

Thursday December 28, 2023 | The Daily Telegraph

OPINION 13

# Paul Nicolaou



## Housing is important but much more to do

**M**ost political leaders have one eye on day-to-day affairs of state and the other on the legacy they will leave.

Solving a full-blown housing crisis has dictated Premier Chris Minns' legacy project. And 2024 is going to be a critical year for delivery.

Minns has made building "up" and overcoming NIMBY obstacles as the path to success.

Just before Christmas, the Premier was handed a huge step forward with a "gift tag" of a new community of 25,000 homes at a reimagined Rosehill Gardens — an idea delivered by the Australian Turf Club and its astute chairman Peter McGauran.

But as we head into 2024, it's vital that the Minns Government not lose sight of other priorities that are crucial to Sydney's future as a global city.

There are other policy challenges to be tackled.

While on the housing theme, it's vital that the CBD is included in the mix as planning processes are accelerated to turbocharge higher density housing along public transport corridors.

Let's not overlook the city centre. It's crazy that we have so few people living in the heart of the city.

Housing for essential workers is

just as important in the CBD as it is in the suburbs. And a resident population is the major ingredient to supercharge the night-time economy and make Sydney a 24-hour city.

Arts and culture is another area where Minns and his Arts Minister John Graham can stake a legacy claim.

They can make sure that Sydney is recognised as Australia's arts and culture capital and end the myth that it is Melbourne's exclusive domain. Minister Graham has taken a step in the right direction signing off on NSW's first 10-year statewide arts and culture strategy that coordinates the effort in the city, western Sydney and in regional areas.

It includes opening up spaces such as the historic Callan Park precinct to artistic endeavours. To bring the overall strategy to life, there will be a need to put some serious money behind it.

When it comes to city building, the Metro needs to be seen as a once-in-a-century opportunity to drive our city's growth.

It is fantastic that Metro West is going to become a reality along with the Rosehill housing project.

But it is also the golden opportunity to build a Metro link to Moore Park, Sydney's traditional entertainment and sporting zone.

It would add so many dimensions to the coordinated development of



Premier Chris Minns (right) and Arts Minister John Graham are committed to improving the city's arts and culture.

the Entertainment Quarter, the sporting complexes and community parklands.

On the society front, 2024 needs to be the year of a serious effort to help the homeless, especially the hundreds who are literally living rough on our streets and in our parks in the midst of a generational cost of living crisis.

It is unacceptable as a global city that we have people sleeping rough under the verandah of the Sydney Town Hall or under the light rail viaduct at Wentworth Park.

In recent weeks, we have seen evidence of organisations that are doing their bit to help the homeless recover their self esteem, independence and a future.

One of these is The Big Issue,

**“It is unacceptable as a global city that we have people sleeping rough**

Australia's oldest social enterprise. It's hard to imagine that selling a magazine can be a pathway out of destitution but it does.

But then we met Denise, a highly

educated vendor of The Big Issue whose life has been affected by the traumas of a difficult childhood that left her with serious mental health scars. Denise says that selling the magazine has given her social contact with people that has been of great personal benefit.

Business Sydney strongly believes that the NSW Government needs to appoint a homelessness commissioner to coordinate the work of various charities so that no one is left in a position where living on the street has to be an option.

Building a lasting legacy is not just good for politicians and for the state. Get it right and the people benefit too.

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