

New year's wish list for a fun and prosperous Sydney

Paul Nicolaou



Sydney should have reached the end of 2024 with a collective spring in its step. Instead, it is closing out an otherwise successful year with a bloody-minded industrial dispute.

The combined rail unions have managed to stall the resurgence of our wonderful city's legendary mojo.

Like many world cities, Sydney has faced a very challenging year.

Business difficulties have been compounded by high interest rates, crippling insurance and energy costs, staff shortages and nagging inflation.

I'm an optimist, so I also see the positive elements of 2024. Top of the list is the game changing extension of the Sydney Metro with more links to come.

The Metro opening was a defining moment. It gave the CBD a huge boost by bringing more people into the city, especially at weekends.

There is more to do. The Minns government and the City of Sydney must redouble their efforts to

revitalise the night-time economy and follow through on their aim to make Sydney a 24-hour city.

There are five things on Business Sydney's wish list for 2025. An end to the rail dispute is naturally the first priority.

Sydney needs a laser focus on more affordable housing for essential workers such as police, nurses, cleaners, council workers, retail and hospitality staff who keep our city running.

It is a disgrace that hundreds of people have to sleep rough on our city streets each night.

A homelessness commissioner is needed to co-ordinate all the groups involved in homelessness services.

On a lighter note, let's install all-weather surfaces on the playing fields at the Domain so that city workers can play sport at lunchtime and after work year-round.

Our vibrant city also needs an arts and culture commissioner to co-ordinate and drive such an important sector.

And, last but not least, let's welcome more international visitors to show off our wonderful city to the world in 2025.

With the sights and sounds of the New Year's Eve fireworks still resonating, let's also give a "high five" to Foti Fireworks International for their 27 years of creativity in staging the world's best fireworks display in Sydney.

The City of Sydney has invested \$6.3m in this year's city's fireworks extravaganza delivering \$117m in economic benefit for the CBD.

By any measure, it's money well spent.

While we are on the subject, Glebe Island was again the key staging ground for the fireworks.

Another reminder, that this remaining part of Sydney's working harbour must be retained.

Bring on a fabulous New Year.

Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney.