

THE VERTICAL PUB COMES TO SUBURBIA



Less than two months after he won the coveted Hotel of the Year for his mega-pub The Prince, Chris Feros has opened a brand new venue, The Highfield, Caringbah. And if the crowds are any indication, the Sutherland Shire's first vertical pub looks set to win awards of its own.
By Craig Vaughan

Four years ago, on a quiet corner behind a shopping strip in suburban Caringbah, Chris Feros saw something nobody else did.

To the untrained eye it was the Caringbah Bizzos. An empty, run-down, businessmen's club on the verge of bankruptcy.

But Feros saw something different.

In his mind Feros envisioned a vertical pub - three levels of original, high quality and markedly different venues in one - complete with a roof-top bar with views all the way to the city.

It has taken four years- but now the rest of us can finally see what lived in Feros' head the whole time, the amazing Highfield Caringbah.

ON TOP OF UGLY

The Feros Group has literally, and figuratively built on the success of its award-winning Ugly Pizza and Huxley's Sports Bar.

The two popular venues opened two years ago on the ground floor of the MacKay Street site, now known as The Highfield.

While big crowds were enjoying the New York-style pizzas at Ugly's or the burgers, hot dogs, and beer in the hidden away Huxleys - Feros and his team were transforming the upper floors.

In mid-December 2017, two new venues, The Public House and The Botanical opened on those two floors above

On the middle floor, The Public House is described as a 'punters paradise'.

It has a large TAB, gaming room and four huge screens- each one

made up of nine 47 inch plasmas- playing possibly every sport in the world at the same time.

It has domestic and craft beers on tap and a menu featuring staples like schnitties and steaks and four huge screens.

On the floor above is The Botanical. It has a dedicated roof-top cocktail bar, a living green wall and restaurant quality, bistro-style food.

It also has spectacular views of the city skyline, which on a clear day stretch all the way to Chatswood, 40kms away.

Feros said they opened up each venue a few weeks apart in December last year.

"Since we opened, trade has been crazy," said Feros, who lives in the Sutherland Shire.

"We have been flying since we opened and have just hung on and tried to keep up."

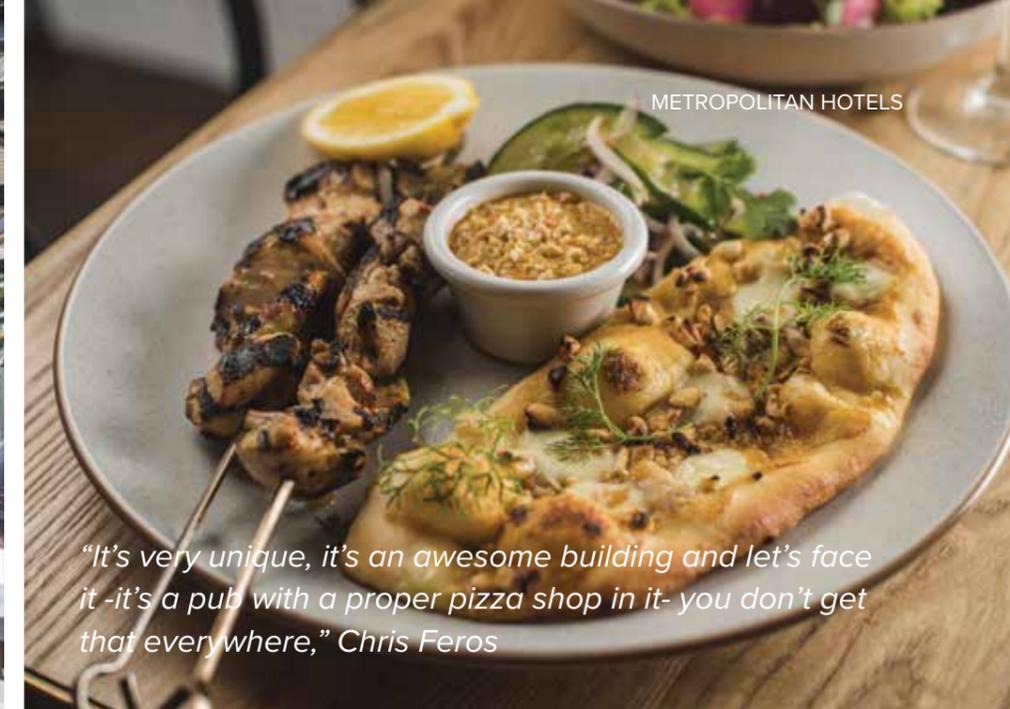
Feros said it's been a long journey for The Highfield.

"It's been four years since I first walked into the venue," said Feros.

"But it has been worth it."

"It took a while because we spent a lot of time trying to get it right. We had a lot of ideas and we were looking at restaurants with full table service and putting all sorts of different things in there.

"But in the end we decided to stick with what we do best. We decided to go with bistro-style food, but food that is a cut above - the kind of thing that we have been doing well all along."



"It's very unique, it's an awesome building and let's face it -it's a pub with a proper pizza shop in it- you don't get that everywhere," Chris Feros

A VERTICAL PUB

Feros said the vertical pub is pretty uncommon in Sydney - and particularly in the suburbs.

But he said he and his team were careful not to forget who their market is.

"We are in the suburbs and we wanted to be true to that," said Feros.

"Even though it's a multi-level building, if you unstacked the parts it's a pub, a nice one, but still a pub.

"We call it a vertical pub because we don't want people thinking that we are a city venue when we are still in the suburbs."

Like he does for all his pubs, Feros and his team looked closely at other venues for inspiration. But he said in the end there is no single place that inspired The Highfield look.

"It's more little bits of lots of other places," said Feros.

"It's very unique. it's an awesome building and let's face it it's a pub with a pizza shop in it, you don't get that everywhere."

IRONS IN THE FIRE

At the same time as Feros was developing The Highfield, his company also built The Prince, in nearby Kirrawee, from scratch.

The Prince was awarded City Hotel of the Year at the 2017 AHA NSW Awards and Feros said it was a great morale booster.

"You put so much time and effort and work into it, it's very rewarding to be recognised, it really is," he said.

"The community embraced The Prince and the result of that is we get accolades for it so it is a win on all levels."

Despite opening two new venues in as many years, Feros has no plans to take a breather.

"We keep going, it's what we do," said Feros.

"We are going to do some small renovations on The Taren Point Hotel, (also in the Shire) and The Terry Hills Tavern."

"And there are a couple of opportunities coming up that we want to jump on.

"We have our eye on something at the moment, another greenfield site which we are very excited about, so keep an eye out."