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McDonald's Proposal Sparks Concerns Among Newtown Businesses

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A proposed 24-hour McDonald's restaurant in Newtown, a popular suburb in Sydney's Inner West, is drawing strong opposition from local businesses and residents. McDonald's Australia has submitted a development application to the City of Sydney to open a store at 212-214 King Street. The proposal, valued at approximately \$1.7 million, outlines a restaurant that would operate around the clock, seven days a week.

King Street is already known for its vibrant mix of independently owned eateries. Within a 170-meter stretch, there are at least six chicken-focused food outlets, including KFC,

Broaster Chicken, El Jannah, Gami Chicken, Ogalo Newtown, and Clem's. Business owners in the area fear that the arrival of McDonald's could severely impact their operations by drawing away customers and undercutting prices.

Ruben, the managing director of Broaster Chicken, stated that rising costs have already strained his business. He believes the introduction of a McDonald's just across the road would worsen the situation. "We're already affected by the cost-of-living crisis. A 24-hour McDonald's could be the final nail in the coffin," he said. "We may have to close or relocate."

Razwan Raza, who runs Ogalo Newtown, echoed similar worries. Paying \$12,000 per month in rent, plus other expenses, he said, competing against a multinational chain would be difficult. "If McDonald's comes, our turnover will drop, and we may not be able to cover staff wages. We're barely managing as it is," he said.

In response, community members have launched an online petition opposing the development. As of late July, the petition has gathered more than 770 signatures. Critics argue that a 24-hour fast food chain could alter the area's character, increase foot traffic and noise, and place local businesses at risk.

McDonald's Australia responded to the concerns by emphasizing the project's potential benefits. In a public statement, the company said the new restaurant would create over 100 local jobs and contribute around \$2 million in investment. "We are committed to working with councils and communities to ensure restaurants are thoughtfully designed and consider local needs," the company said.

The City of Sydney is accepting public feedback on the application until August 7. A final decision will be made following a review of community submissions and planning assessments. The outcome is expected to influence future fast food developments in heritage precincts across Sydney.