

# Year in Review

Office of the 24-Hour  
Economy Commissioner



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## Acknowledgement of country

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands across Greater Sydney, including the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, where the Office of the 24-Hour Economy is located. We pay our respects to the Aboriginal Elders of these lands, past and present.

We acknowledge the deep connection to Country that Aboriginal people have and recognise Aboriginal people as the original custodians of this land.

“ As Sydney and NSW rebuilds, reviving our 24-hour economy is a central part of our economic strategy. ”

## From the Minister

When the NSW Government published its 24-Hour Economy Strategy in September 2020, we could not have known that the COVID-19 pandemic would still be a major part of our lives in early 2022.

It has been a tough two years for many in the 24-hour economy sector, as it has all over the world. The impact of border restrictions and lockdowns has tested the resilience of the thousands of people who work in industries from hospitality, tourism, arts and culture, retail and sport.

The pandemic also highlighted how important the 24-hour economy is to our social wellbeing and economic output. Activities that we may have taken for granted, such as meeting friends for a meal, taking in a show or taking an interstate trip, were taken away from us. The loss made us value these experiences even more.

As a government, we have worked in lockstep with the sector to provide financial and logistical support, including the Event Saver Fund, Dine & Discover vouchers, free NSW TAFE hospitality training courses, Accommodation Support Grant and Alfresco Restart Package, to name a few. In return, the sector has demonstrated extraordinary resilience to remain standing.

As Sydney and NSW rebuilds, reviving our 24-hour economy is a central part of our economic strategy. I am proud that NSW is the only state or territory in Australia to have a 24-Hour Economy Commissioner and Office. It speaks volumes for the importance of this agenda for the NSW Government.

I want to thank Michael Rodrigues and his team for their unwavering passion, hard work and energy on behalf of a sector they love.

This Year in Review captures some highlights from a year of disruption. As we move towards greater normality, I am enthused and excited about what great things we can do over the next twelve months.



The Hon. Stuart Ayres MP  
Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport, and Minister for Western Sydney



From the 24-Hour  
Economy Commissioner

Welcome to the first Year in Review from the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner.

It has been a year of immense challenges for the people of NSW, particularly the many who work in our sector. Shows have been cancelled, reservations rearranged, and lights turned on, then off and on again. At times it has felt like walking up a steep hill into a strong gale.

Despite this, we should reflect on a year that has demonstrated the resilience of the sector and a newfound ambition for participants to work collaboratively together. Our newly formed office has prioritised our activities based on where we are best able to make a positive impact, whether it's getting support to businesses in need, eliminating red tape, arranging priority vaccination for hospitality workers, or expanding outdoor dining options across the city.

When not dealing with emergency relief and recovery we have set about delivering on the 39 action points envisaged under the 24-Hour Economy Strategy. I'm pleased to say that notwithstanding the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have delivered on some and initiated many others.

This document is an important record of our first year. With the responsibility of transforming our going out economy and numerous programs being delivered, it's important to note progress and highlight activities to come.



Michael Rodrigues  
24-Hour Economy Commissioner

As an external facing part of government, I'm very grateful to our industry stakeholders who have provided guidance, advice and ideas during my first year as Commissioner. In particular, our 24-Hour Economy Advisory Group has provided incredible support and help. I'm also very grateful to Amy Brown, CEO, Investment NSW and Secretary of the Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade for her exceptional leadership, and to Minister Ayres and his team for both entrusting me with this opportunity on behalf of the citizens of NSW and providing wise counsel.

Finally, thank you to the small team at the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, who have worked tirelessly in sometimes difficult and changing environments to deliver real progress and results.

We cannot wait to do more great things in 2022.

“As an external facing part of government, I’m very grateful to the numerous stakeholders who have provided guidance, advice and ideas.”

