

FUTURE CITIES

Metro-fication 2.0

REPORT

Ridership, demographic
and CRE impacts and
predictions for Sydney

CBRE RESEARCH
OCTOBER 2025

CBRE



Metro-fication 2.0

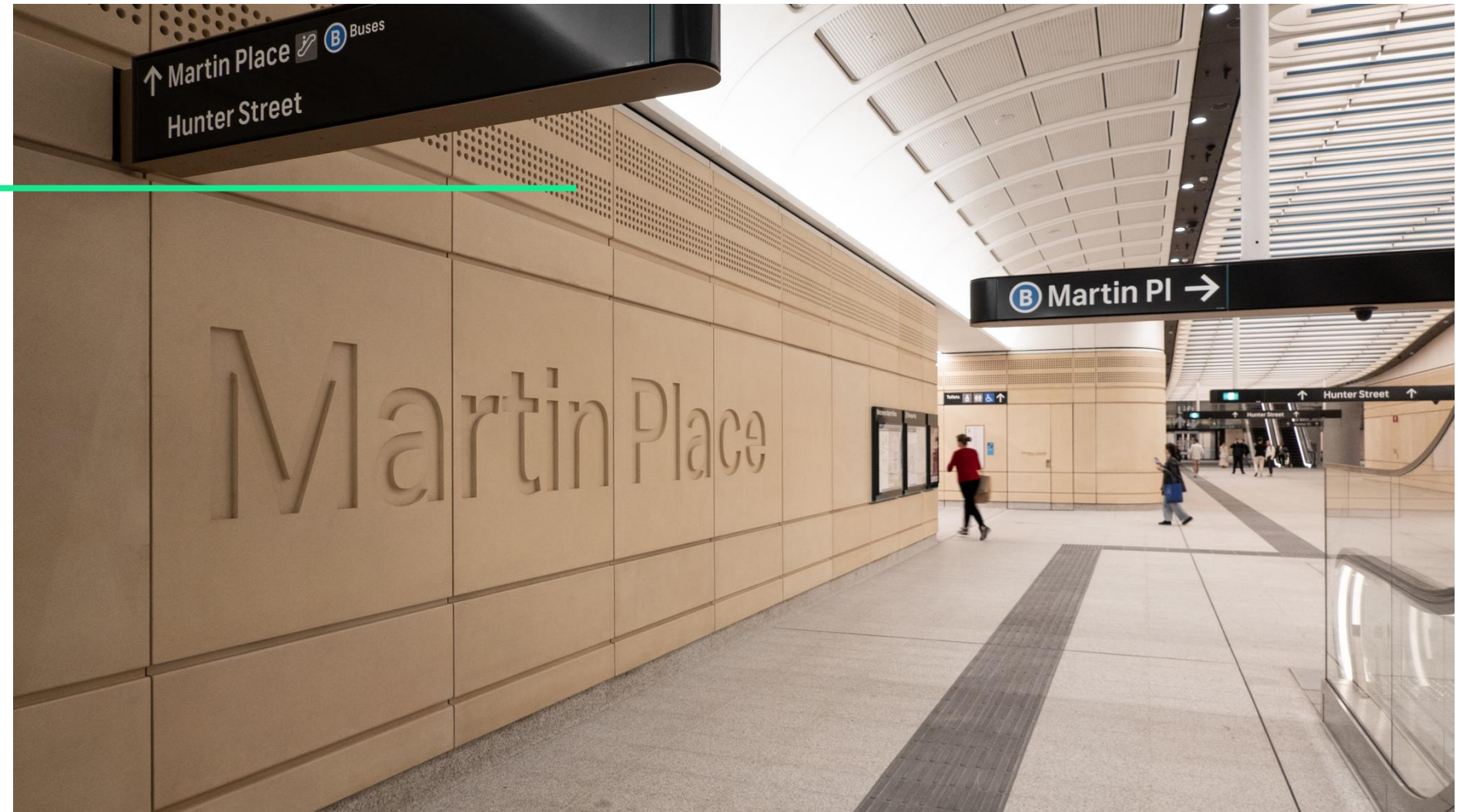
The new Metro train network has been a transformative piece of infrastructure for Greater Sydney.

As discussed in CBRE's [Metro – Transforming Sydney Precincts](#) report released in 2023, expectations were that the new train network would provide substantial benefits for the city including:

- Increase transit connectivity across the market
- Shift demographics and drive population growth
- Drive residential and commercial property valuations
- Generate significant economic growth

With the opening of the Northwest Line in 2019 and majority of the City & Southwest Lines in 2024, the network is now roughly halfway complete.

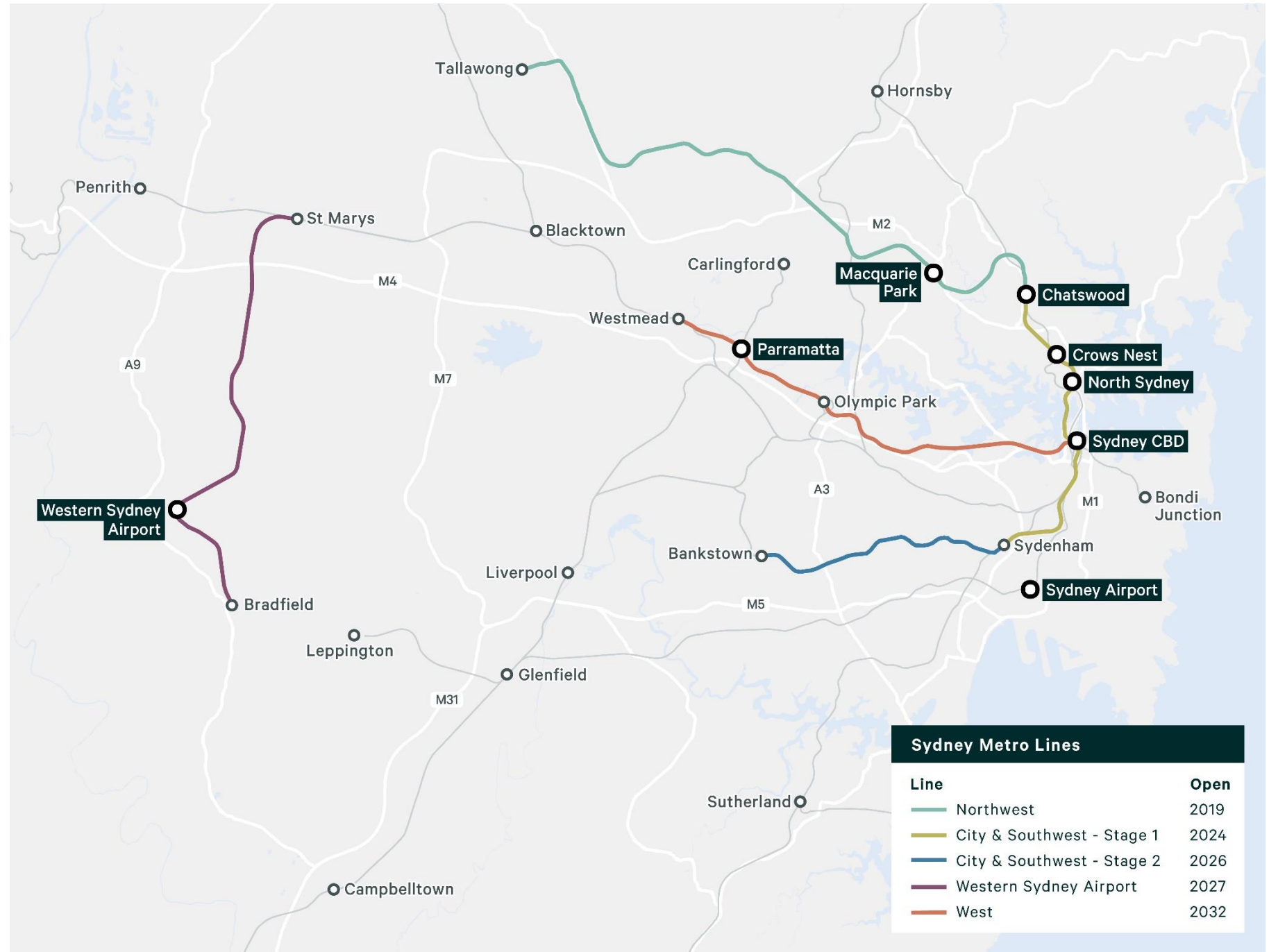
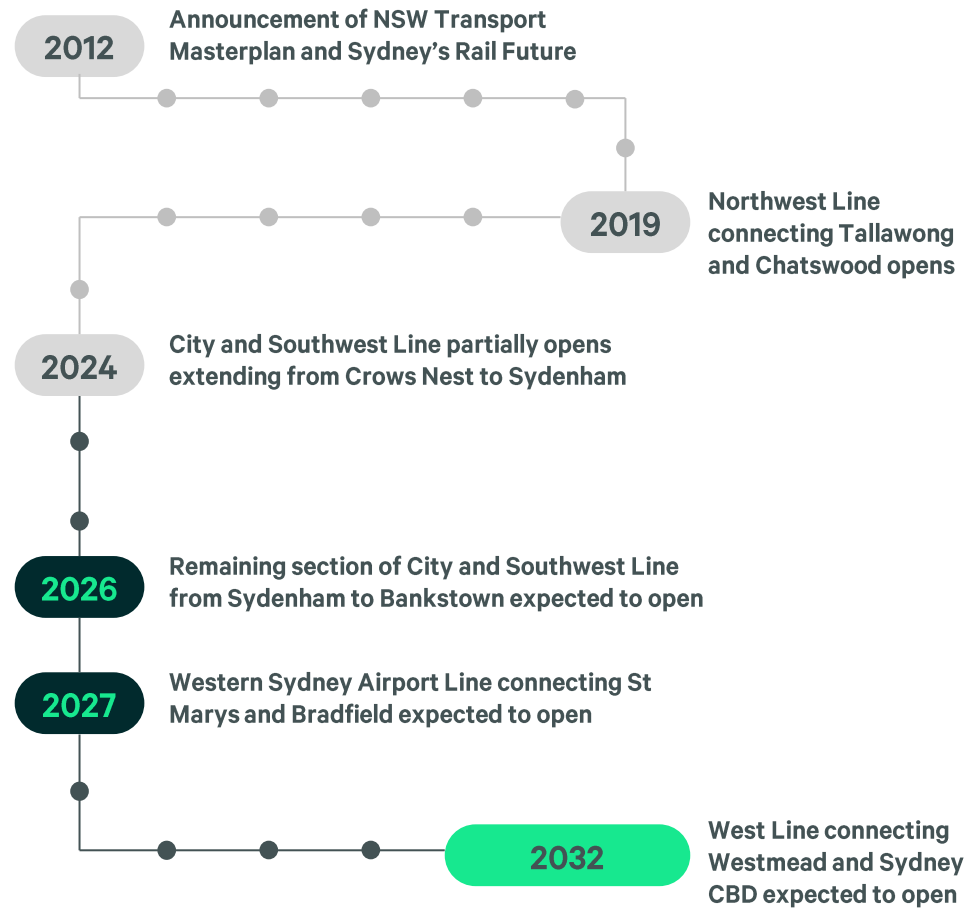
This report will re-visit our prior analysis to measure the impacts of the train network to date. It will also look to apply any learnings from the past few years to forecast the impacts of the upcoming West and Western Sydney Airport Lines on the surrounding regions.



