



# TABLE TALK

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## NEW NSW RAIL TIMETABLES

### Sydney area Passenger WTT 15 Nov 2014

Transport for NSW has published a new Passenger Working Timetable for the Sydney area, version 3.70. Book 2 Weekends is valid from 15 November, and Book 1 Weekdays valid from 17 November. There appear to be no significant alterations other than the opening of Shellharbour Junction station closing of Dunmore station. A PDF of the new South Coast line Public timetable can be accessed from the Sydney trains website.

### Sydney area Freight WTT 15 Nov 2014

Transport for NSW has published a new Freight Working Timetable for the Sydney area, version 3.50. Book 5 Weekends is valid from 15 November, and Book 4 Weekdays valid from 17 November. There appear to be no significant alterations.

### Hamilton truncation timetable 3 Jan 2015

The Wickham Transport Interchange Construction Period (WTICP) Timetable will commence from Saturday 3 January 2015. Services will no longer operate at Newcastle, Civic and Wickham stations, which will be closed. Services will instead operate to/from Hamilton. A section of the former main line between Hamilton and Wickham in both directions will be utilised as a new stabling yard, with capacity for up to 2 x 8 Car V sets on each track. The stabling positions will be

designated as Hamilton Yard (Hamilton Station end) and Hamilton Sidings (Buffer Stop end).

The following sections of the Working Timetable will be re-issued with effect from Saturday 3 January 2015:

- Section 7- Central to Hornsby-Berowra (All Routes)
- Section 8- City to Gosford-Wyong-Morisset-Broadmeadow-Hamilton
- Section 9- Hamilton to Maitland-Dungog/Scone.

Cover pages, Explanatory Notes and Section Maps will also be issued. Additionally, amendments to Section 6 will need to be made manually to include updated run numbers and changes to Sydney Yard working as per Special Train Notice 0034-2015. The re-issued sections of Books 1 & 2 will be designated as Version 3.92, and replace the corresponding sections of Working Timetable 2013, Version 3.31, reprint from 7 June 2014. With the re-issue of Sections 7, 8 and 9 of the 2013 Working Timetable from 3 January 2015, a number of changes to the content and format will be incorporated.

- Altered train working.
- Altered Train numbering.
- Changes to stabling arrangements, decanting and maintenance cycles.
- Increased deployment of Oscar sets on weekends.
- Build-up of selected Central Coast Intercity services.
- Revised train rosters and altered empty running.
- Altered paths for Mechanised Track Patrol.

## RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

### Australian Rail freight

A report released in November by the Australasian Railway Association into the nation's rail network predicts movement of freight via rail will triple by 2050. It found that freight movement increased 50% in the past five years with the majority of the growth in the WA resources sector. ARA president Bryan Nye said Australian rail moves over a billion tonnes of freight each year. "In world terms we do move a lot of freight by rail and some of it, particularly in WA, would be the world best." Mr Nye highlighted the immense surge in the movement of freight on rail, with an increase of 57% over the past five years. (See also **Reviews** later in this edition of *Table Talk*).

However, Luke Fraser, principal of Juturna Infrastructure, a consultancy company, says that Australia is in desperate need of mainline railways capable of carrying big freight tonnages at lower cost. He says that despite the critical importance of mineral and commodities exports to the national economy, Australia continues to lag badly behind other OECD countries when it comes to freight rail. He claims the lack of an adequate heavy rail line running along the eastern coast severely hampers the transport options for suppliers of key commodities. "An example is Newcastle and the Hunter Valley, where rail freight services are fairly full up.

It's hard for that coal to go anywhere. The debate on rail easily gets hijacked by other issues that aren't so relevant – like high speed passenger rail along the east coast... a mainline railway capable of carrying big freight tonnages at lower cost is what east coast Australia desperately needs. While the Federal government's Inland Rail project is intended to remedy these shortcomings, with a mainline freight rail situated west of the Great Dividing Range that links Melbourne and Brisbane, funding allocations remain grossly inadequate."

"The Federal government spends around \$8 billion each year on roads, while it has budgeted only around \$75 million per year for planning and preparatory work for the Inland Rail," said Fraser. "At this rate, Australia will be waiting a long time for cheaper freight." He advocates greater use of private investment to facilitate the rapid construction of the inland railway. "A best practice solution would embrace commercial financing of this railway to get it built quickly."

### Galilee Basin coal railways

The Galilee Basin now seems likely to have two rail lines to Abbot Point despite the Queensland government's determination to have just one main line servicing the bulk of the coal-rich region. On 18 November it announced that it would help fund a 300 km railway to be built by Indian mining

giant Adani. The line will link Adani's \$16.5 billion Carmichael project, potentially the largest coal mine in Australia, to Abbot Point, north of Bowen. One of the key provisions of the deal is that Adani has to share the railway with other miners in the Galilee Basin. India's GVK and Queensland freight group Aurizon were the initial preferred developers but GVK's Alpha Coal project has fallen behind the timeline needed by Adani. Now the two proposed lines will converge near the town of Scottsville before splitting again and heading towards Bowen. Adani's line will finish north of GVK's. The Carmichael mine holds more than 11 billion tonnes of thermal coal, to be exported to India.

### **ARTC: Inland Freight line**

The Chairman of the Inland Rail Implementation Group, former Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson, says construction will begin next year. He said one of the first priorities will be to build the section of track linking North Star, in northern NSW, and Yelarbon, in southern Queensland. He said the complexity of some of the technical challenges of constructing the rail line has caused delays in getting the project up and running. "In some areas more work than we might have thought would have been needed, will be needed. But we'll have that full report in the Government's hands pretty soon in the new year and in our view that will coincide with work that can begin as soon as the Government can open its chequebook."

It's expected NSW grain producers will save around \$20 a tonne on transport costs when the line is operational. "From an agricultural point of view, it links the four most productive agricultural shires in Australia," Mr Anderson said.

### **ARTC: Advanced Train Management System**

On 29 October Australian Rail Track Corporation and Lockheed Martin Australia signed an agreement to implement the Advanced Train Management System. The technology uses GPS navigation systems, broadband communications and state-of-the-art computer technology to locate and route trains in real time. ATMS will be tested over the next two years between Whyalla and Port Augusta.

### **ARTC: Hexham coal refuge sidings commissioned**

On 21 November five new up refuge loops were commissioned as part of the Hexham Relief Roads Project. Access to the new loops is at each end of the up coal line. They are situated at 173.9 to 176.9 km from Sydney.

### **ARTC: Benalla-Oaklands line**

On 8 August the Train Staff and Ticket system controlling the Benalla, Victoria to Oaklands, NSW line was replaced with the Phoenix Train Order system.

### **Great Southern Rail: Uncertain future**

On 10 November Serco, the British utilities operating company with a diverse range of worldwide interests, issued a statement indicating that it is in a troubled financial situation. It said that it has a "Programme of disposals of businesses not core to our future strategy underway." This includes sale of Great Southern Rail, operator of the Indian Pacific, Ghan and Overland.

### **NSW/ACT & SA: New freight trains**

A weekly container train is planned to be introduced from Canberra-Sydney and v.v. It will be worked by Espee Rail, the operating arm of the Australian Railway Historical Society, ACT Division. This will be the first freight service to Canberra since oil trains ceased in December 2010.

SCT (Specialised Container Transport) has been operating a port shuttle train from their new terminal at Bolivar, north of Adelaide, to Outer Harbor since April. There are four

services a week. Thus far, it has attracted only containerised wine shipments.

