

# PUBtic

Volume 2 No.4

Everything that makes pubs tick

**Hemmes  
all-NEW Newport  
Now on show**



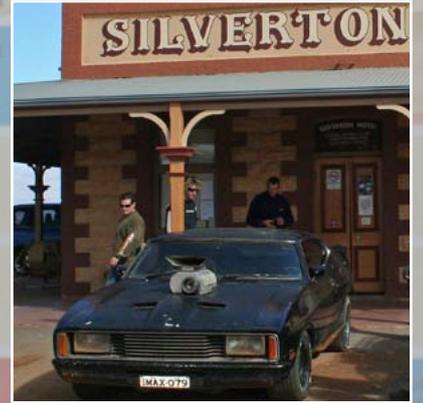
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**PUB  
ACCOMMODATION  
ON THE RISE**

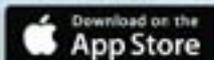
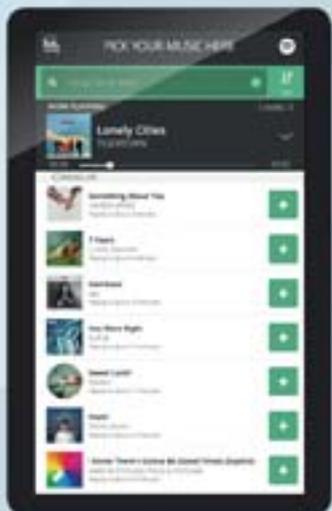


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## EDITOR'S RANT

Regular readers may understand why *PubTIC* has faced accusations of late of reading like a real estate rag. It's hardly our fault that large and interesting transactions continue to take place every other day.

The development boom is seeing sites torn between staying hospitality or becoming prime location residential, or a mix of both – as with the furore over Kingston's Mentone Hotel, known as The Edgy. Despite the heritage pub closing due to lack of patronage, locals have banded together to stop it being transformed into apartments. Even when a developer says the pub can continue if he can build resi behind, they say "not enough".

In complete contrast, a heritage pub site in Sydney is being redeveloped with no-one complaining. Industry veteran Bruce Solomon has joined with celebrity chef Matt Moran in the pair's first true partnership to buy the former Carlton Brewery hotel, The Australian.

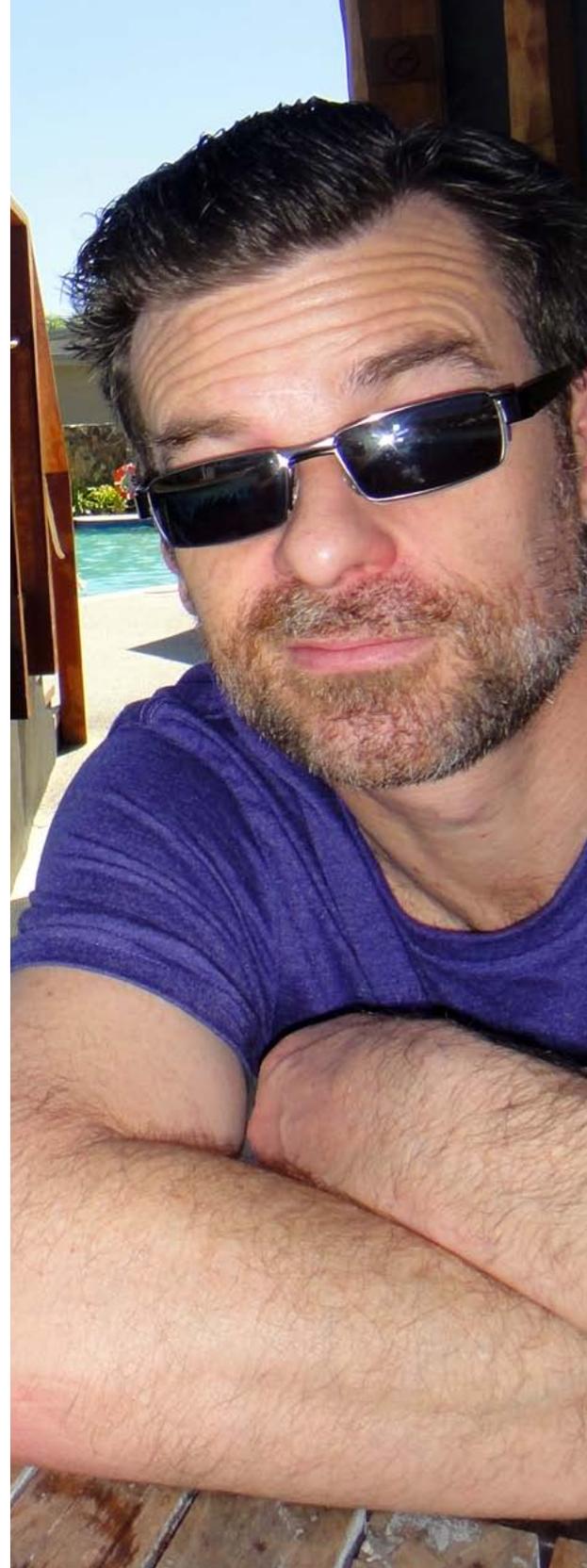
This historic yet dilapidated structure sits stubbornly on a busy corner of Broadway, and will soon have a 15-storey residential and retail tower above and behind it. The Solomon-Moran deal will ensure there is a dangerously on-trend gastro pub downstairs for all to enjoy.