INTRODUCTION

Metro Progress Update

Plans for the Metro train network were first announced nearly 15 years ago. Since this time, two segments of the network have been delivered. The Metro Northwest Line connecting Tallawong to Chatswood was delivered in 2019, while Stage 1 of the City & Southwest Line was opened in 2024. This report will focus on the insights gathered following the delivery of these two train lines.



Note: Dates shown are based on information available when the report was written.

01

Metro Usage



01: METRO USAGE

Metro Ridership

Ridership on the first two segments of the Metro network has been exceptionally strong.

The Northwest Line, delivered in 2019, was the first leg of the new Metro opened to the public. This train line connects Tallawong to Chatswood and includes 13 stations. Despite opening to the public at the onset of COVID, the line has consistently attracted 2 million riders per month.

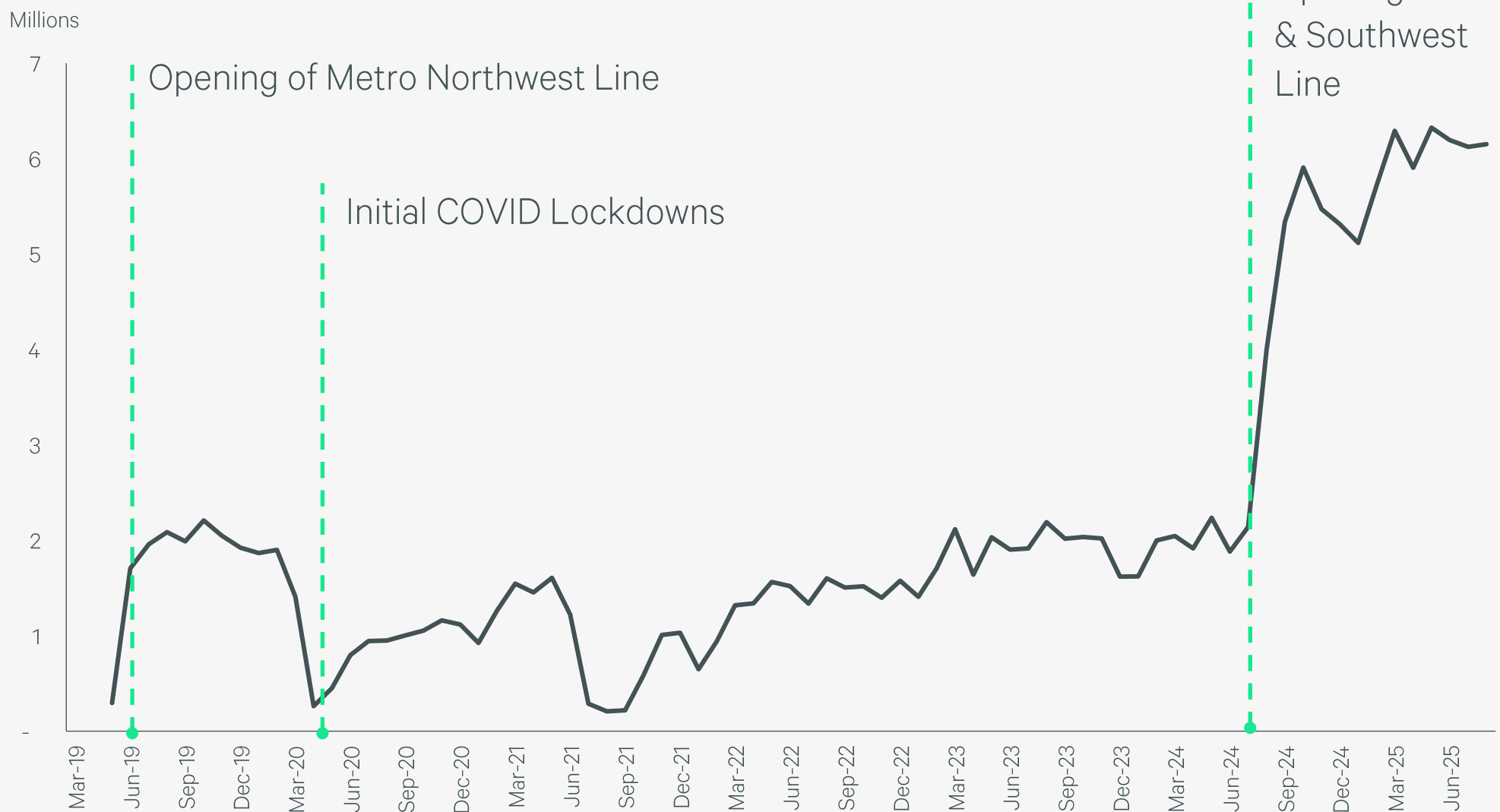
The second train line delivered was the first portion of the City & Southwest Line. This segment of the Metro network opened in 2024 and connected Chatswood to Sydenham via the CBD and 8 stations. The launch of service along this segment of the network increased overall metro ridership substantially.



Over the last year, Metro Ridership has averaged 5.8 users per month and peaked at **6.3 million per month.**

Source: Transport for NSW, CBRE Research.

Metro Ridership
Total Monthly Rides



01: METRO USAGE

Combined Train Ridership

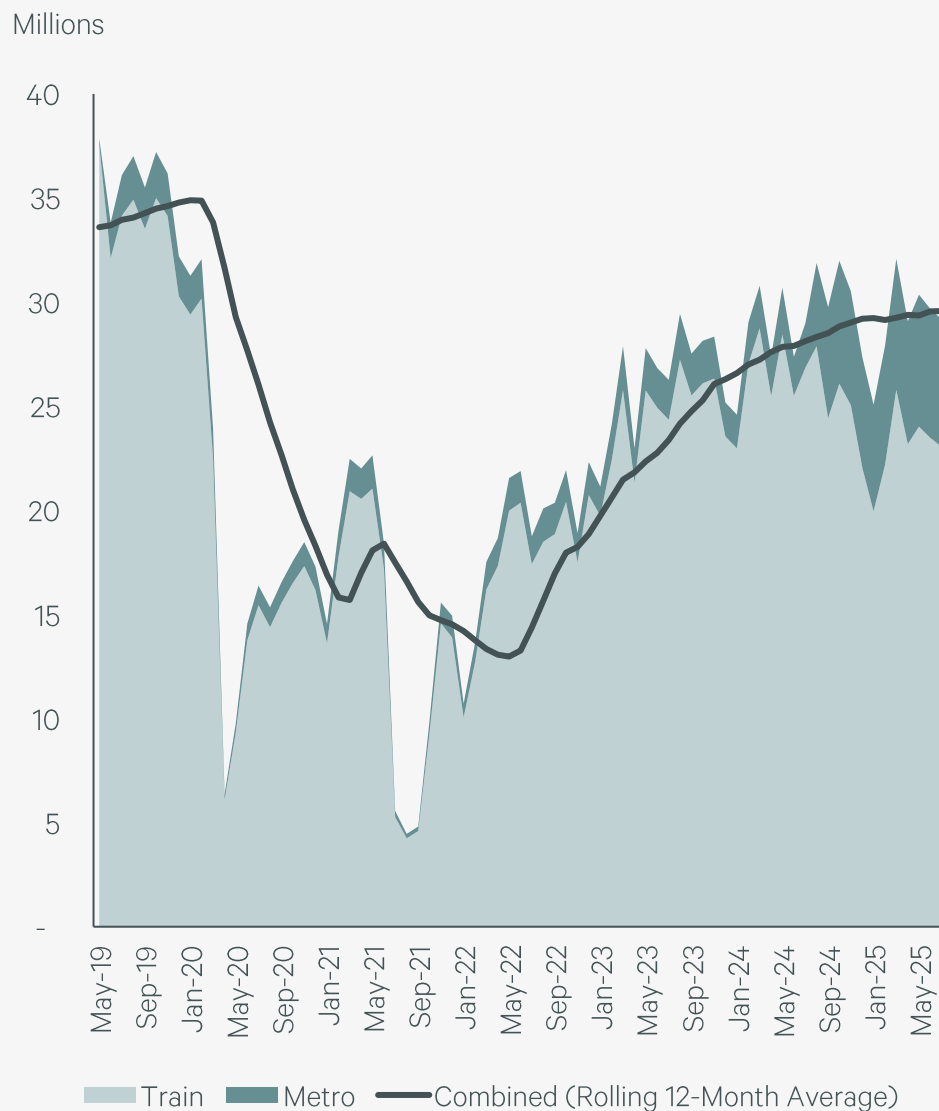
Train network ridership has recovered significantly from the challenges brought on by COVID lockdowns and the subsequent shift towards increased hybrid working.