### **East Coast High Speed Rail**

The perpetually postponed east coast high-speed rail link could cost around half the previous estimate, according to a new study. The Australasian Railway Association on 27 October released a report that says a comparison of international construction costs indicates a railway between Brisbane and Melbourne could be built for \$35m a kilometre. That gives a price tag of \$63bn – significantly lower than the \$114bn estimate from a feasibility study completed in 2013. The Association's chief executive, Brian Nye, said prices had not come down and the \$63bn cost was a reflection of current international costs. "These construction costs are why the project needs to be put on to the global market." He said for this to proceed, the government needed to make a commitment, then establish a body to oversee the project. Then it should be opened to the market. "High-speed rail is proven to entice populations out of capital cities and open up regional areas," Mr Nye said. "The study shows these same benefits are viable for Australia too." The project is routinely postponed because of the cost and difficulties of an infrastructure project that would cover three states and one territory and involve five governments.

In response, the Opposition Infrastructure spokesman, Anthony Albanese, urged the Federal government to implement four key recommendations of the High Speed Rail Advisory Group:

- Formally commit to high speed rail and settle arrangements with state and territory governments;
- Protect the corridor;
- Refer High Speed Rail to Infrastructure Australia for initial assessment;
- Establish a High Speed Rail Authority.

### **QR Citytrain: Train control**

On 29 November Queensland Rail called tenders for an Integrated Train Operations Solution for train control in South-east Queensland.

### **QR Citytrain: Brisbane storm city**

A severe thunderstorm hit Brisbane shortly before the evening peak on **Wednesday 19 November**. Queensland Rail experienced multiple issues, including water over the tracks requiring the overhead power to be turned off through the CBD. All trains through the CBD were suspended and then delayed for at least 90 minutes. Ipswich and Springfield line trains ran from Milton. Caboolture and Sunshine Coast line trains from Virginia. Ferny Grove line trains ran from Windsor. Cleveland line trains ran from Park Road. Shorncliffe, Airport and Doomben line trains were suspended throughout. Bus replacement services were organised but there was chaos.

Eight days later on **Thursday 27 November** it all happened again at the evening peak, but even more severely. A ferocious hailstorm spread across Brisbane. Trains were again severely disrupted. Brisbane Central station was flooded. Passengers on one train between Fortitude Valley and Bowen Hills were trapped for three hours. Later in the evening, trains resumed running in the outer suburbs. Buses were provided elsewhere. Trains were also disrupted the next morning. Buildings in the CBD and elsewhere were extensively damaged. Across the city, the cost of damage was estimated at about \$150 million.

### **Brisbane BaT tunnel route**

The Queensland government proposes to re-align the proposed Brisbane BaT cross-river rail and bus tunnel. This would involve demolition of Roma St Transit Centre, replacing it with a new building. The tunnel would be 4 kms long Dutton Park to Spring Hill with new underground stations at Woolloongabba, George St and Roma St. The

government claims this would save hundreds of millions of dollars due to reduced tunnelling and re-engineering. It wants to complete the BaT project by 2021.

## Queensland Rail Traveltrain: Inlander and Westlander downgraded

Sleeping and dining carriages will be removed from Queensland Rail's twice weekly trains, the **Westlander** (Brisbane to Charleville, 777 km) and the **Inlander** (Townsville-Mt Isa, 977 km) from 1 January. Sleepers and a diner will be retained on the **Spirit of the Outback** train (Brisbane-Longreach) but the Motorail facility will be removed.

The Westlander was introduced in August 1954, replacing the Western Mail which had run between Brisbane and Roma since 1888. The Inlander was introduced in 1953 replacing the Mt Isa Mail.

Queensland Transport Minister Scott Emerson told State Parliament on 29 October that the services would continue, but did not say that dining or sleeping cars on both services would be withdrawn. He said, "I understand the importance of rail travel across Queensland, and they are continuing as services." A spokesperson for Mr Emerson said the decision to withdraw the dining and sleeping cars was only made later. "On advice from engineering experts, the carriages must be retired by the end of this year as they are 60 years old," the spokeswoman said.

Rail: Back on Track spokesman Robert Dow said the changes meant the inevitable decline of the two services. "This in reality means the end of these services," Mr Dow said. "It is doubtful that passengers will even bother once the basic facilities are removed," he said. "It is clearing the way for the privatisation of the Mount Isa - Townsville railway, and the closure of the Western line."

Mt Isa Mayor Tony McGrady, said the move was a masked way to force the closure of the service, because the Inlander would become less attractive for passengers, forcing a likely drop in patronage. "This is an insult to the west and it is essentially closure by stealth," he said. "The passengers, many of them elderly, will be treated like second-class citizens. To expect seniors to sit up for that duration is impossible and an absolute insult."

The demise of both the Inlander and the Westlander has been predicted for a long time. In truth, they usually have very small patronage and big losses. Their retention – albeit in a severely reduced form – is no doubt due to the Queensland state election due in 2015 and the desire of the current State government not to incur further unpopularity.

## NSW Train Link: Services to Melbourne resume

Around 11/12 November NSW Train Link XPT services resumed running to/from Melbourne Southern Cross station. Since a derailment on the North Melbourne flyover in June they had been running only to/from Broadmeadows, in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, with bus connections beyond. The problem was insufficient clearance for XPT wheels on the new third rail section over the flyover.

## NSW transport upgrades

On 25 November NSW Premier Mike Baird promised that if the Coalition is returned at the 2015 NSW election and subsequently secures Parliamentary approval to lease 49% of the state's electricity networks for \$20 billion, there would be major infrastructure investments. The public transport components would be:

- Sydney rapid transit \$7 billion (second Harbour crossing and conversion of the Bankstown line)

- Sydney rail upgrades \$1 billion (capacity upgrades on the Western and Northern lines, power supply upgrades, and introduction of advanced train control systems),
- Parramatta light rail \$600 million (see next paragraph), and
- "Fixing" country rail for freight \$400 million (compared to \$3.7 billion proposed for country roads).

On 27 October NSW Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, announced short-listed corridors for light rail in Western Sydney:

- Parramatta to Macquarie Park via Carlingford,
- Parramatta to Castle Hill via Old Northern Road,
- Parramatta to Bankstown, and
- Parramatta to Sydney Olympic Park and Strathfield/Burwood.

These corridors will now be subject to detailed engineering, transport planning and customer analysis, to establish which represents the best option for light rail in the region.

## NSW Train Link: Hunter train punctuality

Trains on the Hunter line had only had a 90% punctuality rate four times in the past 15 months, in February, May, June and August. In March punctuality dropped to 78.2% – the lowest figure since March 2012 when trains were only punctual 76.5% of the time. The data analysed trains that arrived in Newcastle CBD between 0730 and 0930 and departed between 1600 and 1800 Monday to Friday. They were logged as "on time" if they arrived at the final destination within six minutes of the timetable.

## Sydney Trains

The NSW Auditor-General issued a report into the state's transport system on 18 November. It showed an increase in security and ticketing complaints by rail passengers. Complaints about timetable issues increased from 458 in 2013 to 4808 in 2014 – a 950% increase, which Sydney Trains attributed to the October 2013 timetable changes.

NSW Transport Minister, Ms Berejiklian, noted that the new timetable added 1000 extra services per week. This helped produce an overall drop in crowding on the rail system. But this was not spread evenly among all lines, and some stations experienced a drop in the number of services. Kogarah, for instance, which for decades has been promoted as a major employment destination, lost its direct rail connection with the Sutherland Shire and the Illawarra. Services to a number of smaller stations were also reduced.

