



# Reimagining Central Station Precinct

Submission by BusNSW

## 1. Introduction

BusNSW members provide bus and coach transport services throughout NSW under various contractual and regulatory environments. This includes accredited bus and coach operators providing Long Distance, Tourist and Charter (LDTTC) service to transport passengers between Sydney's Central Station and other Sydney CBD precincts (attractions and hotels), regional NSW and Interstate.

The reimagining of Sydney's Central station provides an ideal opportunity for the NSW Government to not only address the current issues being faced by LDTTC Operators at Central Station but also to establish a world class Coach/Bus interchange that meets or exceeds the expectations of tourists and domestic passengers.

The BusNSW vision for the reimagining of Central Station includes not only improvements to the physical infrastructure of the precinct but also the incorporation of digital solutions and new technologies that will enhance customer experience.

BusNSW recommends that TfNSW consider including a digital platform to coordinate the positioning of arrivals and departures within a well-appointed waiting area that is like an airport lounge (consideration could also be given to different levels of customer experience on a user pays basis, like at some UK stations) That is, a vision for a multimodal digital mobility interchange (no longer just a coach terminal) that should have mobile booking capabilities that offer up access to bus and coach services in the mix of other mobility options.

The following tourism statistics released by the NSW Minister of Trade, Tourism and Major Events and Minister for Sport, Stuart Ayres (07/12/2016) point to a substantial increase in current tourism numbers with further increases projected over coming years.

- 20% increase in NSW Tourism numbers from key markets including China, USA and South Korea
- 3.8 million visitors

- Regional tourism has seen a 7.1% increase – with significant increases in tourists visiting the North Coast, Central NSW and Central Coast as well as the Riverina and Blue Mountains

Sydney’s Central Station and the transport services provided from it play a key role in transporting tourists to and from regional tourist destinations.

It is reported that around 270,000 people enter or exit at Central Station every weekday and many more customers interchange each day, swapping between suburban and intercity services, the Inner West Light Rail, coaches, taxis and the bus network.

Regular passenger services operated under contract to TfNSW, rail replacement bus services, intra-state and inter-state coach services, day tour operators and metropolitan and country based charter vehicles all interface with rail and other services at Sydney’s Central Station. These services and demand created by the recently opened Sydney ICC at the south end of the CBD place greater emphasis on the need to improve transport interchange and layover facilities in the Central Station precinct.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Regular Regional and Interstate Coach Passenger Services

The following Coach Operators provide daily services into and out of the current Central Station facilities to NSW regional locations.

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Destinations</b>
Australia Wide Coaches	Orange & Central West
Fire Fly	Melbourne and Adelaide via NSW regional centres
Greyhound	Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane via NSW regional centres
Murrays Australia	Canberra
Port Stephens	Newcastle / Port Stephens
Premier Transport Group	Melbourne and Brisbane via NSW Regional centres

Any re-development at Central Station needs to consider the services provided by these operators and how passengers can connect with other transport services.

### 2.2. Day Tours

Many coach operators provide day tour services to destinations such as the Blue Mountains, South and Central Coast, Hunter Valley, Southern Highlands and Canberra. These services provide a vital and growing link in the tourism chain and impact the visitor economy. It is important that there is proper infrastructure within the

Central Station precinct to facilitate the picking up and setting down of day tour passengers.

As part of the reimagining of Central Station, consideration should be given to address one of the wider Sydney CBD issues, that being traffic congestion. There is an opportunity to provide a centrally located meeting point for all coach and bus operators providing day trips, as is done in many cities around the world. Implemented across the board for all operators and supported by appropriate communication and compliance strategies, a significant benefit could accrue from reducing the number of vehicles picking up from individual hotels.

### 2.3. Rail Replacement Services

Both Sydney Trains and NSW Trains procure the services of bus and coach operators to provide rail replacement services to and from Central Station. The timing of these services is generally when these organisations have programmed rail infrastructure works and therefore rail services are unable to operate. The provision of facilities to enable the seamless interchange of passengers between the rail network and the rail replacement bus services is therefore a key issue to be considered as part of the reimagining project.

### 2.4. Visitor Economy Taskforce (VET)

The Visitor Economy Taskforce (2012) provided the NSW Government with a report and action plan focussed on doubling the overnight visitor expenditure by 2020.

The VET found that the existing interchange facilities at Central Station are cumbersome and difficult to navigate, particularly for first-time visitors. Provision of all-weather cover and access for all transport modes, especially coach and taxi services, is important.

The Key actions related to the reimagining of Sydney’s Central station are outlined in the table below. Action 24D is strongly supported by BusNSW.

<b>Visitor Economy Taskforce report recommendations relevant to the NSW Tourism and Bus and Coach operations</b>	<b>Government response to Visitor Economy Taskforce report recommendations</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 14 – ensure visitor precincts and major event venues are considered in transport planning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action 14C: Improve coach and taxi infrastructure and access options</li> </ul>	<p>Supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TfNSW is developing a Sydney City Centre Access Strategy (LTTMP) which will include consideration of</li> </ul>

<p>throughout Sydney CBD, major visitor precincts, event venues and Regional NSW.</p>	<p>coach and taxi access and infrastructure needs.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 24 – Develop a visitor and transport policy to ensure that visitor needs and improved visitor service are incorporated into transport planning and service delivery.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action 24A: more adequate coach parking and accessibility arrangements.</li> <li>• Action 24B: increase frequency and hours of operation of late night public transport.</li> <li>• Action 24D: <b><i>Establish an operationally efficient transport interchange facility at Central Station to facilitate seamless transfers between all transport modes and Sydney and regional services.</i></b></li> </ul>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The LTTMP supports growing visitor needs. NSW Trade and Investment will coordinate an interagency working group to consider the transport options needed by visitors in NSW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported and outlined in the LTTMP.</li> <li>• Supported – Extra buses currently operating from 1-5am from Kings Cross.</li> <li>• Supported in principle.</li> </ul>

## 2.5. Sydney’s CBD – BusNSW Discussion Paper (August 2016)

BusNSW has recently released and published a discussion paper on the access issues and opportunities in Sydney’s CBD. This paper was submitted to Transport for NSW’s CBD Coordination Office.

Within the Sydney CBD, there are increasing demands on kerbside space and layover areas, and a policy for the consistent management and allocation of space is desperately needed. This problem has been steadily growing over recent years and, for the NSW coach industry, the issue has reached a serious level.

The provision of on-street and off-street parking for coaches within the Sydney CBD is vital for the promotion of tourism and when managed effectively has a positive impact on congestion, the environment and the economy. Consideration for coach access, pick up and set down of passengers, and parking within the Sydney CBD and airport should be a priority for road and infrastructure managers. Unfortunately, in recent years, the issue seems to have been largely forgotten.

New infrastructure such as the Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct (SICEEP) and Barrangaroo, along with existing tourist destinations (Opera House, major hotels, Darling Harbour and Central Station) are key interface points between tourists and business groups, and are facilitated by coach operators. BusNSW is seeking to place on the agenda of policy makers the need to recognise the importance of coach movements to tourists and the NSW economy, and the need to develop and implement strategies to accommodate their, and more importantly their clients', needs. Sydney is Australia's tourism hub and the entry into Sydney and access to the CBD for group travel is critical to its reputation on the world stage. In particular, BusNSW is seeking the cooperation of TfNSW in the development and implementation of a new Sydney CBD Coach Strategy.

In regard to Sydney's Central Station the following was included;

*BusNSW has expressed concern to the NSW Government regarding the impacts associated with the introduction of light rail along Eddy Avenue and Pitt Street at Central Station. BusNSW understands that coach parking at Central Station will be cut from 17 to 7 coach bays, which will impact on the parking facility for coaches in this area. Currently Australia Wide, Premier-Illawarra, Murrays, Firefly, Greyhound and Port Stephens all have regular coach movements from this facility to provide interstate and intrastate services.*

*The current coach facilities at Central Station are important for tourism and caters to regional tourists arriving in Sydney by train and to those embarking on tours from Sydney. If, as proposed, 10 coach bays are to be removed due to the CBD Light Rail network, the City of Sydney must consider alternative solutions that cater for the large number of coaches that move on a daily basis through Eddy Avenue and Pitt Street. This can be achieved by allocating alternatives for coach on-street or off-street parking within the area. With an increase in the number of domestic and international tourists visiting Sydney, a world class coach terminus facility is urgently needed.*

*To that end, two identified possible opportunities currently exist;*

- *A world class Coach Terminal utilising part of the upper concourse (country train car parking) area of Central Station*
- *A world class Coach Terminal located in Lee Street (utilising the existing bus layover) with access upgrades to Central Station.*

Further to this, BusNSW recommends that a Bus CBD Access Working Group including TfNSW, RMS, BusNSW and STA is formed to meet on a quarterly basis and discuss bus and coach CBD Access issues and opportunities for improvement.

## **2.6. Australian Examples**

### **a. Elizabeth Quay – Perth – Western Australia**

The recent opening of the Elizabeth Quay facility in Perth, WA provides one example where rail, bus and ferry operations have been integrated to deliver a service to passengers that had not previously been provided.