Prior to COVID, monthly train ridership in Sydney typically totalled between 30 and 35 million riders per month. Monthly ridership then dropped to a monthly average of just under 15 million riders over the first two years of the pandemic.

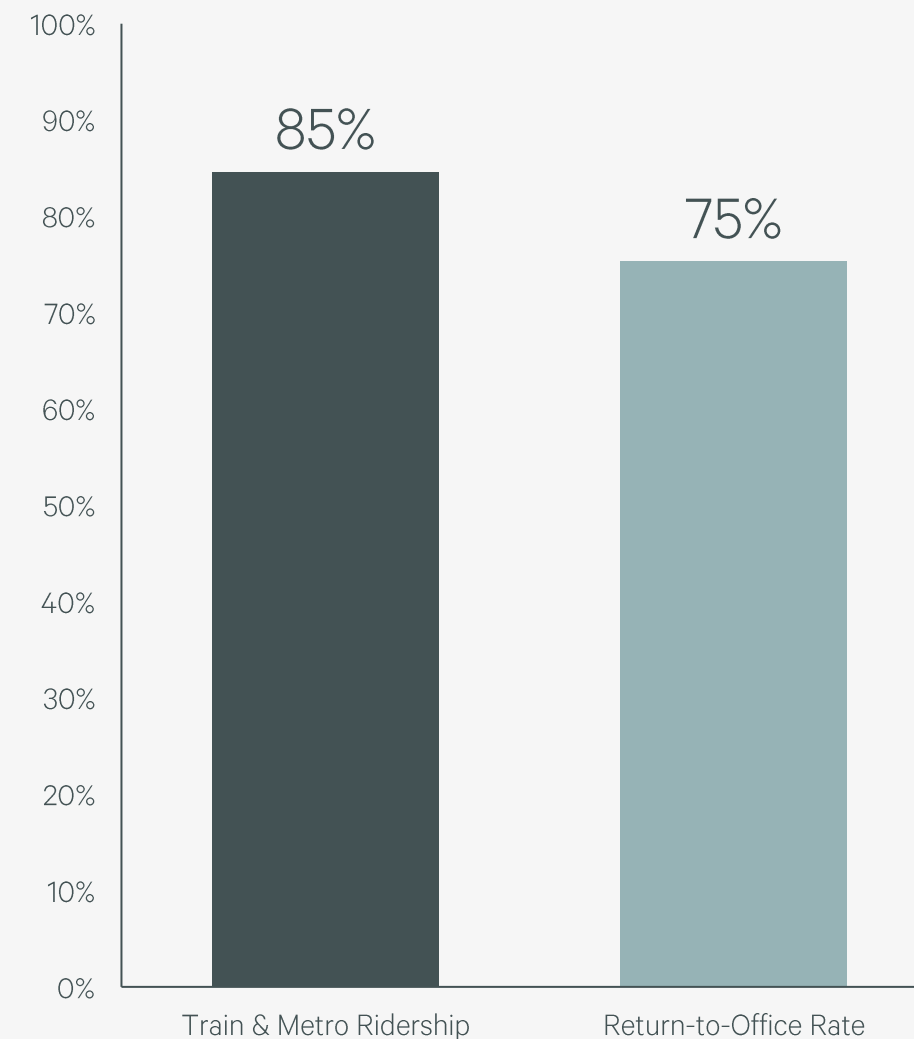
Train ridership has improved gradually since mid-2022 as New South Wales re-opened and people returned to in-person working. This recovery also coincided with the opening of the City & Southwest Metro Lines in 2024. Combined ridership on both the Train and Metro transport networks has now recovered to just under 30 million riders per month. These totals equate to roughly 85% of pre-COVID ridership, a strong figure given that return-to-office rates in the Sydney CBD currently sit at 75%.

It's expected that these numbers should continue to rise as awareness of the benefits of the Metro network increases, as developments of precincts surrounding Metro stations accelerates, and as the final few Metro lines are delivered.

Metro & Train Ridership
Total Monthly Rides



Recovery of Train Network Usage vs Return-to-Office Rates



Source: Transport for NSW, CBRE Research.

01: METRO USAGE

Rider Journeys

Given it has now been five years since the delivery of the Northwest line and one year since the delivery of the City & Southwest Lines, rider behaviours have started to stabilize, and usage patterns can be seen across the network.

Riders typically enter the Metro network at either **Residential or Intermodal nodes**. These entry points include smaller suburban stations such as Tallawong, larger near city centres such as Sydenham, and intermodal connection points such as Epping. Ridership in these entry point stations is correlated to the population surrounding each station and/or the number of intermodal networks serviced at each station.

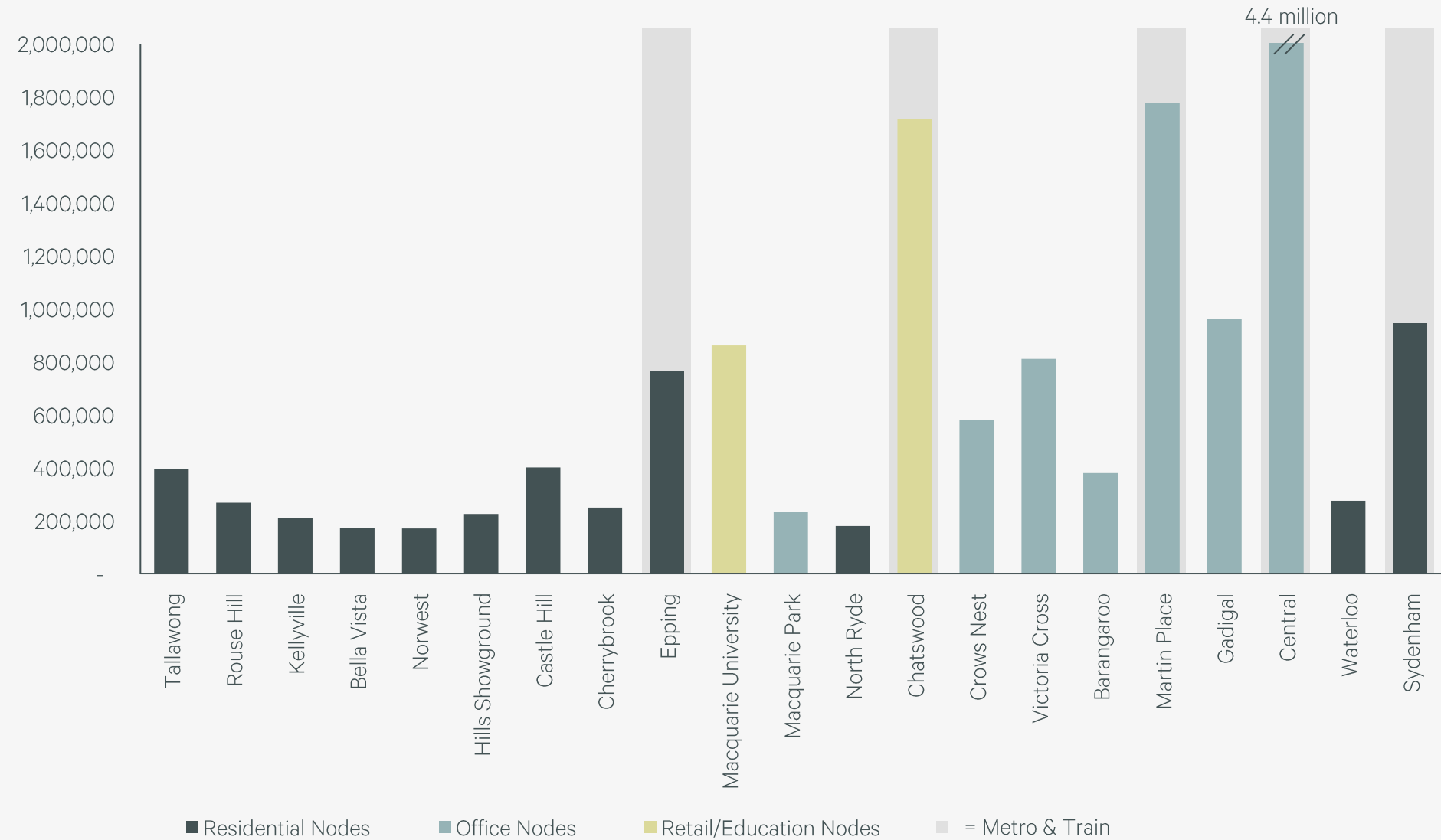
Riders then use the network to travel to exit point stations. The primary types of exit points along the already delivered Metro lines include:

- **Office Nodes:** Stations located near large office centres. This includes stations such as Martin Place, Gadigal, Barangaroo, and Victoria Cross .
- **Retail Nodes** Stations located in suburban markets near major shopping centres. This includes the Chatswood (Chatswood Chase) and Macquarie University (Macquarie Centre) stations.
- **Education Nodes** Ridership is also high in stations close to educational institutions. This includes stations such as Macquarie University and Central Station (which neighbours Sydney University).