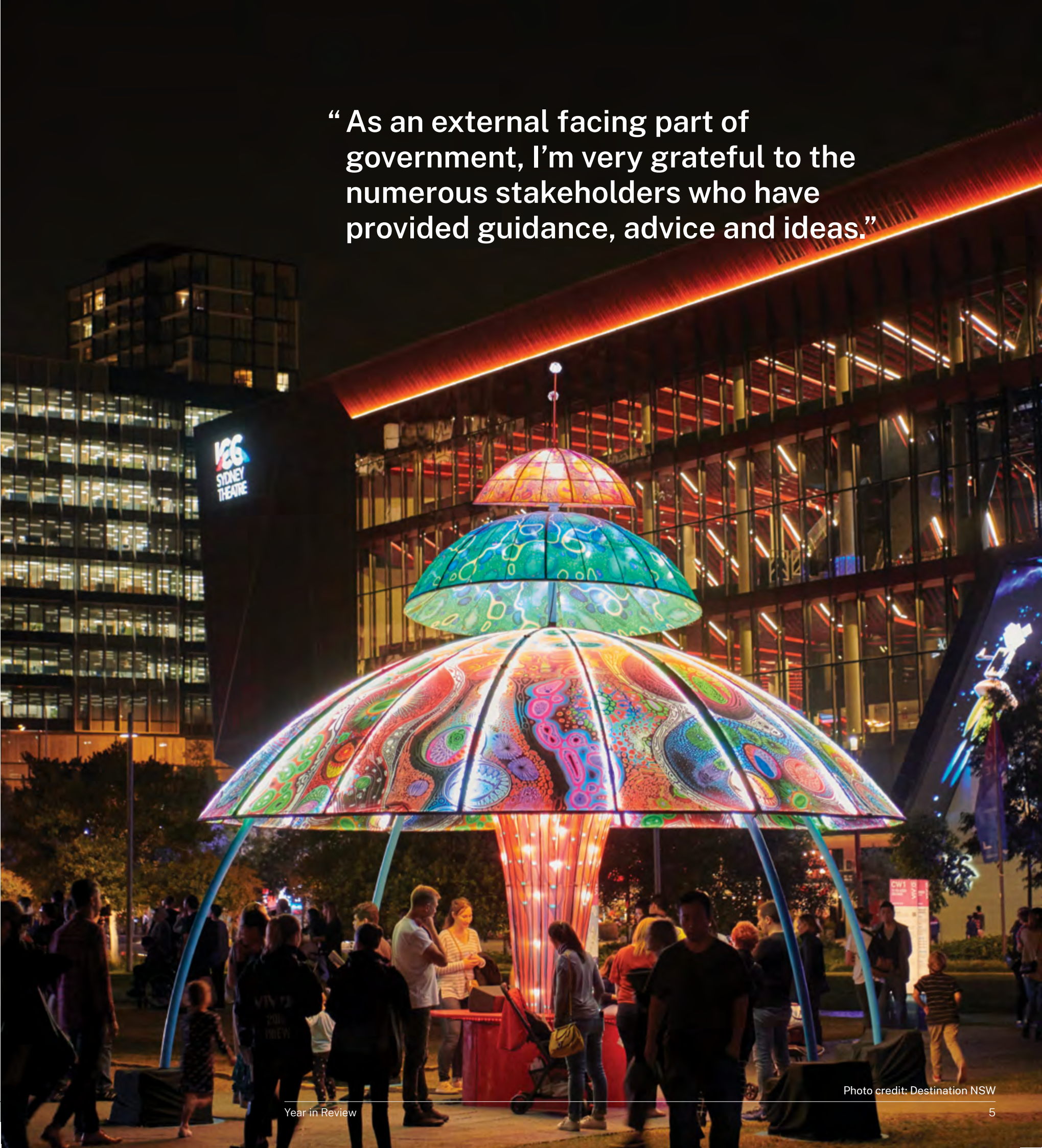


Photo credit: Destination NSW



# Delivering the Strategy



At its heart, the NSW 24-Hour Economy Strategy aims to create diverse, vibrant and safe night-time destinations across Greater Sydney. The night is an integral part of the commercial, cultural and social fabric of Sydney and NSW, and now more than ever, it is critical to our pathways forward as we manage the impacts of COVID-19.

Over the past year, we have focused on delivering the Strategy, whilst ensuring that its action points remained relevant and responsive to the ever-evolving pandemic. The vast majority of action items in the Strategy have already been initiated and some have been delivered.

