

NEWS

25 of the Sunshine Coast's most innovative businesses

by Damian Bathersby

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SOME are using ground-breaking technology on projects across the world while others are creating something as simple as t-shirts with important messages on them.

But every one of these 25 Sunshine Coast businesses is proving that innovation is the key to success.

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An artist's impression of main aquarium tunnel at the public aquarium in Muscat, Oman, built by Advanced Aquarium Technologies.

Picture: Contributed

than 80 located around the globe on various projects.

1. ADVANCED AQUARIUM TECHNOLOGIES

THE builder of giant aquariums is based in Kunda Park but does more than 90 per cent of its business overseas and has created some of the world's most recognised and loved public aquariums and oceanariums.

AAT projects can be found in China, Lithuania, Turkey, Singapore, Denmark, Hong Kong and Macau as well as on the Sunshine Coast where the company undertook major works on the aquarium at SeaLife Mooloolaba.

In the Chinese province of Chengdu, it was contracted to build a \$50 million aquarium in the heart of what will be one of the country's largest shopping malls and it was last year hired to design and build a \$20 million public aquarium in the Middle East.

The company has grown from a handful of staff to more



Ralph Francis from Billet Proof and Shane Pukallus from APAC Infrastructure are excited about a massive new tank building contract for south-east Queensland.

Picture: Patrick Woods

"We started a new company pretty much to gain some traction on this sort of military stuff," Mr Pukallus said.

His company has secured solid work, exporting two portable communications systems to the US for unmanned air vehicle monitoring.

Another two systems were sent to Spain.

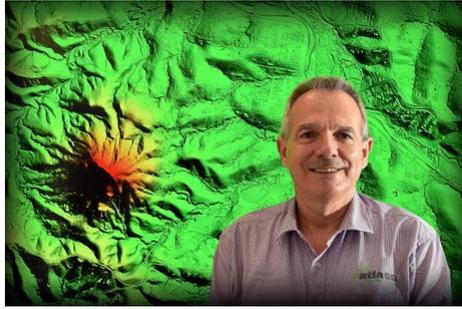
2. APAC INFRASTRUCTURE

& BILLET PROOF

A DOWNTURN in mining prompted boilermaker Shane Pukallus to risk a complete shift of business focus and location.

Mr Pukallus moved from Mackay about a year ago to be a part of setting up APAC Infrastructure at Bells Creek. His firm now specialises in military radar and portable communications systems.

Recent confirmation of a \$5 billion government contract for Rheinmetall Defence Australia to build 211 Boxer CRV tanks in south-east Queensland has backed up his belief in the potential of his new industry.



Ralph Lante's company, Atlass Aerometrix, specialises in Lidar aerial mapping imagery and has just bought a \$1 million camera as their business expands.

Picture: Patrick Woods

3. ATLASS-AEROMETREX

MILLION-dollar views have become a daily highlight at mapping company Atlass-Aerometrix, thanks to its purchase of an Australian-first piece of specialist equipment.

General manager Ralph Lante's workforce has risen from seven to 15 staff since his company moved from Rockhampton to Buderim about two years ago.

The firm specialises in light detection and ranging (Li-DAR) imagery, using lasers mounted in aeroplanes to create three-dimensional maps.

They were sharing one specialist sensor between two planes until a new, \$1.1 million sensor arrived from Austria earlier this year.

Mr Lante said it was one of three of the particular Riegl models in the world and the first to be based in Australia.

"The new camera means we can fly higher to get the same level of detail," he said.

His crews have been working across most of eastern Australia and their mapping is used in flood mitigation and road construction planning, precision agriculture, mining and forestry.

By taking images of the same landscape at constant intervals, it can be used to measure problems such as ground subsidence as a result of underground mining.



Henry and Sandra Gosling, creators of CO YO.

Picture: Cade Mooney/cm190089

4. CO YO

CO YO launched in 2010 as Australia's first coconut milk yoghurt business.

It all began in 2009 when Henry and Sandra Gosling were enjoying semi-retirement on the Sunshine Coast.