Ridership in exit point stations is typically higher than those in entry point stations.

Note: Central figures cut off for readability.
Source: Transport for NSW, CBRE Research.

Metro station usage along Northwest and City & Southwest Lines
Combined Station Entries/Exits as of August 2025



01: METRO USAGE

Station Usage Trends

Ridership across the various station types has evolved since the delivery of the Metro lines.

Residential Nodes Entries into residential stations have continued to rise over recent years and figures have now surpassed pre-COVID levels. As seen in the Tallawong data, riders have taken some time to adjust in suburbs which have been traditionally been underserved by transit. These areas continue to see uplift in ridership figures and show the greatest potential for growth going forward.

Intermodal Nodes Ridership at most intermodal nodes has recovered to pre-COVID levels and shown signs of continued growth going forward. Given the highly connected nature of these nodes historically, they show some potential for growth, but at a more moderate rate.

Office Nodes Office nodes have been a major beneficiary of the new Metro network. At stations such as Martin Place, the new Metro has been purely additive to ridership figures. When looking at both entries and exits at these station, usage has increased by ~50% since the delivery of the new Metro line in 2024.

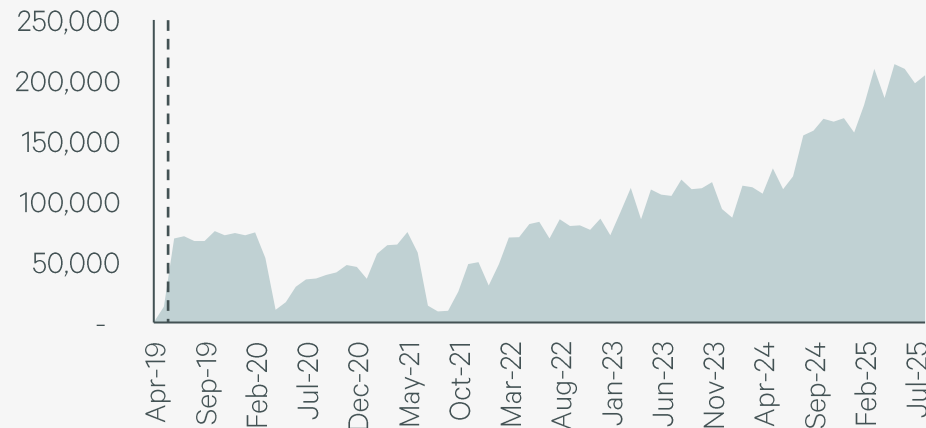
Retail/Education Nodes Ridership figures have also shown signs of growth at Retail/Education nodes. These locations also have potential for significant growth going forward given many people reached these destinations by car historically. Metro ridership to these destinations should increase as people's behaviours change as they increasingly see the convenience and benefit of travelling by Metro.

Source: Transport for NSW, CBRE Research.

Residential Node

Tallawong

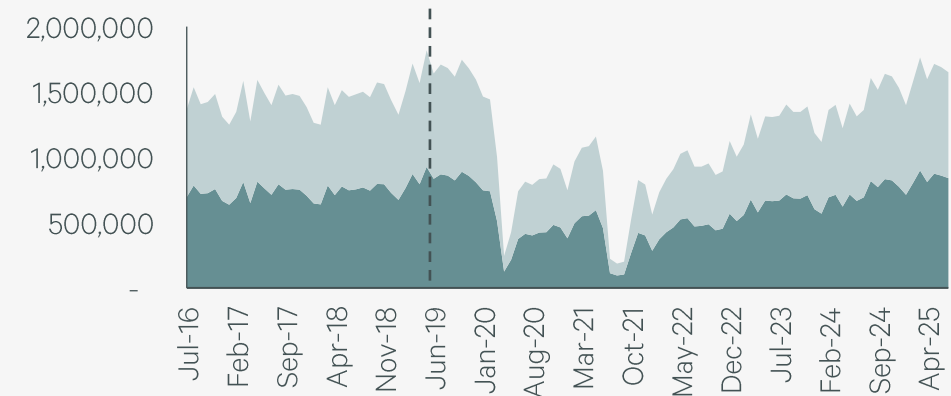
Monthly Station Entries



Intermodal Node

Chatswood

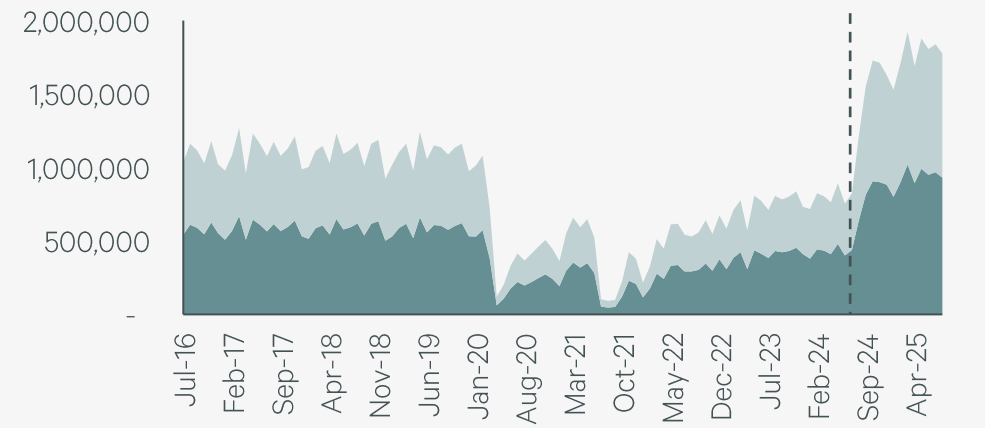
Monthly Station Entries/Exits



Office Node

Martin Place

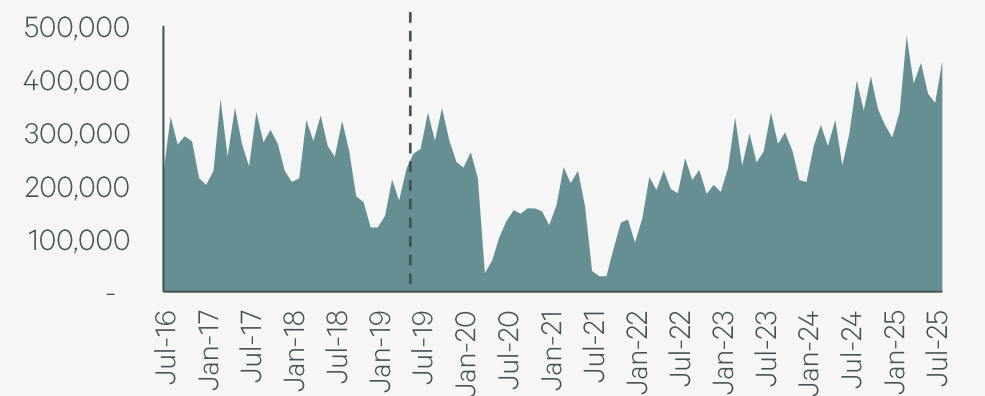
Monthly Station Entries/Exits



Retail/Education Node

Macquarie University

Monthly Station Exits



--- OPENING YEAR

02

Metro Impacts



Artist's impression of Central Station, Sydney Metro.

02: METRO IMPACTS

Population Growth

It was expected that the delivery of the new train network would drive demographic shifts across Greater Sydney. Primarily, that the convenience and connectivity provided by the new Metro train system would attract residential development, which in turn would drive population growth around Metro stations.

Population growth along delivered Metro lines

This trend has clearly been observed when looking at population growth along the two already delivered Metro lines. Suburbs directly adjacent to Metro stations along these two corridors saw significantly more population growth than their neighbouring suburbs. It was also found that population growth around stations began to accelerate upwards of ten years before stations were delivered.

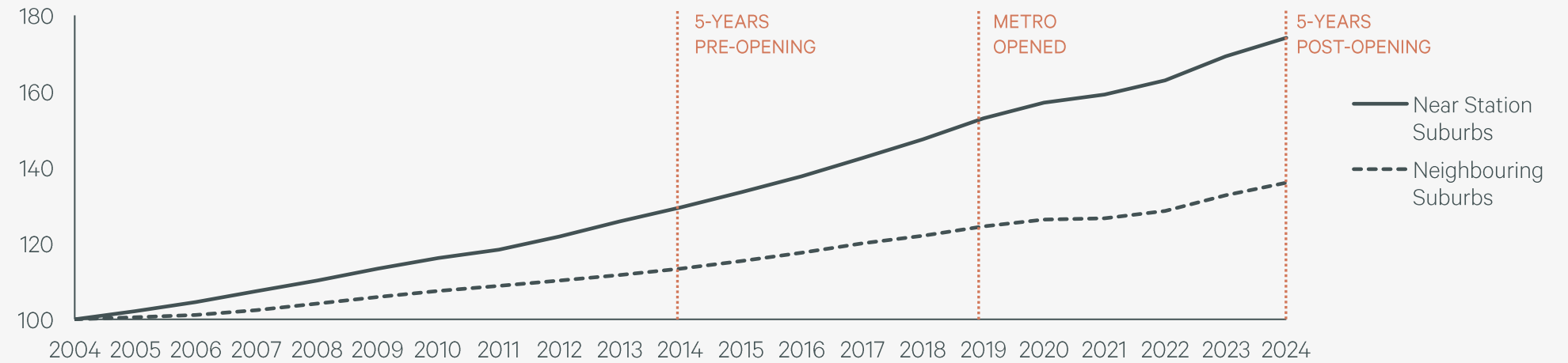
Given that many of the suburbs around the Northwest Line have been underserved by transit historically, the introduction of the Metro to these areas has driven a substantial widening in population density trends. Suburbs along this corridor saw population growth of 35% in the ten years before the line opened in 2019, and 14% in the five years after. This was compared to only 18% and 9% in neighbouring suburbs.

