



TABLE TALK

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TOP TABLE TALK – V/LINE CRISIS

Substantial progress has been made in re-instating trains on the V/Line network. Damaged wheels on most VLocity DMUs have been replaced and tight curves on the North Melbourne flyover replaced. However, there is still some way to go before services are fully restored.

On the early morning of Thursday 17 March a VLocity DMU operated test runs over the North Melbourne flyover to test a lubricating system.

From Monday 21 March 43 of the 64 weekday rail replacement buses returned to being operated by trains instead of buses. 93% of the VLocity DMUs have been returned to service as the wheel replacement program is continuing. Train replacement coach services continue to be free. Circular S 16/8009 covers cancellations and alterations on Mondays-Thursdays, S 8010 on Fridays, S 16/8011 on Saturdays and S 16/8012 for Sundays (and Good Friday). The following services are now operating.

Weekdays:

Geelong line 98 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Ten services are replaced by buses. These are:

- 0651 Waurin Ponds to Southern Cross
- 0716 Wyndham Vale to SC
- 0804 South Geelong to SC
- 0840 South Geelong to SC
- 1730 Waurin Ponds to SC
- 0625 SC to Wyndham Vale
- 0710 SC to South Geelong
- 1610 SC to Waurin Ponds
- 1740 SC to South Geelong
- 2315 SC to Waurin Ponds

Ballarat line 70 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Three services are replaced by buses. These are:

- 2110 Wendouree to SC
- 1537 SC to Melton
- 1915 SC to Wendouree

Bendigo line 35 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Six services are replaced by buses. These are:

- 0507 Bendigo to SC
- 0622 Eaglehawk to SC
- 0721 Kyneton to SC
- 1625 SC to Eaglehawk
- 1704 SC to Kyneton
- 1731 SC to Epsom

Seymour line Normal services continue to be scheduled (40 trains per day).

Gippsland line VLocity trains will return to the Gippsland line, meaning 34 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Two services are replaced by buses. These are:

- 1615 Traralgon to SC
- 1120 SC to Traralgon

Weekends: All weekend services are scheduled to run as trains.

This table summarises the situation (EC = Empty carriage):

	<i>S.Notice</i>	<i>Start Day</i>	<i>Finish Day</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Total Trains Affected</i>	<i>Cancelled</i>	<i>Altered</i>	<i>Platform change</i>	<i>Additional Trains</i>	<i>Coach Replacements</i>	<i>Set Change</i>	<i>Re-instated</i>	<i>Re-instated but amended</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Not replaced (All)</i>	<i>Not replaced (Pass)</i>	<i>Not replaced (EC)</i>	<i>Passenger</i>
8001	22-Feb	Indefinite	M-Thu	239	109	137	103		69	31		0	40	9	31	208		
8002	26-Feb	Indefinite	Fris	247	110	143	109	8	69	34		0	41	10	31	216		
8003	27-Feb	Indefinite	Sats	108	25	91	66		14	27		0	11	3	8	100		
8004	27-Feb	Indefinite	Suns	87	21	73	45	3	14	26		0	7	0	12	75		
8009	21-Mar	Indefinite	M-Thu	247	58	148	110	3	25	103	60	8	0	33	0	33	206	

This table summarises current carriage formations (VL = VLocity DMUs, N = N carriage sets, SH = H carriage sets, SP = P carriage sets):

	M-F (per day)			Sat			Sun			Full Week		
	Down	Up	Total	Down	Up	Total	Down	Up	Total	Down	Up	Total
	192	188	380	95	86	181	67	66	133	1122	1092	2214
2VL	6	3	9	1	1	2	0	1	1	31	17	48
2VL+3VL	24	25	49	7	10	17	2	1	3	129	136	265
2x3VL	22	25	47	33	35	68	26	30	56	169	190	359
2xN	2	2	4	1	1	2	2	2	4	13	13	26
2xN+FN+5/VN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2xP+2xSH	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	10	15
2xSP	7	6	13	9	4	13	7	0	7	51	34	85
3VL	73	67	140	20	11	31	9	13	22	394	359	753
3xSP	5	5	10	0	0	0	0	1	1	25	26	51
4xSP	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	5	6	11
5xSP	2	2	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	10	11	21
N	4	4	8	2	2	4	6	3	9	28	25	53
N+5/VN	9	9	18	2	3	5	3	3	6	50	51	101
N+FN	13	17	30	12	10	22	5	7	12	82	102	184
N+SHLH	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	20
N+SHSH	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	10
N+SN+PCJ	5	4	9	4	4	8	4	3	7	33	27	60
N+SSH	6	6	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	30	60
N+Y	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	2
Overland	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	6	5	11
P+SH	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
P/P+2xSH	6	4	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	20	50
XPT	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	2	4	14	14	28