## Sydney Trains: Leppington line timetable January 2015

The inaugural timetable from January 2015 for the Leppington line (South West Rail Link Sydney) provides for trains operating from Leppington to Liverpool only. The first service will depart Leppington at 0506 each day, and the last service from Liverpool will depart at 2358. Initially trains will run every 30 minutes, with the journey taking around 15 minutes in each direction between Leppington and Liverpool. Minister for Transport Gladys Berejiklian stated on 6 November that "We are already planning the full integration of the SWRL into the Sydney Trains network and once services have started early next year we will monitor passenger movements, and then ensure the trains are fully integrated into the timetable as soon as practically possible."

(It should be borne in mind that, in fact, there will only be a small population served by the new line when it opens, although large growth is planned for the area. The South West Growth Centre will eventually be home to a population of around 300,000 people — almost the same size as Canberra. This line is a rare example of public transport infrastructure preceding the large population.)

## Sydney Trains: Leppington open day

On Sunday 23 November, there was an open day on the new Glenfield-Leppington line. Trains operated every 30 minutes.

## Sydney Trains: City Circle closedown 21-22 November

The City Circle was closed for maintenance on the weekend of 21 and 22 November

All Revesby / Macarthur via Airport trains operated to/from Redfern, Bankstown and Liverpool via Bankstown trains to/from Sydenham, Campbelltown via Granville trains to/from Sydney Terminal, Homebush services to/from Ashfield, Glenfield via Granville services trains to/from Granville, Epping / Hornsby (via Main) / Blacktown / Richmond / Penrith trains to/from Sydney Terminal, Hornsby (via North Shore) to Central trains to/from Wynyard, and Hornsby to Central (via Macquarie Park) trains to/from North Sydney.

## NSW train priority

ABC Sydney Radio News has reported that more than 2,000 NSW passenger trains are delayed or disrupted every year by freight train breakdowns, which have increased significantly under the policies of the present State government. The report stated that passenger service disruptions have increased by 62.5% across the Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink network, according to Transport for NSW. This increase has occurred since September 2011, when NSW Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian began implementing policies giving priority to freight services. The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill of 2011 abolished several state government departments and transferred their duties to the newly formed Transport for NSW. This legislation increased the Transport Department's focus on freight transport systems. In less than three years the number of passenger service disruptions caused by freight train breakdowns increased from 1,348 per year to 2,191 per year.

A spokesperson from Transport for NSW said they are working hard to provide reliable public transport for customers. "More than 150 freight services operate on the Sydney Trains network each day and the majority of these freight services operate without incident," he said. Opposition leader John Robertson tweeted that he had rejected this proposal when he was Transport Minister because he foresaw the delays to passenger services prioritising freight services would cause.

The number of freight trains on the network may increase in coming years with plans for a new intermodal freight terminal in Moorebank in South Western Sydney.

One in four freight-related passenger train interruptions in NSW occur on the Newcastle / Central Coast line, with the section between Hawkesbury River and Cowan responsible for over 10% of delays in NSW. This is due in part to the large number of trains that travel between Sydney and Brisbane on this part of the line. While the number of breakdowns has not increased since 2011, there has been an increase in the number of delayed passenger services. The steep incline southbound was the site of over 54 freight train breakdowns per year, disrupting 237 passenger services. Central Coast Commuters Association President Kevin Parish says that this incline has been an issue since it was built. "Freight companies used to have spare locomotives stored at Hawkesbury River in order to help if a train got into trouble on their way up the hill," Mr Parish said. Now the long freight trains are usually towed down the hill and stored in sidings at the riverside town of Brooklyn or at Gosford, over 30 km away. The breakdowns cause significant delays, which are exacerbated in peak hour. "Crossover tracks and two-way signals have been installed between the stations to help ease the problem, but the only

long-term solution is a third track between the Hawkesbury River and Cowan," he said.

## Shellharbour Junction opened

The inauguration of the new Shellharbour Junction station, and closure of the nearby Dunmore (Shellharbour) station on the NSW South Coast line scheduled for 15 November was deferred and occurred on 21 November.

## Rail Motor Society website

The Tours section of the website of the Rail Motor Society based at Paterson in the Hunter Valley, [www.railmotorsociety.org.au](http://www.railmotorsociety.org.au) usually includes links to all the documentation for their tours from 2009 to 2014 - the Special Train Notices (for operations over Transport for NSW lines), the Train Alteration Advices (ARTC lines) and the Country Train Notices (John Holland Rail Country Regional Network lines). There are also draft timetables for forthcoming tours.

## V/Line & Sydney Trains: Foretaste of summer

V/Line introduced summer restrictions on train services as early as 13 November. On the timber sleepered line (more prone to possible buckling than concrete sleepered lines) between Bendigo and Swan Hill, trains instead of being slowed down, were replaced by buses. The 0742 Southern Cross to Swan Hill terminated at Bendigo and was replaced with buses beyond. The 1250 Swan Hill to Southern Cross train service was replaced by buses throughout. A similar replacement was promulgated between Seymour and Shepperton, but then cancelled. Similar weekday arrangements can be expected as summer progresses. However on Saturday 22 November, another hot day, the Swan Hill train operated throughout, albeit with slowed schedules north of Bendigo.

Next day, as the hot weather moved east, bushfires caused delays to Sydney Trains services through the Blue Mountains.

## V/Line: Vote for us and get more trains

Public transport issues featured strongly in the Victorian State election campaign ending on 29 November. Both major parties supported planning for an extension of the suburban network from South Morang to Mernda, and both agreed on improved train services on the Geelong line. In south-eastern Melburnian electorates the performance of the Frankston line was an issue.

What is possibly a first in election campaigning occurred when the Coalition talked not only of improving timetables, but, in some cases, supplied specific times that the additional trains would run. The then Victorian Premier Denis Naphine promised 79 additional V/Line train services a week at a cost of \$178.1 million (presumably per annum).

The Coalition's promise included 40 extra services between Ballarat and Melbourne. There was promised one extra weekday service on each of the Albury, Ararat, Echuca, Warrnambool, Maryborough, Traralgon, Shepparton and Sale lines. The only lines not to receive augmented weekday services would be Swan Hill and Bairnsdale, but these were promised an extra return Sunday train. The bulk of the service boost was targeted at Ballarat, where the Coalition hoped to wrest two marginal seats from Labor. Most will run off-peak, reducing the interval between trains to 40 minutes. There had already been announced ten extra weekly peak trains. There would also be three extra return trips on Saturdays and two extra on Sundays. The additional Warrnambool service would run Monday to Friday from the year 2016, departing at 0740 and arriving in Melbourne at 1105, with the return service departing Melbourne at 1545 and arriving in Warrnambool just after 1900. It would take the Monday to Friday return services to four each day. The

Sunday service would also be improved, with the existing midday coach services replaced with a train under the plan. The additional Albury service would require the conversion of an additional locomotive and carriage set to standard gauge. Subject to discussions between V/Line and the Australian Rail Track Corporation, the Coalition envisages that the additional train will depart Albury at about 0900, arriving at Southern Cross before 1300 while the return train will depart Southern Cross on weekdays at about 1500 arriving in Albury prior to 1900. There is promised an extra peak train to Traralgon and extra services on weekends. The Shepparton line would have an extra weekday evening train from Southern Cross and an additional return train on Saturdays and Sundays.