But beyond the tirade of property news, there is other serious business taking place in Australian pubs. One Fitzroy establishment has been going through the motions of regulating its water closet.

A surprised Tom Tshul found himself the subject of international headlines when he politely posted a notice asking non-patrons off the street \$4.50 to use the rest room. The surprise was especially justified in that during the approximately two weeks the policy was in place, with dozens of publications echoing the story around the world, no-one was actually charged.

The seemingly random fee was in fact the going rate for a soft drink, and Tom told me himself if anyone had actually paid it he would have given them a drink for free. Nonetheless, the brief stint of threatening to charge to spend a penny paid off, and the flood of public using the pub's public toilets ebbed to a trickle.

And so the big news continues.



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Everything that makes pubs tick

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## BEER DELUXE JOINS DIXON GROUP STABLE FOR \$31m

Dixon Hospitality swooped on another pub group, signing a \$31 million deal to acquire the Beer DeLuxe portfolio in the lead-up to its anticipated IPO later this year.

Armada Hospitality was formed in 2012 by Craig Shearer and Jason Sheather, specialising in “management service solutions” for the hospitality industry. It created Beer DeLuxe, targeting the growing demand for quality beer, which now boasts five venues in NSW and Victoria with one under construction in Queensland.

Dixon Hospitality Group (DHG) engaged Cropley Commercial to approach Armada about purchasing its burgeoning brand.

“There is great experience within Dixon Group already,” Shearer relayed to *PubTIC*. “The access to capital this deal will provide will greatly assist our plans to fairly aggressively expand the brand’s position.”

Shearer and partner Sheather will retain key roles in the new set-up, working primarily on new sites for the Beer DeLuxe model, including the rebranding of some existing Dixon venues.



## LANTERN BOASTS MORE PREMIUM PUB SALES AMID TURN-AROUND

Following a shareholder vote to oust the existing board of Lantern (LTN) mid-2015, the newly-appointed Chairman John Murphy and CEO John Osborne have led an orchestrated plan to reverse the company’s flagging profits.

They have since divested a number of “non-core assets” including Surry Hills’ The Dolphin to Christian Denny’s dynamic hotel group, and now the NSW Southern Highlands stalwart Bowral Hotel to an as yet unnamed “experienced Sydney-based hotelier”.

In their announcement to the ASX, Murphy and Osborne disclosed that the Bowral sale price of \$6.35 million represented a 22 per cent premium to the 2015 book value. It follows the freehold sale earlier this month of the tenanted GPO Hotel in Brisbane’s Fortitude Valley for \$5.25 million, which achieved a 28 per cent premium to its end of 2015 book value.

Both assets were marketed via EOI campaigns through CBRE Hotel’s Daniel Dragicevich, along with Ben McDonald in NSW

and Glenn Price in Brisbane.

“The [Bowral] sales campaign was a success on every level, attracting over 50 genuine enquiries throughout the process and 13 initial offers,” reported Dragicevich. “The eventual purchaser was an existing hotelier and industry identity who was a ‘great fit’ for the asset and will significantly enhance the current offering for the benefit of the Southern Highlands region as a whole.”

An *Investor Update* by LTN on 9 May disclosed success building from the new operation strategy and measures taken during the December quarter to improve financials. A strong March quarter saw a 9.7 per cent lift in operating revenue, and cost-cutting resulting in a 29.3 per cent improvement in EBITDA for the core hotels, when compared to the previous corresponding period (PCP).

Sales exceeding book value, coupled with active debt reduction and ongoing primary debt refinancing see the Board considering a return of excess capital to shareholders.

## CALLIGEROS GRABS REILLY’S TRINITY BAR

After a busy first half of the year that saw Irishman Ray Reilly both selling and buying, he told *PubTIC* he’s “over the moon” about the Calligeros clan taking on his beloved Trinity.

“I’m happy someone with passion bought the pub. It needs fresh eyes and new love, and I didn’t have that passion anymore.”

After many years owning and operating North Sydney stalwart the Rag & Famish, Peter Calligeros has partnered with his sister Anna to take on the new challenge of the Trinity Bar for \$8.5 million.

“We are really excited about it,” Calligeros reported. “The pub seems to have a great local following, and we see Surry Hills as the coal face for what great pubs are doing. We can’t wait to learn from some of the experienced operators in the area, and keep up with changes in the industry.”

“It’s in a cracking spot, and the purchase is a long-term play for us. We’ll be hanging on to this for a while.”

The freehold going concern of the Trinity was sold through an on-market campaign steered by CBRE Hotels’ Daniel Dragicevich and Ben McDonald, who report “genuine competition between buyers” in the asset-starved marketplace.



## MELBOURNE PUB AND CLUB OPERATORS FACE DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES

Three men from two late-trading Melbourne music venues have been charged with drug trafficking offences.

