

Spirits maker says best distil to come

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Australian Distilling Co. master distiller Dr Graham Jones with founder Michael Hickenbotham at the Stepney facility.

A NEW craft distillery has opened in Stepney as part of a national expansion plan being rolled out by local spirits maker Australian Distilling Co.

Founded in 2018 by Hickenbotham Group's Michael Hickenbotham, Australian Distilling Co has started production at its new facility – the first of several distilleries planned across the country.

The Hickenbotham family's history in wine and spirit making goes back three generations, starting with Mr Hickenbotham's grandfather, Alan Hickenbotham, who established Australia's first degree dedicated to winemaking, and Alan's wife, Mary.

In a tribute to their legacy, two copper pot stills at Stepney will carry their nicknames – Hick and Nell.

Michael Hickinbotham said the new distillery would produce the company's original Adelaide Gin, as well as its signature range, including Australian Distilling Co. Gin, Shiraz Gin and Rhapsody Ruby Gin.

"Our team of distillers journey across the country, partnering with local distilleries to produce our city gins, in each city," he said.

"We are now investing in this commitment with plans to build distilleries in cities around Australia, starting with Adelaide, with stills planned for Darwin, Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Geelong."

Led by master distiller Dr Graham Jones, who has a background in structural chemistry and X-ray crystallography, Australian Distilling Co.'s range of gins has been individually crafted to reflect Australia's cities and landmark locations.

Adelaide Gin came first and was soon followed by flavours inspired by Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Bondi and Darwin.

In a little over two years,

Australian Distilling Co. has won 74 national and international spirit awards, including double gold at the prestigious 2020 SIP Awards for its Adelaide Gin.

It was named Australian Distillery of the Year at the Berlin International Spirits Competition in 2019.

Spirits produced by the distillery are sold at restaurants, bars and pubs, as well as in major chains including BWS, Cellarbrations, Thirsty Camel and Dan Murphy's.

Mr Hickinbotham said the company was also looking to expand its production of other spirits – including vodka and whisky – as part of a commitment to building the spirits industry in South Australia and nationally.

"Last month, we expanded into vodka, releasing our first batch of Adelaide Vodka and Australian Distilling Co. Vodka that will also be produced from Adelaide," he said.

"Further expansion into whisky is among our future plans."