1829, Samson’s business imported the first gins into Western Australia, and its subsidiary, Plantagenet Wines, is sourcing the wine required to produce base spirit for our gins and vodkas.

“The range will celebrate the flavours of West Australian wine and feature botanicals from the Perth coastal plain.”

As with the trio’s past three ventures, Mr Townes said they would be commissioning the architect behind the Queen’s Hotel and Shadow Wine Bar, Michael Petroni, to design the lofty warehouse-style venue located on Pakenham Street.

Great Southern Distilling Company director Cameron Syme, who began producing gin in WA 15 years ago, said he’d heard of a number of distilleries targeting Fremantle as a potential location to set up, which to him suggested a boom in local distilling.

He said activity in Europe and the US showed there was ample room in the Australian craft spirits market for more competition, provided people were making quality products.

“We had some research done that says, in the US, craft spirits supply 2.5 per cent of their domestic consumption,” Mr Syme said.

“In Australia we’re at 0.25 per cent.

“I think there’s an opportunity for massive growth within the craft spirits market as people want to know more about where their products are made and what’s going into it and that sort of local provenance.”

Great Southern Distilling Company sought to leverage WA’s tourism potential when shifting its gin production to Margaret River mid-last year.

Mr Syme said since rebranding its gin to Giniversity and establishing a make-your-own-gin hub by the same name, Great Southern Distilling Company’s



**NEW:** Jason Townes, Matt Giudice and John McVeigh plan to establish a gin distillery in Fremantle by the end of the year.

## Distilleries in WA

*ranked by year established*

Company name	Year Established
Hoochery Distillery	1995
The Grove Distillery	1995
Kimberly Rum Company	1996
Harris Organic	1998
Great Southern Distilling Company	2004
Old Young’s Distillery	2008
The West Winds Gin	2010
Gidgie Distilleries	2011

See BNiQ [www.businessnews.com.au/List/distilleries](http://www.businessnews.com.au/List/distilleries)

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gin had experienced phenomenal growth.

“Giniversity is now pushing 50 per cent (of sales) with Limeburners, so we’re now half a gin

company and half a whisky company,” he said.

“A lot of it really is about education and I think traditionally Australians haven’t really understood spirits, and this (Giniversity) is all about helping people to understand what you should be looking for in a gin and what goes into making it.”

Mr Syme said consumers had begun to ask what was coming next, following the success of Giniversity.

Great Southern will launch a new hemp gin on World Gin Day this week (June 9), following the legalisation of hemp as a food product in Australia and the establishment of local producers.

It will also be introducing a new distillation method called vacuum distillation, which allows the alcohol and botanicals to be boiled at a much lower temperature (28° Celsius) to produce a higher-quality extract.

“That’s really where I think gin

can be now, on the cutting edge of what botanicals you are using and what distillation methods,” Mr Syme said.

About 15 years into the business, he said Great Southern Distilling Company was making profits but wouldn’t consider a trade sale in the future, having already turned down two major spirits companies interested in taking a stake.

“We’d like to keep this as a Western Australian family owned business,” Mr Syme said.





# Provenance and innovation key as local brewers get crafty

Brewers are releasing increasingly innovative products as they aim to stay ahead of the game in a marketplace where competition is intensifying.

**INNOVATION:** Pia Poynton says Nowhereman will soon be releasing a limited edition honey beer produced in collaboration with Fremantle's Bib and Tucker

## Tori Wilson

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WESTERN Australian breweries are developing a reputation for their creative approach to their craft, and new entrant **Bright Tank Brewing** is no exception.

Co-owned by former Petition Beer Corner venue manager Josh Edmeades, head brewer Matthew Moore, and craft beverage aficionado Gemma Sampson, Bright Tank Brewing is expected to open as a microbrewery and hospitality venue in East Perth within the coming months.

Mr Moore said the new brewery, which was expected to produce between 50,000 and 100,000 litres annually, would leverage the emerging Perth foodie culture and its appreciation of innovative food experiences.

"Our beer is very much built around food and sharing food with other people," Mr Moore told *Business News*.

"For the share menu, staff will point you to beers that pair

well, but we will also have a bi-monthly degustation, where I'll probably bring out something new that I've brewed.

"We'll also show people beers that inspired us and what's out there."