Manager Paul Polito and Chris Lytras – believed to be the owner – of Brunswick’s Railway Hotel appeared before Melbourne Magistrate’s Court following a raid on the hotel 15 April. Both faced charges relating to the trafficking of ecstasy, amphetamines and cocaine after Victoria Police reportedly found thousands of pills, other drugs and a quantity of cash on the premises. They will reappear before Court 14 July.

Lytras had previously been banned by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) from holding a liquor licence for ten years, after the regulator noted multiple breaches at a different Brunswick hotel back in 2005.

Fairfax Media reported the VCGLR and local police had received complaints about the hotel prior to the raid being executed, and that Lytras concealed his involvement with the Railway Hotel by registering another party as licensee.

The situation mirrors that of Melbourne CBD nightclub Two Floors Up, where police similarly found “what is believed to be several thousand ecstasy pills as well as quantities of other drugs believed to be methamphetamine” during an unrelated raid on 7 April. The nightclub is said to be part-owned by well known Melbourne DJ Jason Kolbeck, who has similarly been charged with trafficking offenses relating to a commercial quantity of drugs.

Both venues continue to trade, but the VCGLR has reserved its right to take matters further.

There is no suggestion anyone else involved with the operation or ownership of the venues is involved in the illegal activity.

## PELATHON RE-WORK HEADS FOR \$100m PORTFOLIO

Pelathon Group – established by ASX-listed BlackWall Property Funds, who partnered with Jaz Mooney – now has the opportunity to take the re-structured pub group “to the next level”.

Pelathon Pub Group (PPG) has held three assets worth around \$24 million since 2010, and now has mapped out strategic plans to build this to a strong \$100 million portfolio. A recent ASX announcement by Blackwall consolidates years of planning by the two entities, and included news of the investor vote to install Pelathon Fund Management Limited as responsible entity.

Mooney stressed their emphasis on “solid” returns and acquisitions that align with the philosophies that saw the partnership bring the Group’s ancestry back from the brink.

“We really understand the history of non-performing pub funds as we watched the fallout during the post-GFC period. As the asset manager Pelathon Management Group, working strongly with Blackwall, was capable of finding underlying ways to keep assets alive, and paying banks back down,” said Mooney.

“We have four properties in the pipeline. We’ll bring those in,

and add more as we go – slowly, slowly. Our expectation is to return in excess of 10 per cent to unitholders. Less would be considered some sort of failure in this sector.”

Blackwall acquired several distressed pub funds in 2009, and worked with Mooney’s Pelathon Management Group to turn them around, merging the Tankstream and Armada pub funds, divesting several non-core assets, investing in sorely needed capital works and reducing debt.

PPG was formed out of the floundering Tankstream and Armada, which were operating under “unstainable business models” with LVRs well exceeding banking covenants. Underwriting and management by Pelathon and Blackwall secured re-financing.

Focusing on sustainable outcomes, Mooney says they like good regional “meat and two veg” pubs with some gaming and a bit of bottleshop. This agenda begins with the Amaroo Tavern (Moree), Mary G’s (Lismore) and the Victoria Hotel (Wagga Wagga). He says they seek “balance”, and are looking in NSW, Queensland and Northern Territory. Big-ticket city venues are not likely to be of interest.

## BIG TICKET RENO FOR ALH ‘FLAGSHIP’ PUB

ALH has announced the impending re-opening of its heritage-listed landmark pub, the Crows Nest Hotel. Stage one of the head-to-toe multi-million-dollar overhaul, opening late May, brings all-new food and drinks menus, and new spaces including a rooftop terrace.

Considered one of the flagships of Australia’s biggest publican, Australian Leisure & Hospitality (ALH), the four-level 100-year-old pub sits prominently on the corner of Military Road and the Pacific Highway.

Perched atop Crows Nest’s topographic peak, the new rooftop terrace will afford guests panoramic views of the surrounding lower north shore of Sydney as well as the airy new courtyard below.

The renovation has taken almost a year, and architect Darren Dickfos and builder Rohrig have painstakingly incorporated its heritage charm and ornate features into the new design. New elements include five flexible function spaces to capitalise on the area’s thriving business community.

Guiding the kitchen will be former Keystone chef Kelly Rodgers, offering a “produce-driven menu” packed with hearty pub-food options to take on the restaurant-laden strip of Crows Nest’s Willoughby Road.

Going through many reincarnations over the past few decades, the pub has often been known as a destination for live music. This tradition will be a key part of the reinvention, with a wide range of acts slated to bring “nightly music and laughter”.



# The New The Newport

On a bright, seemingly summer's day in April, Merivale CEO Justin Hemmes took *PubTIC* on a tour of the wonderland that is The Newport.

Words and pictures by  
Clyde Mooney



Sydney's north is most famously known for the 30-kilometre stretch from Manly to Palm Beach that offers some of the most desirable and expensive coastal real estate in the country.

Northward from the classic beachside suburb of Newport this procession of sandy shores is flanked to the west by a body of water known as Pittwater, which is home to institutions such as the Royal Motor Yacht Club and Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, and is traversed by a ferry service that shuttles locals between several wharfs, including the one at the bottom of Queens Parade, Newport, next to the area's historic public house.