While suburbs around Stage 1 of the City & Southwest Line stations saw a similar trend, the difference between near station and neighbouring suburbs was less pronounced. This was due to the fact that these areas were already densely populated. Near station suburbs along this corridor saw population growth of 22% in the decade before the line opened in 2024, versus 17% in neighbouring regions.

Source: ABS, CBRE Research.

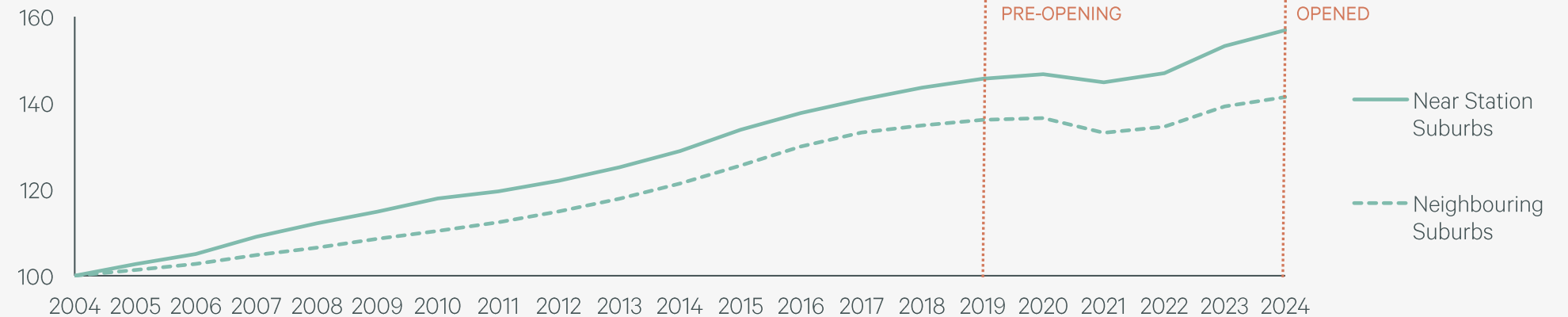
Northwest Line

Population growth
(Index = 100, last 20 years)



City and Southwest Line (Chatswood to Sydenham)

Population growth
(Index = 100, last 20 years)



02: METRO IMPACTS

Population Growth

Population growth along upcoming Metro lines

Interesting trends have started to materialize along the next two Metro lines to be delivered as well.

Population growth along Stage 2 of the City & Southwest Line has followed a similar trend to Stage 1, although in reverse. This line is the only one in which population growth around neighbouring suburbs has outpaced near station regions. This was likely due to the fact that this corridor was already serviced by a Train line in advance of the announcement of the Metro. This means that residential development along this corridor has already taken place. Additionally, many of the neighbouring suburbs are high growth Inner West suburbs which have seen strong population growth over recent years.

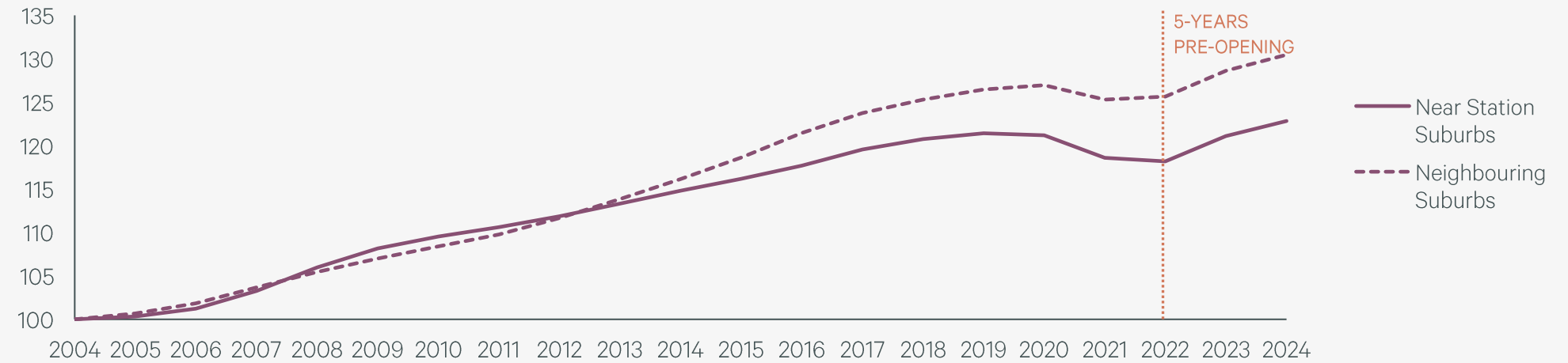
Conversely, outsized population growth has already started to materialize along the West Line corridor, despite the fact that this line isn't set to open until 2032. Population in suburbs around the West Metro stations has grown by 33% in the last decade, far exceeding the 7% growth in neighbouring suburbs.

Overall, it has been seen that the new Metro stations have driven significant population growth. This accelerated growth was more pronounced in areas which had minimal public transport prior to the delivery of new train lines and less pronounced in more urban areas of the city.

Source: ABS, CBRE Research.

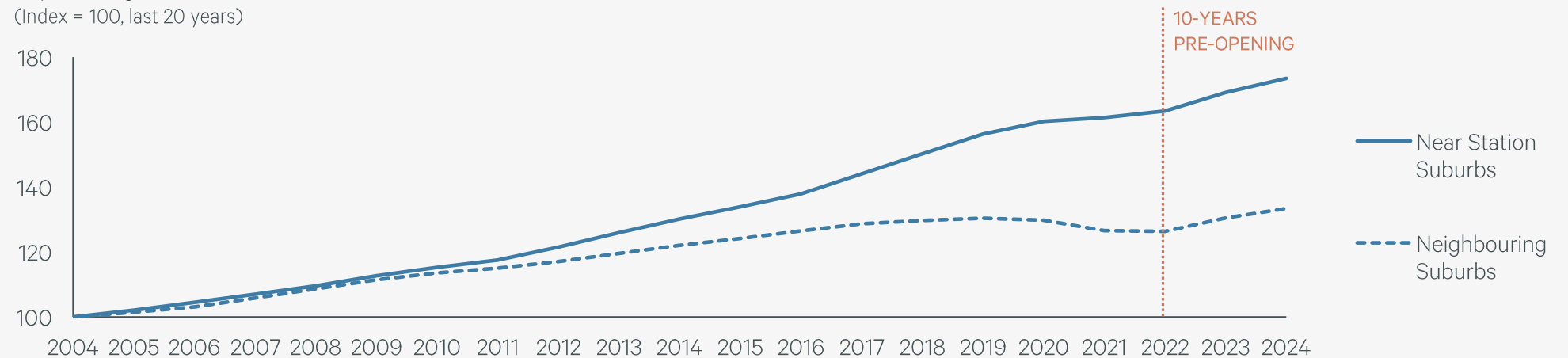
City and Southwest Line (Sydenham to Bankstown)

Population growth
(Index = 100, last 20 years)



West Line

Population growth
(Index = 100, last 20 years)



02: METRO IMPACTS

Apartment Values

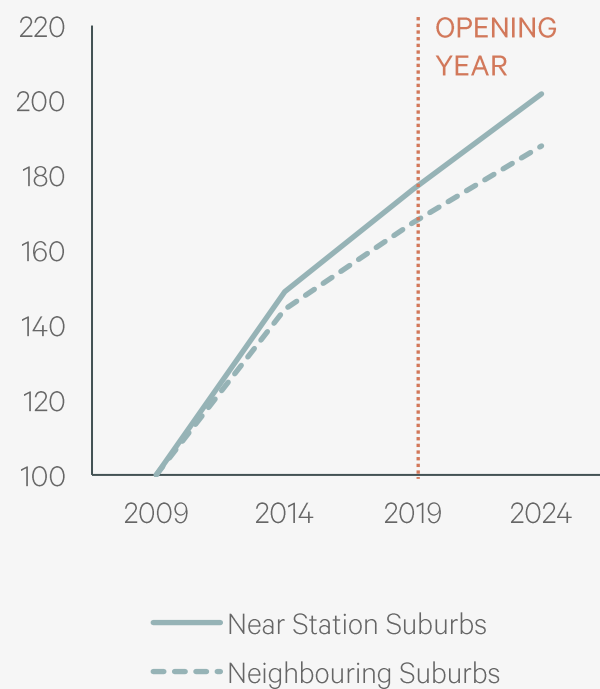
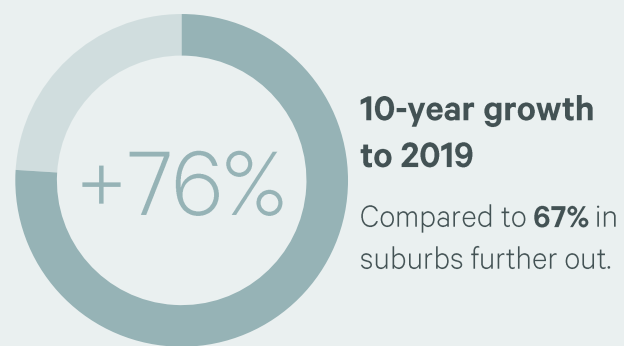
The next anticipated impact of the new Metro network was that population growth would drive residential apartment values near stations. Once again, this trend can be clearly seen in the data.

