

# Courier Mail

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## Lager louts are out in this ale nation

- by: **Rory Gibson**
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LEADING BRAND: With the Fosters takeover, Coopers Sparkling Ale is now the leading Aussie beer. Picture: Russell Millard

Source: The Advertiser

**A CURIOUS byproduct of Foster's becoming a foreign-owned entity last week is that Australia's national beer is no longer a lager.**

Sure, the biggest-selling beers might be Foux Gold and VB, but they are foreign-owned.

The biggest-selling Australian-owned beer is Coopers Pale Ale, and the second-biggest is the Sparkling Ale, which are both ales, not lagers.

Throw into the mix the fact that many of the beers made by the other independent Australian brewers are also ales - pale ales, porters, stouts, IPAs, etc - and suddenly our image as a nation of lager louts is looking a bit shaky. But that's the thing about figures, you can bend them to your will. Coopers, the largest Australian-owned brewer, has a market share of about 4 per cent of total beer sales in Australia, and the rest of the Australian craft brewers combined make up about 0.2 per cent.

"Our rise to our new-found status, on the eve of our 150th anniversary (next year), was achieved almost by default," Coopers managing director Dr Tim Cooper says.

"However, it is a badge of honour we will wear with pride as it represents the reward for 150 years of hard work by the Cooper family."

While Coopers revels in its role as Australia's flagship brewer, the minnows of the industry have formed a "brewers' union" to give small independents a voice in what they see as an increasingly hostile environment. The Australian Real Craft Brewers Association only allows 100 per cent Australian-owned brewers to join, which means makers of fine beers such as Matilda Bay, James Squire, Little Creatures, White Rabbit and Stone & Wood are excluded because of their economic ties with multinationals. Some of the Queensland brewers that have signed up are Sunshine Coast Brewery, Bacchus Brewing, Brews Brothers, 4 Hearts and MT Brewery.

ARCBA founder Dave Hollyoak says it is becoming almost impossible for small, independent brewers. "Big companies control the bottle shops and the taps in the pubs," he says. "Australian craft brewers are being squeezed out of the market, and that means less choice for consumers and a dwindling local beer industry."

*[gibsonr@qnp.newsltd.com.au](mailto:gibsonr@qnp.newsltd.com.au)*