As was the case in Canada and Europe, for example, Mr Edmeades said beer would not be an afterthought but rather a crucial element of a meal at Bright Tank.

"We'll be using elements of beer in the food as well, so using hops to make a simple snack like popcorn; instead of having a steak and chips we'll have an oxtail gnocchi," he said.

With Bright Tank beers dominating tap points, Mr Moore said one other available brand would be the barrel-aged sour beer collaboration that he and Rocky Ridge Brewing head brewer Hamish Coates had been working on, to be supplied in corked champagne bottles.

And with gin producer Whipper Snapper within close

proximity, an ongoing collaboration with the distillery could also be in the works, he said.

## Product innovation

Sour beers, food-based beverages and creative collaborations are some of the innovations coming out of breweries such as Rocky Ridge and Beer Farm as they seek to make a name for themselves.

Located in Busselton and Mettup respectively, Rocky Ridge and Beer Farm are relatively fresh on the beer scene with a focus on self-sustainability and local ingredients.

According to the co-owner of specialist beer outlet **Mane Liquor**, Joshua Daley, it was Rocky Ridge's Peach Invasion New England IPA that helped the brewery gain early recognition and drive sales for its core range.

Meanwhile, **Beer Farm's** recently released shiraz-based sour beer, produced in collaboration with the winery LS Merchants, was driving social

media engagement and expected to sell out within a week, he said.

Mr Daley said Feral Brewing was the first local brewery to produce packaged beers that pushed the boundaries, but newer players such as Rocky Ridge, Beer Farm and Eagle Bay Brewing had picked up the trend and were selling well.

"We usually like to say our beer market mimics America, but just about 10 years behind," Mr Daley told *Business News*.

"There's a style of beer called sour beer, and if you go back five years it wouldn't even be a thought to cross a WA brewer's mind.

"All the guys that are releasing stuff like that; they're the ones who are ahead of the game. It

helps put them on the map and right in front of people's faces when they're releasing those boundary pushing brews."

Beer Farm's native Australian beer series is produced in collaboration with native pop-up dining experience Fervor, which includes a bush lime twist on the popular New England IPA style; it is another example of the innovative offerings coming to market.

While the beer label behind **Northbridge and Whitfords Brewing Companies**, Beerland, focuses on producing drinkable beers to keep its venues running smoothly, it also maintains relevance with quirkier limited releases.

Awarded champion Australian beer for its draught wheat beer at the Australian International Beer Awards last month, Beerland will be releasing a limited edition Habanero IPA to coincide with its chilli week, which launches today (June 4).

Virgin bloody mary 'chilli pong' will be one of several games and

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**BREWRIES**  
**IN WA**





restaurant. Photos: Attila Csaszar

"I kind of feel the brewing industry as a whole is going to reach saturation at some point soon, and by minimising our overheads and becoming self-sufficient it'll future proof us to an extent," Coates told *Business News*.

"It's also about having that point of difference to stand out in what is becoming an increasingly saturated and full market."

With the change in liquor licensing regulations that now allow breweries to operate satellite cellar doors, Rocky Ridge plans to open its own small bar and cellar door in Busselton within coming months.

"Again, it's about that future-proofing so that if in five years' time it is that hard to get tap points, we at least have our own venue to sell our own beer through," Mr Coates said.

**Nowhereman Brewing Co** business development manager and Girl + Beer blogger, Pia Poynton, who has been working in the beer industry for about a decade, said there had been a noticeable increase in competition in the past year.

She said there were about 12 new sales representatives on the road in the past two years, without counting major players Carlton United Breweries (CUB) and Lion Nathan.

"As the movement has matured people are looking for more innovative beers; they're getting interested in not only the beer itself but who's making it and where it's coming from," Ms Poynton said.

"It reminds me of what's happened with food and the pad-dock-to-plate movement.

"Challenges are obviously competition from the sheer number of suppliers."

She said while rotational tap points in venues had increased, as opposed to tap points contracted to major breweries, the opportunities weren't yet matching the number of new breweries available.

"You're seeing more venues now that will keep all of their taps and decide who are put on, whereas back in the day they'd split it 50:50 between the big boys (CUB and Lion Nathan)," Ms Poynton said.

