Submission No 38

INQUIRY INTO STRUCTURE AND FUNDING OF THE ARTS, MUSIC, NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY, AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIOS

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 14 November 2025

Submission to the Inquiry into the Structure and Funding of the Arts, Music, Night-Time Economy, and Transport Portfolios

Context

1. This submission addresses items 1(d), (e), (f), and (g) of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, specifically as they relate to Transport for NSW.

2. It is based on my recent experience as a Temporary Fixed Term (TFT) employee at Sydney Trains.

Summary

3. Transport for NSW enforces a strict two-year cap on temporary employment contracts, including contractors and TFT staff.

4. This policy forces productive, experienced workers to exit the organisation, only to be replaced by new hires with no institutional knowledge.

5. The cost, inefficiency, and loss of organisational memory caused by this practice warrant urgent review and reform.

Submission

Nature of Temporary Employment

6. Sydney Trains relies heavily on temporary staff, including Labour Hire and TFT employees.

7. Labour Hire staff are sourced via third-party agencies and paid daily rates—typically higher than salaried employees but without entitlements like sick or annual leave.

8. TFT employees are hired directly under the same conditions as permanent staff but for a fixed term.

9. Temporary staff are engaged for two main reasons:

    a. To support specific projects (usually Labour Hire)

    b. To backfill roles vacated due to secondments (usually TFT)

Impact of the Two-Year Cap

10. All temporary roles are capped at two years, regardless of performance or business need.

11. This arbitrary limit often ends contracts while the role itself remains necessary, triggering a cycle of replacement.

12. The result is a "revolving door" of temporary staff, each requiring onboarding and training.

13. Over two years, these employees gain valuable knowledge and align their skills with Sydney Trains' practices.

14. This development is enabled by permanent staff who invest time and effort in training and mentoring.

15. Temporary staff also complete mandatory learning modules, incurring further cost.

16. Sydney Trains bears the full cost of onboarding, training, and development.

17. Despite their growing value, temporary staff must leave at the two-year mark—even if willing to stay.

18. Their accumulated knowledge exits with them, and their return is uncertain.

19. New hires then repeat the cycle, starting from scratch.

Consequences of the Policy

20. This approach is inefficient and costly:

a. Permanent staff are trapped in a loop of training new hires, reducing time for core duties.

b. HR and line managers face constant administrative overhead from recruitment and offboarding.

c. Temporary staff disengage in their final months, focusing on future employment.

d. Many become disillusioned by the lack of opportunity for permanent roles, despite ongoing work needs.

Project Delivery Implications

21. In Project Delivery, an estimated 80–90% of roles are advertised as temporary.

22. Permanent staff can apply and retain their substantive roles, but external hires are subject to the two-year limit.

23. Effective project delivery depends on deep organisational knowledge. Transport's preference for "fresh blood" over retaining proven performers undermines project success.