

Liquor industry is whisking up North



HARRY MURTOUGH



SPIRIT: Turner Stillhouse founder and owner Justin Turner launches the newly built whisky distillery in the Tamar Valley. Picture: Phillip Biggs

NORTHERN Tasmania is joining a state and nation in growing its liquor trade.

The state's spirits production has been on the up-and-up these past few years according to Turner Stillhouse owner Justin Turner, who formally launched his whisky distillery alongside Premier and Treasurer Peter Gutwein on Wednesday.

"Tasmania is actually leading the charge in the Australia market," Mr Turner said.

"Tasmanian distilleries have been named the best single malt whiskys in the world multiple times over the last few years and a number of craft distilleries have opened up."

Mr Turner said based on the size of his distillery, it's shaping up to be one of the larger operations of its nature to open up in Tasmania.

"The craft whiskys have substantial demand, we plan to do both a single malt as well as a couple of American style whiskeys," he said.

While the gin industry has been the fastest growing industry in Australia over the past two years, Mr Turner said whisky has been the more notable product to hit overseas markets.

"Australia, and in particular Tasmania, is starting to be become joined Japanese whiskys globally when people think of non-Scottish whiskys," he said.

"The quality is there, I just think we need to supply enough product to meet the demand of the customers."

There are about 20 whisky distilleries across Tasmania.

According to the Tasmania Visitor Survey 2018, more than 126,000 people visited a Tasmanian distillery which was an increase of three per cent from 2017. Mr Turner said the whisky community is very collaborative and egalitarian as far as distilleries go and was great to be a part of.

"There's certainly always a competitive mindset that we all are going to market with because we want consumers to drink our products," he said.

"But at the same time the more of us that succeed to better it is for the industry as a whole."

Mr Gutwein said the government's trade strategy, which aims to grow export trade by \$15 billion by 2050, is aimed at boosting industries such as the whisky trade.

"We [the government] have been working closely with the Tasmanian Whisky and Spirits Association and providing them with funding to undertake a number of whisky industry development activities to help focus global attention on the Tasmanian whisky sector," he said.

"Tasmania's wine, whisky and spirits industry continues to grow both in production and in international reputation and has played a critical part in driving our visitation growth and tourism numbers, especially in our regional areas like the Tamar Valley."