

Combining kid wrangling and craft brewing

28 August 2017

When father-of-three Lachlan MacBean grew disenchanted with his job, his wife encouraged him to become the primary caregiver and pursue his dream of launching his own business.

Lachlan MacBean is the kind of blokey bloke you don't expect to be challenging conventional gender roles. After studying horticulture at uni, he ended up as sales manager for his father's tree nursery in NSW's Southern Highlands. A long-time home brewer, he then transitioned into the craft beer industry, joining what was then a small Hunter Valley-based operation called Bluetongue Brewery in 2004.

But what started out a dream job eventually changed into something different. "When I started at Bluetongue there was an inclusive, family feel to the place," he says. "Then it got sold to Coca-Cola Amatil and became more corporate. I was one of the senior brewers and as production was ramped up, we all found ourselves doing lots of shift work. That meant I wasn't seeing much of my kids. My wife, who knew I'd always dreamed of brewing my own beers, encouraged me to quit my job, look after the kids and launch what became [Grainfed Brewing Company](#), the craft beer provider of choice for Newcastle residents."

"I tell people it was like doing two full-time jobs at once, only one of which you had any hope of getting paid for."

Two full-time jobs at once

MacBean's wife resumed her nursing career and he took on the responsibility of looking after three kids, all aged under seven. Once he got on top of that challenge, he started on the hard grind of brewing, distributing and marketing his craft beers throughout NSW's second most populated region.

"Two of the kids were at school, so I tried to schedule as many business activities as possible between 9am – 3pm," MacBean explains. "Then I'd do more work at night when they had all gone to bed. The youngest was three when I started Grainfed, so I'd just have to take him along if I had a business meeting or needed to deliver a van full of beer. I tell people it was like doing two full-time jobs at once, only one of which you had any hope of getting paid for."

Do what's right for your family

While today's fathers are getting more involved in childrearing, MacBean says he still experienced a "bit of stigma" around being an (entrepreneurial) house husband. But he has no regrets and encourages other men not to let social expectations discourage them from taking on a caregiving role.

"The time I've been able to spend with my kids and the deep connection I've forged with them as a result is priceless. It wouldn't have happened if I was working a normal full-time job," he says. "The only regret my wife and I have is that she hasn't been able to spend more time with the kids. But as the business grows, she should be able to cut back her work hours. Who knows, maybe she and the kids will end up working at Grainfed with me down the track."

Flout conventions but don't take foolish risks

Just because MacBean isn't fazed by the raised eyebrows of judgemental acquaintances, or hesitant to change careers or start a business, doesn't mean he's oblivious to the possibility of things going wrong.

"Probably because I'm married to someone who's worked in intensive care units, I'm aware that worst case scenarios can and do happen," he says. "I've got life insurance for myself and public liability insurance for my business. As Grainfed scales up, I'll be taking out key person income cover and transit insurance for transporting stock."

If you're considering making a career change or launching a business, you should discuss what cover will be appropriate to your changed circumstances with a [Steadfast Insurance Broker](#). Your broker can get to know your business inside and out, and be able to recommend the best policies for you and your business.