

R&CA Warns City's Gas Restrictions Could Erode Sydney's Food Identity

The Restaurant & Catering Association (R&CA) is urging the City of Sydney to reconsider its move to restrict gas connections in new developments, warning the decision could unintentionally disrupt the viability of many foodservice businesses and strip the city of its diverse food culture.

The new planning controls, set to take effect from 31 December 2025, limit food and beverage tenancies in new mixed-use developments to a single gas connection. While current operators are unaffected for now, industry leaders are concerned about where this could lead.

"Sydney's hospitality industry cannot absorb another poorly thought-out policy," said R&CA National President John Hart OAM. "This restriction may not apply to existing businesses, but it sets a precedent that risks penalising future operators and shrinking the diversity of our food scene."

R&CA has warned that certain cuisines simply cannot be prepared using electric appliances without compromising flavour, texture, and speed. Many Asian, Middle Eastern, and European restaurants rely on the intensity and responsiveness of gas to maintain their food standards and service efficiency.

"You can't replicate wok cooking or chargrilling with induction," Hart said. "This isn't a lifestyle choice, it's the difference between an authentic meal and something substandard. It also means higher operating costs for small businesses that are already on the edge."

The Association is calling for a more measured and inclusive approach, including meaningful consultation with the hospitality sector and clear guidelines that support, rather than burden—operators.

"There is a pathway to transition, but it can't come at the cost of food quality, cultural expression, or commercial viability," said Hart. "This policy risks pushing new restaurants out of the city altogether, which would be a blow to Sydney's reputation as a global dining destination."

R&CA is calling on the City of Sydney to:

- Commit to ongoing consultation with industry stakeholders before expanding restrictions or applying them to redevelopment or renovation projects.
- Provide clear protections for existing venues, ensuring future planning changes don't force costly retrofits or reapplications.
- Consider financial support or grants for operators exploring energy alternatives—especially those in leased properties with limited control over infrastructure.

“The food we serve reflects the communities we represent. We can't afford to lose that over a poorly drafted planning policy,” Hart said.

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About the Restaurant & Catering Association (R&CA):

The Restaurant & Catering Association is the national industry body representing over 57,000 cafés, restaurants and catering businesses across Australia. R&CA advocates on behalf of its members to the government, supports industry development, and champions a sustainable and prosperous hospitality sector.