Platform working at Southern Cross has been altered to obviate VLocities going over the North Melbourne flyover:

Train#	Old Plat	New Plat
8433		
8071	7	6
8017	8	5
8025	15	7
8043	15	3 N
8055	8	16
8020	8	5
8024	2	6
8036		3 N
8175	6	16
8177	15	3
8128	5	16
8166	15	3
8733	15	8
8745	16	8
8749	16	8
8757	16	8
8761	16	8
8769	15	8
8781	16	8
8793	16	8
8805	15	8
8809	16	8
8815	6	8
8798	8	6
8804	16	8
8433	No	8

Thanks to Geoff Lambert for these tables.

More detailed tables showing cancellations, reinstatements and altered carriage formations for individual trains are available on request to the Table Talk editor on abvi@iinet.net.au or to the Times editor on G.Lambert@iinet.net.au

Postscript 1: Test runs by VLocity DMUs took place between Little River and Corio on the nights of 4 March and 8 to 10 March. *Geoff Lambert writes:* These were tests of new intermediate trailer cars for the conversion of 2-car VLocity sets to 3VL sets. Since the Network Service Plan (Working Timetable) started in June 2015 TM 1300-1312 have been added to 2VL sets 00 to 12, to convert them to 3VLs. During 2015, 2VL sets ran to Newport and return, and then to Bombardier as a 2VL set and came back a little later as a 3VL set. Thence follows the test drive. There are 6 more TM cars to be delivered (13 to 18), so we should see 6 more test runs. So these trains are not

associated with the VLocity disaster - they were not testing the RRL track at all.

Postscript 2: VLine is not the only important passenger train operator to suffer a major fleet failure at the present time. In Britain, the entire fleet of trains used on Heathrow Express services are withdrawn indefinitely due to safety concerns. The Heathrow Connect stopping service has been suspended to allow its train fleet to operate Heathrow Express services. Passengers who would normally use Heathrow Connect are being directed to use London Underground and local bus services.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Pacific National: Future

The bidding war for Asciano, the parent company of major rail freight operator Pacific National, finished on 15 March, when both bidders, the Canadian infrastructure company Brookfield, and a consortium including rail operator Qube and the Canadian Pension Fund, announced that they will jointly acquire the company. Asciano will be broken up. Brookfield and its partners will acquire the ports business. Qube and its partners will acquire the Pacific National rail business. A joint venture of both will acquire the container business plus non-container terminals. This outcome is subject to approval by competition and foreign investment authorities in Australia and NZ.

Glencore for sale

Anglo-Swiss commodities company Glencore, operator of coal trains in the Hunter Valley, announced on 17 March that it has put its coal train fleet up for sale, hoping to fetch more than \$1 billion as it looks to cut debt.

Inland Freight Railway

In early March a number of contracts were let for environmental assessments and engineering design for the proposed Brisbane-Melbourne Inland Rail project.

There is a new website for this project at www.inlandrail.artc.com.au

Telstra causes havoc

On Thursday evening, 17 March, the Telstra 3G mobile network went down across most of SE Australia. V/Line, ARTC and John Holland Rail all now use the ICE (In-cab Communications Equipment) train control system which relies on this Telstra system. Train Controllers at Bourke St Melbourne, Mile End Adelaide, and Broadmeadow were unable to change points or signals or communicate. Consequently, most trains on these systems were stopped for about 90 minutes.

Queensland Rail: North Coast line

Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk announced a \$500m State Infrastructure Fund on 13 March, which will include \$95 million for upgrading work and capacity improvement projects on the North Coast line.

The plan also includes planning for other rail projects, such as the Brisbane Cross-River Rail suburban link, the Springfield – Redbank line in southwest outer Brisbane, and a high-capacity connection to the Port of Brisbane. However, she made it clear that these would be dependent on a matching contribution from the Federal Government.

Queensland Rail Citytrain: Kippa-ring line

The first electric train operated a test run on the Kippa-ring line on 16 March,

ARTC & NSW Train Link timetables

6 March

The reference in March *Table Talk* (page 5) to a new ARTC WTT commencing on 3 March should have been 6 March.

