

One leader to help solve Sydney's transport woes

Now it is three out of three for Sydney's beleaguered public transport system where reliability has become a faint hope.

Last Saturday, as polling booths were soon to close for the 2023 State Election, trains again ground to a halt as fans tried to get to the South Sydney-Manly game at Olympic Park.

We saw familiar images of fed-up commuters whose trust in the rail system had been dashed yet again and heard belated apologies from transport officials.

Add Saturday's debacle of trains grinding to a halt to the recent meltdown of the communications system that brought the entire Sydney rail system to a stop right on



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the evening commuter peak.

And, before that, the summer downpour that left Elton John 'singing in the rain' and commuters singing for a pathway home with a crippled light rail system.

Three strikes in a row. It's not a great record for Australia's premier city and it is especially troubling that these public transport 'events' have happened when Sydney has been staging big events.

Being able to manage all the complexity of big events from crowd control to public transport to traffic

management is emblematic of a well-tuned city where systems work like proverbial clockwork.

There is clearly a missing element. Business Sydney thinks that missing element is a powerful transport and traffic management 'tsar'.

Having one person in control of all the levers is essential to end the current fragmented approach where a myriad of officials are running the show but no one is really in charge.

A transport and traffic tsar could pull the various pieces together to make the city sing. That would involve public transport including rail, buses, ferries and light rail so that they work in an integrated way.

Add to this traffic management to get car-loving Sydneysiders to venues and back home again in seamless

fashion, a task made harder by the failure to build a decent-sized car park at Allianz Stadium at Moore Park. Don't blame Sydneysiders for being even more wedded to car use after the series of transport debacles.

Business Sydney has also advocated for an underground car park to the west of Anzac Parade which would serve multiple purposes seven days a week.

These ongoing major public transport disruptions are embarrassing for a city that prides itself on being a global mecca.

It wouldn't happen in other global cities such as Tokyo where punctuality of public transport services is almost a matter of national honour.

NSW has just elected a new state

government, which is committed to getting the basics right. Nothing is more basic than reliable public transport.

Getting the trains to not only run on time but also to simply run must be a priority for Premier-elect Chris Minns and his team.

In our opinion, the appointment of a transport and traffic tsar is an excellent place to start. A true test of this role is that there would be far fewer occasions where the people of Sydney have to ask in bewilderment "what went wrong this time?"

And in the event that something does go wrong, there is someone accountable for what is hoped would be a rare failure.

Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney