

**Submission
No 689**

SYDNEY'S NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Organisation: Uber

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The Hon. Natalie Ward, MLC
Chair
Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chair

Uber appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the *Joint Select Committee on Sydney's night time economy*. A vibrant night time economy is the hallmark of any successful global city, creating jobs and enhancing its liveability. However, this needs to be balanced with safety. Uber plays a crucial role in getting people home safely and affordably from night time events. We look forward to working with this committee and governments to build on this and enhance safety for Uber driver partners, riders and the community.

Uber has created more transport choice in Sydney since launching in 2012

Uber is a technology company that provides a smartphone app which connects driver partners with people who need safe, reliable and affordable rides. Uber launched its Australian operations in Sydney in 2012 with our Uber Black product, a premium ride with a professional driver. Our ridesharing service UberX launched in 2014, and since then we have provided millions of Sydneysiders with access to on-demand transport at the push of a button. UberPool launched in Sydney in 2018, providing riders with an even more affordable transport choice. UberPool services allow multiple customers heading in the same direction at the same time to share a journey in one vehicle and reduce the cost.

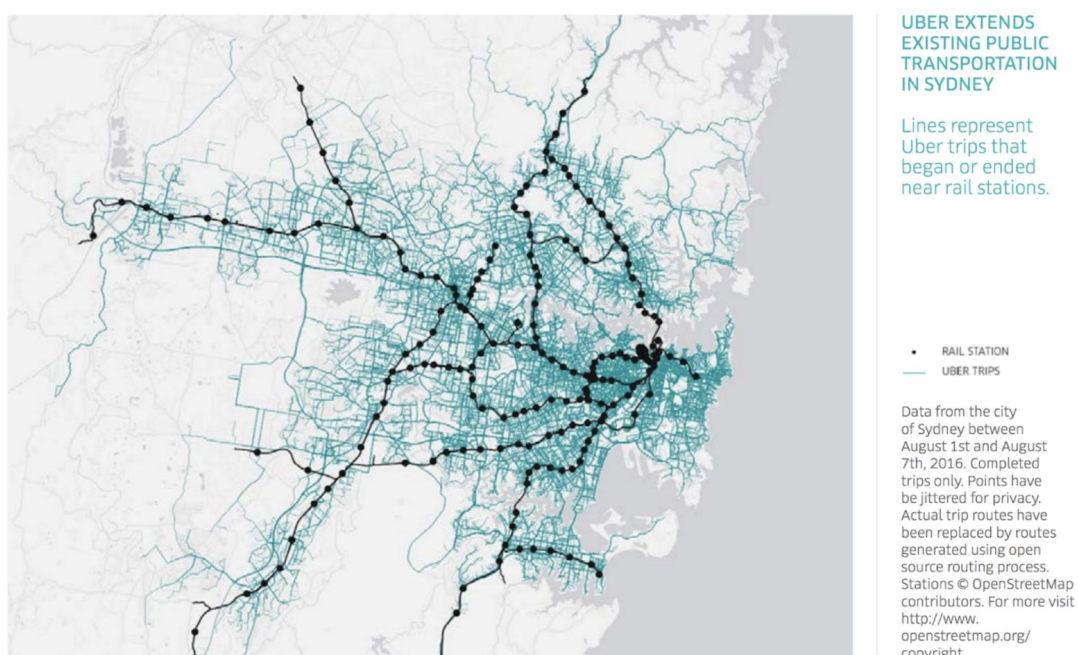
Seven years after launching, Uber's products has meant Sydney-siders have many more transport options to choose from during both the day and night. Uber is now operating in 37 Australian cities and 3.8 million Australians regularly choose to share rides with more than 63,000 driver partners. Average wait times for an Uber ride in cities like Sydney is under 5 minutes.

In the early to middle evening, Uber complements the public transport network

Public transport is the mobility backbone of cities around the world. It is also an affordable option for people to get home from a night out. However in situations where public transport is not available to cover the full journey, commuters are using Uber for their first and last leg. In this way, ridesharing complements and extends the reach of public transport.

In Australia, over 60 per cent of Uber trips start or end in a public transport desert¹ and almost half of all trips are one-way, implying that for some suburbs, for at least part of the day, public transport is unavailable to cover either the outbound or return leg. This is an important point in the context of the discussion around transport for the night time economy. Particularly in the early to middle part of the evening, Uber is used not only as a single point-to-point mode of transport but also as part of multi-modal journeys (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Uber and the public transport network



Uber supports the night time economy by providing access to safe and affordable late night transport

Uber helps billions of people move around their cities. By providing access to a safe, reliable and affordable ride at the push of a button – no matter the time or place – ridesharing is helping make our cities better connected, easier and safer places to get around.

