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Get out and get on the new Metro

Paul Nicolaou



What's the point of Sydney's new Metro marvel if it is unused by thousands still working from home?

Premier Chris Minns and Transport Minister Jo Haylen should use the Metro opening to encourage as many people as possible to use it, and that includes the WFH brigade.

It's in the government's interests for the new Metro link from Chatswood to Sydenham via the CBD to be well patronised from day one. This is an infrastructure investment that cannot afford to fail.

The arrival of a 21st century transport system makes the WFH argument less potent, especially when essential workers, including health professionals and emergency services personnel, have no choice other than to turn up at their workplaces.

It's unfortunate that WFH has effectively become entrenched in the public sector and written into workplace agreements for thousands of commonwealth public servants across scores of government departments.

And the Fair Work Commission is looking at other industrial awards to see what part WFH provisions might apply.

As we prepare for the Metro's potential benefits in bringing more people into the heart of the

city for work and play, we need to also consider the real-life impact of the current cost-of-living crisis.

The hospitality sector is the so-called canary in the mine in this regard. The sector is in deep trouble as discretionary consumer spending dries up.

And this is backed by our latest Business Conditions Survey, which found that 35 per cent of NSW hospitality businesses were contemplating closure, with 49 per cent cutting hours and 82 per cent losing customers.

The Metro should boost numbers. It also has great potential to revive retail and Sydney's night time economy.

There is an air of Metro excitement in the CBD. Each day, construction skip bins are being retrieved from the vast new Martin Place station. All the signs are there that this city building project is nearing completion and will soon be open to the public.

Cutting the opening ribbon won't be enough.

The pressure will be on the NSW government to ensure this wonderful addition to our city does its job and brings many people back to work.

Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney