



Home / Newsletters / Business List

Food

The Illawarra hotel to grow and distil its own



By [Connor Pearce](#)

Updated April 14 2022 - 8:35am, first published April 12 2022 - 6:25pm



📷 Farm manager Liam Fraser at the Smith Street Distillery. Picture: Robert Peet

Passing through the gates at 100 Smith Street the smell that one notices isn't one that you would expect at a former car wash.

Instead, the faint smell of fertiliser is present, a hint at how the site is being transformed.

ADVERTISEMENT

Ad





Ryan Aitchison, proprietor of the light industrial space, has taken the keys to supply his pub, smells and all.

to the light industrial space, smells and all. Ryan Aitchison, proprietor of the light industrial space, has taken the keys to supply his pub, smells and all.

Read more: [Didn't get the job? UOW researcher uncovers bias in HR software](#)

Already, the small parcel of land is supplying a good chunk of the pub kitchen with herbs such as basil, parsley, cos lettuce, chives and tomatoes.

At the back, the final touches on a chicken coop are being finalised and soon - pending DA approval, the site will begin producing spirits for the pub.

Rather than being Wollongong's latest [cellar door](#) or [brew pub](#), Smiths Street Distillery and Vinery, as it is called, is about reducing waste, creating a more sustainable product for punters at The Illawarra and a unique recruitment tool.



📷 Nikki Aitchison has been a driving force behind the zero-waste concept. Picture: Robert Peet

"We purchase \$500,000 a year of spirits, mainly vodka and gin, so if we produce our own, we save a huge chunk," Mr Aitchison said.

"We thought we could bank the savings or we could invest them in creating something that the community would love and set an example for sustainability."

Working with advice from GreenConnect, organic waste produced in the pub's kitchen will be turned into fertiliser for the farm and spent grain used in the brewing process will be given to farmers for finishing cattle before they are served up as steaks.

"Nothing gets wasted," said Mr Aitchison. "A staff member and I both went down a rabbit hole and it's taken us to some crazy places."

One of the places that ended up leading to was passionfruit. According to Mr Aitchison, the only adequate passionfruit liqueur available is produced internationally, and passionfruit cocktails are increasingly popular.



"We have the ability to produce it all here because passionfruits grow like crazy and produce fruit all year round," he said.



 Ryan Aitchison at the Smith Street Distillery. Picture: Robert Peet

In addition to closing the loop on spirits and produce at the pub, Mr Aitchison has found the idea of growing their own food and drink has energised his staff.

At a time when the hospitality industry is facing a critical staff shortage, the proposition of tending to the vines in between shifts



attracted talent.

"We've just found a great chef, in a time where no one can seem to, because she loves gardening and the idea of being able to farm her own food," Mr Aitchison said.

Ultimately, Mr Aitchison said he wants the whole of Wollongong to benefit.

ADVERTISEMENT

"It's just really cool to live in a city where you can walk down the street and eat some fresh stuff. I think it'll add to the Wollongong experience."

The Illawarra Mercury newsroom is funded by our readers. You can [subscribe to support our journalism here](#).

Sign up for breaking news emails below ...



MERCURY

Email

First Name

Last Name

Phone

Illawarra Mercury Newsletters

- Breaking
- Daily Newsletter
- Whats On
- Sports
- Rugby League
- Weekly Wrap
- Property
- Business
- Daily Puzzles Alert