The extra services would commence in 2016 or 2017. Dr Naphthine said the government wanted to double V/Line's long-distance patronage "within 20 years". "This is the biggest single boost to V/Line's long distance trains in the past 30 years," he said. Both major parties had already promised a weekday off-peak frequency of every 20 minutes on the Geelong line from next year.

The Coalition also promised to duplicate the Gippsland line between Bunyip and Longwarry (4.4 km), the remaining single section between Melbourne and Moe.

V/Line is the only regional rail service in Australia that has seen significant patronage growth in the past decade. See the review of BITRE's *Trainlines* below. Patronage in every other state has remained static or shrunk.

## Metro Trains and V/Line: State of infrastructure

In the lead-up to the Victorian election, Alannah MacTiernan, Federal Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure stated in the House of Representatives on 24 November that Melbourne's rail network had fallen into such a dangerous state of repair, that a train could run off the rails. She had called on the National Rail Safety Regulator to investigate.

### **From the Age, 26 November, by Adam Carey:**

Years of inadequate funding have left Victoria's country railways so run down and unreliable, V/Line is padding out its timetables so it can run trains at reduced speeds. The chronic neglect is also pushing up the cost of repair works by tens of millions of dollars and threatens to leave the state's regional railway lines in such a degraded state they will not cope with expected passenger growth. The stark warning about V/Line's maintenance funding shortfall is contained in a confidential plan signed by chief executive Theo Taifalos and seen by Fairfax Media. It warns that the maintenance budget the Napthine government provided to V/Line this financial year is smaller than last year's, "continuing the historical shortfall in funding required to appropriately maintain the infrastructure to the required level of service". The "maintenance deficit" has spawned a long list of serious problems for V/Line, including:

- "Unplanned service disruptions due to higher rates of system failures and a decrease in reliability."
- "Temporary speed restrictions or load restrictions due to the condition of track and structures."
- "Greater [maintenance] costs as the rate of degradation accelerates."
- "Deteriorating network performance that will not support long-term patronage growth."

Problems have grown to a state where the plan proposes a strategy of changing timetables to accommodate temporary speed restrictions on some lines in lieu of their eventual repair. "Timetable changes can be planned months in advance to minimise overall disruption to service delivery," the plan states.

V/Line added 15 minutes to the Albury line timetable in 2012 after its punctuality rate bottomed out at just 2.8% of services in August. The Bairnsdale line currently has a five-minute timetable extension, due to a 10 km/h speed limit on a degraded rail bridge near Sale. The Gippsland line was temporarily shut down last month between Moe and Traralgon for urgent repair works on the Morwell River bridge.

The state-owned operator ran 87.5% of trains on time in 2013-14, well below its 92% punctuality target.

## V/Line: Not-so-significant closedowns

Two reports in November *Table Talk* of bus replacement of trains turned out to be less disruptive than expected:

- The item about replacement of trains by buses on all V/Line lines (except Gippsland) on the weekend of 29 and 30 November was unduly alarmist. In fact, the substitutions only applied to late trains on Saturday night.
- Repair of the corroded bridge between Moe and Traralgon on the Gippsland line was completed in less than a month instead of the forecast two months. Trains resumed running from Monday 17 November.

## Metro Trains: Storm 27 October

Severe thunderstorms during the early morning of Monday 27 October resulted in multiple signal failures across the Melbourne train network, including at Flinders St station and the City Loop. All suburban services were severely affected by delays throughout the morning.

As the storm moved east and north, a tree fell across the line at Medlow Bath in the NSW Blue Mountains, resulting in delays there.

## And the winner is: Metro Trains

On Melbourne Cup Day, Tuesday 4 November, 52,910 of the 100,794 patrons travelled to Flemington Racecourse on Metro Trains.

## Long wait for a train to Doncaster

A study by Public Transport Victoria indicates that any railway to Doncaster will not be built for at least 15 years. The study suggests a railway would cause just 2% of motorists to switch from cars to trains, even though the line would service one of the most car-dependent parts of Melbourne. About 56,000 passengers a day would use the line by 2031, PTV predicts. In the meantime, work will be done to give residents of Melbourne's north-east better bus services in and out of the city. The authority will investigate building the Doncaster rail line for less than the \$3 billion to \$5 billion suggested in a feasibility study.

The PTV released its response to the \$6.5 million Doncaster rail study on Tuesday, agreeing with its conclusion that there is no capacity to build a rail line to Doncaster without first building a rail tunnel from Clifton Hill to Southern Cross station via Parkville. There are no government plans to build the tunnel.

## West Coast Wilderness Railway

The West Coast Wilderness Railway, Tasmania, will resume full operations from 15 December. However, the full journey from Strahan to Queenstown will only be offered on Mondays and Tuesdays. On other days, there will be shorter trips from Strahan and back.

## ARTC: No broad gauge to Outer Harbor

ARTC is to decommission the broad gauge portion of the line from Dry Creek to Outer Harbor (Adelaide).

## TransWA: Expanded Avonlink service 1 December 2014

TransWA's expanded **Avonlink** service commenced on 1 December. The main existing service, the commuter service from Northam to Midland in the morning (connecting with suburban trains) and return in the evening is unchanged. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays there are two additional return services between Northam and Midland. A Saturdays return service from Northam to Midland has been introduced. However, the existing Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays Perth to Merredin service (supplementary to the Prospector train on the same route) is reduced to run on Wednesdays only (under the name of Merredin Link). Consequently, on Mondays and Fridays the **Prospector** now stops if required at intermediate stations between Northam and Merredin (but on Wednesdays maintains non-stop operation over this section). The new **Avonlink** timetable is:

	Mon-Fri	M, Tu, Th, F	Wed	M, Tu, Th, F	Sat
Merredin			1310		
Northam	0630	1000	1454	1600	0830
Toodyay	0650	1020	1514	1620	0850
Midland	0750	1120	1610	1720	0950
East Perth Term'l			1630		

	M, Tu, Th, F	Wed	M, Tu, Th, F	Mon-Fri	Sat
East Perth Term'l		0855			
Midland	0815	0912	1400	1750	1535
Toodyay	0910	1007	1455	1845	1630
Northam	0935	1027	1520	1910	1655
Merredin		1210			

TransWA's **Esperance-Kalgoorlie bus** on Sundays now runs six hours earlier, departing at 0800 instead of 1400. This now provides a connection with the Prospector departing Kalgoorlie at 1405 on Sundays for Perth. Buses on other days on this route are unchanged.

### TransPerth: Significant closedown

Fremantle line trains were replaced by buses after 1900 from Perth and 1945 from Fremantle from 10 to 13 November and again from 17 to 20 November.

### Auckland Rail: 8 December 2014 timetable

The Auckland Transport suburban rail timetable introduced on 8 December provides the first major improvements in services arising from the electrification program. All services from Pukekohe or Papakura are now routed via Newmarket and all services from Manukau via Glen Innes.

#### Eastern / Manukau line:

- Electric trains
- More frequent trains - 10 minute peak frequency, 20 minutes off-peak and 30 minutes in evenings and weekends (Formerly was 20 minutes in the peak, 60 minutes off-peak and weekend).
- All services will terminate at Manukau.

#### Onehunga line:

- Electric trains
- Increased off-peak and weekend services

- Consistent half hour services all day, seven days a week (Formerly was 60 minutes off-peak and weekend).
- Extended Friday night and weekend operation.

