

'Daigou queen' offers to save Napoleon Perdis



Sue Mitchell *Columnist*

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"Daigou queen" Livia Wang and former Witchery executive Henry Lee have come to the rescue of Napoleon Perdis, offering to buy his eponymous make-up empire, which went into voluntary administration in January.

[<https://www.afr.com/business/retail/napoleon-perdis-group-goes-into-voluntary-administration-20190131-hlap2h>]

Ms Wang and Mr Lee have formed a private investment company, Kuba Investments, which proposes to take control of Napoleon Perdis Cosmetics through a deed of company arrangement (DOCA).

The value of their offer has not been revealed, but administrator Simon Cathro of insolvency firm Worrells said on Thursday the proposal would result in a better return to creditors than if Napoleon Perdis were liquidated.

Creditors, who are owed more than \$22 million and include the ANZ bank, the ATO, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries and Myer, are due to meet on April 8 to consider whether to accept the DOCA.

Mr Perdis, who founded the business 24 years ago, and his wife Soula-Marie Perdis support the deal and have agreed to transfer their shares to Kuba as part of the proposal.

They will continue to play a role with the company as creative directors. Other key stakeholders including API's Priceline chain, which inked a nationwide distribution deal with Napoleon Perdis last year, also support the proposal.



Napoleon Perdis' cosmetics empire could be rescued by "daigou queen" Livia Wang. **Steven Siewert**

It is understood Ms Wang and Mr Lee plan to accelerate Napoleon Perdis's overseas expansion. Ms Wang is known as the "daigou queen" for her work promoting personal shoppers, who buy goods for consumers in China.

Ms Wang, 38, is managing director of Access Brand Management, which manages and represents Australian and international brands in the China market.

Mr Lee, 49, is a former Witchery, Mimco and Country Road executive and has more than 20 years' experience in fashion retailing and finance industries.

Livia Wang plans to accelerate Napoleon Perdis' overseas expansion. **Ryan Stuart**

For the past four years he has been chief executive of Postie Group, part of Steinhoff South East Asia's Pepkor unit, which also owns department stores Harris Scarfe and Best & Less.

"Kuba's investment will ensure loyal customers can continue to purchase Napoleon Perdis in over 700 storefronts and keeps more than 250 existing staff members in employment," Ms Wang said.

"We will leverage off the restructure undertaken by Worrells and continue to work closely with Napoleon, and the teams, to build the brand both in Australia and overseas".

Teetering for almost a year

Worrells continued to trade the Napoleon Perdis business after it went into administration but closed half its 56 stores.

Documents lodged with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission last month revealed Napoleon Perdis had been teetering on the brink of insolvency for almost a year before it went into voluntary administration.

Mr Perdis had been looking for buyers or investors for more than 18 months, appointing Sydney-based investment bank Allier Capital in late 2017 to find investors willing to fund the company's expansion plans, which included re-entering the United States market and expanding into Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

However, it is understood potential investors were spooked by the rapid growth of Mecca [<https://www.afr.com/business/retail/mecca-brands-goes-mega-as-sales-soar-20180531-h10smz>] and Sephora, [<https://www.afr.com/business/retail/sephora-sets-up-shop-in-david-jones-20180918-h15jeq>] which dominate the \$2.4 billion premium beauty market.

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