

Local Entrepreneurs Series: SecondLife Recrafted



In our new ‘**Local Entrepreneurs Series**’, we’re shining a spotlight on the talented, skilled and innovative individuals who call the Central Coast home.

This time, we’re chatting to **Katie Silvia**, who is the co-owner / operator of **SecondLife Recrafted** with her husband, **Mark**.

As long time Central Coast locals, they’ve made an impact by **recrafting beautiful, bespoke homewares using recycled materials**, while still **honouring and preserving the history** of what each piece of timber once was.

And despite the fact that they’ve only been in operation for less than two years, their **unique approach to sustainability** is already **winning them accolades and acclaim nationwide**.



Congratulations on all of your success to date. Can you tell us what inspired you to start the business?

Thank you so much! Considering we really weren’t sure what the reception and longevity of the business would be, it’s been a lovely surprise and a very welcomed start.

My husband Mark is our solo maker. He handcrafts all of our pieces and had the ‘SecondLife’ idea in mind for a really long time.

He’s a qualified carpenter and has worked in construction for more than 20 years now. The idea came to him from construction sites, when he would see a lot of timber being wasted and discarded that he knew could still be useful.

He hates waste, loves timber and loves history, so the idea to sustainably repurpose old timber and tell its story was the perfect way for him to combine all three.

We love the eco-friendly message that underpins your business. Are there any types of homewares that you’re particularly passionate about crafting? What would you say are some of your most popular items right now?

We’re passionate about recrafting any pieces that use reclaimed Australian hardwood, and any that we make from materials that have been sourced locally on the Central Coast.

Those materials are used mostly in the crafting of our large cutting boards, which are our original (and some of our most popular) products. Our other most popular pieces would be our triangle bookstands, and our grazing boards and cheese knives, which are handcrafted from recycled French Oak wine barrels.

All of your pieces are truly beautiful, so we understand their popularity!

Let's go back to the beginning. How did you find the process of starting your own small business? What have been some of your greatest challenges, and how did you overcome them?

It's been a huge learning curve from the outset, particularly for two people with no business background or qualifications.

In saying that, we both love learning and we both love challenges, and we've really enjoyed developing our knowledge and skillset as the business has evolved.

Some of the biggest challenges we have experienced have been managing the fast and unexpected growth of the business alongside all of our family, work and study responsibilities, as well as organising (and reorganising!) our limited physical space to operate more efficiently as a home-based business.

Generally, we have found that flexibility and a willingness to change things as the business evolves has been the best approach to overcoming challenges, along with clear communication with one another, and improved time management.

Starting up a new small business comes with some learning curves, that's for sure, but you've also seen tremendous success in a very short space of time.