#### Southern line:

- Electric trains will commence in early 2015. The outer Papakura-Pukekohe section, 18.2 km, over which suburban services was introduced only recently, is not being electrified.
- All services will go via Newmarket.
- Papakura-Pukekohe weekday services will increase from 25 to 29.
- A weekend service Papakura to Pukekohe will be introduced, running once an hour. Passengers will need to change trains at Papakura

#### Western line:

- Electric trains will be introduced in the first half of 2015, but no date has yet been announced. The outer Swanson Waitakere section, 3.8 km, is not being electrified, and Auckland Transport has indicated that trains between these stations will be withdrawn (Waitakere is a very small village).
- Weekday off-peak frequency remains at 30 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the afternoon.
- Extra Friday night services between 2200 and 0030 run every half hour.
- Saturday and Sunday half hour frequency extended to all day. (Formerly was every 60 minutes).
- Weekend train services will finish at Swanson. (Formerly some Saturday trains continued to Waitakere). An hourly bus service will operate between Swanson station and Waitakere village on Saturdays.

The new timetables are on Auckland Transport's website at <https://at.govt.nz/bus-train-ferry/timetables/>

### Auckland Rail upgrading

From Thursday 25 December 2014 until Sunday 4 January 2015 there will be a full network closure on the Auckland suburban network. Bus replacement services will operate on all lines. This is to allow for significant track maintenance at Newmarket, Penrose, Westfield, Wiri and Papakura, sleeper replacement on the Eastern line, station work at Otahuhu and motorway work at Takanini and Ellerslie. Then from Monday 5 until Sunday 11 January 2015 buses will replace trains on the Western line to allow for track upgrades at Morningside and Kingdon St and sleeper replacement works at level crossings. Normal train services will operate on other lines.

Construction began in November on a new Otahuhu train-bus interchange, with completion expected in late 2015.

### NZ tourist trams re-opening

The heritage tram loop in Auckland will re-commence operations on Sunday 23 November. In late January the tramway will close again for a short period while more road works are carried out in the area.

The Christchurch tramway resumed operation over its entire loop from 8 November.

## US Amtrak funding

The United States mid-term elections on 4 November resulted in large Republican Party majorities in both houses of Congress. This is expected to lead to cutbacks in funding for Amtrak, the national Federal-government owned long-distance passenger train operator. Republicans have usually been unsympathetic to Amtrak.

## European Rail Timetable

Every monthly edition of the *European Rail Timetable* includes passenger trains schedules in its Beyond Europe section. This rotates among different regions on a six-month cycle. The publishers also produce Summer and Winter seasonal editions. This is mainly because bookshops will not stock monthly publications, but will sell six-monthly publications. The seasonal editions are world rail timetables because they include compilations of all of the Beyond Europe sections, sometimes with additional material. In the forthcoming Winter edition, the Australian section will be slightly expanded compared to that what appeared in the monthly edition.

## European timetable disaster

*A rant by Victor Isaacs*

Over the past few years, printed timetables have gradually been disappearing for many European railway systems. Don't worry, many people said, the information is still all available on the various railways' websites. Well, sorry, but it isn't. Now, PDFs of timetables have also disappeared. In many cases, all that remains are point-to-point timetable search engines. That is, you have to interrogate the system by specific stations, specific dates and specific times. This gives you very narrow information. It does not give you an overview. Mark Smith is the brilliant person who runs the Man in Seat 61 rail travel information website, [www.maninseat61.com](http://www.maninseat61.com). He has said something like: "Using these search engines is like looking into a room through a keyhole. You get a view of only a tiny portion of what is available". If you don't interrogate correctly, the information you want won't come up or you will receive a misleading impression.

I tried as an example interrogating the German Railways, DB, website for travel from Berlin to Hannover. To get an overview of all services on offer, I had to start by asking for

departures from Berlin at 0500. Only three departures came up. To get the full day's departures, I kept clicking on the "Next" button. After three clicks, it wouldn't show any more. I had a list of departures only up to mid-afternoon. This was a very frustrating and time consuming process.

There are also the DB (German Railways) downloadable timetables. These are generally regarded as being very good. And they are also only silly, limited point-to-point timetables. They are also not immediately available. You cannot go the website and immediately look up a timetable. You must first download and install a program and have it in your computer's memory. (Then after the next timetable change, re-download and re-install.)

I surveyed the various European railway systems. The only systems still offering PDF timetables seem to be Norway, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Portugal, Italy, Slovakia, Estonia, Britain, Ireland, and Northern Ireland.

Switzerland also offers PDFs. Some of these are accessible from the SBB website, but take a lot of searching to find. However, for individual line PDFs, it is now necessary to register with SBB.

Even when PDF timetables are available, it often takes a lot of searching to find them. Sometimes, for example on Austrian Railways, ÖBB, they are only accessible from the local language website, not from the English-language site. Why?

In fact, it is often easier to access these timetables not via the national railways website, but via Samuel Rachdi's website, [www.fahrplancenter.com](http://www.fahrplancenter.com)

Thank goodness the printed *European Rail Timetable* resumed publication in March 2014! It is more necessary than ever.

**Thanks** to Hilaire Fraser, Scott Ferris, Craig Halsall, Geoff Hassall, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Len Regan, Roger Wheaton, Brendan Whyte, [www.railpage.com.au](http://www.railpage.com.au), *ABC Radio News*, *Age*, *Australian*, *Catch Point (SA)*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Federal City Express (ACT)*, *Herald Sun*, *Newcastle Herald*, *Railway Digest*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Transit Australia* for Rail news.

# BUS NEWS

## Australia Capital Territory

### 2014 Nightrider Network

ACTION will operate 10 Nightrider routes overnight on Saturday and Sunday mornings between 5 & 20 December, at 80 – 90 minute intervals. Services will also operate on New Years Eve roughly every 40 minutes. As per previous years, buses will depart for a zone of suburbs with drivers customising routes to drop passengers at their local bus stop.

Consideration had been given to operating routes more frequently (every 20 minutes) along the key rapid corridors to the major town centre, where customers would be forced to find their own way home, an idea not largely dismissed in a recent online survey. Of the 550 customers who responded, around 70% were in favour of the roaming model.

The number of routes in 2014 has increased from eight to ten, as follows:

- 969 – South Belconnen
- 970 – North Belconnen
- 972 – South Gungahlin
- 973 – North Gungahlin
- 974 – Inner North
- 975 – Inner South
- 976 – Weston Creek
- 977 – Erindale
- 978 – Theodore
- 979 – Lanyon

The flat \$5 fare will be re-introduced after last year's trial of free services did not result in a notable increase in patronage.

### Network 2014 Changes

Following vocal complaints from Weston Creek locals, ACTION hastily added a third morning Xpresso 725 service on 15 September, departing Cooleman Court at 0746 and arriving the City at 0826. The original 725 timetable had seen the second trip arrive by 0739, far too early for those starting work at 0830 or 0900.

Effective 28 September, the 2032 918 service departing Lanyon for Tuggeranong on Sunday evenings was withdrawn. It would appear this trip was included in error, as all other ACTION routes finish by 2000 on Sundays.

On 20 October, ACTION removed the occasional weekend 982 services serving the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre in Kenny, with the nearest alternative option a 1.4km walk away at Mitchell shops. Weekday 82 services continue to operate. A revised weekend network map issued on 1 December due to City detours (see item below) still shows the service.

On 19 November ACTION posted a news item online advising that there will be no further reprints of the current weekday bus book, as they prepare for adjustments, presumably early in the new year. In the interim the call centre will post out website printouts on request for individual services.

