

BUSINESS CHOKING

Companies change trading hours to try to beat the traffic gridlock



ANNA LE-SUEUR

BEST BUDDS

- Drives down Parramatta road three times a week to pick up fresh flowers, has to leave home in Leichhardt by 5am
- Has to rush to Sydney markets, if she doesn't leave by 6.15, she is late to work
- Deliveries in the city centre now take hours, so there is a limit to how many can be done
- Staff members who catch buses to work are often late because buses are delayed in traffic

“There is no way around it. It just means more time in my car and loss to business”

ALICIA WOOD POLITICAL REPORTER

COMPANIES have been forced to move start and finishing times for workers — and significantly change the way they do business — just to try to beat traffic congestion across Sydney.

Almost half of Sydney metropolitan businesses surveyed for the NRMA's annual BusinessWise congestion survey said heavy traffic had dictated how their business

was run. The majority of businesses had changed start and finish times so employees would miss morning and afternoon peaks.

More than 30 per cent had extended delivery times to be able to meet deadlines.

Danny Westwood, owner of Frog Furniture Removals, said yesterday he was not surprised by the results. He participated in the NRMA's survey and said he started earlier and finished later, to miss heavy traffic on Parramatta Rd.

He leaves his Homebush

site by 7am most weekdays and does not get home until 8pm. “If we go to the eastern suburbs, we leave Homebush by 7am, but we could get to the east any time from 7.45am to 9am,” Mr Westwood said.

“Obviously, that costs quite a bit extra in wages, and it can cost extra in fuel — just sitting in traffic burning it.”

Worse still, the changes to his business were also having an affect on his family life.

“I'm having to get up earlier, I'm getting less sleep. I've got a young family too,

and they are only young once,” he said.

Mr Westwood and his wife Vesna estimate traffic congestion added about \$15,000 to their operating costs in extended hours, wages and petrol.

Roads Minister Duncan Gay welcomed the survey's results, and said he was “determined to get on with the job of building roads and infrastructure as quickly as possible”.

The survey of 600 businesses found 47.5 per cent of those in the metropolitan area reported increased costs of up to \$5000

and 20 per cent were passing on costs to consumers.

For the businesses surveyed, the most pressing job for the government was duplication of the M5 East Tunnel and completion of the M4 to the CBD. But 67 per cent of businesses were opposed to a peak-hour congestion charge.

NRMA president Wendy Machin said the survey results showed road congestion was more than just an inconvenience for Sydney drivers.

“As congestion continues to get worse in Sydney it's no

surprise that it's now starting to have a greater effect on an increasing number of businesses,” Ms Machin said.

“Given the importance of roads to the state's economy, it's time that we built Sydney's missing links to take pressure off and make it easier for small businesses to get around.”

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia chief executive Brendan Lyon said the government would be judged on how they tackled congestion in the city.

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DANNY WESTWOOD

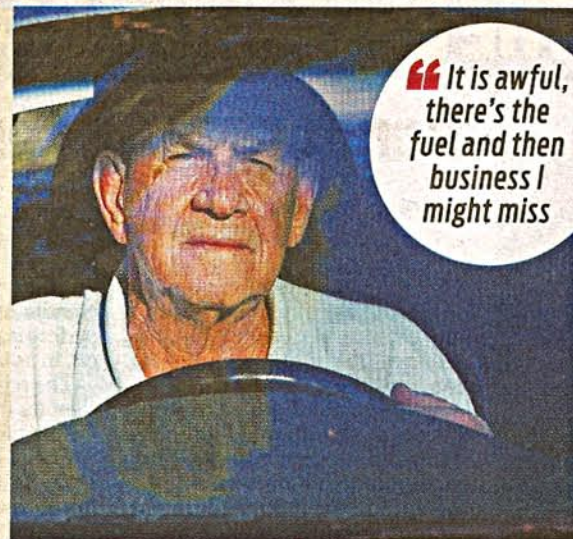
FROG FURNITURE REMOVALS

- Regular 12-13 hour days because he has made starting times earlier, but rarely gets home before 8pm

“It is a nightmare and it is getting worse. You can be in the car for 15 minutes and barely move 5km”

- Added costs of about \$15,000 in wages, and fuel

- Finds Parramatta Rd and the M4 the worst for traffic



“It is awful, there's the fuel and then business I might miss”

ERN PAYNE

ERN PAYNE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

- Has to leave 2 1/4 hours in travelling time each way, from Richmond to any of his clients. Latest out of the house: 6am
- Changed starting and finishing times to miss peak hour
- Says he will avoid the M2 or M5 if humanly possible
- Even with earlier start times, he can rarely go above 30 or 40km/h.