



10 July 2024

Business Sydney welcomes this opportunity to comment on the operation of bike share arrangements in our city.

In addition to making this submission, we would welcome the opportunity to appear before the committee to provide further context.

INTRODUCTION

Following years of close observation, Business Sydney concludes that when it comes to bike share there has been a failure on the part of operators and on the regulatory system.

Operators have either lacked the back-of-office capacity to support the system so that operational guidelines are met.

At the same time, there appears to have been a failure on the part of the regulatory system to ensure adherence to the guidelines.

Too often we see bikes that have been discarded irresponsibly. Also too often the bikes' luggage trays become receptacles for rubbish.

Assessing the performance of the current system can be demonstrated by making a line-by-line comparison of the guidelines and adherence with respect to each.

BUSINESS SYDNEY VIEW ON BIKE CULTURE

To capture our position in a nutshell, Business Sydney has never opposed the introduction of bike lanes or general encouragement of bike riding.

The benefits are well documented in terms of reduced motor vehicle use, less pressure on public transport services and the promotion of personal fitness.

We have been critical of examples where bike lanes have been pursued without proper consultation with businesses, residents and public utilities.

State and local government support for share bike arrangements is an extension of these pro-bike riding policies.

However, it is clear to Business Sydney that the share bike experiment has failed.

Operators have let our city and themselves down by failing to adhere to local government guidelines that apply to bike share arrangements.

Further, local councils and government agencies have failed to adequately police bike share operations to ensure adherence to published guidelines.

Bike share particularly in the CBD and its adjoining communities will only reach its full potential if operators and regulators ensure the guidelines are met fully.

PERFORMANCE IN GUIDELINE ADHERENCE

As referred to above, a useful way to gauge the impact of bike share is to match individual guidelines to observed performance.

The guidelines in question apply to six council areas — Canada Bay, City of Sydney, Inner West, Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra.

Guideline: Operators must inform their customers through their apps about correct bike parking, bike safety checks and responsible riding.

Business Sydney: Some riders do the right thing in parking bikes but many others don't leaving bikes in inconvenient places often on their sides sprawled on footpaths.

When deployed all bicycles must have bells or other warning devices, helmets, front and rear lights, and a rear reflector as per Australian Standards.

Bikes observed in the city might well have the warning devices and lights as stipulated but it is rare to see helmets in front baskets as required, a clear safety concern.

Bike placement must not interfere with pedestrian access or amenity.

This guideline is regularly breached with numerous bikes parked or lying inconveniently and a potential risk for pedestrians.

Operators must have a geo-fencing capability for preferred parking and exclusion zones in high traffic areas.

Operators might have geo-fencing capability but it is also apparent that it is not working efficiently or effectively.

Operators must monitor the location of bikes at least daily.

This guideline is clearly not adhered to judging by the number of bikes left in often isolated locations for long periods.

Operators must enable easy reporting of faulty or damaged bikes, missing helmets or bikes parked in inappropriate locations, through their app, website, email and a fully dedicated phone number available 24/7.

This guideline might or might not be followed to the letter but our principal concern is the absence in so many cases of helmets, which are a vital piece of safety equipment.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to the operation of share bikes both sides of the equation — operators and regulators — must lift their game.

Notwithstanding the attractions and benefits of bike use, bike share arrangements are giving this service a bad reputation.

Business Sydney is concerned that operators are under-resourced and unable to satisfy the guidelines as a consequence.

It appears that councils, as regulatory authorities, are similarly under-resourced to enable proper adherence to the guidelines.

In the absence of improved performance by both sides, we see the possibility of bike share operators withdrawing due to the commercial challenges.

Such an outcome would be unfortunate as Business Sydney is keen to see bike share arrangements work for the benefit of our city and community.

ABOUT BUSINESS SYDNEY

Business Sydney is the voice for business in Sydney. It advocates, influences and delivers policies and outcomes to drive economic growth and create opportunities to invest, work, live and visit the city. For nearly 200 years, it has worked to advance Sydney as a global, competitive, and liveable city.

Its network includes leading businesses across financial and professional services, construction and development, health, education, arts and culture, tourism and hospitality, as well as technology, transport, and logistics.

Through Business Sydney's association with Business NSW and My Business, it also influences and delivers on a state and national platform.

Business Sydney can proudly trace its history to 1826 when the Sydney Chamber of Commerce was established as the first organisation of its kind in the fledgling colony.

In 2006, it became the Sydney Business Chamber and now to reflect a broader reach, influence, and strength, the organisation transformed to become Business Sydney.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Nicolaou', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul Nicolaou

Executive Director
Business Sydney