### Constitution Ave roadworks

Works to install bus priority lanes and a segregated cycle lane along Constitution Avenue in the vicinity of the Convention Centre and Canberra CIT commenced on 27 October, with minor changes to stops. Owing to ongoing delays and missed connections to ACTION, Qcity and Transborder services due to these works, effective 1 December, all services will divert along Coranderrk St,

Cooyong St and Akuna St. It is anticipated the diversion will last for around a year, with revised weekday and weekend network maps for ACTION available online.

### Spring event buses

Friday 31 October and Saturday 1 November saw 'Oktoberfest' held at Exhibition Park. In addition to numerous regular routes nearby, those wishing to celebrate German culture could also hop an hourly return service from Canberra Bus Station between 1800 and 2330.

Tuesday 4 November saw 'ACTTAB Melbourne Cup Race Day' event at Thoroughbred Park. Socialites could catch Routes 56, 57, 58 or 200 to the gate, along with return charter buses to City Bus Station between 1600 and 2000.

Tuesday 11 November saw the Australian War Memorial host the 'Remembrance Day National Ceremony', with ACTION providing a free shuttle bus from parking at Majura Park from 0850 until 0950, returning at noon.

Wednesday 19 November saw Australia take on South Africa in the 'Carlton Mid ODI Series' one-day cricket match. Those with event tickets enjoyed free travel on all ACTION services including Routes 2, 3, 4 & 5 nearby. Free charter buses also departed Woden & City Bus Station from 1200 until 1400 and after the final innings.

Sunday 23 November saw the 'Run for your Lifeline Canberra 2014' fun-run, with ACTION providing charter buses from Belconnen and Woden at 0700, serving Gungahlin and City Bus Station enroute. Return buses departed at 1100. The ACTION website advised that those participating in the half-marathon would have to find an alternative mode as no charter buses were provided for the earlier start.

Sunday 30 November saw the 'Voices in the Forest' concert at the National Arboretum, with a no car policy in place. In addition to the five 981 services, a shuttle bus operated from Edinburgh Avenue, Acton (adjacent to QT Hotel) and the City Bus Station between 1400 and 1630, with return buses every half hour after 2030.

## New South Wales

### Discontinuation of Route 620

Hillsbus operated their last 620 service on 7 November, departing Dural for the City at 0545. Commencing 10 November, this trip now operates as per the 620X via Lane Cove Tunnel, providing a consistent pattern for all services. Most trips had been operating as per 620X or 620N via Lane Cone Tunnel since upgrades in September 2009, with the other remaining a shoulder-peak trip Route 620 departing Cherrybrook at 08:39 converted to a 620X with timetable changes on 2 June.

### Extra Clovelly trip

To cater for increased demand on 339 and X39 services, Sydney buses added an additional 339 peak shortworking on 24 November, departing Martin Place at 1741. Existing 339 trips continue to pass Martin Place four minutes either side of the new trip, along with an X39 at 1741. A revised timetable booklet has been sighted online.

### Schofields detour

Services on Busways T75 will be required to divert along Schofields Farm Road for 6 months from 25 November due to roadworks along Boundary Road as part of an upgrade of Schofields Road.



### **Queanbeyan Night Bus changes**

On 8 November changes were made to the Saturday Night Bus in Queanbeyan, previously introduced in July (see October *Table Talk*). The bus now completes three circuits instead of two, but no longer serves the Tourist Hotel, Queanbeyan Bowls Club, Jerrabomberra Tavern or RSL Bowling Club, presumably due to a lack of intending passengers and earlier venue closing times. The return trip to Canberra now departs Walshes at 0040, returning from Canberra Theatre at 0105 instead of 0120. Fares remain \$2, a part of the funding arrangement from NSW Roads & Maritime Services.

### **Buses arrive in Googong**

Qcity Transit introduced a new Route 837 service on November 10 to Googong, a new town 8 km south of Queanbeyan that will be eventually home to over 15,000 residents as it develops over the next 15 - 20 years, although only a few dozen residents call it home so far. Initial return services include a peak commuter service and a lunchtime shopper bus along with converting existing school services to urban services.

The printed timetable includes a large table detailing various onward connections at Queanbeyan, including the usual services to Fyshwick, Canberra and Woden, along with the myriad of school bus options.

Route 837 was traditionally the route to Greenleigh (a wealthy lower density suburb in south-east Queanbeyan), but eventually trips only consisted of the return school bus and the number has been omitted from public timetables since late 2000.

Hopefully Qcity has more success with this venture than the 850 service to the township of Bungendore of around 2,500 residents, which briefly included a peak service during 2006 and 2007.

### **Dions Sunday revisions**

Dions introduced an updated timetable for their Route 1, 1U, 4 and 4U services between Wollongong, Bulli and Austinmer on 17 November. Notably, Sunday services have been retimed to better connect with trains coming into Thirroul from Sydney. The last trip on Good Friday and Christmas Day on Route 1 now operates at a different time to Sundays, making the information presented harder to digest, especially for infrequent users of the services.

### **Shellharbour Junction feeder**

Coinciding with the opening of Shellharbour Junction station on 24 November, Premier Illawarra introduced a new peak-hour Route 52 service from Flinders, Shellharbour and Shell Cove. Morning services arrive every 40 minutes from 05:21 until 0800, while afternoon services are hourly from 1532 until 1932, plus 2010 service. Trips are timetabled at 18 minutes. Other local Routes 51, 53 and 72 are unchanged.

### **Busways Central Coast update**

Busways issued revised timetables on 30 November for all their Central Coast routes across Woy Woy, Wyong, Lake Haven and Gosford to improve service reliability. New booklets were letterboxed to residents.

## **Northern Territory**

### **Smartcard ticketing coming soon**

As part of the upcoming roll-out of a Smartcard ticketing system across the Darwinbus and ASBus (Alice Springs) networks, the Department of Transport has unveiled changes to the fare structure. Reusable "tap and ride" cards will be introduced. Existing paper tickets will remain for 3 hour travel (\$3 full fare and \$1 concession) and daily travel (\$7 full fare and a new \$2 concession daily ticket). A new

'Flexi Trip' fare will be offered for 10 3-hour trips for those using the Tap and Ride card, at \$20 full fare (potentially a \$10 saving) and \$7 concession, with the same rates applying for weekly tickets, introducing the introduction of a \$7 weekly concession fare (a saving of up to \$14). Free travel will remain for school students, veterans, and the disabled and those with companion cards. The tickets will be valid on both networks, however given the distance between the centres, only a handful of customers would use the same card on both networks in a single day.

### **Afternoon 8 skips Kormilda College**

Effective 1 December the Route 8 service departing Palmerston for Darwin will no longer divert via Kormilda College, with students required to board the bus on Stuart Highway. Running times have been adjusted.