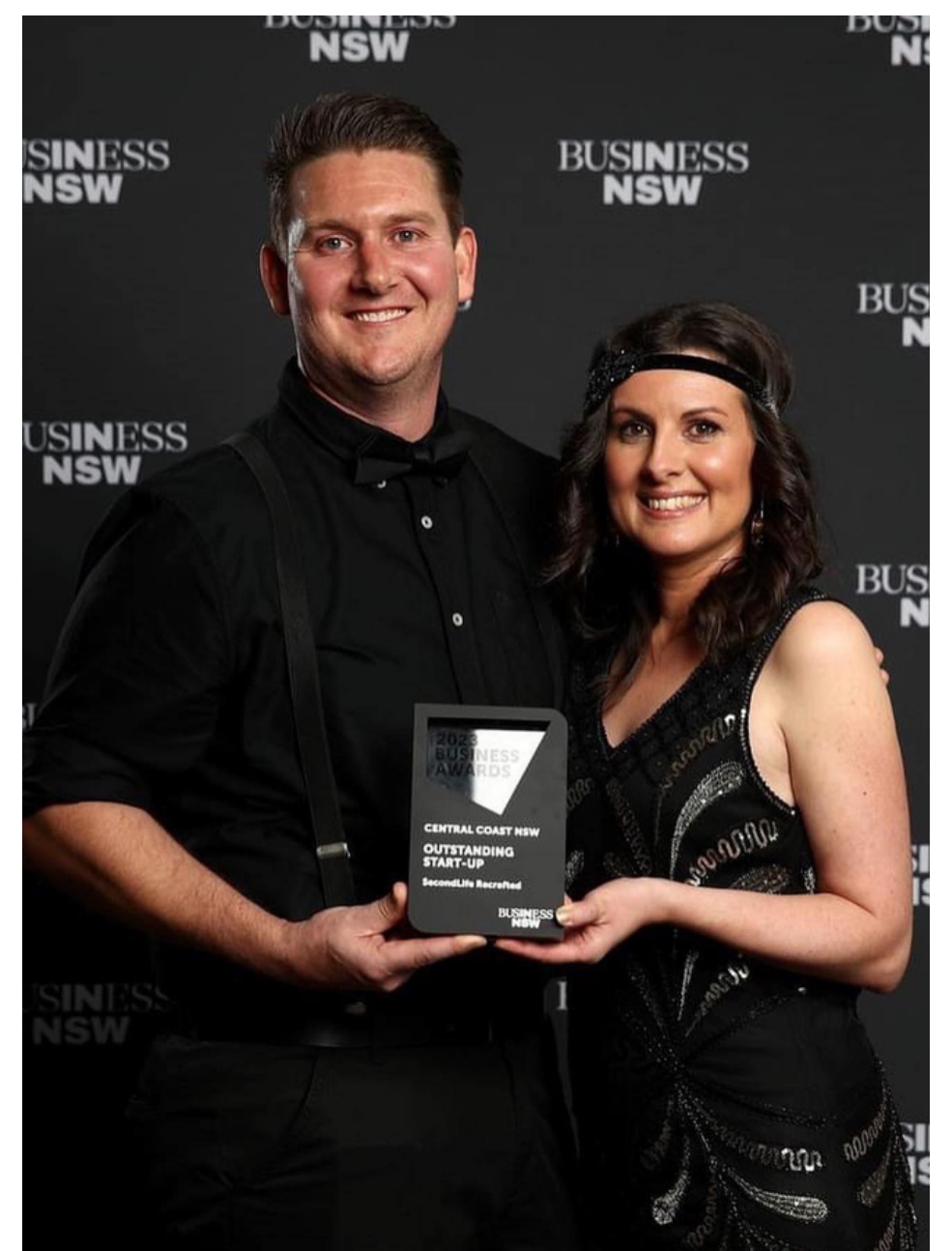
Last year, you were named as the winner of the 'Outstanding Start-Up' category in the prestigious Central Coast Business Awards, and you were also one of only 100 businesses nationwide to be named as an Australia Post 'Local Business Hero'.

How do you think this recognition has benefited your business?

Those recognitions were so amazing to receive. We have only been operating for a little less than two years and to be acknowledged in that way, at that level, has felt very surreal to us.

I think this recognition has helped people to be more interested in what the business is about and what it is we are doing. I think it's also demonstrated that whilst we may be a micro-sized business and a 'side hustle', we are doing what we do well, and we are a business that people can trust.

Your hustle has hit the headlines, that's for sure! We also love that, with every item purchased, you include a short backstory about the piece's reclaimed materials.



Much of the timber comes from suburbs right here on the Central Coast, and it's such a wonderful point of difference that we're sure your customers appreciate.

How do you go about looking into the history of each item?

We love telling the story behind each piece and it was such an important part of what we wanted to do here from the outset.

How much we can tell people about the history of their recrafted piece's materials varies greatly, depending on where it has come from, but we only tell people as much as we know.

When we source local timber from home demolitions, we may only be able to tell people what part of a structure it originated from, which suburb it came from, and where we sourced the timber from.

But when it comes to wine and whisky barrels, we like to source them direct from distilleries and vineyards, so we can not only tell people where the barrel has come from, but also the whisky or wine that has matured inside it.

We've also sourced timber from shopping centres, train stations and other buildings of historical significance, and have been able to find out a lot of interesting history about the origins of those materials by researching online.

Here on the Central Coast, we're seeing a real groundswell of visionary, entrepreneurial individuals who are backing themselves and their ideas, and bringing their unique products to life.

What additional government support do you think would be beneficial when starting a new local business?

There is already a fair bit of government support offered to new businesses by way of grants, information, courses and rebates, but looking at how better to get the word out about those available supports may be something that could be further prioritised.

I know that we were largely unaware that those supports existed for some time, and knowing what you may be eligible to receive from the outset would likely be really helpful to new business owners in those early start-up days.

Expanding business eligibility for these supports may also be beneficial for growing a wider range of businesses, too.

You're long time locals and your products have been really well received by our community. What has that close-knit Coastie support meant to you?



Having both lived on the Coast our entire lives, having the support of locals has meant the world to us and has really blown us away.

We both agree that one of the best aspects of this whole experience has been connecting with locals - both customers and other businesses - who have shown us an overwhelming amount of support, and have appreciated and celebrated what we are doing.

What we have perhaps loved even more than sharing the reclaimed timber's story with our customers is having locals share *their own* stories with us, and learning why they connect with our ethos, the materials we use or the pieces we make. The Coast community is one we feel very lucky to be a part of.