Henry had been searching for a new way to bring the benefits of coconut to the world and came up with the idea of making yoghurt from coconuts instead of dairy products.

He'd never made yoghurt before and it took countless hours of testing and handcrafting batches for him to perfect Australia's first coconut yoghurt alternative: Co Yo.

The products were quick to gain traction in the health food industry and today the company's range has expanded to include ice cream and a range of fermented vegetable dips.



Caleb Telfer has found a niche by constructing and selling surfboard showers.

Picture: John McCutcheon

5. CT'S CUSTOM CREATIONS

AFTER an ambitious attempt to take on surfing, Caleb Telfer instead stumbled across a different life-changing hobby.

"Basically, my wife went to the tip shop and while she was looking around she came across an old surfboard for me to take to the beach, but it was in such bad shape all it did was sink.

"But rather than just leaving it sit there, my wife asked me to make use of it," the 30-year-old carpenter said.

This was about three years ago and it was the moment CT's Custom Creations was born.

Since then the Caloundra man has developed his own business making outdoor showers and other unique furniture pieces from recycled surfboards and timber, sourcing materials from various community noticeboards and rubbish tips.

"Even if boards are broken I've been using timber to rejoin them together. It fancies them up a bit," Mr Telfer said.

The company also offers to make customised pieces for customers wishing to use their own boards.

6. DEE'S TEES

MAKING people aware of his autism and giving them a better understanding is important for Ollie Sklenars. But it wasn't until recently his mum Durrelle found a way to communicate that.



Ollie Sklenars and his mum Durrelle who designs t-shirts and other wear to increase awareness of autism.

Picture: John McCutcheon

There were a lot of common misconceptions about autism in the community and parents could be misjudged.

"People can think that they're just naughty kids that get away with a lot, that the parents don't have control over kids, that the kids are stupid, but that's not the case.

"What I want to do is spread awareness that these tees are available and endlessly helpful for families going out in public."

The Coast-based brand makes a range of t-shirts, hats, rashies, bracelets and seatbelt covers, which could help paramedics in the event of a crash, covered in positive slogans.

informative," Ms Sklenars said.

She's only been making the shirts for two short months, but they took off quickly after people saw Ollie wearing one.

"The response has been really positive, people have been saying it's changed the way they've been able to go out," Ms Sklenars said.



Carissa Trickey, Kristyanne Maria and Bec McCallum of Exquisite.

Picture: Sarah Dionysius

7. EXQUISITE BEAUTY - ELEGANCE, STYLE, GLAMOUR

A GROUP of small business owners have collaborated to deliver a one-stop beautification shop in Warana.

Exquisite Beauty - Elegance, Style, Glamour is the brainchild of Carissa Trickey, who said her vision was to create a haven for customers.

The shop includes hairdressing services, nail artistry, spray tanning, waxing, cosmetic injections, mark-up artistry and hypnotherapy.

"I had this vision in mind of being able to create a really nice environment where people can walk in and walk out feeling great and feeling confident," Ms Trickey said.

"And to be able to create a one-stop shop where people can get everything done at once.

"I've created little packages for mums and dads and their sons and daughters.

"They can walk out feeling confident and like they can succeed. If people feel good about themselves it radiates from the outside and that's what we hope to achieve."



Jaxson Bermingham has started his own clothing brand Faithful.

Picture: Warren Lynam

8. FAITHFUL

AT just 13, Jaxson Bermingham might be too young to officially enter the workforce but the Chancellor State College student has made a good start in his business career with the launch of online clothing company Faithful.

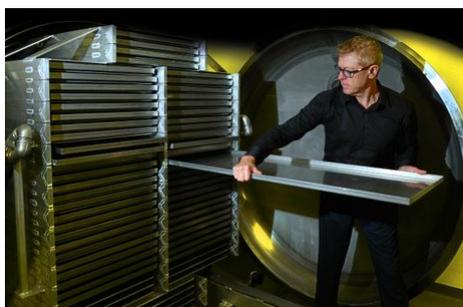
Using his natural passion for art, Jaxson - with the help of his business-savvy mother Rachael - formed the surf brand which had 1000 online views in its first night.