When comparing apartment value growth in suburbs surrounding Metro stations to neighbouring suburbs, it was found that values along the Metro corridors far exceeded those in regions further afield. Apartment value growth along both open Metro Lines was similar near stations and in surrounding suburbs until roughly five years before opening. After this point however, the gap in apartment values began to widen. In the 10-years prior to the opening of the Northwest Line and Stage 1 of the City & Southwest Lines, apartment values in suburbs near stations grew by 76% and 57%, respectively. This compared to only 67% and 46% in neighbouring suburbs. In the case of the Northwest Line, this widening continued for the five years post-opening.

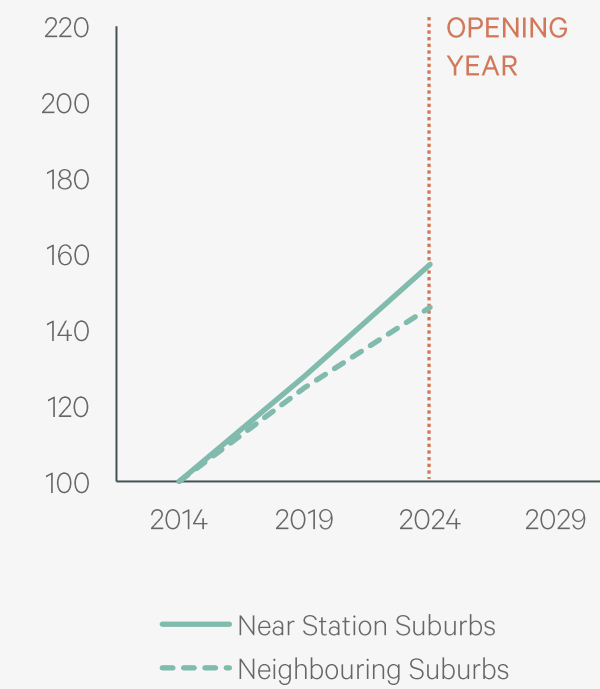
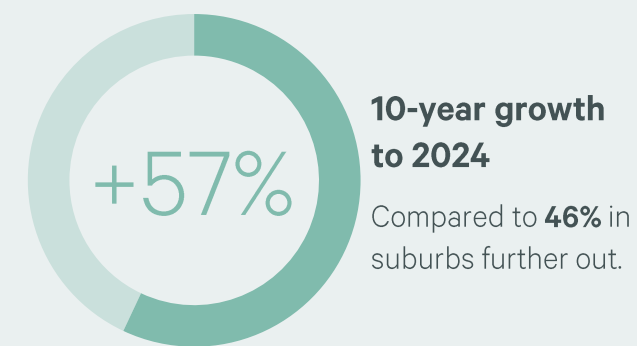
These findings suggest that the anticipation of the new Metro line drove migration and in turn apartment values. This trend has not eventuated along stage 2 of the City & Southwest Line given that outsized population growth around these stations has yet to materialise.

Given that the delivery of the West line is now only seven years away, it should be expected that apartment valuation growth should begin to materialise over coming years.

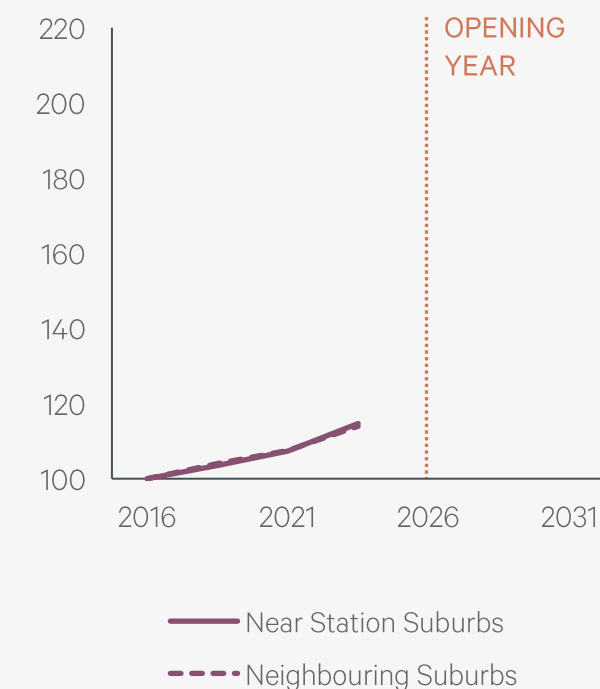
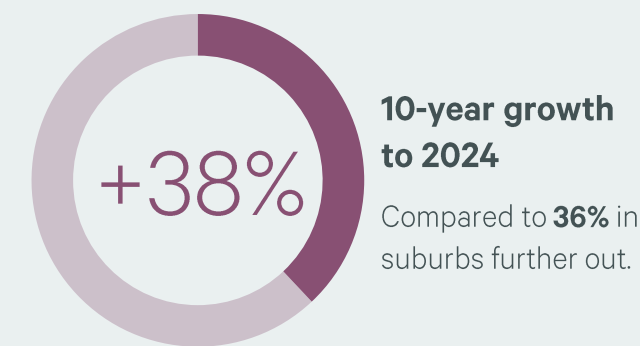
Northwest Line Tallawong to Chatswood



City and Southwest Line Crows Nest to Sydenham



City and Southwest Line Sydenham to Bankstown



Source: Cotality, CBRE Research.

02: METRO IMPACTS

Office Rents & Values

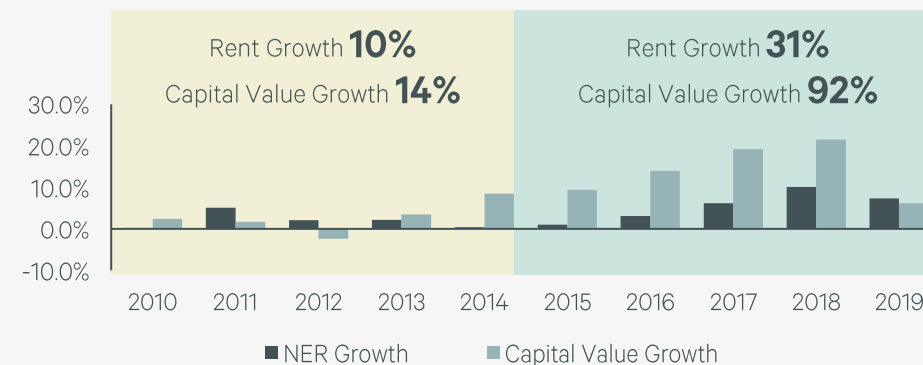
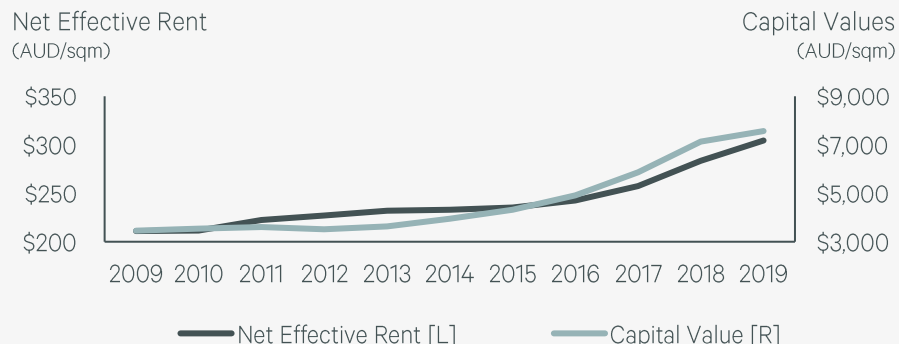
Given that one of the primary purposes of the expanded Metro system was to shorten commute times for workers, it was expected that office submarkets along the new Metro corridors would benefit greatly from the new train network.

To measure the impact of the Metro on office markets, CBRE analysed rental rate and capital value growth in key office submarkets along the Northwest Line and City Line in the years before 2019. The regions studied included Macquarie Park, Chatswood, and Crows Nest.

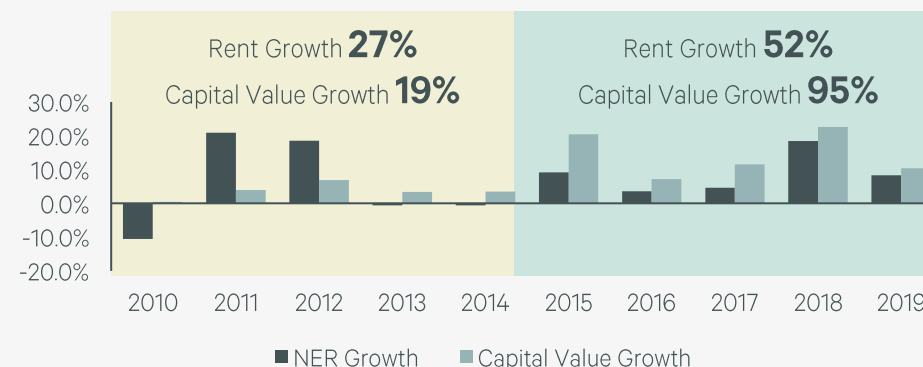
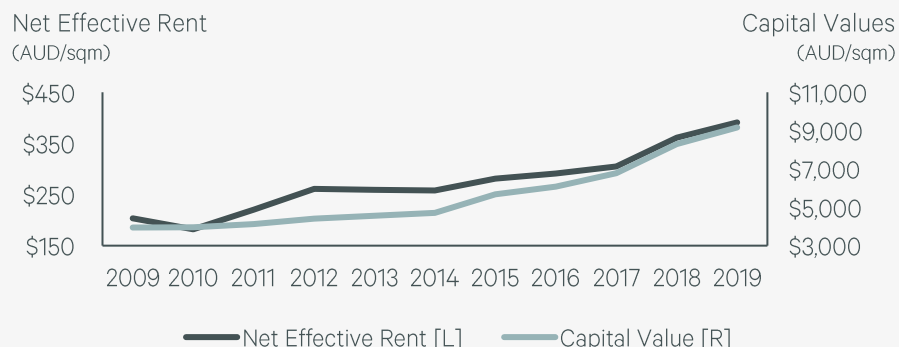
What this study found was that the subject markets each saw significant uplift in rental rates and capital values starting five years before the Metro line opened. Macquarie Park, Chatswood, and Crows Nest experienced cumulative effective rent growth of 31%, 52%, and 52%, respectively, in the five year leading up to 2019. Likewise, these submarkets saw capital value appreciation of 92%, 95%, 126% over this same time period.

These findings suggested that office occupiers clearly saw the benefits of the new Metro stations and began making leasing decisions well in advance of the Northwest Line going live. This shows that capital looking to invest near future Metro stations must have foresight and invest well ahead of the delivery of the new lines. This will allow them to capture much of the income and capital value appreciation generated by the new train network.

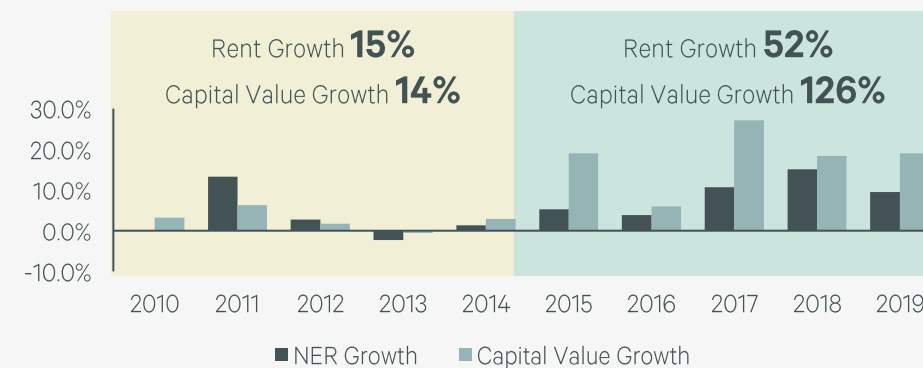
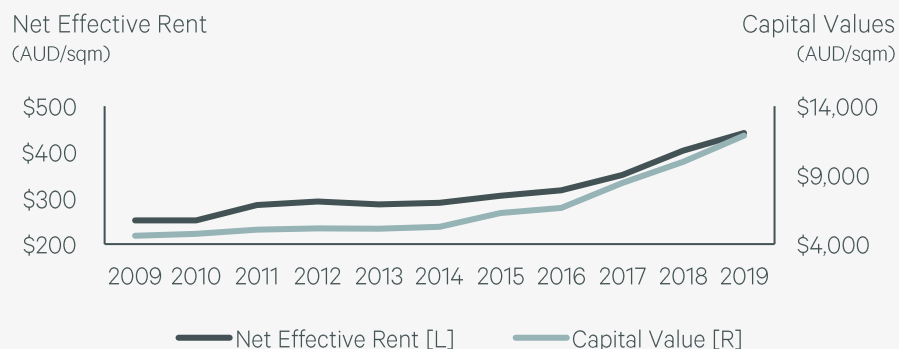
Macquarie Park



Chatswood



Crows Nest



Source: CBRE Research.

02: METRO IMPACTS

Spending Patterns

Rising inflation and cost of living pressures have made 2024 and 2025 difficult years for businesses. Broader economic conditions have magnified these impacts in discretionary spending sectors such as food, beverage, and entertainment. Despite these economic headwinds, businesses in regions near Metro stations generally outperformed over this time.

The Sydney Metro has allowed for easier access to the CBD as well as away from the CBD. Areas such as Sydenham, Chatswood, and Crows Nest are now hot spots for entertainment and dining, and the Metro has clearly helped facilitate additional visits to and spending in these suburbs.

When looking at food and beverage spending data in regions along the delivered portion of the City & Southwest Metro Line, it was found that spending activity grew substantially after the delivery of the Metro. This trend was also seen in both day-time and night-time spending.

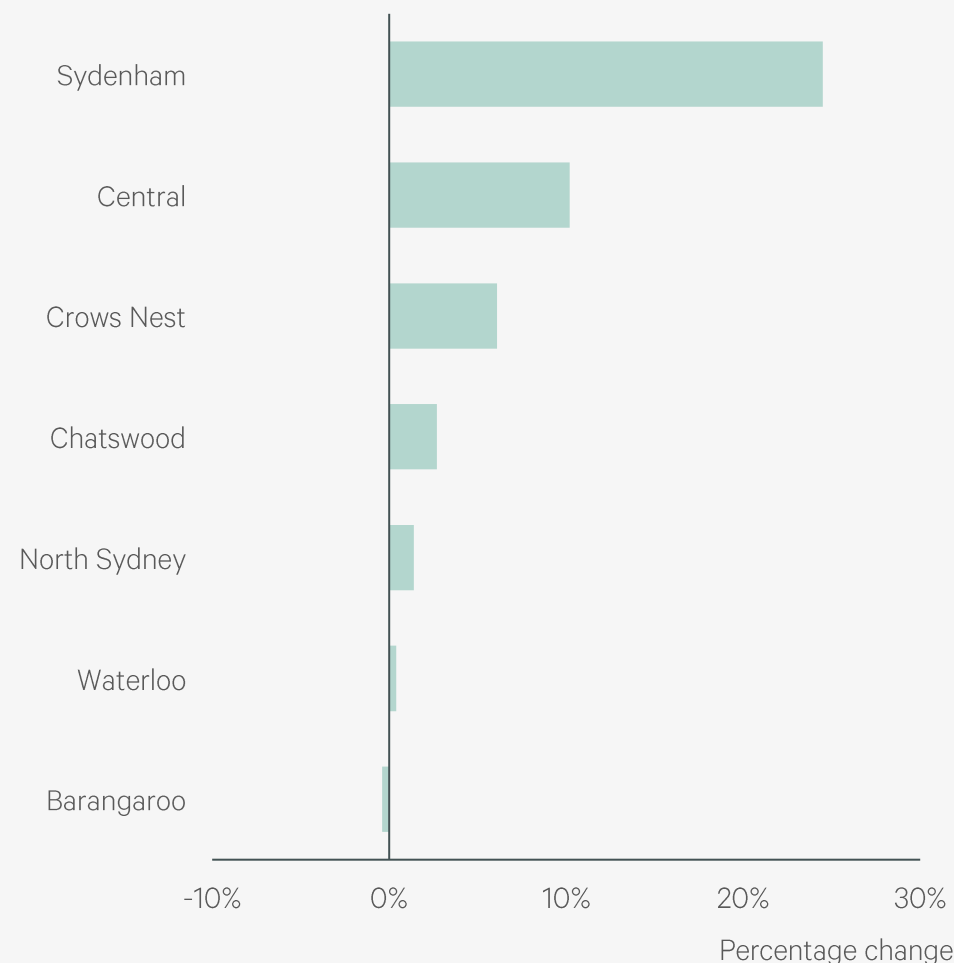
The regions where the largest increases in day-time spending occurred included Sydenham, Central, and Crows Nest. Areas to see strong increases to night-time spending included Sydenham, North Sydney, Crows Nest, Central, and Chatswood.

Note: Spending data shown is for Food and Beverage Services only. Source: Data After Dark, Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner; Westpac DataX spend data.

