

CHARLES STURT: INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEUR SCALE UP PROGRAM

CASE STUDY: WANDERING EMU



"Our company is seeking to challenge the way we think about Australian ingredients and Aboriginal economic participation. Aboriginal owned businesses account for just 1% of native food and beverage companies. We want to change that!"

Sam Kirby

Founder, Wandering Emu



WANDERING EMU

Sam Kirby's journey with Wandering Emu began in 2020, sparked by ideas conceived around a campfire and later translated onto paper. His vision for Wandering Emu emerged from the desire for the recognition of the use of native foods and cultural intellectual property within the Australian spirits industry. Recognising both an opportunity and a concern for the industry's growth.

A driving force for Sam with Wandering Emu is a commitment to operating differently, by being socially and culturally connected within the community. By infusing the business with cultural values and principals, Sam seeks to bring a genuine connection and authenticity with native ingredients. Through Wandering Emu, he aims to not only innovate but also raise awareness and inspire growth and necessary change within the industry.

The evident gap in the Australian Spirit market and the use of native ingredients presented as an optimal opportunity for Sam to create a native spirit and beverage company. With a particular focus on gin, Sam's incorporation of the Dilang fruit, resonating with familial ties, adds a distinctive flavour profile characterised by a delightful balance of bitterness and sweetness. Ethical and cultural responsibility underpins all aspects of Wandering Emu's operations, appealing to the socially conscious consumer and actively supporting Indigenous businesses.



COMING INTO THE PROGRAM

Sam's introduction to the Charles Sturt Indigenous Entrepreneur Program commenced with a serendipitous timing, with the launch of Wandering Emu only 14 days prior. With his recently launched venture Sam was eager for support and guidance to formalise his aspirations into actionable strategies, connecting to resources and new markets to support growth and further developing detailed planning for Wandering Emu's vision and long term goals.

The in-person visit to the Charles Sturt AgriPark Innovation Campus marked the beginning of Sam's collaborative journey, and started with building connections with the fellow cohort and the program coaches, along with immersive workshops and experiences. With determination and a willingness to learn, Sam embraced the opportunities that lay ahead, recognising the program as a catalyst for Wandering Emu's future success.

PROGRAM JOURNEY

During his journey in the program, Sam actively engaged with fellow participants, fostering connections and collaboration. Notably, with the creation of a shared Instagram digital hamper for the Christmas period, featuring products from various participants, showcasing the sense of community within the cohort and community. Sam has demonstrated making strides with the forecasting that was put in place during the in person bootcamp which also incorporated production agreements, and reductions on the Cost of Goods, accessing broader sales platforms and is constantly expanding the stocklists for Wandering Emu. He successfully completed sales for the first batch of Dilang Gin, a testament to his strategic planning and execution.

Additionally, he accomplished harvesting for the second batch leveraging production agreements to optimise cost efficiencies by engaging a new manufacturing facility who is a local distiller, in which the production of the second batch has been initiated. Sam also has a new liquor licence with the option of pre-ordering available directly through the Wandering Emu website. Sam ensures Wandering Emu has a sustainable and organic approach to growth, and his accomplishments are a testament to his planning, knowledge and resources, positioning Wandering Emu for continued success.

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IMPACT

Sam explains that *“Wandering Emu’s success will be built on our honest approach to crafting our spirits, our Authentic Stories and experiences will connect our customers to our product”*.

Bringing meaningful connections and authenticity to native ingredients is the cornerstone of Wandering Emu’s success. As consumer awareness grows, so does the opportunity to offer genuine products and services.

The expanding Australian spirit market presents an opportunity for consumers to connect with Indigenous products, fostering recognition and knowledge, while advancing the industry through best practice. Sam has positioned Wandering Emu to remain socially connected to both customers and community throughout operations with innovation at the forefront.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Sam is continuously broadening the network and reach of Wandering Emu, which is underpinned by a mindset focused on scaling the business. He is set to focus on progressing sales, consistently connecting with new customers within the existing Australian Spirit market. This expansion may encompass various sectors, including hospitality and event groups, Australian Hotel and Tourism Companies and International consumers through third party distributors.

Sam has prioritised engaging local interest and building a loyal following for Wandering Emu, recognising the value of working with local businesses, which has enabled *“authentic experiences and reviews of the products to be shared with like minded customers”*.

Over the next 6-12 months Sam’s goal is to have an established launch of being connected with his target customers such as hotel chains that align with the vision and values of Wandering Emu. In the long term, Sam hopes to engage larger supply agreements and eventually establish his own distillery for Wandering Emu.



“We will be a leader alongside other Aboriginal businesses to operate on our cultural terms and values. We will use our success to empower communities whilst ensuring the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the economic growth of native plants, food and medicine”

Sam Kirby

Founder, [Wandering Emu](#)