"But there's still lots of venues opening up that might only have one or two rotating taps available that are not locked into anyone,

competitions customers can get involved in throughout the week at the Northbridge and Whitfords venues, while the Carolina Reaper chilli will show up across a number of menu items, including chilli mud crab.

## Market saturation

With 64 breweries established in WA, according to the BNiQ Search Engine breweries list, and about 492 across the country according to craft beer publication the *Craft Beer Reviewer*, establishing a point of difference through product innovation or provenance is increasingly important.

**Rocky Ridge** is based on a family-run beef and dairy farm, with about 90 per cent of its ingredients home grown, including its hops.

Founder and head brewer Hamish Coates said the investment in growing its own ingredients was costly in the short term but would prove to be beneficial over time.



**SUCCESS:** Joshua Daley says beers from Rocky Ridge, Beer Farm, Eagle Bay and Colonial Brewing Co are driving sales at Mane Liquor.

so you'll have 30-odd breweries competing for that rotating tap."

Beer Farm general manager George Scott said venues on the east coast provided greater opportunities to smaller breweries by culling the majority of exclusive contracts with the major players.

"There are a lot of rotational tap points over there but over here we still have a lot of venues that are contracted out, either between 80 per cent or sometimes even 100 per cent to Lion Nathan or CUB," he said.

"I think until these contracts get addressed, it's minimising the opportunity for independents to grow."

## Red tape

Mr Scott said another major restriction for emerging breweries was high excise tax.

"The Australian market definitely does fall in line to what America is doing," he said.

"But the thing to realise is America had the same growth

“ There’s a style of beer called sour beer, and if you go back five years it wouldn’t even be a thought to cross a WA brewer’s mind - Joshua Daley

as what Australia is now experiencing, but what their government did is they supported the industry, they made tax cuts for independents and small producers.

"(Australia's) just done it with an excise decrease for small kegs, and that's the first real positive thing I've seen from the government for supporting a small market segment and I think they need to get behind it more."

In an effort to boost support among smaller independent breweries, the **Independent Brewers Association**, which changed its name from the Craft

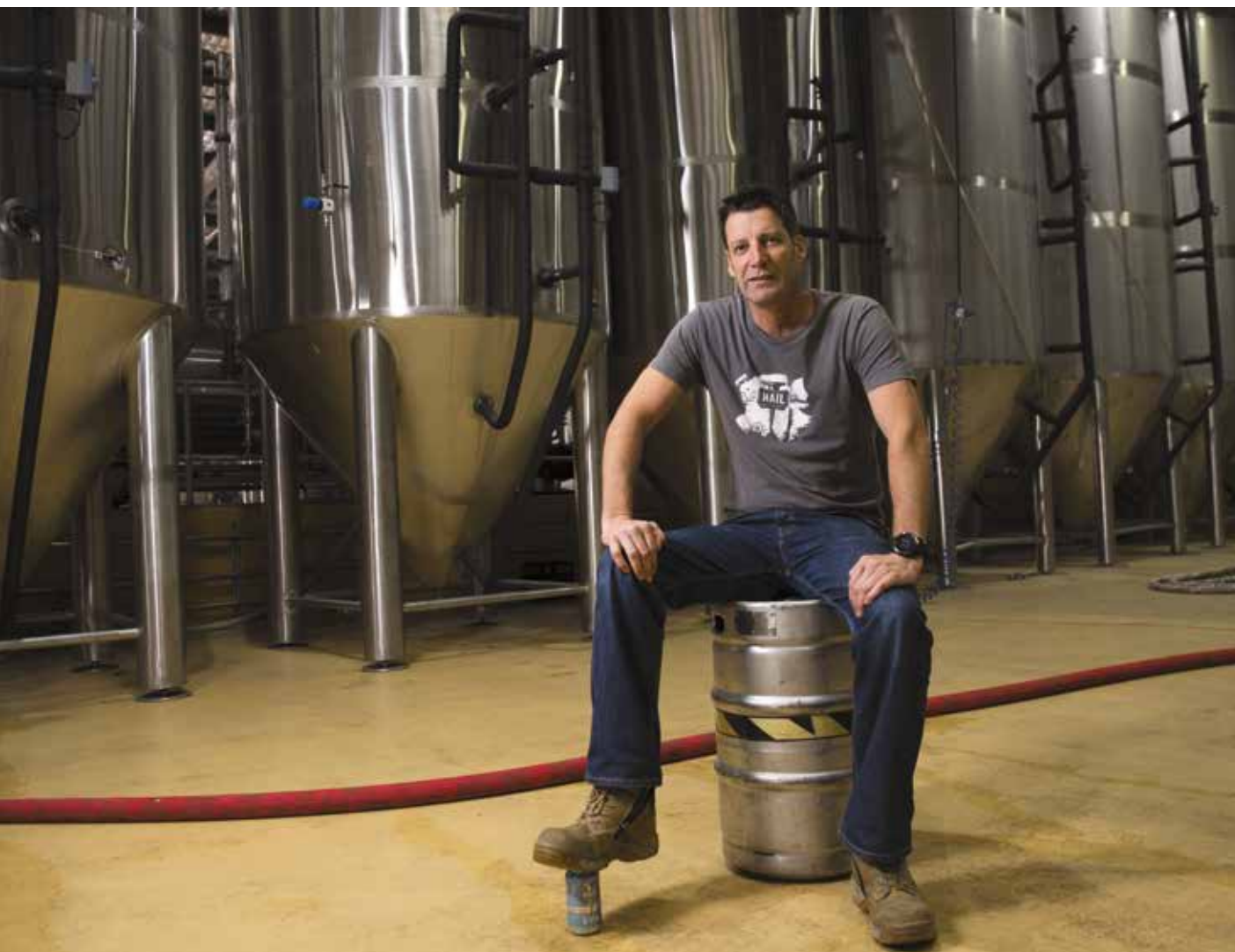
Beer Industry Association last year and updated membership requirements, has introduced a new product seal that confirms independence.

