

National NSW [Property development](#)

‘Keeping the Eskys’: North shore bar preserved in new boarding house



Andrew Taylor

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Famed for serving drinks from Eskys, the Pickled Possum is one of Sydney’s most beloved drinking holes and one of the few late-night venues on the north shore.



An artist’s impression of the proposed boarding house development on the site of the Pickled Possum in Neutral Bay. MOD URBAN

But it is facing the wrecking ball after owner Bob Patterson submitted plans to North Sydney Council to revamp the former piano bar in Neutral Bay, which has hosted the likes of Janet

Jackson and Chris Hemsworth.

It will be replaced by a 78-room boarding house with ground floor commercial and retail space fronting Military Road under the \$15.6 million plans submitted to North Sydney Council.

Patterson said a bar and function space would be included in the new six-storey short stay development and elements of the Pickled Possum, including the old panelling and bar, will be fitted into the new venue.

“We’ll even be keeping the Eskys we serve drinks from,” he said. “It will be old school and we’re not going to take the opportunity to modernise it or even go retro.”

“I’m passionate about the Pickled Possum and I bought it to preserve it. It means a lot to me.”

Patterson purchased the site in 2021, but refused to reveal his identity, insisting local media refer to him as “Possum Bob”. He also purchased the dilapidated Italian Forum in Leichhardt earlier this year.

Named after the possums that used to hang over the door frames in the hope of being fed by patrons, the Pickled Possum was previously owned by John Oseckas and Margurite Smith for 38 years.



The Pickled Possum in Neutral Bay is one of the new late-night venues on Sydney’s north shore.

NARELLE AUTIO

Planning documents said about 2400 bed spaces in boarding houses in the North Sydney council area had been lost between 1984 and 2013 due to property development.

Patterson said there had been significant population growth in the north shore but a lack of new affordable housing.



Pickled Possum owner Bob Patterson said a bar would be included as part of a boarding house proposed for the site of the Pickled Possum. DION GEORGOPOULOS

The proposed redevelopment of the Pickled Possum comes as eastern suburbs residents prepared to rally on Saturday in opposition to [plans to shut down The Village Inn in Paddington and turn it into a dress shop](#).

A North Sydney Council spokeswoman said the Pickled Possum may disappear if the development application is approved but “we’d expect to see a new form of nightlife continue in the space”.

North Sydney councillor MaryAnn Beregi said the Pickled Possum was a long-standing institution on the north shore.

“I’m sure many people who live or have lived on the north shore have a memory or memories of visiting the Pickled Possum on their way home for a final drink or two and to stretch their evening out a bit longer,” she said.

“It’s not flash but I don’t think it’s meant to be – it has its own unique decor and is one of the few venues open after 11pm.”

Night Time Industries Association chief executive Mick Gibb said property redevelopment was a “practical reality” as Sydney changed but had to include space for art, culture, entertainment and hospitality.

“The state government’s push for higher-density living can be a great opportunity for the nighttime economy,” he said. “But it requires addressing sound and noise challenges head on so venues and residents can live side by side.”

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