## **Queensland**

### **December NightLink changes**

Further to the changes to NightLink services in mid October, a further series of improvements and timetable changes will take place on 5 December, including:

- N100 (Fortitude Valley – Forest Lake) will be extended from Forest Lake Village to Richlands, replacing the existing N464. Buses depart Fortitude Valley 15 minutes later.
- N111 (Fortitude Valley – Eight Miles Plains) arrives Eight Miles Plains 4 minutes later
- N184 (Fortitude Valley – Upper Mt Gravatt) departs Fortitude Valley 5 minutes earlier and arrives Garden City 8 minutes later
- N200 (Fortitude Valley - Cairndale) inbound services depart Woolloongabba 3 minutes later, while outbound buses arrive Cairndale Heights 6 minutes later
- N226 (Fortitude Valley - Wynnum) will be extended to Wynnum Plaza and commence the return trip at Morningside Shops. Buses depart Fortitude Valley 2 minutes later, arriving Wynnum North 2 minutes later
- Inbound N385 (Paddington – Fortitude Valley) services will now originate at The Gap Park 'n' Ride and arrive Fortitude Valley 6 minutes later.
- N390 (Fortitude Valley – Ferny Grove) will be renumbered N392. It will no longer serve Normanby Station
- N412 (Fortitude Valley – Uni of Qld and St Lucia) will be renumbered N413 and will now travel along Hawken Drive and Gailey Road in St Lucia, returning to Fortitude Valley 9 minutes earlier
- N464 (Fortitude Valley – Forest Lake) will be renumbered N449 and re-routed to serve Mt Ommaney, Jindalee and Riverhills, with buses departing Fortitude Valley 25 minutes later

Services will no longer operate drop-off only after leaving the Valley and City, with passengers now able to hail buses at stops throughout each route. N310 will continue as drop-off only past Centro Toombul, while N555 will drop-off only after departing Springwood for Loganholme.

Extra trips will operate during the festive season, with services doubled to half hourly from 5 December to 20 December.

### **Children's Hospital Moves**

On 29 November, RCH Herston station on the Northern Busway was renamed Herston station, due to the relocation of the Royal Children's Hospital to South Brisbane. The new Lady Cilento Children's Hospital can be accessed from Mater Hill Busway Station.

## South Australia

### Christmas Pageant Buses

Families attending the 2014 Christmas Pageant in the City Centre on 8 November were able to catch one of the additional timetabled services into town provided on Routes 118, 142, 144, 147, 150, 155, 167, 168, 171, 172, 174, 178, 190, 200, 203, 208, 235, 239, 241, 248, 254, 263, 265, 271, 273, 281, 287, 503, 506, 507, 541, 542, 543, 545, 548, 556, 557, B10C, C1, C2, G10C, G20, G21, H20C, H22C, H30C, H33C, J1, M44C, W90C, as detailed in a PDF available on the Adelaide Metro website. Most routes had 2 – 4 extra services, with over 30 extra trips running along the O-Bahn.

Additional trips also ran as required on Routes 222, 224, 228, 720, 721, 722, 863 and 864.

### Rolling Stones concert survey

Adelaide Metro are currently conducting an online survey for those passengers who travelled to Adelaide Oval by public transport to see the Rolling Stones play on 25 October, to further improve transport options for future events at the redeveloped oval.

## Victoria

### State Election promises

In addition to the many rail promises made by both ALP and Liberals prior to Victorians going to the polls on 29 November (see *Rail News*), buses also featured in funding commitments for public transport. In the second last week of the campaign, the ALP unveiled a detailed \$100 million package of bus improvements. Among the highlights:

- \$5 million to redevelop the Huntingdale interchange, a key transfer hub for Monash University students
- Introduce new university shuttle services from Reservoir to La Trobe Uni, Box Hill to Deakin University and Footscray to Melbourne University, following the success of the 401 and 601 shuttles
- Promised upgrades and extensions in the marginal outer south-east seat of Cranbourne cover Routes 790, 796, 798, 799, 847, plus an extension of Route 897 via Lyndhurst and Dandenong South to Dandenong and a new link to Pearcedale, previously trailed by Casey Council in 2005 as Route 794. A route from Endeavour Hills to Hallam in the adjacent Hallam seat is also listed.
- Improvements in the outer north growth areas, such as Doreen, Mernda, Epping North and Wollert, including reinstating a direct bus from Whittlesea to Greensborough, a new South Morang – Diamond Creek service, new services to Epping North and Wollert along with extra Route 517 services to alleviate overcrowding at Viewbank College
- An upgrade of Route 486 in Sunbury serving the Rolling Meadows & Goonawarra estates
- Outer-west improvements generally mirror previous announcements by the PTV for implementation in conjunction with the regional rail link, although reports in the *Wyndham Star* suggest further enhancements may be funded
- Reinstatement of the 509 Hope St service in Brunswick, withdrawn in September 2012 amid community protests. The reinstated route will include an extension to Moreland Station.
- Review of services in Bentleigh East to service the Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre, including straightening of 822 along East Boundary Road, a move opposed by the local Liberal MP in the marginal Bentleigh seat
- Further develop networks in regional areas with a specific commitment for a new community bus in Woodend
- Identify recommendations from the 2010 Bus Review program that remain implementable (consolidation of

operators in recent years would make some of the more radical changes less complex)

- Review of the SmartBus network to identify opportunities for further improvements

It is assumed that further improvements would be achievable for the \$100 million budgeted, and that the specific announcements were made to appeal to those living in marginal seats. These improvements follow a large boost to buses by the Labor during their last two terms of office, including 9pm finishes, Sunday services and the roll-out of the premium SmartBus and DART networks.

In contrast, the Liberals made few commitments for buses. Route 842 between Fountain Gate and Endeavour Hills was set to be upgraded to hourly run seven days, a major boost to the current timetable of three return daytime shopper trips, although the committed 2pm finish on Sundays was half-hearted given the centre trades until 5pm.

As part of the long distance rail promises reported in *Rail News*, plans to introduce a connecting bus between Wodonga Station and the Wodonga CBD were announced by 2017, an ongoing oversight since the relocation of the station in June 2011 as part of the Wodonga rail bypass.

In the dying days of the campaign, the Liberals made a final pitch to the marginal sandbelt seats of Bentleigh, Mordialloc and Carrum by promising a doubling of peak services from 30 to 15 minutes on the zigzagging 708 (Hampton – Carrum) a route that attracts significant school patronage but otherwise largely overlaps the catchment of the Frankston line.

Following the release of the Labor Bus Policy, the Liberals issued a media release reminding voters that they have delivered an additional 7,100 trips have been added over the last four years as part of various network revisions, with more improvements scheduled for Wyndham, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo in April 2015 in conjunction with the opening of the Regional Rail Link. Given these improvements were funded in the 2014-2015 budget, it is unlikely that ALP would reverse or delay these upcoming improvements now they have won office.

### Extra Nightriders

PTV again funded additional Nightrider services in late November and December on popular routes leaving the CBD for the eastern and south-eastern services. Routes 966 (Croydon/Lilydale), 968 (Knox City/Belgrave), 970 (Mornington) and 980 (Dandenong) had three extra trips added at 0215, 0245 and 0315, boosting headways to 15 minutes each weekend from 28 November until 21 December.

### Double Deckers coming for SkyBus

Passenger numbers continue to grow on SkyBus services between Southern Cross and Melbourne Airport, with boardings increasing from 2 million passengers in 2010 to 3.4 million in the 2013, with predictions annual patronage could hit 7 million by 2020. Market share from airport travellers has also hit 10% for the first time, from 7% 3 years ago, similar to rail links interstate. To cater for this demand, SkyBus have reportedly ordered double decker units which are due to enter service in March to complement their existing 14.5m and articulated fleet. This follows a demonstration of a Bustech CDI double-decker on the route in late October and introduction of a double decker bus operating to Adelaide Airport.

The announcement for double decker buses follows the recent sale of the business consortium that includes OPTrust Private Markets Group and Catalyst Direct Capital Management in three months ago, although current

managing director Simon Cowen will retain a significant equity interest in the business and stay on as a non-executive director.

### **Kallista Shuttle**

Owing to roadworks on Monbulk Road between Belgrave and Kallista on 20 November, a shuttle service was provided while regular routes 663 and 694 detoured via Grantulla Road.