And finally, can you tell us your favourite thing about living and working on the Coast?

We love the laid back lifestyle here, the awesome people and the beautiful locations we have on our doorstep.

In particular, we love spending time on or by the water, and when we aren't working, you'll likely find us somewhere near or on Brisbane Water either fishing, boating or just spending time with our kids.

Our favourite thing about working on the Coast is being able to collaborate with some amazing other businesses here, and most definitely the support we have received by local businesses and customers alike.

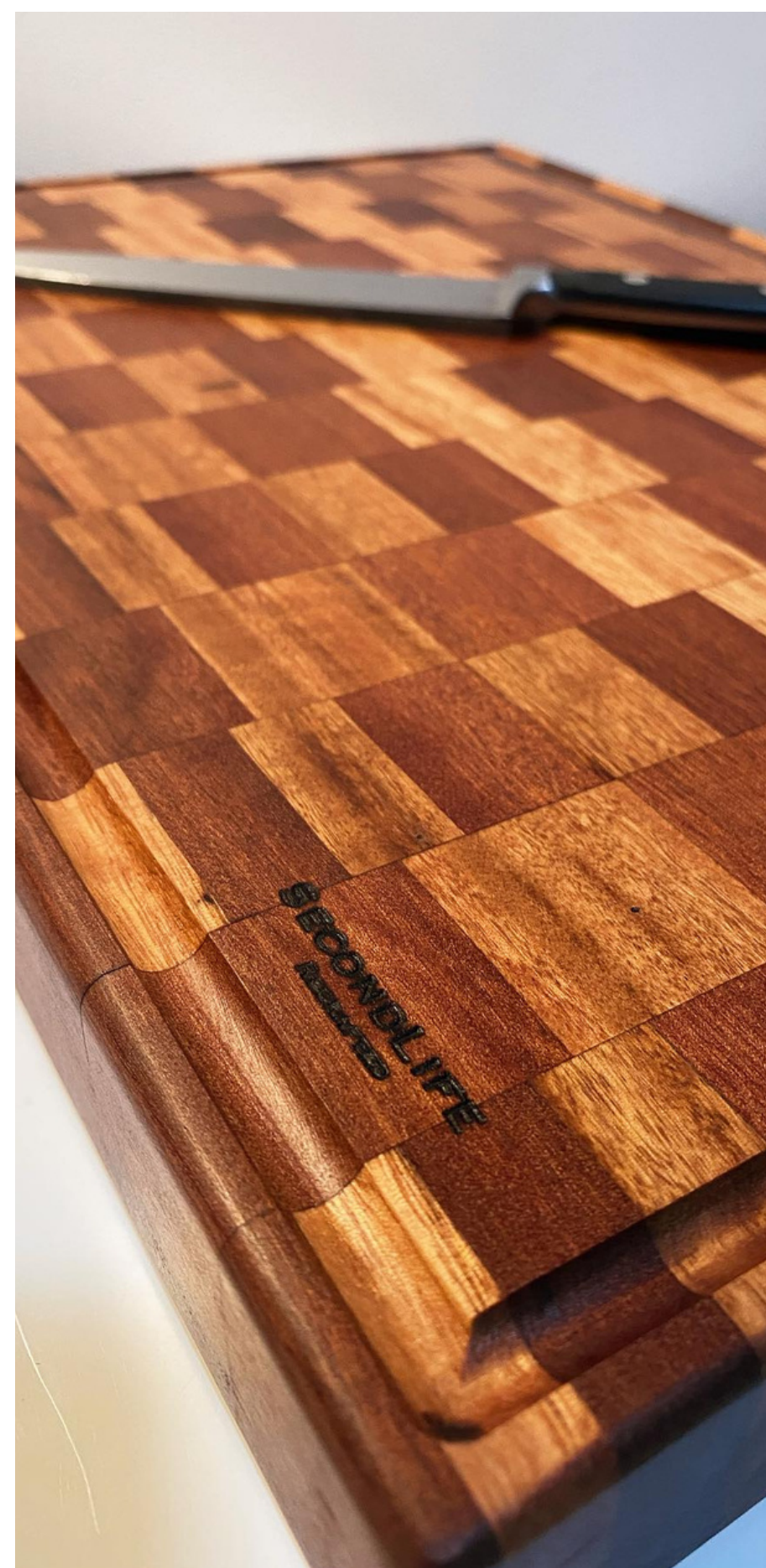
The appreciation and support that the Coast community shows local business is really very special and we know we wouldn't have experienced the success we have had without it.

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