In addition to the alterations to NSW Train Link South Coast trains from 6 March, which were mentioned in February *Table Talk* (page 4), additional weekday trains will stop at Austinmer as a trial for three months. Additional stops by up trains will be at 0630, 0650, 0710, 0731 and 0810. Additional stops by down trains will be at 1709, 1800, 1839, 1919 and 1959.

ARTC East-West upgrade

On 9 March the Prime Minister and ARTC CEO announced an upgrade to the east-west line between Adelaide and Tarcoola, 724 km. The upgrade will replace 47kg per metre rail with 60kg per metre, enabling an increase in axle weight from 23 tonnes to 25 tonnes at 80 kms per hour.

NSW Government: Open data

The NSW Government has announced an open data policy of putting as much information as possible on the internet. This may extend to Working Timetables and Special Train Notices.

Transport for NSW: Train Operating Conditions Manual

Transport for NSW re-issued its Train Operating Conditions (TOC) Manual dated 18 December 2015 in three volumes:

- 1 General Instructions (295 pages), including locomotive and rolling stock data.
- 2 Division Pages (96 pages) with tables of loads for specific locomotives classes on specific sections of line.
- 3 Track Diagrams (60 pages).

Copies are available at

<http://www.asa.transport.nsw.gov.au/ts/asa-standards#rolling-stock> along with other documents.

NSW Trains: Real time information

A data feed from transport technology and communications firm 4Tel gives NSW regional passengers access to real-time service information through their mobile phones. They can check on their service through popular mobile apps TripView, NextThere, Arrivo Sydney, Triptastic, Metarove, abil.io, Moovit and Transit App with train updates every 30 seconds, and buses every few minutes. 4Tel, an SME founded by Derel Wust in 2001, which operates out of Newcastle, generates the real-time information through its 4Trak application, which it has been using to track trains since 2008. The 4Trak system collects real-time position information (track and GPS data) of trains and coaches on the NSW regional network, then compares that data to the planned timetable. It then calculates the estimated arrival times for passenger information systems, and for the external application feed.

Sydney Trains: Control centre

A central control centre, under construction at a cost of \$276 million will open at Green Square in 2018. It will replace separate control centres which at present manage trains, disruptions, tracks, security and customer communications. Sydney Trains chief executive Howard Collins said the new centre would ensure all relevant staff would be informed the moment an issue is reported.

Sydney: Fast train to Badgerys Creek?

On 11 March Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull backed plans for a fast train between Sydney CBD and the second airport at Badgerys Creek, saying he hopes it will be ready when the airport opens in the mid 2020s, however it was also too early to commit to a fully-functioning rail line by the time the airport is ready in 2026. He did not reveal a dollar figure for any rail projects or who would fund the line. "There is too little known about the route, the cost, the value created and the sources of funding," he told delegates at a Western Sydney Ideas Summit. "We are already setting aside space for rail, including station boxes, and approaches so that the rail link can be established whether at the time the airport opens, which would be preferable, or later." Traffic forecasts show there won't be a demand for a rail link until the 2040s, Mr Turnbull said. The airport is expected to cater for an estimated 10 million passengers a year by 2030 and there are no plans for a curfew like its Sydney counterpart. NSW Premier Mike Baird said the airport couldn't be built without a rail link and he welcomed the announcement.

Parramatta Light Rail

Work will begin on Parramatta Light Rail in 2018 on two lines — from Westmead to Parramatta to Strathfield and a branch from Camelia to Carlingford. The NSW Government has committed \$1 billion to the project, with hundreds of millions more to complete the job expected to come from infrastructure contributions from developers who will build adjacent to the line. Consultation on the exact route will take place later this year.

Canberra Light Rail

The ACT Government has shelved a possible extension of light rail to the Russell defence precinct until after the 15 October ACT election. ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr said he will now develop a much more ambitious "stage 2" for light rail, taking in not only Russell, but the wider Parliamentary Triangle, and possibly also Canberra Airport and the Australian National University. He will take that package to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and to the federal Labor opposition in the hope of persuading them to help pay for the next stage. The details of stage 2 will be released before the ACT election, including precisely where the tram would run, and the government would seek a mandate for it from voters, he said.

V/Line: Trains and books go well together

In connection with the annual Clunes Booktown Festival, V/Line will again run special trains – VLocity DMUs – between Ballarat-Clunes-Maryborough on Saturday 30 April and Sunday 1 May. The specials will

depart Ballarat at 0955, 1210 and 1530, and Maryborough at 1100, 1355 and 1705. One could combine going to the Book Festival with riding over a usually hard-to-do line.