The seal was influenced by similar actions in the UK and the US and follows the sales of Mountain Goat to Asahi, 4 Pines to AB InBev, Feral Brewing to Coca-Cola Amatil, and Pirate Life to CUB.

While it's too early to say what effects the new packaging seal will have on the industry, IBA is aiming for 90 per cent of its member breweries to adopt the seal by late 2019.



# Stallwood on track to Nail craft brews



**PROGRESS:** John Stallwood says Nail is now well placed to reach its goal of doubling production. **Photo:** Attila Csaszar

One of WA's oldest craft breweries, John Stallwood's Nail Brewing recently tasted success on the international stage, winning a prestigious award in the US.

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CRAFT beer was in its infancy in Australia when John Stallwood bought a homebrew kit for a friend in 1994.

That gift had some unintended (positive) consequences, however, with the friend announcing he couldn't be bothered with the process and suggesting Mr Stallwood create the beverage himself.

Thus was the first version of Nail Ale born, with Mr Smallwood's inaugural

home brew launching what is now one of the state's oldest craft beer operations.

This year, Nail Brewing was recognised for its two best-selling beers, having won silver for its VPA pale ale at the World Beer Cup hosted in Nashville, while it's MVP pale ale won gold at the Australian International Beer Awards for the reduced alcohol category.

Those beer competitions are the world's two biggest.

Thanks to support from late publican Maurice Brockwell, who owned 23 pubs across the country, Nail Brewing was established in its first premises in 2000 at Bobby Dazzler's pub on Murray Street.

But Mr Stallwood came to realise brewing as a small independent was no easy task and, hearing a similar story across the craft industry, he founded the WA Brewers Association (WABA) the following year, which has grown from just a few breweries to 55.

"What I realised was, it's really hard to make money because excise (tax) is a big killer; we had lots of problems and needed to work together to solve them," Mr Stallwood told *Business News*.

In 2004, Mr Stallwood was forced to step down from the directing role at WABA,

with an assault in Fremantle leaving him in a coma for 10 days, followed by weeks of intensive care and a year of rehab.

"It really took a good couple of years of my life to recover, but the hard thing besides the health problem was that the economy boomed," Mr Stallwood said.

"I was looking at a place to get in the Swan Valley that was about \$500,000 in 2004, and then after my accident it was double the price, so it became impossible."

Mr Stallwood's equipment was sold to The Monk Brewery during his recovery, setting him back significantly during a period when the awareness and popularity of craft beer was growing.

Across several years of gypsy brewing – using other breweries' facilities – Nail began gaining some recognition, before launching a production site in partnership with Feral Brewing in 2012, and again moving together in 2016 to expand capacity in preparation for future growth.