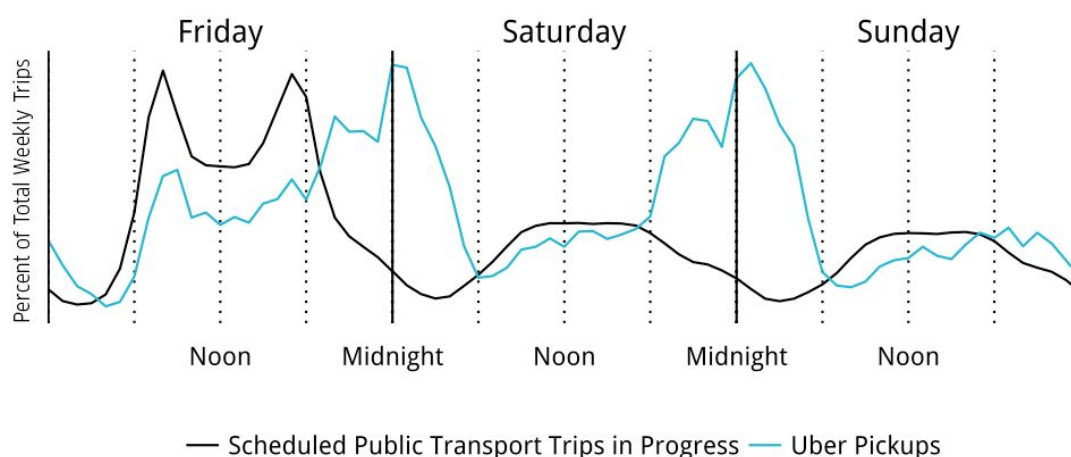
In 2016 Uber announced a partnership with DrinkWise to raise awareness of responsible drinking. Every year in Australia, hundreds of people are killed in car crashes that involve a drunk driver. Not surprisingly, most alcohol related incidents

¹ Deloitte Access Economics, 'Economic effects of ridesharing in Australia', July 2016, viewed 1 July 2019, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/Economics/deloitte-au-economics-economic-effects-of-ridesharing-australia-150216.pdf>

happen late at night, over the weekend – exactly when it’s typically been hardest to get home, because in many cities, including Sydney, public transport is severely limited at night.

In almost all the cities where we operate, Uber’s peak hour is not first thing in the morning or at the end of the day when people are getting to and from work, but late at night when the bars close. Our busiest times each week are typically Friday and Saturday night, when the supply of other forms of transport is at its lowest. 2016 analysis of Uber trip data and public transport services in Sydney shows this trend (Figure 2). This trend can still be seen today though Uber trip request now peak between 10pm and 11pm. This is earlier than other cities such as Melbourne which peaks between 11pm and 12am.

Figure 2: Weekend Public Transport Activity and Uber Rides in Sydney’s CBD, 2016



Improving women’s safety in the night time economy

Women’s safety in the night time economy is a crucial issue for this committee’s consideration. A recent Committee for Sydney’s report found that sexual harassment was the main issue impacting on women in Sydney at night. Their research found that women were turning to services like Uber for peace of mind and to get home safely². While Uber is pleased to play a role in getting women home safely, we acknowledge it is a broader issue in society which needs to be addressed and we want to do more to improve safety for women both before, during and after trips with Uber.

In the last year, as part of our global Stand for Safety campaign, we announced support for WESNET (Women’s Services Network) in Australia via financial grants to assist them to continue to do their work in the community. We also provided support

² Committee for Sydney, ‘Safety after Dark: Creating a city for women living and working in Sydney’, March 2019, viewed 1 July 2019, https://www.sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CfS_Safety-After-Dark.pdf



to Australia Says No More in 2019, a national campaign to raise awareness to end domestic violence and sexual assault, via financial grants and through community activations. We are rolling out practical educative materials for both driver partners and riders in Australia and New Zealand to help improve awareness and prevention of gender-based violence. And finally, we launched the Uber ANZ Women's Safety Forum – a group comprised of thought-leaders, local academics and experts – to provide us with ongoing advice on this significant social issue.

Technology can make travel safer than ever and every Uber trip is GPS tracked. The Uber app always displays the make and model of the ride, as well as the number plates, making it easy for someone to check they're getting into the right car. In 2018 we also introduced a new feature – Spotlight – which illuminates a rider and driver-partner's phones with the same colour. Last year we launched the Emergency Assistance Button, and the Trusted Contacts/Share My Trip feature which allows both driver partners and riders to share their trip details with loved ones in real-time. Riders or driver partners can also nominate for their trip details to be shared automatically with one or more Trusted Contacts during evening hours. Uber also has a team of former law enforcement professionals who are on call to work with police 24/7 to respond to urgent needs and assist in investigations.

We're raising the bar by putting safety at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to doing our part and promoting safe use of our app, tackling tough issues, and mitigating any incidents.

Uber recommends creating rideshare pick up and drop off zones in busy night time areas

Uber will continue working to improve the safety of driver partners, riders and the broader community. We know that Uber already plays an important role in getting people home safely from a night out, particularly at times when public transport services are limited.

Our data shows that some of the busiest areas for Uber pick ups in Sydney on Friday and Saturday nights correspond with night time economy activity, for example Kings Cross, Newtown, Pyrmont, Sydney CBD and Surry Hills. One of the challenges for our driver partners and riders is finding kerb space to safely pull over and pick up or drop people off. Rideshare driver partners are not allowed to stop in taxi zones and on busy streets there are few other places to safely pull over. Uber does not want riders to encourage driver partners to stop in unsafe locations. Nor do we want riders to be forced to wait in less busy, but poorly lit and unsafe areas, such as laneways.

Given ridesharing's growing role in supporting a safe and vibrant night time economy, we recommend the NSW Government works with relevant local governments to create designated rideshare pick up and drop off zones in areas of busy night time activity. These zones could operate only on certain days and at certain times, similar to commercial loading zones. Uber would be pleased to work with government to

investigate suitable sites and use our technology to direct riders and driver partners to them.

Recommendation

NSW Government works with relevant local governments to create designated rideshare pick up and drop off zones in areas of busy night time activity.

Uber looks forward to working with the NSW Government, and local governments, to promote both a safe and vibrant night time economy in Sydney. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this submission please contact Ashleigh Cormack, Public Policy Manager, Australia and New Zealand on ashleigh@uber.com.

Yours sincerely

CHARLES ALLEN

Head of Uber Riders, NSW and ACT