Occupying 12,000 prized square metres on Pittwater's edge, on the corner of Queens Parade and Kalinya Street, The Newport was built along with the wharf to welcome sea-faring travellers. In mid-2015 this local institution was purchased from long-term family operators the Bayfields by the trail-blazing Justin Hemmes, best known for CBD juggernaut ivy, and most recently for transforming a different beachside pub into something approaching a three-ring circus.

In early 2014 Hemmes' Merivale purchased the (former) Coogee Beach Palace, and set about creating a multi-faceted hospitality experience that has single-handedly brought thousands more people to the district. Sporting options from a giant chessboard to a rooftop bar overlooking the beautiful Coogee beach, it has proven to be a massive success in a sprawling three-level venue, and no doubt a tough act to follow.





What has followed is dogged determination to greatly increase the appeal and offerings of one of Sydney's best-loved watering holes. No less than three stages will unfurl to produce a bigger, better The Newport. Stage one came alive to the public for an unseasonably warm Easter weekend at the end of March.

## Where to go

Tucked away off the northern beaches artery, Pittwater Road, the traditional ingress to The Newport is a rather modest entrance on Kalinya Street that takes you into a well-patronised public bar.

Hemmes' plan for the place was to amplify and showcase the hotel's magnificent outdoor areas that take up most of the three-acre property. This begins with the re-location of the main entrance to the side of the pub building, such that visitors are first greeted by a magnificent old tree standing sentry over a new area fashioned as a Parisian garden.

Hundreds of mature trees have been painstakingly transplanted into the grounds, including a clutch of Plane trees that will grow to cover parts of this new entrance.

The Newport's famous and voluminous beer garden forms the bulk of stage one of the renovations, with stages two and three expected to be completed later in the year. These will bring further advancements to the hotel's comparatively understated structure, such as a table-service dining area mostly encased in glass that will overlook the outdoor area and Pittwater itself.

"We've opened with the most casual, and as we fill it and finish stage three, there'll be something for everyone," said Hemmes.

"We wanted to create different feelings and different vibes in different spaces, so you can actually graze and move your way through the venue throughout the day."

Coming in via the new entrance the first amenity that greets patrons is a large, colourful children's area featuring a larger-than-life wall-mounted magnetic Scrabble game, skittles, ping-pong and even a podium for game-winners' photo op's. Further game options are in the works.

In busier times the hotel pays someone to keep an expert eye on the state of play in this area, but parents are required to keep a thoughtful eye on their own little ones, so a selection of comfortable seating arrangements are incorporated into the space and surrounds.

Soon after the Newport acquisition, Hemmes and girlfriend Kate Fowler announced they were expecting their first child



# MAJOR FEATURE

in late 2015, adding a new dimension to the notion of a 'family' pub for the creator of so many cutting-edge icons of hospitality and entertainment.

*PubTIC:* Does doing a family pub have a new meaning for you now?

"Yes! My little darling girl can come as well," he laughs. "She's been here a few times. She loves it."

The children's play area, which is beneath what will be the upstairs restaurant, looks out onto the bustling beer garden and its many attractions. The aim was to create the feeling of a 'food festival' in which patrons can choose their style of eats and area in which to dine. This begins with the very aromatic smoked and rotisserie meats bar, borrowed from Merivale's Papi Chulo on Manly Wharf, and The Paddington chicken shop. This is located adjacent to and helping to contain the play area.

"There was always a bar here, just a regular bar; we just wanted to open it up, and make it a lot more visual. You can see the meat cooking, staff preparing the food, and get that festival market feel.

"Then there's the seafood market here, with fresh-shucked oysters and beautiful prawns. We're doing some stir-fried noodles, and a crab omelette. It's a very simple offering ... sparse. You go up and get your own food."

The existing capacity at The Newport is around two thousand, and aiming to complement the incredible views and garden with equally amazing dining, Hemmes has designed the foodservice offerings to be capable of high-volume output. As a policy, all food is ready in 10 minutes, or less.

The garden tour next brings you to The Newport's instalment of Vinnie's Pizza – a marquee-style structure that



houses no less than two striking and industrial pizza ovens, producing masses of custom-styled and on-trend gourmet pizzas. This concept has proven massively popular at Hemmes' other beachside pub.

"We've got two at Coogee too now. We ran out of capacity with the one.

"Here, pizzas come out somewhere between two and eight minutes. We have got them out in under two minutes,



'We enjoy the good fortune of facilitating in excess of \$35bn of property sales internationally every year, however few are as special as the sale of the Newport Arms. Irrespective of the record hotel sale price achieved, the opportunity afforded us by the Bayfield family to manage the sale of their 130 year old icon was truly memorable. And to facilitate the sale to Justin Hemmes and his team at Merivale is an extraordinary experience, particularly given the incredible hospitality precinct he has now delivered the patrons at this piece of hotel royalty; and for which we congratulate you Justin. Put simply, you've done it again.'

ANDREW JOLLIFFE  
Ray White Hotels Australia

[rwh.net.au](http://rwh.net.au)



# MAJOR FEATURE



'cause they take only 90 seconds to cook. These ovens are unbelievable."