"In 2008 and onwards, I started to go really well in beer awards. I wasn't making money, I'm still not, but the beer awards is motivation that I'm making some of the best beers around, so surely it's just a matter of time," Mr Stallwood said.

**“I’ve made a lot of mistakes along the way and have learnt the hard way, but now things are falling into place – John Stallwood**

"The move cost a lot, half a million, but it meant we have a facility that's three times bigger.

"We were spending a lot of money in cold storage offsite and everything was adding up, so even though it was so expensive to move and it hurt us, we had to do it."

Another major move last year was the sale of Feral to Coca-Cola Amatil, a decision Mr Stallwood said came after his friend Feral founder Brendan Varis had been offered a rare opportunity within the industry for a decent return.

"Running a brewery is extremely hard ... and then moving to a new facility made it even harder; there's a lot of stress running a brewery with high loans," he said.

"So with Brendan selling, we only ever had a handshake agreement so he could have destroyed me really, but he made sure I was in a better position."

The takeover led to the sale by Nail of its 25 per cent stake in the production facilities to CCA, though operations will continue at the location through a contract brewing agreement.

"Basically, I now don't have a loan, I still have the same equipment and the same setup and brewing team, so it's given me financial relief and I'm now stable for probably the first time ever," Mr Stallwood said.

"We're in a position for the first time to attack growth.

"I've made a lot of mistakes along the way and have learned the hard way, but now things are falling into place."

He said Nail had grown production since 2015 by about 25 per cent year on year to 400,000 litres per annum, with his ultimate goal being 1 million litres.

"You need to make about 750,000 litres (wholesale) for it to add up and new breweries I don't think realise how hard that is," Mr Stallwood said.

"But with that you grow passion, and the ones that are in it for the money will probably fail and the ones with passion will keep going and get there."

