

Iconic Mildura microbrewery sold and set for expansion

ABC Mildura-Swan Hill

By Kellie Hollingworth and Lauren Henry

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PHOTO: [Mildura Brewery was one of the first microbreweries in Australia.](#) (ABC Mildura - Swan Hill: Lauren Henry)

MAP: [Mildura 3500](#)

The new owners of Mildura Brewery, one of Australia's first microbreweries, are planning to expand and market the beers internationally.

Broo Limited has bought the microbrewery, which was founded 12 years ago by renowned cook Stefano di Pieri, wife Donata, and her father, Don Carrazza.

Currently producing two beer products, Broo Premium Lager and Australia Draught, Broo expected the expansion of the Mildura brewery facility would create 25 more jobs.

Broo director and chief executive Kent Grogan said had been looking at various craft breweries across Australia, particularly stand-alone production facilities.

"We crossed paths and came across Mildura Brewery and fell in love — such a beautifully-done building and beautiful brewery, and I would think with probably the most unique vision in what was to come when they developed it," he said.



PHOTO: [Broo chief executive and director Kent Grogan is planning to expand Mildura Brewery's craft beer varieties and market internationally.](#) (Supplied: Broo)

Mr Grogan said he expected the building, the historic Astor Theatre, to be unchanged.

"It's more about looking at spending money on the upgrade and automation at the back, and maybe a couple of little cosmetic changes," he said.

"But as it stands, it's such a beautiful building and been done so beautifully — I don't think that there will be a great deal that we'll actually do.

"There's a lot of opportunity, given the significance of the building itself, the history of the town and obviously being one of the first microbreweries and brewery pubs in

Australia, we see a fair bit of opportunity on promoting it more than it has been in the past."

Mr Grogan said Broo was hoping upgrades would be completed by May, resulting in more jobs created in both the brewery and front of house.

He said he was planning to grow Mildura beer sales in both the domestic and international markets, and introduce more varieties.

"We've got significant ties with China so there's opportunity for us to look at exporting some craft brands over there," he said.

"Craft beer as a whole has been increasing, probably a bit slower than we've seen in Europe and the USA, but there's definitely an upwards trend. People are becoming more educated on craft brews."



PHOTO: [Mildura Brewery, one of Australia's first microbreweries created 12 years ago, has been sold to Melbourne-based company Broo.](#) (ABC Mildura - Swan Hill: Lauren Henry)

Surprise sale

Mr di Pieri said the sale had "come out of the blue", but was confident the new owners would expand and improve what the business had achieved in the past.

"I'm just so happy that this venture, founded by my father-in-law and mother-in-law 12 years ago and was continued by brother-in-law and then by Donna and I, we're very pleased it had survived all these years and now it's going to be in good hands," he said.

"When I get into business I just always try to do my best and I never think about tomorrow — I just always think about the moment and try to deliver the best I can with the resources I have at the time."

Mr di Pieri said the sale had come about after the Melbourne-based company had made an offer.

"We're very pleased they are investing in Mildura because it will protect the jobs and probably create more jobs," he said.

Mr di Pieri said he would have a "little rest" before embarking on any new ventures.

"We were pioneers in Australia when we established the Mildura Brewery — now there are about 300 microbreweries around Australia — we were one of the first four, and quickly became one of the largest ones in terms of capacity," he said.

"So Mildura was trail-blazing the development of the craft beer industry in Australia; we're certainly very proud of that and it's probably something that the town didn't fully comprehend at the time — 12 years ago.

"But I think now people have grown accustomed to alternative beers and they can see them sprouting up everywhere, so Mildura is in a good position in terms of tourism and hospitality because it understands the needs of a modern market."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-02/iconic-mildura-microbrewery-sold-and-set-for-expansion/8235636>