Next on the menu is the Burger Shack, offering six different types of burger, as well as the essential beachside fish & chips, deep-fried goodies, and five different healthy salad options. For all the sophistication of The Newport's new menus, it could almost not claim to be part of the northern beaches without burgers and fish and chips. Thankfully, nothing is served in yesterday's Manly Daily.

The pizza marquee is also home to a large and versatile bar, serving cocktails, mocktails and a range of beers deemed to suit the venue – but no Victoria Bitter.

In a true case of a storm in a schooner glass, a couple of visitors from Melbourne came to the hotel on opening weekend, only to lament the absence of their eponymous State's brew. What followed was a largely meaningless petition to "bring back VB" to The Newport.

"The funny thing is, they actually weren't serving VB anymore,"



said Hemmes. "I had lunch with the Bayfields, and they said 'we took VB off ages ago.'"

This somewhat misguided loyalty has not slowed the progress of the new Newport, which has taken advantage of the protracted summer to welcome in a great array of newcomers and curious returnees.

"We've been blessed with the weather at the moment, so they're just coming, which is good; new venue, they want to check it out. But we find we're busier after the honeymoon period is over, because people coming then are coming because they want to come back.

"We get a lot of retirees, which is really nice. Lots of mothers groups ... we're getting some eastern suburbs people out for lunch – it's a nice trip for them."

Himself an 'eastern suburbs people' – enjoying his newly renovated heritage-listed family home, The Hermitage, at Vaucluse – the uber-busy A-lister has taken to using a small sea plane to hop from south of the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the northern peninsula, saving a lot of commuting time.

The beverage offerings continue, with barista coffee – complemented by delicate pastries and soon the sensory production line delights of a donut machine – and another concept rarely seen in a pub, fresh juice concoctions.

Sublimely in keeping with the healthy living appeal of the view-kissed gardens, the juice bar looks somewhat like a scientist's greenhouse, encased mostly in glass, sitting unpretentiously in the middle of one of the Parisian garden spaces. Adult and virgin juice offerings include the likes of 'Original Green', 'Banana Rama' and flower-hugging-inspired recipes of 'Love Drug', 'Love Patch' and 'Summer Love'.

This space, toward the lower end of the garden, is built atop the existing and slightly expanded carpark. While some features were already there, such as the sculpted hedges, much of the plant work here involved installing of watering and drainage services to allow for the above-ground horticulture.

Terracotta and Mediterranean-styled furniture arrangements offset the mostly bleached concrete garden beds, and low-mounted steel fire pits sit amongst communal seating and ground cushions. A bubbling fountain and surrounding pool almost beg cheeky paddles by children and bare feet.

A simply staggering number of large trees were brought in to make up the garden wonderland, including two-metre tall mature cacti, and large palms. Almost every tree in the beer garden is new, required a 300-tonne crane down Queens Parade to hoist them into place. Such were some of the challenges improving on one of the country's most famous beer gardens.

The result is that the huge area no longer leaves patrons at the mercy of the sun, with trees, umbrellas and shade structures punctuating the sky, and misting systems discharging cool breezes through seating areas.

"It's certainly got a lot to do with the view here," Hemmes notes, looking out across Pittwater.

"We've just created a nice little sheltered haven here, where people can enjoy the view. Big and small groups, all different types of seating arrangements.

"It's been a wonderful site to work on, because of the scale and the fact that it is a true outdoor venue. As the garden evolves, the venue will evolve, which is lovely."

One of the highlights of the garden is the stage and hedge-lined viewing area, boasting its own unique feel, furniture and plant arrangements that tie into yet are slightly different to each of the other areas.

This arena is already being inhabited by live music every night of the week, and has tapped a chord in the history of the pub, which famously featured 'Sunday jazz' for many years in the 80s and 90s.

"Sunday Sessions has totally taken off already," Hemmes reports. "There's a fantastic local community here, they're very



supportive and really good crowds, and they all come along. We play at least 90 per cent local bands."

A veritable platoon of speakers subtly adorn almost every rafter and vantage point in the garden, providing an almost directionless tone that permeates every nook and cranny. The design incorporates the theory that more, smaller speakers provide better coverage without as much volume.

## BEHIND THE NEWPORT'S SOUNDTRACK

The Newport's entertainment director, Martin Smith, says crafting the optimal venue 'sound' is an art form. As they do for other venues across the group, Merivale partnered with Nightlife Music to deliver The Newport's unique soundtrack. Reflective of the dynamic local community and outdoor lifestyle, music at The Newport is content-rich, accessible to all, and adapts to the venue's changing needs, from open to close.

"Nightlife Music has been instrumental to creating the feel we're after," says Smith. "I briefed them with a Spotify playlist, they took that vision and using their matching technology and music team built this incredible sound that beautifully complements our live talent. I'm really proud of what we've achieved."