## **Overseas**

### **Busways eyes off Singapore**

Large family based NSW operator Busways has publicly indicated their intention to bid for contracts as part of the Singapore government's Land Transport Authority new contracting model, with plans to bid for the contract to operate a range of services from the new Builm depot in

western Singapore. Routes up for tender are currently shared between the SBST and SMRT duopoly. ComfortDelGro, who operate extensively in Sydney and Melbourne in conjunction with Cabcharge, own SBST. SMRT is a publicly listed company on the Singapore stock exchange. Further details of Busways plans can be found at a dedicated website [www.busways.sg](http://www.busways.sg) along with associated Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Transit Systems have also make it known they are keen to make their mark in the Singapore market.

**Thanks to:** Jason Blackman, Ben Knight, Scott Mitchell, *ABC News, Australia Financial Review, Sydney Morning Herald, Wyndham Star Weekly* and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*.

# **AIR NEWS**

## **Domestic**

Passenger numbers at Melbourne Airport increased 5.8% to 2.9 million in the year to October, with international passengers increasing 9% and domestic by 4.2%. Sydney Airport passengers increased 2.6% to 3.47 million – international numbers up 1.7% and domestic 3.3%.

From 5 December **Virgin Australia** will cut 13 of the current 44 weekly flights from Perth to WA southern towns of Albany, Esperance, Busselton and Ravensthorpe.

**Thanks** to the *Australian* for Air news.

## **REVIEWS: BITRE'S TRAINLINE**

The Federal Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics in November published a second edition of **Trainline**, a statistical review providing an overview of freight rail, urban and non-urban passenger rail. The Report contains a large amount of data, as well as references to further sources of information. It includes information about both infrastructure and traffic flows. One enlightening map shows Pilbara railways when current construction (the Roy Hill project) is complete. This shows the three heavy haul iron ore railways running virtually parallel for hundreds of kilometres south from Port Hedland. Unfortunately, in this commercial age of private operators, some of the traffic data is difficult or impossible to obtain, especially from Brookfield Rail in WA. This means some of the traffic data is questionable. The BITRE report has been compiled by BITRE from a number of sources, including the Train Operators and ARTC and is the second of a series which carries on the work formerly carried out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Both Trainline1 and Trainline2 have been produced under considerable difficulties because BITRE does not have the power to compel provision of consistent data from the rail industry in the way that ABS could do in the past with Government-owned railway systems. Accordingly there seem to be anomalies in the report which, among other things shows that Intermodal traffic across Australia has increased dramatically since 2010, whereas other parts of the report show that it declined by small, but significant amount. The latter seems to be the correct interpretation. Nevertheless, the report is well worth looking at on their website at [http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/2014/files/trainline\\_002.pdf](http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/2014/files/trainline_002.pdf)

The summary from the Report is:

### **Freight:**

In 2012–13 Australian railways carried over 1 billion tonnes of freight. The task was dominated by bulk movements, which accounted for 97%. Intrastate bulk freight in WA—principally iron-ore—accounted for 56% of national rail freight tonnes. Bulk movements in Queensland and NSW—principally coal—were 22% and 17% respectively.

Australia's rail freight tonnage has grown by 57% since 2007–08. The growth has been driven by the resources

boom. The intrastate bulk task in WA has increased by 83% in this period.

Intermodal freight is recovering from the effects of the Global Financial Crisis. Intermodal tonnes decreased between 2007–08 and 2009–10. Tonnages have since increased by 67% to 28 million tonnes.

### **Passenger:**

Sydney has Australia's busiest urban heavy rail network, with over 300 million passengers in 2012–13. Melbourne's light rail system carried 183 million passengers in that year.

The experience of Transperth and V/Line show that network additions and enhancements, leading to greater network coverage and service improvements, can increase urban and non-urban patronage levels. Since 2003–04, both operators have more than doubled their patronage.

### **Railway networks:**

Australia's operational heavy railway network is around 33,000 kms, with 10% electrified. There are 452 kms of track under construction, including 75 kms of passenger rail. Australia has approximately 291 kms of operational light rail/tramway.

Melbourne has Australia's largest heavy and light urban passenger rail networks at 462 kms and 250 kms, respectively.

The principal iron ore railways are in WA's Pilbara (2,295 kms). The principal coal networks are Aurizon's central Queensland systems (1,912 kms) and the NSW Hunter Valley Coal network (788 km). Grain flows run from agricultural hinterlands to ports and for domestic processing. There are approximately 5,400 kms of operational railway that are largely or exclusively used for grain haulage.

### **Railway performance**

Scheduled freight train transit times on the North–South interstate corridor have continued to fall as investments in infrastructure are commissioned.

Of the urban passenger rail systems, Perth provides the most consistent frequencies across its network, with a minimum of one train every 15 minutes on all lines. The

highest average train speed (for all-stops services) is on Perth's Mandurah line - 84 km/h.

Victoria's Regional Fast Rail program increased train speeds, enhanced rolling stock and increased service frequencies.

## INTRODUCTION OF COMPUTERS TO SOLVE RAILROAD OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS IN THE 1970s

"In the Millions", by Victor Hand, American *Trains* magazine, November 2014, pages 34-41. (The issue also contains

other articles about the application of technology to railroading).

## ODD SPOT

The Beyond Europe section of the November 2014 edition of the *European Rail Timetable* summarises passenger train services in Africa and the Middle East. These are grim. Even South Africa, a country and a railway system both once sometimes compared with Australia, offers very sparse services. For example between Johannesburg (population of region 12 million) and Durban (population 3.5 million), 722 km, (cf. Sydney-Melbourne 953 km), there are a mere four overnight trains a week. An additional more upmarket overnight train operates only once a month! But this is good compared to some other parts of Africa. The *Table Talk* rail editor has maliciously selected the worst services, in descending order of ghastliness:

- Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire, Ougadougou-Abidjan, two national capitals: Thrice weekly train, "No timings available", but "journey time 43-48 hours" for 1143 km.
- Nigeria, Port Harcourt-Kaduna-Maidiguri, 1801 km: One train a week, "Subject to confirmation, no timings available."

- South Sudan, Er Rahad-Nyala, 713 km (the only passenger trains service in the country): "Every two weeks, day and time not fixed".
- Ethiopia, Djibouti-Dire Daoua, 318 km: Three trains per week, but "Djibouti Tourist Office claims that the trip to Dire Daoua is the most dangerous in the world."

And probably the worst railway passenger service offered in the world:

- "Democratic" Republic of Congo, Kisangani-Ubundu, 125 km: "A service runs approximately every 2 months. No schedule available."

Perhaps, after studying these examples, we will never again criticise trains in Australasia.

(The Beyond Europe section of the November edition also has a bonus section of non-Amtrak trains in California).

(Is this a record? Mentions of the *European Rail Timetable* in three separate items in the same edition of *Table Talk*).

## About *Table Talk*

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**Editor, Rail and Tram, Air, Ferry:** Victor Isaacs, [abvi@iinet.net.au](mailto:abvi@iinet.net.au), 11 Blacket St Downer ACT 2602.

**Editor, Bus:** Craig Halsall, [craig.halsall@gmail.com](mailto:craig.halsall@gmail.com), 27 Edithvale Road Edithvale Vic 3196.

**Production and Mailout:** Geoff and Judy Lambert.

**Proofreaders:** Agnes Boskovitz, David Cranney and Geoff Hassall.

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**Table Talk Newswire** is an advance monthly email of Rail news. To obtain this, ask the Rail Editor at [abvi@iinet.net.au](mailto:abvi@iinet.net.au)