## 1. Integrated planning & place-making

Responding to the need for greater trading space in outdoor areas during the pandemic, the Office played a key coordinating role in the delivery of a \$66-million package to promote alfresco dining in NSW. The package included financial support for businesses to invest in alfresco, whilst freeing up regulations to make it easier to operate outdoors. We continue to work with colleagues across government to further enhance the alfresco revolution.

Action to streamline licensing arrangements and make it easier for pop-up activations (Strategy Actions 15, 18, 19) are being delivered through a new Fun SEPP (State Environment Planning Policy). The reforms give greater flexibility to the hospitality and arts sectors through a simpler, faster planning process and allows creatives and councils to get venues set up faster, allowing for later, longer and more diverse events in more and new locations.

A night-time accreditation scheme based on the UK's Purple Flag model has been developed in readiness for launch in mid-2022. The scheme will deliver Action 3 of the Strategy, and will work with local councils, businesses and communities across Greater Sydney to boost public confidence in going-out areas. Purple Flag will also complement the districts created in the UpTown program.

Tools for night-time planning have been further enhanced by the piloting of Special Entertainment Precincts (SEP), including the reform of noise regulations for venues (Action 16). Draft guidelines for the Precincts were developed in extensive consultation with councils, business and other stakeholders and the pilot scheme has just been launched.

## 2. Diversification of night-time activities

To help support and encourage businesses to diversify their night-time offering (Action 13), we launched a new \$5-million district acceleration program called UpTown in late 2021, with a full roll-out planned for later in 2022. UpTown aims to fast-track the formation of districts across Greater Sydney that provide a range of entertainment offerings to Sydneysiders. Districts will be made up of local businesses and other organisations that are aligned under a unified identity as a means of engaging residents and visitors.

To further support the diversification of activities, our Office is working with councils such as City of Parramatta and Randwick City Council to promote the extension of opening hours for late night trading businesses.

In addition, our CBDs Revitalisation Program is funding the extension and promotion of opening hours across major cultural institutions (Action 22), through the Culture Up Late initiative.

Reforms made in the Liquor Amendment (Night-time Economy) Act also came into force in 2021, ushering in a modern, streamlined approach to regulating the night-time economy. The changes included reducing red tape by aligning liquor licensing and planning processes and removal of outdated live music restrictions. Monitoring and enhancing regulation will continue to be a key priority for our Office going forward.

We are also working closely with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to rollout pilots for Special Entertainment Precincts (SEP), a ground-breaking new policy that supports venues and local communities around the night-time economy. We have led engagement with key industry bodies and councils around SEP guidelines, with pilot projects starting in 2022.



### 3. Industry & cultural development

Collaboration with the 24-Hour Economy ecosystem is a core part of our Office’s work and delivery of our strategy (Action 26). We have established a 24-Hour Economy Advisory Group, made up of senior representatives from hospitality, entertainment, arts and culture, sport, live performance and retail, plus representatives from local and state government. The group is deliberately cross-sectoral and focused on problem-solving and generating ideas. It meets every quarter and has a number of subject-specific sub-groups to develop policy ideas and solutions.

To further drive collaboration across NSW Government, we have also established a Senior Officers’ Group, with responsibility to drive and oversee delivery of the 24-Hour Economy Strategy. Comprised of ten state government agencies, the group is actively taking forward many of the action items in the Strategy, as well as coordinating whole-of-government activity around the 24-Hour Economy.

In partnership with the City of Sydney and the Night Time Economy Councils’ Committee (NTECC), the Office held a series of workshops in 2021 for NSW councils on leveraging the 24-Hour Economy Strategy to build a vibrant nightlife for their communities. Local councils are critical to the delivery of the Strategy and play a key role in creating diverse, safe and sustainable night life.

As part of a masterclass, a Local Area Acceleration Toolkit was also developed for councils as a resource to help identify key elements that will aid them in creating a local 24-hour economy in their communities.

The Toolkit can be viewed at [investment.nsw.gov.au/24hour](https://investment.nsw.gov.au/24hour).



### 4. Mobility & improved connectivity

The Office has established a Safety, Wellbeing and Mobility Working Group to bring together NSW Police, NSW Health, Transport for NSW and other key agencies to coordinate activities and promote responsible going out behaviour (Action 26).