Faithful began with Jaxson's doodles during a school class when he wrote down words in different designs - bubble writing, big blocks, tagging - and stumbled on Faithful.

"Mum saw my design and thought it would be a good thing for me to start. Mum's business skills made it way easier for

me to get it going," he said.

"I want to build the Faithful tribe and make it an Australian favourite surf brand."



Freeze Dry Industries CEO and founder Michael Buckley with one of the dryers.

9. FREEZE DRY INDUSTRIES

THE brainchild of CEO and founder Michael Buckley, Freeze Dry Industries' state-of-the-art manufacturing facility dries Australian fruits and vegetables to create nutritional snack foods.

Even food items usually thrown in the bin aren't safe from the freezer.

"We've been experimenting with a range of materials like plum skins, pineapple cores and even camel milk, both for our own interest and on behalf of our clients," Mr Buckley said.

"The thing is why would we freeze dry cheese? It is such a popular, wonderful snack as is, but it's perishable," he said.

"What we always look to do is to turn a perishable in to a long shelf life and see if we can add value there and cheese is just one of those wonderful, fulfilling products."

Mr Buckley said the company was also working on developing a range of products for pets.



Jamie and Natalie Dalton, the creators of Frozen Sunshine Iceblocks, with their young family.

Picture: Sonja Wrethman

10. FROZEN SUNSHINE ICEBLOCKS

ONE of the newest Australian owned companies, Frozen Sunshine Iceblocks is flipping tradition by swapping processed ingredients for fresh, real produce from the Sunshine Coast.

Jamie and Natalie Dalton are the husband and wife duo behind the company and source the freshest seasonal produce from farms across the region to hand-craft a naturally sweet and simple ice block free from dairy, gluten, eggs, nuts, flavourings, colours and preservatives.

The sweet idea of professional chef Jamie was born after a beach outing in 2013 with Natalie and their three daughters.

"We wanted to get the kids a cool treat and Natalie wanted something that didn't have a bunch of preservatives in it because she suffers from food intolerances," Jamie said.

"I decided that day that I could make the most delicious ice blocks using the amazing local fruit, leaving out all the junk that goes into the mainstream alternatives."

Jamie said hopefully soon people would be able to buy their ice blocks all over Australia.

"We would love to be distributing our ice blocks all over the country and be a household name known for amazing flavours and quality," he said.



Sandy Aslett makes hats for customers around the world.

Picture: Warren Lynnam

11. HATS BY SANDY A

COAST designer Sandy Aslett is turning heads with her award-winning millinery.

The creator of Hats by Sandy A took out the 2018 international HATalk Millinery competition.

Her unique design titled Cosmic Concertina was chosen from 177 entries and as a result, her designer headwear was displayed at the International Hat Week in London earlier this year.

It wasn't Sandy's only design represented on the international stage as she was also selected in the top 30 of

the Great Hat Exhibition.

Sandy's obsession with style started at the age of five but it wasn't until 2009, after a long career in dressmaking and fashion retail, that she decided to turn her hand to millinery.

Studying under some of Australia's most talented milliners, she learnt the importance of sleek lines and how to achieve the perfect fit.

"I've always been fascinated by the way in which a headpiece can completely transform an outfit and lift the mood of the woman wearing it," she said.



Holey Moley combines 10-pin bowling and indoor mini golf.

Picture: Contributed

12. HOLEY MOLEY

ABOUT 70 tradies and a group of movie production designers teamed up to deliver the latest treat for the Coast's party people.

Holey Moley mini golf and Strike Bowling Bar recently opened in Maroochydore's Big Top building.

Set over 1300sq m, the two venues - including 10 lanes of tenpin bowling and 18 holes of wacky indoor mini golf - are complemented by a sports bar, karaoke rooms and escape rooms.

Escape rooms are a combination of adventure, obstacle course, and puzzle where participants have a set time to solve a riddle and "escape".