Change in Food and Beverage Services Spending Pre- and Post- Delivery of City & Southwest Metro Line

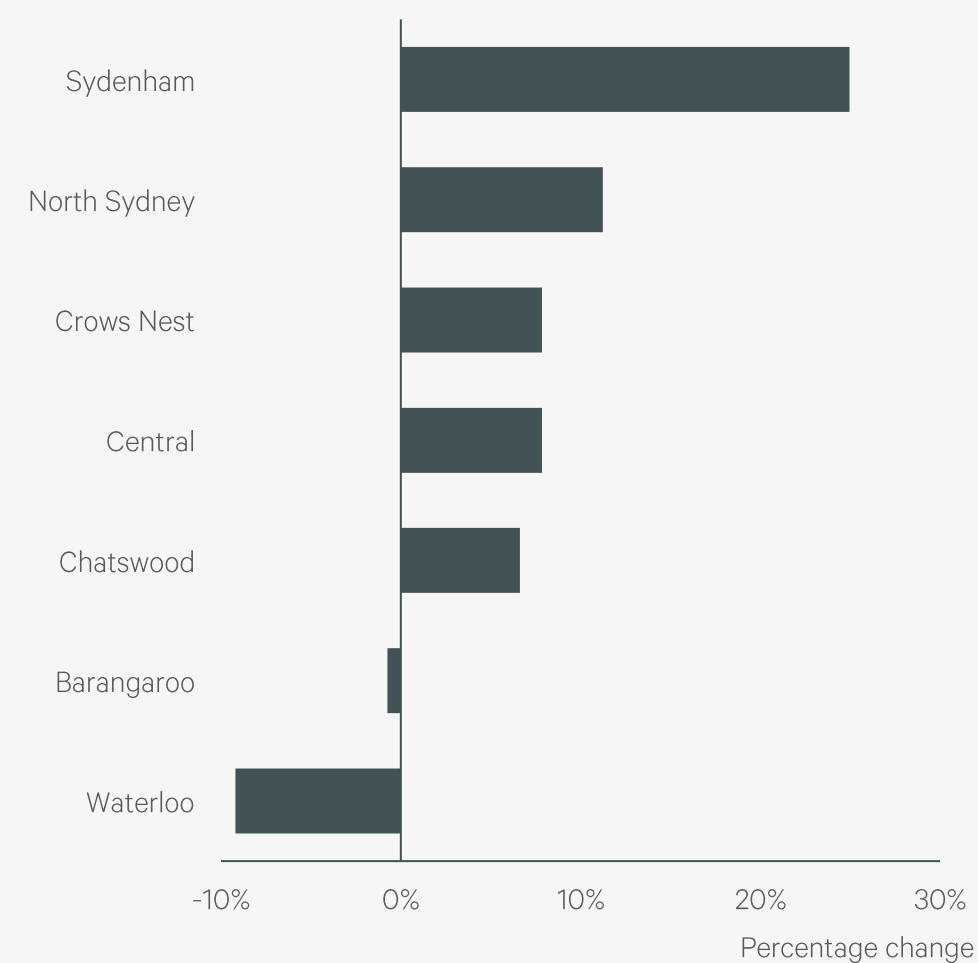
Day-time spending in Metro areas

Year to Aug-25 vs Year to Aug-24



Night-time spending in Metro areas

Year to Aug-25 vs Year to Aug-24



03

Metro Insights



03: METRO INSIGHTS

Regulatory Changes

While the Metro network is now halfway complete, its impact will continue to reverberate across Greater Sydney for many years to come. The opening of Metro stations and the success of the new train network has driven strategic changes to planning regulations at the council and state levels. These changes are focusing on accelerating development, increasing vibrancy, and generating additional economic growth. While these re-zoning schemes have come in various forms and with a wide range of scopes, key initiatives include:

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Accelerated Precincts

There are eight TOD Accelerated Precincts in Sydney, seven of which are located along the Metro. Collectively, the eight precincts will add 60,000 new homes over 15 years (including affordable housing), space for 130,000 jobs, and at least 3.4 million sqm of mixed use and commercial space.

Amended TOD Planning Controls

These controls will be implemented within 400 metres of 37 transport stations across Sydney. Over the next 15 years, the amended controls are expected to deliver 170,000 new homes. Nine of the selected areas are Metro station suburbs.

Master Planed Communities and Priority Growth Area Precincts

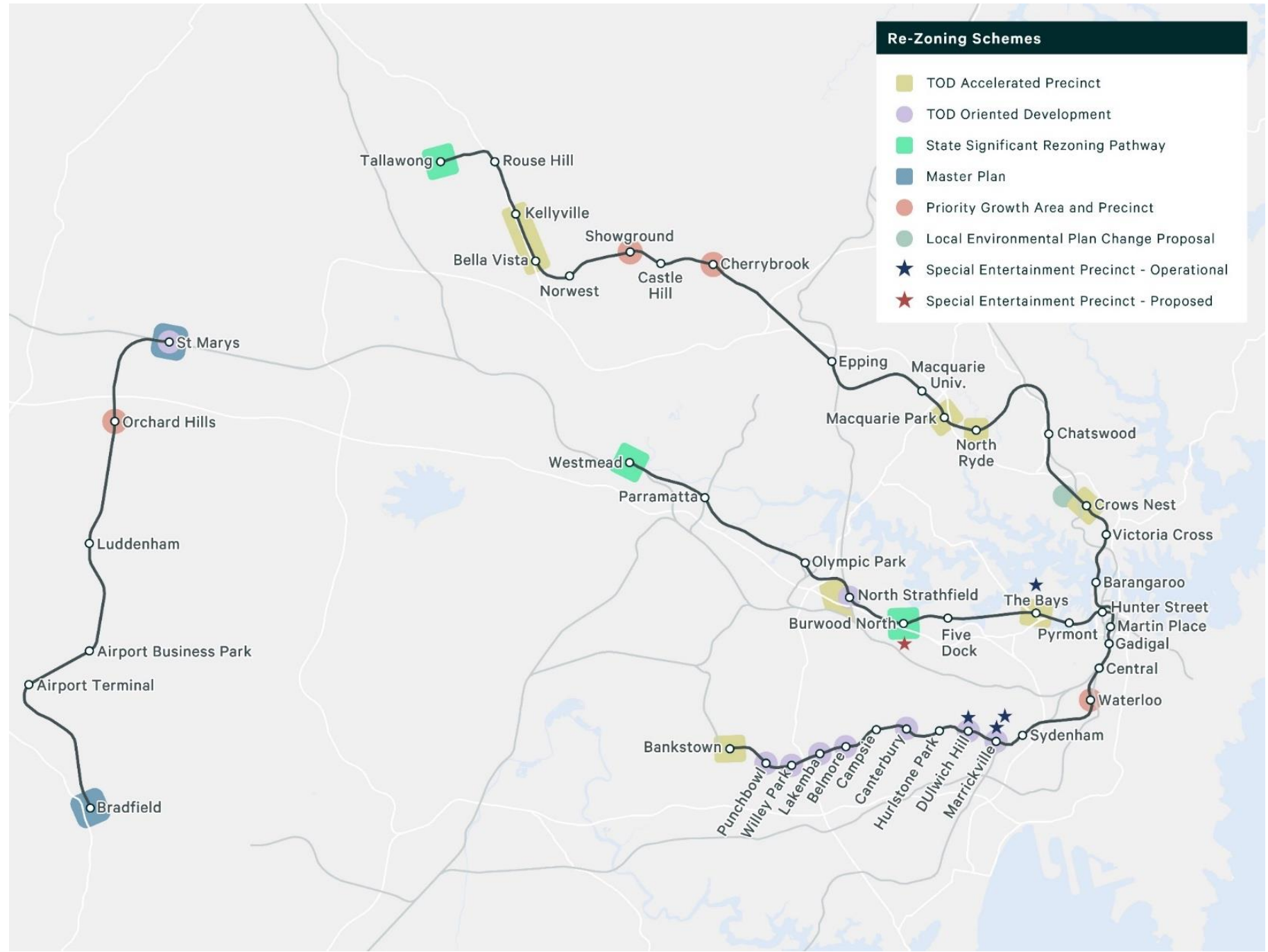
Bradfield City Centre and St Mary's Town Centre masterplans are expected to deliver almost 20,000 new homes and around 28,000 new jobs. Other priority growth areas include Cherrybrook Precinct, Showground Station Precinct, Waterloo South, and Orchard Hills.

State Significant Rezoning Pathway

State significant rezoning has occurred in Tallawong Town Centre, Westmead South, and Burwood North. Changes to the planning framework for St Leonards South in 2020 allowed for development of up to 2,000 homes and 11,300 sqm of new open space.

Special Entertainment Precincts

The introduction of Special Entertainment Precincts is part of the Vibrancy reforms introduced by the NSW Government to support the state's night-time economy. Of the NSW Government's announced Special Entertainment Precincts, there are four operational and one proposed directly along the Sydney Metro.



03: METRO INSIGHTS

Applying Lessons Learned

Halfway through the delivery of the new Sydney Metro network, it's clear that the project has been a major success. The Metro has enhanced connectivity and facilitated movements across the city substantially, as evidenced by the strong ridership recorded over the last year. It's also clear that the new train lines have had a significant impact on demographics, driven economic growth, and are shaping planning and future development for the better.

Looking forward, the Metro should also have similar impacts along the yet to be delivered Southwest, West, and Western Sydney Airport Metro Lines.



Population Growth

Residents will continue to migrate to already delivered stations and start considering moving near yet to be delivered stations in line with project deliveries.



Residential Values

Investment will begin to take place along the yet to be delivered Metro lines over coming years. This impact will be most felt along the West Line set to be delivered in 2032. Apartment value growth should accelerate along this line over the next two years.



Office Rents and Values

The delivery of the new Metro lines will drive rent and value growth in existing office markets such as the CBD, North Sydney, and Macquarie Park. It will also drive future growth in markets such as Parramatta along the West Line corridor. It will also unlock totally new office precincts such as in Bradfield along the Western City Airport line.



Economic Growth

The expansion of the Metro network will continue to drive economic growth along train corridors. These new Metro lines will expand the catchment area for already established shopping, eating, and entertainment precincts while also unlocking new areas for development.



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