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HD **GOLDEN IDEAS**
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WITH FANTASTIC IDEAS ROLLING IN FASTER THAN THE WAVES AT SNAPPER ROCKS, IT IS NO WONDER THE **GOLD** COAST IS KNOWN AS START-UP CENTRAL. COULD ONE OF THESE BUSINESSES BE THE NEXT BILLABONG?

THE SALTY MERCHANTS Stretching out on the sand with a vintage beach umbrella and endless sunshine does not sound much like a day at the office, but for Lachlan Leckie and Megan Wagner it is all market research.

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For the past couple of years, Lachlan has had a fledgling business selling decorated surfboard fins with stockists across Australia, as well as in the Netherlands, France, Japan and the United States.

But despite screen printing his heart out on his kitchen bench, the fins alone were not enough for Lachlan to put food on the table.

It was then his girlfriend Megan had a stroke of brilliance and came up with plans to expand their romantic beach lifestyle **company**.

The sands of time have done little to dampen the appeal of a vintage-inspired beach umbrella and so Boutique Brollies was born.

But try as they might, the duo were unable to find anyone in Australia who was able to make them a batch of brollies.

"I realised surviving off the fins would be tough and my girlfriend wanted to be involved and so we've been on the brollie hunt for the past two years," Lachlan says.

"Then we stumbled across an old lady who used to own a factory in Sydney. "She acquired it by fate as she used to nanny for a family who owned the business.

"They had no interest in it and so she ended up getting an umbrella factory to herself.

"The factory hadn't been operational for years, but then she took us digging around the back and under all these dirty blankets was a good stash of beautiful originals." The couple restored the umbrellas and has been selling them ever since, however, the supply is dwindling.

But rather than stick their heads in the sand and wait for the original 1970s brollies to run out, Megan and Lachlan began a quest to take new, vintage-inspired umbrellas global.

Following a three-month research trip to America and an international search for parts, the final product will be assembled here on the **Gold** Coast and for **sale** from February.

There's fibreglass frames from Asia, printed vinyl from Italy and aluminium hinges from Brisbane with Lachlan and Megan to add the final touches like painted details on the arms.

There are also plans to join forces with a skin cancer awareness charity to promote the concept of enjoying a day at the beach safely.

"We didn't want to get it all made in **China** like everyone does and the Italians were too expensive to do it all and doing it here would mean making a whole new factory," Lachlan says.

"Ours will have a vinyl top so it will be really good to block out the UV rays and also waterproof.

"I've had probably close to a dozen different styles and now it's funny when you put one of ours up next to the cheap ones down the beach.

"It pops up so easily while there's is blowing inside out.

"If you ask me, there's more opportunity to do something like this here on the **Gold** Coast than anywhere else in the world."

ALLUSIVE COLLECTIONS Jason Hazle is the kind of guy who likes to wear his art on his sleeve. The emerging artist had been looking for a way to get his work seen when he realised, as well as selling the pieces themselves, he could also screen print his way to a new business.

Allusive Collections was created four years ago and Jason regularly collaborates with up to 10 artists, making their work on to T-shirts, caps, cushions and canvas bags.

The artists involved come from a variety of backgrounds and their works include fine line, illustrations, portraits, sculptures and surrealism – all on mixed media. An overweight woman with sagging breasts and the head of a bird features on one T-shirt while a skull with feathers instead of hair merrily adorns a cushion.

As well as providing the artists with a modest income, with T-shirts starting from just \$20, it is also an affordable way for the masses to support **Gold** Coast artists.

Like Jason, many of the artists just want to get their work out there. One of them is Will Duncan, a promising young artist originally from the Far North Coast who now works at Tattoo Republic at Robina.

Will has done a Fine Arts degree at Southern Cross University and uses everything from spray paint to cigarettes to create his original and idiosyncratic works.

Another is Nik Dolman – a graphic artist whose work is now appearing on Allusive Collections shirts and festival bags.

"Whenever we have a new range of clothing we'll do an exhibition," Jason says. "We'll get around 10 artists plus three bands and put on a big opening for the new range.

"Our demographic can be anyone who likes art or who just wants a good shirt. "I've seen everyone from 16-year-olds to old dudes rocking around in them." Jason's hard work is starting to see success with the shirts picked up by popular outlet Surf Stitch and sold in a small number of stores around Australia.

Orders are trickling in online as well.

"It would be nice to push it and pick up more accounts, but the main thing is to keep it running – keep doing more shows and getting more artists on board," Jason says.

"I don't think you do something like this to make a lot of money out of it, but it's good exposure and great to collaborate with other artists.

"At the end of the day, we just want to spread more creativity around the **Gold** Coast."

COTTAGE SKATEBOARDS We've all been guilty of stealing a housemate's noodles in a time of need, and then there was that time Jimmy Kakanis accidentally made the pair of pyjamas he found lying around into a skateboard.

Jimmy was an out-of-work web designer who, without much cash to fund a new skateboard, decided to take matters into his own hands, along with his mate Michael Fenwick.

"We decided to make our own and just got on a roll with it," Jimmy says. "It was one of those stupid ideas that actually went a bit further. "Instead of using traditional methods of screen printing, we started using old shirts and resin." The pair started Cottage Skateboards and, while Michael has since taken a back seat, Jimmy has sold almost 200, all made in the shed out the back of his Palm Beach home.

"One time there were these pyjama pants laying around the lounge room and I thought I'd found them, but it turned out my housemate Claire had left them over the couch," he says.

"Later on I was showing her my new range of boards and she was like, 'hey, those are my pants'. When it sold I gave her a commission, so it was all good." Jimmy mostly sells his boards on the **Gold** Coast markets circuit, but thanks to his previous online career he also has a significant presence on social media.

"I've sold a couple overseas, one to Mississippi in America, two to New Zealand and one to Hawaii – and all those people all found me on Instagram, which is pretty cool," he says.

"I'm always exploring new patterns and designs, and so far I've never done two the same.

"Mum really wanted to help out and she has a big garden, so she pressed these flowers for me for one.

"I'm doing one for a girl at the moment who found these really awesome peacock feathers.

"I'm also doing furniture – I did a pair of stools with this really cool old 70s paisley fabric." Two years later, Jimmy has no intention of going back to his old job. "I wouldn't say I'm eating salmon dinner, but I'm getting by," he says. "Some people have jobs they don't like and that really takes away from enjoying your life.

"I try and skate nearly every day. It's all research and development. "I've seen people cruising past on one of my boards a couple of times and I'll see people at the markets and they'll say, 'oh man, the board is so sick'. "I'm just so stoked."

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