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STOCKLAND SUPPORTS RETAIL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH THE LAUNCH OF RETAIL INCUBATOR PROGRAM

Stockland has launched a new retail incubator initiative the **S Connect 'Starter'** program, to assist ambitious small businesses grow, thrive and gain exposure through a retail space in a Stockland Town Centre.

The 'Starter' program provides businesses with an opportunity to partner with Stockland to reduce the traditional barriers to entry to trial a shopping centre retail experience. Starter retailers are offered a unique partnership and lease arrangement that includes a space within the centres as well as a dedicated Stockland mentor to provide support and guidance through their retail journey including operations, marketing, and finance.

This exciting retail venture will initially be offered at three Stockland Retail Town Centres in NSW including Merrylands, Shellharbour, and Green Hills with the aim to expand the program nationally.

Michelle Abbey, Executive General Manager, Town Centres said: "S Connect Starter is an opportunity for Stockland to partner with local businesspeople to give local brands and businesses exposure in their community via a retail presence.

"The program provides a safe space for businesses to trial opening in a bricks and mortar environment, supporting and nurturing them along the journey. We provide a retail environment as well as learning opportunities to guide new businesses through the key components of operating in a retail town centre, with the ultimate goal being a permanent tenant that's flourishing.

"We support the small businesses with a premium presence in our retail town centres, provide the latest technology and data insights, a comprehensive retail e-learning program and a contemporary fit-out to set businesses up for success," Ms Abbey said.

The first 'Starter' retailer, Hot Mess Body, is a handmade body and bath product business, and opened at Stockland Shellharbour last month.

Hot Mess Body offers a wide range of bath soaps, bath bombs, shower steamers, and bath salts. A local south coast start-up with a cult following, Hot Mess Body has grown from strength to strength in the past five years.

Founder Sarah-Jane Strutz started creating bath products for fun and has now expanded, employing staff, and building her following online amassing more than 5,400 Instagram followers and over 26,000 Tiktok followers.

In early 2022 Sarah-Jane was at a point with Hot Mess Body where she wanted to take the next step to enable her business to grow. Sarah-Jane chose to partner with Stockland and join the S Connect Starter program as a way to trial her business within a shopping centre environment.

"The opportunity to expand my business into a more permanent, physical retail space and receive business and retail coaching along the way was a dream come true," Sarah-Jane said.

"I have felt very well supported and I have learnt skills that are setting me up for success, wherever my business ultimately takes me."

S Connect Starter is about a commitment between the entrepreneur and Stockland, working together to drive business success.

“Supporting entrepreneurs with a passion for their business is at the heart of what we do. At Stockland we believe the future of retail is about creating places that are at the heart of communities, provide exceptional convenience and offer tailored and unique experiences for our customers.

“We are delighted to also welcome The Cacti Folk to Stockland Green Hills in early June and Zett Sports to Stockland Merrylands in mid-June. We are really excited to offer these types of opportunities to emerging retailers in our Town Centres. The level of interest we have seen in the incubation program to date is exceptional,” Ms Abbey said.

More information on the S Connect Starter program is available via www.stockland.com.au/starter

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Notes

[The Cacti Folk](#), run by Kim Daly, offers an array of specialty and curated cacti and succulents that Kim and her family have grown and propagated themselves. Kim began her business in late 2020 and has over 6000 Instagram followers and a loyal customer base in the Hunter region.

[Zett Sports](#) is a home-grown, local mix martial arts equipment brand that will make its first direct to consumer store debut at Stockland Merrylands. With 33 mix martial arts gyms and studios in a 15km radius to Stockland Merrylands, Zett Sports hopes to support all MMA enthusiasts and customers can buy direct from Zett Sports.

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About Stockland: Stockland (ASX: SGP) was founded in 1952 and has grown to become one of Australia’s largest diversified property groups – owning, developing, and managing a large portfolio of retail town centres, residential communities, retirement living villages, workplace and logistics assets. Stockland is recognised as one of the most sustainable real estate companies in the world by the S&P Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI) and as a global sector leader by the Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark. Stockland is also an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality, as recognised by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). www.stockland.com.au