

Tuesday 7 June 2022

City street transformations create more space for people

George Street's transformation as a pedestrian boulevard has been extended to create more than 9,000m² of additional space for people in the city centre.

The latest section of Sydney's central spine was officially opened today by Lord Mayor Clover Moore.

The new pedestrian boulevard, from Bathurst Street to Rawson Place, is part of the City of Sydney's \$43.5 million dollar project to create a seamless car-free path for walking, dining and seating, and align with the light rail tracks running the full length of George Street from Haymarket to Circular Quay. The project has also been supported with more than \$1.1 million from the NSW Government and \$7 million from the Federal Government.

The Lord Mayor said the City of Sydney's long-held vision for a fully pedestrianised George Street has been realised with the opening of the George Street south boulevard.

"The work to turn noisy, traffic-choked George Street into a pedestrian boulevard and central spine for the city began in 2007, when Jan Gehl's report on public spaces suggested three city squares at Circular Quay, Town Hall and Railway Square, all linked by a light-rail and pedestrian boulevard," the Lord Mayor said.

"The City further developed this idea as part of our Sustainable Sydney 2030 strategy and in 2013, when the NSW Government agreed to the light rail project, we adopted a concept design for George Street as the basis of our \$220 million contribution to the project.

"Working together, we have completed a beautiful and inviting boulevard that creates more than 9,000m² of additional space for people to move safely around the city centre.

"It supports local businesses, giving hospitality venues the opportunity to operate outdoors and provides a far more appealing environment for businesses fronting the street.

"As we draw people back to our city in the wake of the Covid lockdowns, people can now move more freely from Hunter Street in the north down to Rawson Place in the south.

"Despite the challenges of the pandemic, construction pauses, lockdowns and the recent unprecedented rains, I'm delighted this project has been delivered in record time and with minimal disruption."

Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport Rob Stokes said Sydney's streets were being reclaimed as places for people.

"George Street has been completely transformed from a road clogged with buses and traffic to the thriving spine of our city where people can walk, linger, catch up with friends and enjoy a meal on the much wider footpath," Mr Stokes said.

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“With Sydney buzzing again, people are embracing the changes we made during the pandemic and we will continue to look at ways we can improve the experience for all who visit our city.”

In addition to support from the NSW and federal governments, the City of Sydney has worked closely with a number of external stakeholders including Transport for NSW, ALTRAC and Transdev Sydney.

Arsene Durand-Raucher, Managing Director for Transdev Sydney, operator of the Sydney light rail, said seeing the city continue to grow its open public spaces is a shared vision with the City of Sydney.

“The light rail is key to reducing road congestion, creating more people-friendly streets and new spaces for businesses to operate, and attracting people back to the city,” Durand-Raucher said.

“Trams are quiet and can take much longer to stop than some may think. Learning to interact safely in these new open spaces will require people to stay alert and aware of their surroundings.”

The Lord Mayor said the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of space and the need for more people-friendly streets, new spaces for businesses to operate outdoors, more space to attract visitors and ensure everyone can move around safely while maintaining physical distancing.

“This is also about creating world-class streets in areas outside the city centre that will become destinations in their own right and be enjoyed by generations to come,” the Lord Mayor said.

As well as pedestrianising George Street, the City of Sydney is working on several other public space transformation projects that will make our streets greener, safer for people walking and riding, calm traffic and create new opportunities for local businesses.

An extensive upgrade is planned for a 1 kilometre stretch of Crown Street from Devonshire to Oxford streets. The five-year, \$33 million Crown Street transformation project is due to start in early 2023 and includes extensive footpath widening to create space for walking and outdoor dining.

A six-block refurbishment of Macleay Street in Potts Point is nearly complete and includes wider footpaths, new concrete paving, new lighting and smart poles, landscaping and new garden beds, seating, bins and bike racks. The project followed consultation with residents and businesses to help develop the best design for the area.

In the past year, the City of Sydney has also completed 28 footway upgrades across Glebe, Forest Lodge, Ultimo, Erskineville, Beaconsfield, Newtown, Redfern, Waterloo, Alexandria, Surry Hills, Pyrmont, Millers Point, Woolloomooloo and upgraded footpaths along Elizabeth , Phillip , Goulburn and Sussex streets in the city centre.

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