

Small bar boom cheers up city

LINDSAY McPHEE

A quiet revolution is taking place all over the Perth metropolitan area.

Inconspicuous small bars are opening their doors on laneways and alleys to little fanfare but are welcoming small crowds of loyal customers.

Thirty small bars have so far been given licences since the licence was introduced in 2007 — and five are waiting approval.

While it is still early days, the emergence of Perth's own small bar scene is tantalisingly close.

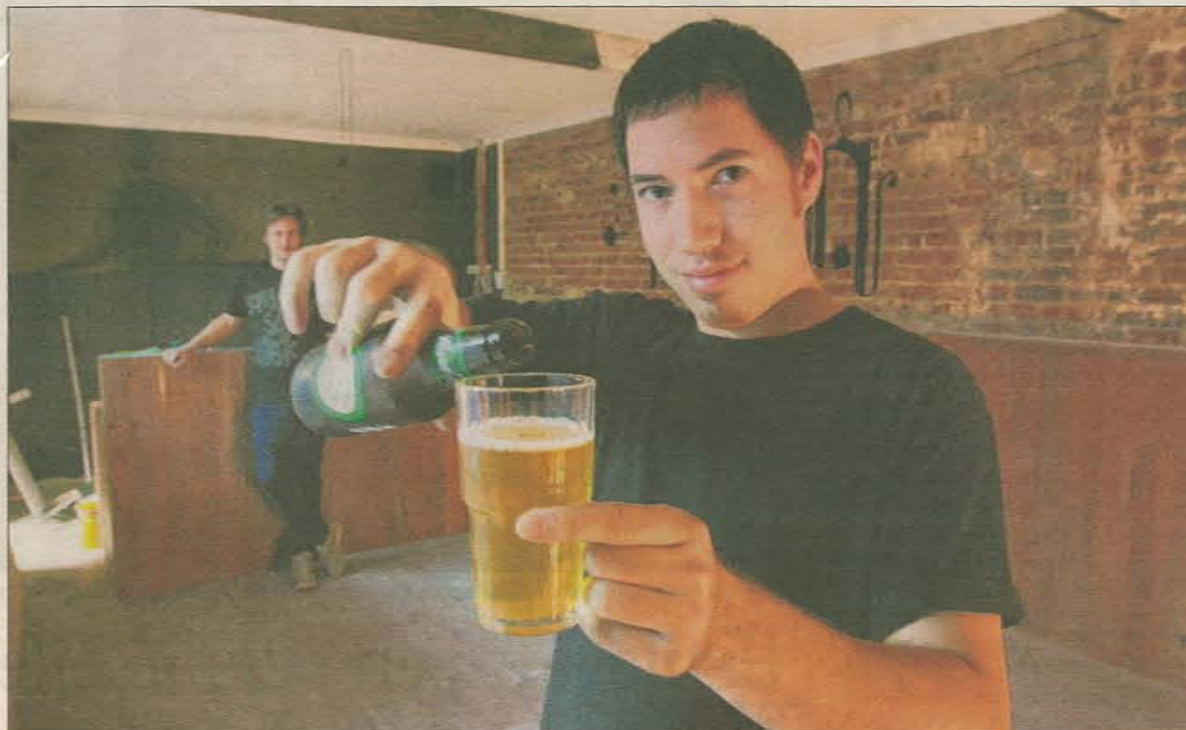
In the CBD, bars such as Helvetica, Alda's Cafe and Andaluz are just a few minutes walk apart and it is these clusters that may hold the key to bringing people back into the city out of work hours.

Jan Kulski and Talmage Anderson will open their inner city bar Ezra Pound in early August, transforming an empty shell into a 1930s-inspired speakeasy.

"It's quite exciting for us to be part of the new movement of small bars and part of a beautiful environment like a little laneway," Mr Anderson said. "We wanted to just bring a small bar to Perth that was based on quality products at an affordable price.

"It's a smaller environment, it's not like a club or a beer barn, it's just a nice place to hang out, whether you come for a quiet drink or for a social gathering and you don't have to deal with lines and crowds and live music."

And it's not just about the inner city — Pure Bar and Fire and Ice in



Countdown: Ezra Pound co-owner Talmage Anderson is just weeks away from opening in Northbridge. Picture: Guy Magowan

Subiaco, Mrs Brown in Fremantle and Double Lucky in Leederville are just a handful of small bars popping up in other suburbs.

Liquor industry lawyer and Small Bar Association of WA founder Dan Mossenson said small bar licences were intended to change Perth's drinking culture.

It would be successful but it would take time.

"The desire was to get away from the traditional hotels and tavern bars into something that was different

and unusual, each place offering a variety of services and facilities so people could drink in a quieter and more ambient atmosphere, which would change the mood and drinking outlook in the west," Mr Mossenson said.

"As more premises open and there's a greater public awareness of the diversity and the variety of services available, small bars will become more popular and will make a contribution to the social and hospitality scene.

"It took more than 20 years for Melbourne to reach the stage of development it has achieved and with the obstacles and formalities and frustrations that some of my clients have experienced in terms of preparing and presenting their applications, it will be a slow process for this to really take off here."

Gary Beadle, who opened 399 in Northbridge a fortnight ago, said he had tried to create a community bar that catered for all ages.

"Small bars will open things up to

BAR CLUSTER

Ezra Pound
189 William Street
(opens in August)

1907
26 Queen Street

Etro
49 King Street

Tiger Tiger Coffee Bar
329 Murray Street

Alda's Cafe
Wolf Lane

The George
216 St Georges Terrace

Helvetica
Rear of 101 St Georges Terrace,
Laneway off Howard Street

Andaluz
21 Howard Street

Canton Lounge Bar
532 Hay Street

a broader range of people who can go out and enjoy themselves without a rowdy room full of louts," he said.

"Having all these small bars will help lift the standards of service and hopefully people will have a better experience going out. I'd like it to be the end of the big session pubs. I don't think they really have a place in a modern culture and I hope that this small bar emergence makes people drink more sensibly."