The group is also driving the roll-out of a night-time certification program for Greater Sydney, modelled on the UK’s Purple Flag scheme (Action 3). A number of pilots will be introduced in urban districts across Sydney in 2022, bringing together local stakeholders to promote high standards of safety, mobility and public health.

Our Office is also supporting the Take Kare Safe Space program, which provides a range of support and assistance to people going out. We are also active participants in the Women’s Safety Charter, helping to make Sydney a safer city for women and girls (Action 33).

We are also working to embed 24-hour economy principles into the planning of major precincts (Action 28) such as Tech Central, Westmead Health and Innovation District and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis.

### 5. Changing the narrative

Part of the role of the Office is to promote Sydney as a global 24-hour destination and use a vibrant nightlife to attract talent to live and work in Sydney and NSW. We have supported major events such as Global Cities After Dark; Fabrics of Multicultural Australia and REMIX to position Sydney as a significant world city for 24-hour economy. In addition, the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner has presented on the NSW 24-Hour Economy Strategy at global events including the World Cities Culture Forum.

We have also supported the launch and roll-out of the NSW Government campaign, ‘Feel New’, the first in more than a decade. The campaign unifies Sydney and regional NSW, bringing to life all the diverse feelings in the state that combine to make visitors feel new. Connecting the abundance of natural wonders and vibrant culture available in NSW, the campaign is inspired by the rich emotional benefits Sydney and NSW offer to energise its visitors like nowhere else.





# 24-hour economy working groups

The successful implementation of the Strategy requires ongoing collaboration and consultation across many different stakeholders. Three working groups have been established to provide key sources of intelligence, direction, feedback and advice as the Strategy is implemented.

- Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Treasury, including the Small Business Commission
- Point to Point Transport Commissioner
- Transport for NSW
- Other government bodies may be invited as necessary to deliver the Strategy.

## 24-Hour Economy Advisory Group

The 24-Hour Economy Advisory Group (Advisory Group) is made up of experts who live the night-time economy, spanning arts and culture, sport, hospitality, live performance, local government and retail. The Advisory Group focuses on bringing a vibrant nightlife back to the city, increasing the diversity of night-time activities and promoting Sydney as a global 24-hour economy.

Members of the Advisory Group were selected by an open EOI process and assessed by an independent panel. The Advisory Group met for the first time on 10 September 2021.

## Senior Officers' Group

The Senior Officers' Group is made up the key government agencies and departments that are either leading or are critical to implementing actions from the Strategy. Membership of the group comprises a number of NSW Government agencies and departments, including:

- Create NSW
- Department of Customer Service (Data Analytics Centre, Liquor & Gaming & Service NSW)
- Greater Sydney Commission
- Investment NSW, including Destination NSW
- NSW Health
- Department of Planning and Environment (Planning Delivery Unit, Public Spaces, Codes and Placemaking NSW)

## Safety, Wellbeing and Mobility Advisory Group

The 24-Hour Economy Safety, Wellbeing and Mobility Advisory Group has been convened to oversee and coordinate the delivery of the safety and wellbeing actions in the Strategy. Membership includes:

- Department of Customer Service (Liquor & Gaming)
- Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (Codes and Placemaking NSW)
- Placemaking NSW (Greater Cities Commission)
- NSW Health
- NSW Police
- Office of Local Government
- Resilience NSW
- Point to Point Transport Commission
- Transport for NSW (Customer Service and Future Transport)



# Building back from the pandemic



## CBDs Revitalisation Program

Managed by the Office, the CBDs Revitalisation Program is bringing life back to CBDs across Greater Sydney that have been heavily impacted by lockdowns, while also supporting the recovery of industries such as hospitality, culture and tourism. NSW Government has invested \$50 million in the Program and is being delivered across three rounds of funding.

In Round 1, the NSW Government committed \$12.23 million to 6 projects:

- Sydney Street Parties
- Culture Up Late extension
- Lights of Christmas
- Sydney Fringe Festival
- Film Festivals
- Sydney's Open for Lunch

Expressions of interest for Round 2 opened on 17 December 2021 and closed 17 January 2022, with activations to go live between March and May 2022. Funding between \$250,000 to \$1 million has been provided to over 20 separate projects for events and activations to attract people back to CBDs, totalling over \$16 million.