Funlab CEO Michael Schreiber said the new venue was a "melting pot" catering to all types, from hipsters to corporates to families and all others.



Bruce Manning is the man behind fashion label Indi Blue.

Picture: Sarah Dionysius

13. INDI BLUE

THE sun, the surf and positive vibes are the inspiration behind the new Sunshine Coast-based clothing brand.

Indi Blue is the brainchild of Bruce Manning, who has a passion for surfing and the outdoors and wanted to develop a sustainable brand that supported other local businesses.

"We wanted to start a local surfing brand with really cool designs and build the entire company on the Sunshine Coast," Mr Manning said.

"Basically I want to keep it 100 per cent local."

Mr Manning said he noticed a gap in the market when it came to quality surf clothing on the Coast.

"I noticed that you weren't seeing the quality, old-school hand designs in clothing stores any more," he said.

"Everything you see from us is done by hand design and then put into digital. We wanted to bring back to life the original surf brand style and feel.

"We wanted to create a nautical, cool and make you feel good tee. When we came up with 'positive vibes' we knew we had nailed it.

"Indi Blue is the name of a beach dog. She's always at the beach and we were looking for a name and it just works."



Brendon Levenson pioneered 24-hour no memberships gyms when he launched Jetts.

Picture: contributed

14. JETTS FITNESS

JETTS is the success story of Brendon Levenson, who pioneered the concept of 24-hour, seven-day-a-week gym access with no contracts.

He sold the business to Quadrant Private Equity in a \$100 million deal last year.

A decade since Jetts first opened in Maroochydore, the 24-hour gym phenomenon has launched four new clubs in Thailand, adding to the 270 clubs across Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

A further eight clubs are set to open in Thailand later this

year.



Adam Benjamin at the Medifarm facility.

Picture: Contributed

15. MEDIFARM

THE state's only licensed cultivator and manufacturer of medical marijuana, Medifarm stands on the brink of a multi-million-dollar new industry.

The company has an exclusive international intellectual property partnership with Israeli-based company Tikun Olam, which pioneered world production 12 years ago.

Operating out of a secret location protected by razor-wire fences with sensors, elevated security cameras and biometric finger scanners for staff, the company expects to begin producing the region's first batches of medicinal cannabis oil by the middle of the year.

Two strains of medicinal marijuana will be developed in the first 12 months as Medifarm director Adam Benjamin hopes to service 5000 patients a year with what is now a Schedule 8 medicine.

The Federal Health Department has outlined five medical conditions medicinal marijuana can target from the outset - nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy, cancer-related pain, palliative care, multiple sclerosis and epilepsy.

About 30 full-time jobs will be created once MediFarm is fully operational.

16. NEXT LEVEL LENS

HUDSON Horne had been fascinated by electronics and making inanimate objects move.

The 12-year-old has turned that fascination into one of the Coast's most successful drone businesses.

The Coast teen purchased his first drone with money he made by selling his toys and doing odd jobs around the home for his parents.

He then started Next Level Lens and uses his state-of-the-art drone to work for real estate agencies, cover weddings and events and even jobs such as checking the whirlybirds on roofs.



Hudson Horne has set up his own drone photography business.
Picture: Warren Lynam

"It has helped me because I can put that I won the award on my website and people can tell that I'm more than just a kid who likes drones," he said.



Rivershore Resort at Diddillibah is rated the best of the BIG4 holiday parks in Australia.
Picture: Contributed

17. RIVERSHORE RESORT

CAMPING was never like this.

Sunshine Coast "glamping" hub Rivershore Resort has skyrocketed into a tourism hotspot and less than a year after its opening was rated the best of the BIG4 holiday parks in Australia.

Rivershore caters for campers, caravaners and those seeking a "glamping" experience and features an onsite restaurant.

Rivershore is owned by the McGovern family, which built the facility from scratch.

Bernie McGovern and his wife Cathy explored Australia in their own caravan a few years ago, staying at holiday parks and taking in the comments of campers and caravaners.