### **b. Southern Cross Railway Station – Melbourne – Victoria**

Southern Cross provides another example worth reviewing as part of the reimagining project as it also demonstrates how rail, light rail, bus and coaches service can all operate within the same precinct providing a high level of service to passengers.

## **3. Recommendations**

### **3.1. Connectivity**

#### **a. Interchange Infrastructure**

The current interchange facilities at Sydney's Central Station have long been inadequate in meeting the expectations of passengers. The facilities are old, disjointed and will have a significantly reduced capacity with the soon to be constructed light rail. Customers need a world class multi modal transport interchange linking rail, light rail, buses, coaches, taxi's and pedestrian as it will deliver multiple benefits to both the Sydney and NSW economy through higher customer satisfaction, increased tourism and less congestion.

BusNSW recommends that a study is undertaken to identify the optimal number of bus/coach bays required to facilitate long distance, tourist and charter services from Central Station including an assessment of future demand. BusNSW would be a willing participant in this study.

#### **b. Layover Infrastructure**

Coach and Bus layover facilities in the southern CBD need to be provided to accommodate the increasing demand provided by not only the growth in regional tourist operations as outlined as part of this submission but also to accommodate vehicles providing services to corporate clients in the southern CBD growth corridor. A bus/coach layover facility at least equal to Kings Street Wharf facility needs to be provided in the South and East of the CBD, and one of these should be incorporated in the re-development of the Central Station precinct.

The Sydney ICC located at the southern end of Darling Harbour has been built with little recognition of the transport task associated with the delivery of large groups to conventions and exhibitions by coaches and buses. There is less bus and coach parking than that which was provided at the old Sydney Entertainment Centre and Convention centre. Providing appropriate layover facilities at or in close proximity to Central Station would allow bus and coaches to service the ICC more effectively, as well as other tourist venues in the southern part of the CBD.

BusNSW recommends that any plans for a new interchange also include consideration of layover. This should form part of the proposed study.

### **c. Centralised Booking Office and Traveller Lounge Facilities**

The booking office currently in place in the lower level (Eddy Ave) of Central Station requires upgrading as in a lot of cases it will be the first point of contact between the traveller and the service provider.

BusNSW recommends a new booking office/lounge facility includes comfortable seating, baggage storage, bathroom/shower facilities, arrival/departure monitors and Wi-Fi for example, to enhance the efficiency and comfort of connecting between modes.

### **d. Wayfinding**

Critical to the success of any reimagining and relocation of a coach and bus interchange at Sydney's Central Station will be the need for clear wayfinding signage to assist intending passengers in their seamless transfer between modes.

BusNSW recommends a study be undertaken to look at wayfinding signage and ensure world best practice. This should be undertaken with consideration of the relocation and development of a new bus/coach interchange and layover facility.

## **3.2. Innovation**

### **a. Digital Solution**

Digital solution opportunities include;

- Automatic bay allocation
- Open platform touch and go ticketing options
- Arrival / Departure (all modes) information displays (fixed and mobile)
- Vehicle and load tracking
- Differentiated service pricing availability

## **b. Vehicle Technology**

BusNSW recommends that any new infrastructure also considers vehicle technology including the provision of charging stations for electric and hybrid buses and coaches.

### **3.3. Community**

The NSW government is commended to use this opportunity to reimagine Central Station Precinct, ensuring that the investment in new transport infrastructure reflects what the community and stakeholders want for the grand landmark station, recognising its iconic place in Sydney's history and future. This ensures the value of the redevelopment benefits all communities including those using the facilities on a regular basis and those visiting based on the attraction of a world class icon, such as occurs with the Sydney Opera House. Uniting people, technology and transport at Central Station has considerable external environmental, social and economic benefits to NSW and Australia.

### **3.4. Integration**

As indicated by TfNSW, Central Station is a key transport hub in the NSW network and it will soon become a major interchange with the new Sydney Metro and an expanded Sydney Light Rail network. The station is an iconic landmark and is also at the heart of a revitalisation of Sydney's southern CBD.

The importance of a centrally located facility that allows people to interchange efficiently between rail, bus light rail and personalised transport cannot be under emphasised. Any new bus/coach interchange and layover should also consider opportunities for integration with surrounding retail, commercial and residential development. A carefully considered and planned facility will have considerable external environmental, social and economic benefits to NSW and Australia.

## **4. Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the project. It is a significant opportunity for the NSW Government to make Central Station a world-class transport hub for Tomorrow's Sydney and help to revitalise the southern CBD. BusNSW looks forward to future involvement in this project. To discuss further please contact Philip Whipp, BusNSW, Ph: (02) 8839-9500.