

SKYE

HOTEL SUITES

ROOM SERVICE



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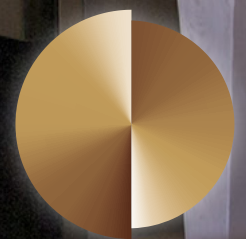


ROOM SERVICE

SKYE Hotel Suites is Crown Group's first foray into the boutique luxury hotel business. Director Wayne Taranto tells Niki Waldegrave how the brand inspires and invigorates the soul

Written by: **Niki Waldegrave**
Produced by: **Justin Nelson**





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Expanding its high-end luxury living, Crown Group has launched its new five-star offering, SKYE Hotel Suites, in bustling western Sydney suburb, Parramatta.

The flagship Arc development – which is mixed use, so one portion residential, the other, hotel – is an architectural masterpiece. Designed by Koichi Takada Architects and Allen Jack + Cottier in a 28-storey luxury residential and commercial development known as Parramatta's 'Vertical Village', it boasts 519 apartments and 72 luxury studios, one and two-bedroom hotel-style suites.

All are furnished with bespoke fittings and it also has a state-of-the-art fitness centre, resort-style pool and sauna, conference room facilities, alfresco dining and a retail piazza.

The bar on level 26 will provide 270-degree views of Sydney's skyline and the base of the building offers old world charm as, when excavating, they discovered the

archaeological space of the Wheat Sheaf Hotel from the 1840s.

As well as an underlying convict hut, wheelwright's workshop and 1,400 artefacts ranging from plates, medicine bottles, old cutlery, bottles and glassware that were used in the actual pub, they discovered – and restored – the old cellar.

Inspired, Director of Hotels and Suites, Wayne Taranto, persuaded Crown Group CEO, Iwan Sunito, to operate a traditional-based restaurant within the complex, paying homage to its roost. Husk & Vine, a modern Australian-style menu, with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern influence, opened in June.

"We've got the original planks of the hotel cellar which sits right next to the archaeological space," explains Taranto. "The name came about with the husk being the core of the ingredient and referring to the old Wheat Sheaf Hotel, the correlation between wheat and husk.

"And the Vine came about from





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having a very boutique wine list that complimented the food that we're offering in the menu."

Foodies flock in to sample delights from ambassador chef Stephen Seckold, formerly of Flying Fish, while locals and historians are seduced by the heritage centre that has been created on-site.

"The plan is that over time, we'd like to showcase and glass canvas some of the artefacts," he adds. "Not only in the heritage centre, but in our lobby and our common areas of the building."

The suburb, which was recently named the most liveable in NSW and is forecast to grow in population by 40% by 2031, has a strong community. So much so, that when building was in the final stages, an elderly local walked into the lobby, handed the concierge team a key and said, "you may need this".

Taranto, says concierge asked him what it's for, and the man said he was handed this key through generations, and was aware it opened an old hotel in Parramatta,



in

Wayne Taranto, Director of Hotels and Suites

but didn't know where it was.

"He said, 'when I heard that you'd found this hotel, I knew that this is it, the actual key that opened the entry to the door of that hotel'. He was right, it fits the original door of the Wheat Sheaf."

Taranto was poached from Accor, where he was general manager, by Crown Group CEO, Iwan Sunito, with the mandate to establish the hotel group, establish the brand, SKYE, and launch the first hotel. He's been involved from concept to launch, and engaged influential Sydney



“We achieved some amazing financial milestones and made the top 25 golf courses in the country”

– Wayne Taranto, Director of Hotels and Suites

designer Nic Graham (behind from QT Hotels) and hospitality consultancy SITE, who interpreted the archaeological space to convert the old world into the new world.

The complex has been heaving during its first few months, and Taranto aims to keep the momentum going. With a capacity of around 200, large rooms can be broken down into smaller ones. And a gigantic space hovers above the beautiful courtyard, which overlooks the pool deck – perfect for conferences and weddings.

Primarily catering to the corporate market Monday to Thursday, weekend clientele is very much driven by leisure, events and activities happening in the local area.

A stone's throw from Olympic Park and ANZ Stadium, it's a no brainer for those wanting something more luxurious than Airbnb when going to see upcoming concerts such as Ed Sheeran and Bruno Mars or sports matches such as the Bledisloe Cup.

SKYE is also introducing and



\$100mn

Annual revenue at
Skye Hotel Suites
(part of Crown Group Holdings)

pioneering new technology, including intuitive tablets, which guests can use for free anywhere in the hotel, and the SkyeHotels app, which includes the ability to upload a mobile key, access the car park, hotel facilities and see what's happening in the local area.

“Some people like a traditional check-in,” he explains, “but others like that seamless experience

like with airlines where it's all via kiosk, and you can download your boarding pass to your phone and go straight to the gate.

“We're applying that same principle to the hotel for those who are time poor and like to go straight to their room.”

The plan is to add three more

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central locations by 2020 – 73 luxury apartments on Clarence Street, so a prime CBD location – and the third property, 95 apartments and a 500 feet auditorium in Green Square, Botany Road.

“We’d like to become a global group,” adds Taranto. “We have two more great sites and moving forward, our focus will be the east coast of Australia, and then to branch out overseas

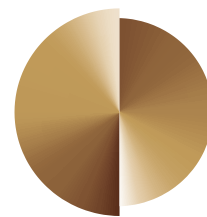


and take SKYE Hotels global.”

Taranto says he’s formed some “incredible friendships” in his 24-year hospitality career, and recalls his proudest achievement in 2010 when he was managing Rydges Capricorn Resort in Yeppoon, Central Queensland.

“We achieved some amazing financial milestones and made the top 25 golf courses in the country,” he says. “We won a raft of awards and I eventually left because I received a promotion back here in Sydney.

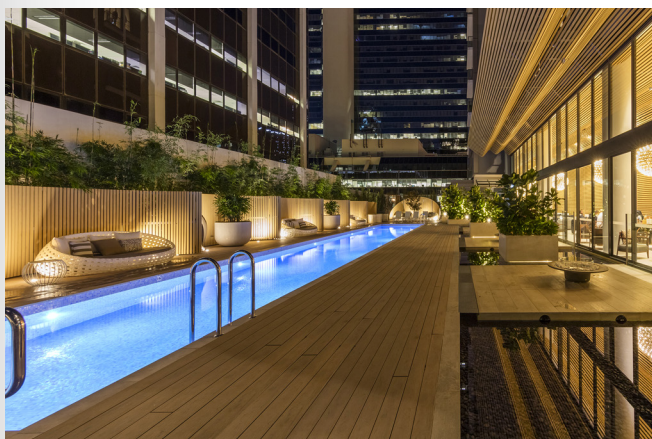
“There was a five kilometre stretch of road leading in and out of the resort and when I left, they gave me a guard of honour the whole way to farewell me out of the resort for the last time. I’ll never forget that as long as I live.” ■



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SKYE
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30 Hunter Street
Parramatta, NSW Australia 2150

Tel. (000) 000-0000

www.skyehotels.com.au