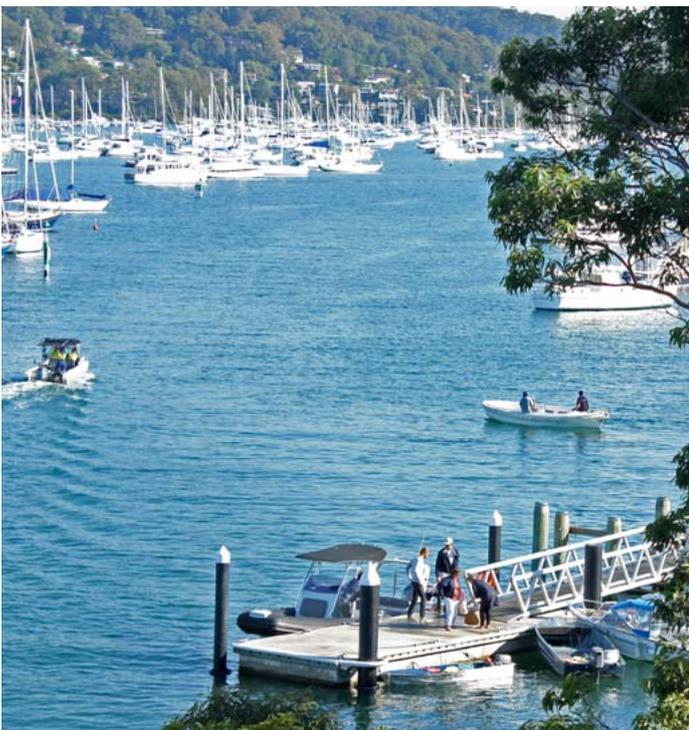




## GRASS ROOTS OF A GARDEN PUB

Built in 1880, when most of the northern beaches was unoccupied bushland, The Newport was originally branded The Newport. It was not until the 1960s it took on its more recently known moniker of The Newport Arms, or local abbreviation of simply The Arms.

Hemmes says that the decision to return to its original name made sense in the context of wanting the pub to return to an air of vacations and festivity, where families congregate in groups enjoying leisure time in a destination-style venue.



But acknowledging its most recent decades as The Arms, he elected to keep the street level public bar – upstairs to the beer garden, ebbing down toward the water's edge – as memorial to the Arms era. The Arms Bar is an old-school carved timber reminder of the hotel's legacy as a beaches beer barn.

The interview with Hemmes took place amongst an already at home collection of local mothers and amused offspring, and a dedicated selection of working tradesmen and operations staff. The Merivale CEO seamlessly stepped between guided tour and logistical causeway, answering first mine then many occasional interruptions by workers requiring decisions.

So what tops the pub prince's priority list over the next half-year? Apparently, he recently determined that the deceased fashion shop beside The Paddington would look good as new venues to be known as Fred's and Charlie Parker's.

"That's coming online in 10 weeks, and then the Queen Vic in Enmore comes online in 12 weeks. Then I've got the rest of this to do, and the middle level of Coogee. That's what is on the cards at the moment – so there's lots to keep us busy."



Darlo Bar, Sydney

# Demand for Aussie Pub Accommodation on the Rise

2015 proved to be another outstanding year for the Australian hotel accommodation sector, with both domestic and international visitation continuing its impressive story of growth.

Adam Le Lievre reports

# FEATURE

According to Deloitte Access Economics, international visitation to Australia surged 8.2 per cent in 2015, growing nearly three times faster than the pace observed over the previous fifteen years. At the same time, domestic visitation posted a jump of seven per cent – a figure almost unrecognisable alongside the one per cent per annum average witnessed since 2000.

The market is responding to demand, with a healthy pipeline of new builds and refurbishments finished, underway or planned around the country. Much of this new development is and will continue to be in the 4- and 5-star market. This is being helped along by Australia being high on the list of places to go for a staggering number of Asian tourists – many looking to travel for the first time, as well as those attracted by a low Aussie dollar.

Deloitte predicts that demand will continue to rise, forecasting room nights sold to climb three per cent per annum over the next three years. This will outpace supply growth by 1.4 per cent.

This is great news for the entire hotel accommodation market, despite the focus on 4- and 5-star developments, because consumers are getting behind a new trend for traditional pub accommodation and smaller boutique offerings.

For pub licensees, this means increased revenue through letting rooms, some currently disused, and potential for the addition of boutique-style accommodation. These represent a huge opportunity for savvy operators to tap into better yields in these markets.

The same trend is being experienced in other countries, including the United Kingdom, where Guestline (an entity specialising in developing, implementing and supporting software solutions for the hospitality industry) recently held a 'Pub Round Table' event with key UK industry representatives from pub companies, government and industry bodies.

While acknowledging market growth, participants identified: the need to grow awareness of pub accommodation, and



Criterion Hotel, Sydney

to develop enhanced digital platforms that cater for today's online travellers – because it's what travellers want. Eighty per cent of travellers now book their accommodation online, so it has become obvious amongst participants that more could be done to support the pub sector when it comes to online booking and the ways people book rooms.

Targeted online marketing and SEO (Search Engine Optimisation: methods to increase internet traffic by getting higher rankings on search engines like Google) were discussed as key areas on which to focus. Because so many pubs have unique offerings, such as accommodation, food and beverage, it is important to market these qualities and points of difference more prominently online to ensure maximum interest is achieved.