Projects will be rolled out in CBDs and urban centres including Sydney CBD, Parramatta, Sydney Olympic Park, Liverpool,



Penrith, Chatswood, North Sydney, Bankstown, Blacktown, Hurstville, Macquarie Park, Campbelltown, Wollongong, Newcastle and Manly.

## Sydney's Open for Lunch

On 3 December 2021, Sydney's Open for Lunch took over public spaces in the Sydney CBD, Parramatta and Eveleigh to host a series of long lunches, supporting the recovery of Sydney's hospitality industry and boost economic activity.

## ELEVATE Sydney

For the first time ever, Sydney's Cahill Expressway, overlooking Circular Quay, the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge, was transformed into a spectacular stage. ELEVATE Sydney was a free, five-day entertainment and cultural celebration featuring more than 20 acclaimed Australian artists performing from morning to night on the Expressway.

## Culture Up Late

Culture Up Late was an initiative between the NSW Government and City of Sydney where major arts

and cultural institutions across Sydney extended their opening hours into the evening, offering up new exhibitions and entertainment.

## Reimagining the CBD

Pre-pandemic, cultural use of the Sydney CBD was highly dependent on a 9-to-5 Monday-Friday workforce. With office tower occupancy and foot traffic significantly below pre-pandemic levels, the Office undertook a piece of market research and thought leadership to help re-shape thinking around how consumers engage with the CBD in a post-pandemic environment.

The report, written and published by EY, will be a key driver of ideas and complement initiatives like the CBD Summit, held in February 2022.

## Smart Places Acceleration Program

COVID-19 has had a severe impact on revenue and jobs in the 24-hour economy industries due to

restrictions on businesses, venues and crowds, low tourism and an increase in people working from home.

The Office has received funding as part of the Department of Planning and Environment's Smart Places Acceleration Program to deliver a project that aims to gather, collate and share real-time data such as venue capacities, available transport options and event information to make it easier and safer to enjoy a day or night out.

The Neon Grid project will develop an overall model to support activation of entertainment districts that is scalable, replicable and interoperable. It will include developing solutions with:

- Real-time data assets – generating and communicating real-time data to support crowds and the increased use of outdoor spaces, including venue capacity, amenity and transport information.
- Connected smart technology – capturing data and communicating insights with technology such as sensors, AI, imaging and IoT platforms to integrate real-time data, link with existing apps and service providers.
- Efficient urban assets – tailored 'reuse' of urban assets to provide services connected via smart technology such as re-purposing parking zones for rideshare pickup or drop-off and noise and waste reduction services.

Making the 24-hour economy more resilient is a critical step in the post-COVID economic recovery and has benefits for consumers and businesses.



# The programs will provide more, better and activated public spaces to support community wellbeing and economic recovery.

## Responding to COVID-19

In addition to the above initiatives, the Office has worked closely with other government departments and industry to help heavily impacted industries such as hospitality, arts and culture get back on their feet.

### Alfresco Restart Package

The Alfresco Restart Package will help bring the streets of NSW back to life through a raft of initiatives and \$66 million in funding that will see outdoor dining, live music and entertainment return.

The programs will provide more, better and activated public spaces to support community wellbeing and economic recovery.

The Alfresco Restart initiatives being rolled out from November 2021 include:

The Festival of Place where local streets will be revitalised with murals, art installations, laneway cinemas and more to kickstart a 24-hour economy. The Festival includes:

- Long Summer Nights Program
- Streets as Shared Spaces Program
- Summer Night Fund Program
- Open Streets Program
- Changing the outdoor dining planning rules permanently to allow pubs and small bars to

implement outdoor dining more easily

- Setting up emergency temporary alfresco dining measures for businesses to setup dining in parks and public spaces
- Offering \$5,000 rebates for hospitality businesses to get their outdoor dining ventures in a park or public space off the ground. Registrations are now open via Service NSW.