**BNIQ SEARCH** Nail Brewing

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Rank	Name	Senior executive	Year est.	Total staff in WA	Available whole-sale	WA production per annum (in carton equivalents)	Head brewer	Beer styles/brands
1	<b>Gage Roads Brewing Company</b>	Mr John Hoedemaker Managing director	2005	50	Yes	<b>1,400,000</b>	Aaron Heary	Little Dove New World Pale Ale, Atomic Pale Ale, Sleeping Giant IPA, Alby Crisp, Alby Draught, Single Fin Summer Ale, Narrow Neck Session Ale, Breakwater Australian Pale Ale...
2	<b>Matso's Broome Brewery</b>	Mr Martin Peirson-Jones Owner	2000	WND	Yes	<b>230,000</b>	Marcus Muller	Ginger Beer, Mango Beer, Angry Ranga Ginger & Chilli, Bishop's Best Dark Lager, Hit the Toad Lager, Session Pale Ale, Chilli Beer, Lychee Beer
3	<b>Feral Brewing Company</b>	Mr Shane Richardson Managing director, alcohol and coffee	2002	40	Yes	<b>NFP</b>	Brendan Varis	Hop Hog, White, Sly Fox, Smoked Porter, The Runt, Karma Citra, Fanta Pants Imperial Red IPA, Rust, Watermelon Warhead, Razorback Barleywine, White Hog, Barrel Fermented Hog...
4	<b>Otherside Brewing Co</b>	Mr David Chitty Director	2016	NFP	Yes	<b>NFP</b>	Rhys Lopez	Festive Session Ale, Anthem India Pale Ale, Social Classic Lager, Harvest Red Ale, Folk Brown Ale, Stout
5	<b>Elmar's in the Valley</b>	Mr Elmar Dieren Director	2005	NFP	No	<b>NFP</b>	Tarik Sammler	Ein Stein Pilsner, Kick Back Wheat Beer, Over Draft Ale, Schwarzbier, Bock Bier, Kölsch, Helles, Märzen
6	<b>Black Brewing Co</b>	Mr Stewart Sampson Managing director	2015	NFP	Yes	<b>NFP</b>	Shannon Grigg	Fresh Ale, Rice Lager, Pale Ale, XPA, Saison, Bao Bao Session Stout
7	<b>Mash Brewing</b>	Mr Brad Cox Managing director	2006	WND	Yes	<b>39,000</b>	Charlie Hodgson	Copy Cat American IPA, Russell American Amber Ale, Grasscutter Summer Ale, Challenger English IPA Pale Ale, Freo Dr Pale Lager, West Coast Wheat, Crush Apple Cider...
8	<b>Blasta Brewing Company</b>	Mr Steven Russell Owner/brewer	2017	25	Yes	<b>37,000</b>	Steven Russell	Chainbreaker IPA, Blastaweizen German Hefeweizen, Myway Grapefruit IPA, Grimster Rocks American Pale Ale, Tangerine Dreams Fruit-infused Hefeweizen
9	<b>White Lakes Brewing</b>	Mr Sean Symons Head brewer	2016	2	Yes	<b>25,000</b>	Sean Symons	Pilsener, Draught, Dark Lager, Pale Ale, Summer Ale, Amber, Standard, Wit
10	<b>Last Drop Brewery</b>	Mr Jan Bruckner Head brewer	1992	WND	Yes	<b>NFP</b>	Jan Bruckner	Hefeweizen, Pilsner, ESB, Dunkelweizen, Light, Oktoberfest Bier, Bock, Wheat, Thunderstorm
11	<b>Mandoon Estate</b>	Mr Travers O'Rafferty General manager	2008	65	Yes	<b>17,000</b>	Steven Wearing	Brauhaus Lager Munich Lager, Golden Eagle Australian Pale Ale, Kaisers Choice Hefeweizen, Thunderbird Pale Ale
12	<b>Northbridge Brewing Company</b>	Mr Michael Keiller Owner	2014	60	No	<b>17,000</b>	Ken Arrowsmith	Lager, Wheat Beer, Pale Ale, Mild and seasonal varieties
13	<b>Billabong Brewing</b>	Mr Alan Proctor Managing director	1993	NFP	Yes	<b>12,000</b>	Rob Murphy	Australia's Pale Ale, Blonde, Billabong Pilsner, Ginger Beer, Nelson Sauvignon Ale, Wheat Beer
14	<b>Cheeky Monkey Brewing Co</b>	Mr Brent Burton Director	2012	30	Yes	<b>10,000</b>	Ross Terlick	Blonde Summer Ale, Pale Ale, Session Red Ale, West Coast IPA, Belgian IPA, Dry Apple Cider, Sweet Pear Cider
15	<b>Three Rivers Brewing Company</b>	Mr Mark Rivers Head brewer	2015	NFP	Yes	<b>10,000</b>	Mark Rivers	Tomahawk American Pale Ale, Rude Boy Extra Special Bitter, Jester Kölsch, Black Knight American Stout, White Knight Belgian Witbier, King Henry English IPA...

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64

RANKED BY WA PRODUCTION PER ANNUM (IN CARTON EQUIVALENTS)

All information compiled using surveys, publicly available data and contact with industry sources. Other companies may be eligible for inclusion. If you believe your company is eligible, please email [claire.byl@businessnews.com.au](mailto:claire.byl@businessnews.com.au). WND: Would Not Disclose, NFP: Not For Publication, N/A: Not Applicable or Not Available.

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# BREWERIES + DISTILLERIES

## SPECIAL REPORT

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18 May 2018 by Tori Wilson

Beerland breweries. Tori Wilson Food & Wine Free to read The local beer label behind Northbridge ... Australian beer for its draught wheat beer. Nail Brewing was another local brewery on the list of winners, ... Brewery, said the awards were rewards for the work that went into establishing the two breweries, which ...

### Coke buys local brewery

12 Oct 2017 by Fraser Beattie

Swan Valley-based Feral Brewing Company has been sold to the business that bottles and distributes Coca-Cola in the Asia-Pacific region for an undisclosed sum. ...

### Small business growth on tap at Curtin

14 Aug 2017 by Matt McKenzie

Curtin University The Monk Craft Brewery & Kitchen Tom Brooking Michelle Chafin ...

### Removing the mystery from beer history

30 Jun 2017 by Dan Wilkie

quality space," he said. The Monk Craft Brewery & Kitchen Cellarbrations Superstore Hamilton Hill ...

### Otherside no gypsy as Gage goes classic

15 Dec 2017 by Tori Wilson

David Chitty says the location for the brewery will be announced in coming weeks.