V/Line: Warrnambool line closedown

The Warrnambool line was closed over Easter, Friday 25 to Sunday 27 March for planned engineering works. However, a service of VLocity DMUs still operated between Wyndham Vale and Southern Cross.

V/Line: Locomotive transfers

Commencing 4 April train paths will be operated, as required, for the transfer of locomotives from South Dynon locomotive depot to Bendigo and return for maintenance at the Southern Short Haul facility at the Bendigo locomotive depot. Depending upon crew availability these services will be operated by either Southern Short Haul or by Pacific National. To facilitate track access recording in this age of the break-up of the railways, therefore, the services will have different numbers depending upon the operator. SSH services will be numbered 81 and 82, and PN 85 and 86. Service 82/86 is timetabled to depart Bendigo at 2050 (2105 on Saturdays) and 81 /85 to depart South Dynon at 0110 daily.

Metro Trains: On to Mernda

The Victorian Government has called for Expressions of Interest to design and construct the extension of the South Morang line to Mernda, in the city's north-east. The new extension will include an intermediate station near Marymede Catholic College. The Government has instructed bidders to investigate and price a proposed station near Hawkstowe Parade as part of the process. A tender will be awarded in 2016, for construction to begin in 2017 with completion in 2019.

Metro Trains: New trains

The Victorian Government has nearly doubled its order of high-capacity trains, making it the biggest single order of trains in Victoria's history. Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Public Transport Jacinta Allan announced on 15 March that its order of High Capacity Metro Trains has been increased from 37 to 65 seven-carriage sets. The new trains will begin arriving in 2018.

[Table Talk does not usually report rolling stock news, being a little remote from timetabling matters, and leaving this to many other magazines. But the very large size of this order deserves an exception.]

Melbourne: Rail freight

On 26 and 27 February a rail shuttle was trialled between DP World's West Swanson Dock and SCT's freight hub at North Altona, 24 km. The companies say they are heartened by the results. In a joint statement, the two businesses said intermodal networks were necessary to manage surging freight volumes.

Great Southern Rail: Overland survives – again

The Victorian Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan, announced on 22 March that the Victorian Government will provide \$10.35 million to keep the

Overland running between Melbourne and Adelaide until at least the end of 2018 This follows a similar announcement by the SA Government. However, the Federal Government has announced it will not continue its funding for pensioner travel on the service beyond 30 June this year.

Adelaide Metro

The Adelaide Cup race meeting was held on Monday 4 March. Special services were not highlighted on the Adelaidemetro website but were accessible if searched for. The Motor Accident Corporation and SA Jockey Club provided free transport on trams, trains and buses for passengers with an event ticket. Trams were scheduled to operate every ten minutes to the Racecourse from Glenelg 0900 to 1900 and from the Entertainment Centre 1000 to 2000. A service every 15 to 20 minutes operated outside these hours.

Light Rail for Hobart? Yes, But!

Political pressure brought by several Tasmanian politicians on the Prime Minister to assist in the funding of the restoration of passenger rail services in the Greater Hobart area received a favourable response on 29 February - but only as a matter of principle.

The Prime Minister has clearly reiterated his view that the provision of a light rail line in Hobart is a State matter and the State Government must provide a lead on the project, including references to opportunities for urban renewal and regional development.

On 29 February the Hobart *Mercury* quoted the Prime Minister as saying "Should light rail be a priority for the Tasmanian Government, we will carefully consider this project to the extent that it drives these outcomes, delivers economic benefits to communities and seeks to apply innovative financing models such as value capture."

But Tasmanian Infrastructure Minister Rene Hidding maintains light rail is not economically feasible at the moment. Infrastructure Tasmania is however working with the Glenorchy and Hobart Councils on assessing the future of the disused heavy rail corridor, including a study of future land use from Claremont to Hobart City. It is highly relevant to note that the local government planning studies in Hobart City are focussed on a rail service which would terminate at the current City bus

interchange at the intersection of Elizabeth and Macquarie Streets. Most previous studies had identified the city terminus as being on the edge of the waterfront at Macquarie Point, a rather isolated location for most light rail passengers.

Europe: Innovative new international service

High-speed operator Thalys is to launch a low-cost train service between Paris Nord and Brussels Midi. The service, branded Izy, will start on 3 April and use Thalys staff and specially liveried trains. Izy services will operate on classic lines to avoid paying the high access charges levied for using high-speed lines. The trains will have no buffet and tickets will only be available through the website www.izy.com and certain select agents. The initial service will be two round trips per day with an additional train on Fridays and Sundays. Journeys will take between 2 hours 10 minutes and 2 hours 30 minutes.