### Hospitality Super Sunday

The Office, along with key industry members and NSW Health, coordinated a hospitality Super Sunday vaccination drive for hospitality workers as the state moved in October 2021 to reopen to those fully vaccinated. It was organised at a critical point to ensure the hospitality industry was ready to respond to the easing of restrictions, allowing businesses to operate as people began going out and about again.

### Live Music and Performing Arts Support Packages

The Office was proud to work with Create NSW to help deliver the Live Music Support Package and Performing Arts Support Package.

The Live Music Support Package aimed to provide funding to live music venues to help them stay open and create employment opportunities for musicians,



promoters and technicians. The purpose of the package was to provide urgent financial support for live music venues in financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. Live music venues are vital not only to the NSW music industry, but the NSW economy as a whole.

The Performing Arts Support Package provided urgent financial support to performing arts venues, producers, and promoters impacted by the cancellation or postponement of performances resulting from the NSW Government COVID-19 Public Health Orders from 26 June 2021 to 18 September 2021. The purpose of the package was to ensure that the performing arts remain financially viable so they can continue to make an important contribution to the NSW economy.

### Good going out behaviour

As NSW began reopening in October 2021 with businesses eagerly welcoming back customers, the Office, alongside Minister Ayres, created a short video to remind patrons to continue to adhere to health guidelines and to be patient with staff as they adjusted to a new way of operating.

### Fun SEPP

To make it easier for creatives and councils to get venues set up, the Office is working with the Department of Planning and Environment on proposed changes to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 AKA the Fun SEPP to allow for later, longer and smaller events popping up in more and new locations across NSW.

These changes will help develop a 24-hour economy and create a simpler, faster planning process by making it easier to hold outdoor events, film, set up food and drink premises, or convert shops to arts or live music venues.



# Stakeholder engagement

## Open Mike Night

Open Mike Night has been created as a forum for stakeholders across industry and council to come together. These forums have been invaluable to helping communicate COVID-19 regulations and updates from the Office and will continue to be used to help implement the Strategy and shape future ideas for developing a 24-hour economy in Greater Sydney.

## Speaking engagements

A key deliverable under the 24-Hour Economy Strategy is changing the narrative for Sydney (both locally and internationally). The Commissioner is actively involved in speaking engagements year-round. A selection of speaking commitments is set out here.

30 March 2021	Committee for Sydney
31 March 2021	Property Council of Australia
8 April 2021	Western Sydney Parklands Authority
17 April 2021	Responsible Hospitality Institute
6 May 2021	Australasian Hotel Industry Conference and Exhibition (AHICE) Conference
12-13 May 2021	Sydney Culture Network
15 May 2021	Night Summit Montreal
19 May 2021	Business Western Sydney Roundtable Lunch
6 August 2021	Department of Planning and Environment - Smart Places Summit
12 August 2021	World Cities Culture Forum
25 August 2021	Parramatta Chamber of Commerce
21 September 2021	Tales of the Cocktail
7 October 2021	Independent Brewers Association Annual Meeting
2 December 2021	Fabrics of Multicultural Australia
7 December 2021	Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue
4 February 2022	Alberta Music Convention

# Communicating our message

## The Neon Grid podcast



Hosted by the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, The Neon Grid podcast explores what it means to build a 24-hour economy through a series of interviews with the best and brightest across industry, local council and the NSW Government.

You can listen to the series on all major podcast listener apps.  
[Listen to podcast](#)

## Media



**Time Out - Ask the Night Mayor**  
[Read Article](#)



**Channel 7 – Good Going Out Behaviour**



**The Sun-Herald – “Justice League”**  
[Read Article](#)



**SMH - Sydney’s night mayor: ‘My job is to get people out of the house and having fun. And often.’**  
[Read Article](#)



**The Daily Telegraph - Hunt on to find Sydney’s own Soho district**  
[Read Article](#)





## Acknowledgements

The Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner would like to acknowledge the support and collaboration received from stakeholders across industry, local councils and NSW Government.

Delivering the NSW 24-Hour Economy Strategy and building a diverse, vibrant and safe night life needs to continue to be a joint and collective effort.

Our cities have some fantastic stories to share, and we look forward to bringing more of them to light and awakening further opportunities that a 24-hour economy will create.

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