Share

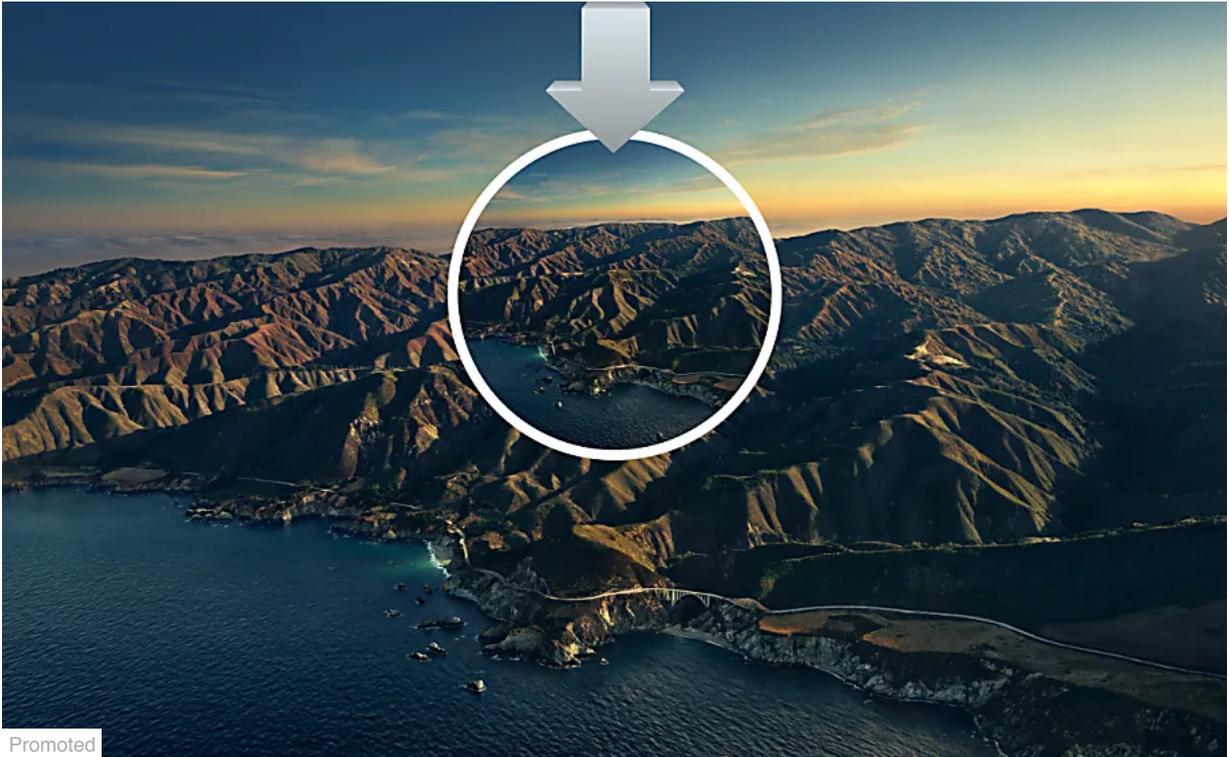


Connor Pearce
Journalist at Illawarra Mercury

FOLLOW



RECOMMENDED



Promoted

All Macs Slow Down Over Time. Use This Trick To Get Rid Of The Spinning Wheel!

MacKeeper



Gun laws won't stop evil: NRA conference



UK ready to party for Queen's jubilee



sponsored by **Noracora**

Limited time offer – Hurry up!





← News Home



Share

Limited time offer –
Hurry up!

Don't Miss This Site If
You Want To Save

All Girls Are Going
Crazy About This Site



Promoted

If You Need To Kill Time On
Your Computer, This Vintag...

Play game

Forge Of Empires

Promoted

Sydney Homeowners Saving Big with
Solar, Battery and a 40c Feed-In

Social Energy

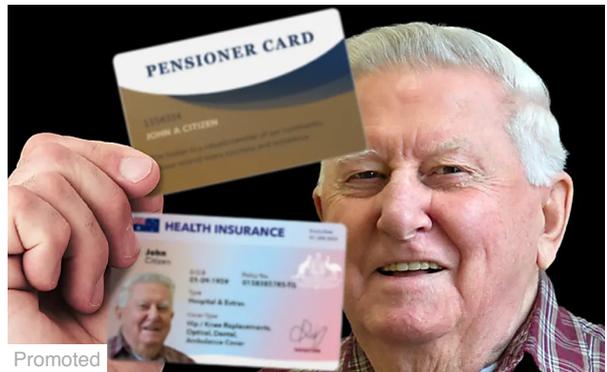


Criticism of Dutton 'sad': Nats deputy
Illawarra Mercury



Promoted

There is a New Way to Cook in Australia
And People Are Loving it!



Promoted

Over Sixty-One Years Old? You may qualify
for \$23 per week health cover



Local News

Illawarra drivers forced onto Macquarie Pass after crash on Hume Highway



All the photos so far of Wollongong's Laneways Live Festival



Wintry blast to hit Illawarra in last days of autumn



Update: Tristan Dunning found after reported missing from Wollongong



Top of the hill Yallah

Stockists of: KIA, Ford, Isuzu Ute, Foton & Proton

Visit Site



Need Insurance for your business?
Contact View Insurance today →

Get the latest Wollongong news in your inbox

Sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date.



Notify me

We care about the protection of your data. Read our Privacy Policy.

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY MEDIA



ILLAWARRA MERCURY



OUR SITES



SUBMIT

