

## OPINION 23

# Black Friday ahead for retailers

**Paul Nicolaou**



**L**et's call this rail dispute for what it is. It's industrial warfare that is a dagger to the heart of our city and its still struggling economy.

The timing could not be worse than if a deliberate decision had been made to sabotage the economy of our wonderful city.

We are already hearing from venues that are receiving cancelled bookings because of the uncertainty.

Let me put it in stark terms. Our business community relies on Black Friday and the lead-up to Christmas for a transfusion of commercial activity to make up for a tough year.

And how tough has it been with wallets and purses firmly shut in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis.

At Business Sydney, we are in a position to reveal just how catastrophic this threatened rail stoppage is for our city.

Our research shows that the week leading up to Black Friday is the biggest week of the year for retail sales.

And December – specifically the weeks leading up to Christmas – is the busiest month for commercial activity.

According to our analysis, businesses will experience lost opportunity of at least \$25 million if the two-day stoppage goes ahead.

Why would any union want to rob the retail, hospitality and entertainment sectors of the biggest opportunity of the year to breathe life into the commercial heart of our city?

Premier Chris Minns has stepped in to work with Transport Minister Jo Haylen to break the impasse in the rail dispute.

It's time for the rail union and the government to step back from the abyss.

The last thing Sydney needs is to step back into an industrial environment scripted from the bad old days of the 1970s.

Nor do we like the idea that 24-hour rail services are being used as a bargaining chip in the current dispute.

We've advocated for around-the-clock public transport to make Sydney a city that never sleeps.

We don't want a good idea being wrecked because it gets caught up in industrial warfare.

For goodness sake and for the good of our amazing city, stop this damaging nonsense in its tracks.

Now!

**Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney.**