Similarly, pub owners and operators should capitalise on local expertise, and drive local partnerships that help differentiate them from the big-budget and branded hotel chain competitors.



Criterion Hotel Sydney



## TURN YOUR UNOCCUPIED ROOMS INTO CASH!

With more than 60% of all accommodation bookings being made online Pubs and Hotels can no longer ignore this valuable revenue channel.

Its time to throw the old paper diary away and turn your rooms into cash! Pub Rooms does all the work to get your accommodation bookable online and selling to new customers worldwide.

### Your package includes:

- Front Desk, Booking Button & Channel Manager
- Pub Rooms connects you to the key online web sites
- Group marketing - [www.pubrooms.com.au](http://www.pubrooms.com.au)
- Make your hotel visible and bookable 24/7

### Want to know more?

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P: 02 8819 6389

W: [www.pubrooms.com.au](http://www.pubrooms.com.au)



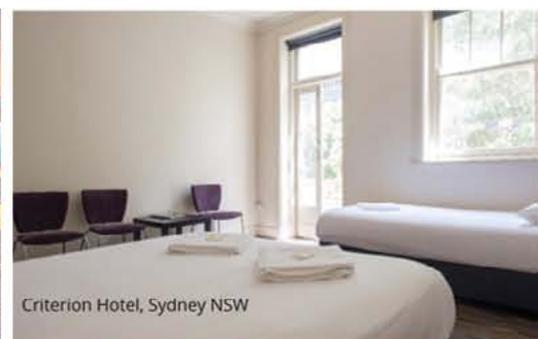
**PUB ROOMS**

**AHA  
NSW**

ASSOCIATE PARTNER  
2016



Bridgeview Hotel, Willoughby NSW



Criterion Hotel, Sydney NSW

In Australia, accommodation website Pub Rooms is already providing a specialist service for operators to optimise occupancy and revenue. Pub Rooms general manager Jeannie Armstrong says demand for pub accommodation is increasing, and is an emerging area of growth that can reap benefits through proper marketing.

“We’re seeing an increase in demand for a number of reasons, including the exposure that pubs offer in accommodation, the price point and the local experience.”

Pub Rooms reports the majority of bookings are made by domestic travellers, but they are increasingly seeing the international market tap in, with customers from the United Kingdom, Europe, New Zealand, Asia and the United States.

“The range of travellers choosing to stay in pub accommodation is also promising, with corporate and government travellers, complemented by leisure travellers over holiday periods and the weekends, as well as mid-week stays,” said Armstrong.

Launched in December 2014, Pub Rooms has grown into a national company offering pub accommodation in Australian cities, regional areas and outback locations, all marketed collectively to the world. The company provides its services to many independent pubs, and counts amongst its clients larger groups including Solotel, PJ Gallagher, Nelson-Meers and Thomas Group.

“Selling rooms online is not just a matter of putting up a listing and hoping for increases in room occupancy,” explains Armstrong. “Hospitality accommodation is an industry in itself, built on relationships, distribution channels, marketing, competitor analysis, pricing and so on.

“This is where we think Pub Rooms works so well – we have that background and experience. We take all the ‘doing’ off the pub’s shoulders, providing all of the online distribution, marketing and set-up. The pub just has to look forward to increasing their guest stays, and of course revenue.”

## BUILDING ON SUCCESSES

Australia’s largest pub owner/operator, Australian Leisure & Hospitality (ALH), is expanding its accommodation offering to meet this market. It now runs 90 accommodation hotels, pubs and resorts, and recently spoke about further expansion after acquiring new properties with rooms that haven’t been tenanted for many years. These rooms will soon be available to patrons interested in pub accommodation.

Gallagher Hotels chief executive, Patrick Gallagher, identified a need to target different market segments at his Criterion Hotel, on Sydney’s Park Street. He made the decision to work with Pub Rooms to market his rooms online, in an effort to attract higher turnover short stays.

“After engaging Pub Rooms, we went from around 20 per cent occupancy on some nights to 85-90 per cent occupancy on average, which has made a significant contribution to our bottom line and helped other areas of revenue within the pub,” said Gallagher.

Gallagher Hotels is currently looking to use the company to sell rooms online for other venues across its portfolio.

The increasing demand for pub accommodation provides significant opportunities, through increased bookings and brand awareness and repeat business, but importantly,



Pier Hotel, Coffs Harbour

**PUB** REAL ESTATE

NEW LISTINGS



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Everything that makes pubs tick

# FEATURE

through the value-add of food & beverage and gaming – the things pubs and hotels do best.

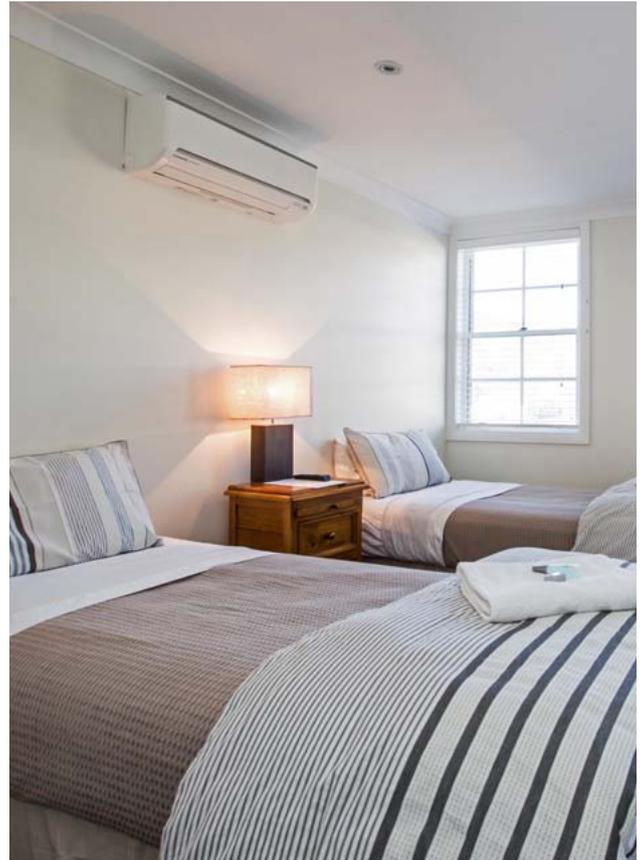
This is important, due to the highly competitive age of the 'share economy', where the likes of Airbnb compete with hotels for market. The additional attractions found in venues, particularly those with broad offerings, can make the difference when competing with the prices of the unburdened home owner offering a cheap room.

## CHECKED OUT

Around the country, a lot of pub owners and operators are already taking advantage of this growing market, and ensuring they're making the most of the accommodation spaces they have, by telling the right people about it with the right online tools. While the unknown of the 'online world' can be confronting, there is no doubt it has become essential if a hospitality business is to reach full potential.

Today, some 80 per cent of all hotel bookings are made online – but a further ten per cent do research online first, meaning approximately 90 per cent of all bookings start on the internet.

Accommodation has the potential to significantly improve the bottom line for almost any venue with rooms to offer, but simply put: if you're not marketing and selling rooms online and using the relevant tools to reach new customers, then you're missing most of the market.



Peel Inn, Nundle



Wisemans Ferry Inn

# SILVER & GOLD IN RED EARTH COUNTRY

A bloke who had a parrot named after him drifted through here in 1841. Another bloke who dragged a whale boat to try and sail it on a salt lake had a squiz around here in 1844. And in 1866 a couple of blokes headed north through here, never to return.

Words and images by intrepid outbacker Greg Smith



# OUTBACK & PROUD

Maybe if Major Mitchell, Charles Sturt, or Burke & Wills had tried to dig a well here they would have hung around a bit longer. The two fellas who did so in 1877 discovered silver, and Silverton was born.

It took a few years before someone decided to build a pub, presumably everyone was too busy digging up silver. But the original Silverton Hotel was built in 1884, then replaced by a bigger and better two-storey watering hole, hurrah! ... which burnt down in the memorable year of 1918. Oh.

But ironically, there was an upside to the fact that by now the mining operations, along with most of the timber and corrugated iron buildings in the town, had largely moved 25 kilometres down the road to the newer town of Broken Hill. This meant Silverton no longer needed a Post Office, so one of the few brick and stone structures in town became the pub. And remains so today.

Around 110 years after the silver was discovered, the Mad Max juggernaut came to town and made gold. Fact is, the film industry had 'discovered' Silverton a few decades earlier, featuring it in movies such as *A Town Like Alice*, *Wake In Fright*, and the celluloid masterpiece *Razorback*. George Miller was planning to film his latest Mad Max offering here too, but Huey made it rain and the red desert turned green, so they packed up their gear and went to Africa instead.



The first time we were at the Silverton Pub Mad Max's 'Road Warrior' car, The Interceptor, was parked out front. But it has since been flogged off and a different desert-dueller offers photo op's for the thousands of tourists who drift out here every year.



As mentioned, when the rich ore started to peter out and Broken Hill came on line, virtually all of the town's buildings were bundled up and moved by donkey, camel and ox cart to the new town. But, the bones are still there to see in Silverton, wonderfully preserved and signed. A ghost town if you will.

There are still a handful of original solid structures, which were presumably too hard to move, and a few that belonged to the local council. The Masonic Lodge, a couple of competing churches, a school, the Surveyor's cottage, plus the Municipal Chambers, which are still regularly used today by the local Village Committee.

There are also lots of building foundations, old rusted pieces of machinery and small brick-a-brack of daily life, pieces of bikes and prams and household items laying around where they were abandoned in that great exodus.

Silverton Hotel still has a very busy bar and I hear the kitchen is making a tasty contribution to its income, having built some fame in particular for its Silverton hot dogs.

But it's the history that diverts most visitors – mostly grey nomads – out here from the Broken Hill leg of their wanderings. The current publicans have set up an excellent museum, featuring the feature films that have been shot around here.

Apart from its screen career, this humble little pub has also played some pretty important roles in Australia's history: it was within these walls that the Barrier Ranges Miners' Association was formed in 1884, bringing unionism to the region. And a year later BHP Company Pty Ltd was created in this very bar.



Greg Smith with his beloved Landcruiser

# PUBtic

## NEWSLETTER

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