

15 FEBRUARY 2023

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT BRINGS OUR CITY TO LIFE

A 24% spending increase in the Sydney CBD during last year's fare-free public transport period has prompted calls for the success to be repeated during World Pride.

Business NSW's review of the NSW Government's fare-free public transport initiative – using Opal data – revealed a 35% increase in CBD patronage during 14-26 April 2022.

The review, using Mastercard credit and debit data, also showed retail, art, entertainment, recreation and accommodation benefited the most – seeing increases of more than 30% in turnover during the 12-day period.

Business Sydney Executive Director Paul Nicolaou said after years of lockdown misery, the increase in foot traffic in the CBD kick-started the city over Easter.

"Travellers enjoyed the city's streets and attractions, and now continue to add colour to the city," Mr Nicolaou said.

"We congratulate the NSW Government and the Transport Minister David Elliott for implementing this important initiative because it played a major role in reactivating the Sydney economy post COVID.

"But we want to see this rolled out again during appropriate events.

"A fare-free period for public transport for the upcoming World Pride event would give another well-timed economic boost to the city, and potentially future Easter-Anzac and Christmas-New Year periods."

The analysis revealed an 89% increase in children/youth trips and a 23% increase in trips on weekends.

Ferry (+179,600 or 110%), light rail (+83,700 or 17%) and train trips (+133,000 or 7%) all increased, while buses saw a decline of 11% or -68,000 during that period.

"This initiative played an important role in encouraging more people onto public transport, making them more likely to use it again," Mr Nicolaou said.

Australian Retailers Association CEO Paul Zahra said the fare-free initiative was "a key driver to getting people back into the city", while Restaurant & Catering Australia CEO Suresh Manickam said "R&CA supported this initiative as a way to encourage Sydneysiders to come back into the CBD and enjoy our magnificent city".

Transport and Mastercard data that was analysed is specific to postcode 2000 only (Barangaroo, Dawes Point, Haymarket, Millers Point, Parliament House, Sydney, Sydney South and The Rocks).

MEDIA RELEASE

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About Business NSW

Formerly the NSW Business Chamber, **Business NSW** is the peak policy and advocacy body which has been representing businesses in NSW since 1826. We represent almost 50,000 businesses.

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