That experience led to a conviction holiday parks should offer extra-large sites, first-class facilities, spotless amenities and provide exceptional customer service and, ultimately, a decision to build a park that met their criteria.



Rhetta Chappell at work on one of her commissioned pet portraits.
Picture: John McCutcheon

18. SIT PRETTY - CUSTOM PET PORTRAITS

RHETTA Chappell has come up with the "pawfect" way to capture your favourite four-legged family member. Just send her a photo of a beloved pet and she'll transform it into a piece of art.

Ms Chappell started her business from her Maroochydore home and it has gained a great deal of attention from Coast pet owners.

Originally from Adelaide, she said the idea for the business came after she painted a canvas of her greyhound.

"My mother is an artist so I have grown up around creativity but I never really considered myself an artist," she said.

"When I was pregnant with my son I painted a portrait of our dog Tony, an Italian greyhound and then posted a photo of it to an Italian greyhounds Facebook page and a lot of people wanted me to do the same for their pet.

"I didn't really take it too seriously until I moved up here and thought I'd pursue it a bit more.

"It's something that's personal to them because it's unique. I also want them to be affordable and accessible to people."

Ms Chappell said she often had people who come to her with the intention of giving the portrait as a gift or as a memento of a pet that has passed on.

"I've done a few commemorative pieces and people tend to really like those as it's something special for them to keep," she said.



Snapsil is changing the way companies around the world package their products.

19. SNAPSIL

BASED in a warehouse in a small industrial centre at Forest Glen, Snapsil is attracting attention across the world for its packaging designs, with the concept touted as a world-first gamechanger.

After more than a decade in development, Snapsil's easyopen packaging is ready to hit the market under Australian brands like Fountain sauces, along with food companies in the US and Europe.

The packaging is designed to be opened with one hand, with hundreds of designs on file suitable for any portioned

Technology, through almost 18 months of trial and error.

Snapsil Australia now has hundreds of designs on file and can tailor the packaging to a company's request.

The design allows the packaging materials to fracture along a pre-determined path, allowing it to remain sealed but snap open easily.

The company topped a highly competitive national grants process to be awarded almost \$1 million in funding as part of the Federal Government's Entrepreneur's Programme.

The packaging is made from recyclable materials.



Rowena Morris has a successful home business where she offers a unique eyebrow package.
Picture: John McCutcheon

20. THE BROW PERFECTOR

ROWENA Morris is the creator of The Brow Perfector, her at-home beauty business which offers a unique eyebrow grooming package.

Ms Morris said she noticed a gap in the market when it came to properly shaping and growing eyebrows.

"There was a bit of a niche in the market where people were wanting more than just a quick five-minute brow job," she said.

She said the driving force behind marketing her business had been social media.

"It's to the point now where people will ask on the community board for brow recommendations and my beautiful, loyal clients will tag me in it."

Ms Morris works around hours that suit her as a mother and she said she never would have been able to do that if she didn't work from home.

"A lot of my clients are mothers themselves so the hours I offer suit them. I also try and accommodate the nine-to-fivers whenever I can too."



The Milk Pantry's Jessica Beveridge with her award for Sustainability.
Picture: Ben Allan

21. THE MILK PANTRY

ALL the products produced at The Milk Pantry are designed for breastfeeding mums looking to boost their milk supply.

Creator Jessica Beveridge began making the milk-inducing products for herself after the birth of her son 10 years ago and developed her passion into a business.

The Milk Pantry's products contain natural galactagogues that stimulate the breastfeeding hormone Prolactin.

The range includes cookies, brownie and bliss ball mixes, shakes, hot chocolate and muesli and is stocked in 25 stores in Australia and three overseas.

more than cookies," Jessica said.

"Everyone has a different taste and some are gluten and dairy free."

The Milk Pantry took out the Sustainability category at the 2017 Sunshine Coast Business Awards.

"A lot of similar businesses only stock cookies but for me it's

Youngster discovers lost war medal
2 hours ago



Children learn with messy play
2 hours ago



22. THE POTTERY STUDIO

ARTISTIC fads come and go, but pottery has found a way to stand the test of time.