German timetable app extended to neighbouring countries

Deutsche Bahn (DB) is now offering passengers real-time information on transnational connections. Via the DB Navigator, bahn.de and m.bahn.de, customers can now find out whether, for instance, their ICE will arrive in Zürich on time and what onward connections are available. Up to now, customers would have had to consult the respective partner railway's corresponding app or website. The information will also be shown on onboard displays and in-station information boards. For the time being, real-time data will be available for Railteam's partner railways, i.e. for connections to and from Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium (ICE/Thalys), the Netherlands and Great Britain (Eurostar). The update will cover roughly 60,000 journeys per day. Railteam is an alliance of Europe's leading high-speed rail operators. Besides customers, the additional information will also benefit onboard staff, who are now better equipped to provide passengers travelling abroad with information on onward connections.

Thanks to Ian Cooper, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Len Regan, Roger Wheaton, Ross Willson, www.railexpress.com.au, www.railpage.com.au, *Age*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun*, and *Sydney Morning Herald* for Rail news.

BUS NEWS

National

Greyhound's Adelaide-Mildura service was discontinued from 29 February because of low passenger numbers. There is no replacement.

South Australia

From 21 March all O Bahn buses will arrive in the City five minutes later and depart from City five minutes earlier. This will last for six weeks. It is due to the start of tunnel works for the O Bahn in the middle of Hackney Road. The tunnel when complete will exit into Grenfell St East. Consequently the M44 times will also

be five minutes later/ earlier to the Marion Shopping Centre. M44 runs Golden Grove/Modbury via O Bahn to City, then Marion. Since these services normally through-route to 645/646, Seaview Downs, these two services will also be changed by five minutes. However, route 281, City to Paradise via Walkerville, which also runs along Hackney Road, will have a revised timetable for at least a year.

The Bay to City Run was held on Sunday 20 March with approximately 3500 participants. Special buses were operated from King William Road City between 0630 and approximately 0800 dropping participants off

at 4.5 and 12 km starting points. For the return journey after the race, buses were scheduled to leave the City at approximately 0930 and then as required until approximately 1300, stopping also at the 4.5km point as well as Glenelg. Free transport tokens were available from the *Advertiser*. Additional trams ran as

required – no details in the official advice. As usual, a number of bus diversions were required.

Thanks to Peter Hobbis, Victor Isaacs and Roger Wheaton for Bus news.

FERRY NEWS

The opening of Elizabeth Quay, **Perth**, has produced an immediate increase in ferry patronage to the extent that there is already an investigation into increasing services. Evening services have already been increased. Passenger numbers increased by about 450% in the Quay's first week, compared to the same period last year.

Thanks to Tony Bailey and *Transit Australia* for Ferry news.

AIR NEWS

Qantas will offer twice daily flights from Sydney to Hong Kong from April to July.

Thanks to the *Australian* for Air news.

REVIEW

Why short-haul intermodal rail services succeed, Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics Research Report. Available at http://bitre.gov.au/publications/2016/rr_139.aspx

The shipping container has revolutionised freight transport over the last half-century but its success is bringing challenges, not least in landside container movements. Port-induced road traffic congestion impacts on port arteries and communities and undermines port efficiency. Policymakers and planners seek to shift activities from roads to rail. This is a challenge, however, because most of the containers move over short distances, where trains are relatively uncompetitive. Despite that, there are instances where port-hinterland rail services exist. This report analyses the underlying necessary conditions that need to prevail for those rail services to be sustainable.

ODD SPOT

Think we are mad? What about these people? An enthusiastic group of hobbyists calling themselves baggists go to significant efforts to collect airline vomit bags (unused). They have a website at <http://www.bagophily.com/baggists.htm>

A station in Hokkaido, northern Japan, was open for a single passenger. Trains stopped at Kami-Shirataki station twice a day for a lone school girl: once to take her to school, and once to take her back home. Although the station was intended to close in 2012, it remained open until March 2016, when she graduated from high school. The student's story went viral and train fanatics are rumoured to have harassed her into posing for photos with trains.

Thanks to the *Australian* and jprail.com (Japan Rail travel advice website) for Odd Spot.

About Table Talk

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The **deadline for Table Talk** is the last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

Editor, Rail and Tram, Air, Ferry: Victor Isaacs, abvi@iinet.net.au, 11 Blacket St Downer ACT 2602.

Editor, Bus: As an interim arrangement, please send your Bus news to abvi@iinet.net.au

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