The Pottery Studio has thrown open its roller door to the community so they can enjoy the fun that the hobby brings.
2 hours ago



Amy Hills runs The Pottery Studio to enable people to try their hands at

Businesses prepare to scrap the plastic
2 hours ago

Ride brings hope for police officers
2 hours ago

Studio founder Amy Hills wanted to give the opportunity for anyone to give pottery a try.

"We looked around and there wasn't really a cool creative space for young people," she said.

Ms Hills and her girlfriend got into the pottery craze around 18 months ago and the search for the perfect workspace began.

After trialling several classes in at-home studios, the young creative realised that there must be more people out there looking for a fresh take on the time-old art form.



Dianna Ryan in her second-hand store, coffee shop and art gallery The Shed.
Picture: Sarah Dionysius

PICK up relics owned by royalty, a classic piece of art and a cup of coffee and cake at this quirky Coast business.

The Shed at Forest Glen is an auction house, second-hand store, art gallery and coffee shop in one.

The business was originally an auction house based at Maroochydore, where it had been running for almost 10 years before the current owners, Geoff and Dianna Ryan, took over.

The Ryans sought to expand their business and turn it into a space that offered customers a whole new experience and moved it to their new site.

"Originally it was an auction only house but over the years

we have changed it to be basically a retail showroom," Mrs Ryan said.

"I'm an interior designer so I come at it from a different point of view as I'm always looking for interesting pieces that people can add to their homes.

"We are pretty selective about what we take. It ranges from vintage one-off pieces to brand new and the quirky and unusual as well."

She has uncovered items such as plates and glassware owned by royalty, old photos in desks of the owner with a past prime minister and even a First World War saddle bag.

"The prerequisite for most things we get in is that it either has to be beautiful or interesting," she said.



Co-owner of Syndicate Creative Bree-anne Jeffrey with one of her pottery creations.
Picture: Sarah Dionysius

24. THE SYNDICATE CREATIVE

ENCOURAGING creativity and supporting the local community is the aim behind this new business in Kunda Park.

The Syndicate Creative was started by two young business owners who went out on limb to provide a space that caters for all artistic endeavours.

Co-owner Bree-anne Jeffrey said she and her business partner Brett Coulthard wanted to create a space where people could create and showcase their art.

They host a range of creative classes including pottery, woodcarving and drawing classes.

They also hire out the venue for photo shoots, private events and business conferences and every month host exhibitions where all profits from sales of the artworks go to the artists.

"We are strong believers in community and reflect that within our business," Ms Jeffrey said.

"I know that a lot of artists who are just starting out will spend a lot of time and money creating their artwork and then if they are paying commission they are usually actually losing money rather than making it.

"I really like the idea of creative communities coming together and I wanted a place where people could come and learn art in a less formal setting."



Board shaper Thomas Bexon has expanded his premises in Noosa to include a barber shop, cafe, retail, shaping and glassing factory.
Picture: John McCutcheon

25. THOMAS SURFBOARDS

THE recent opening of Thomas Surfboards' new premises in Noosaville is just the latest stake in the ground for shaper and co-founder Thomas Bexon, who started shaping surfboards in his mum's Maroochydore garage as an after-school hobby, and his business partner, glasser Jake Bowery.

None of it, Thomas insists, has been planned which may explain the presence of a barber shop on the premises and a retail store that is a mix of men's grooming products and surf kit.

But the combination has struck a chord perhaps fostered by the live band and surf movie nights and art exhibitions which became a feature of the business's early days in a leaky shed.

The new factory is designed with floor to ceiling glass windows to allow the public to view boards being created.

Logger-style long boards, beards, barbers, music and art are all part of an expression of surf culture that goes beyond catching a wave.

Part of the growth of the business has been collaboration with Thomas's good friend Malakai, who wanted to open a barber shop. He's now producing his own line of men's grooming products under the Captain Sip Sop's label, sharing