



# TABLE TALK

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## TOP TABLE TALK – QUEENSLAND RAIL CITYTRAIN: TIMETABLE WOES

A further interim timetable was introduced on Monday 7 November to deal with continuing driver shortages. This had 333 less services a week than the first interim timetable dated 25 October. This timetable was expected to last for about two months with another new one to begin in January 2017 when new fares commence. There were no weekend trains from Ipswich to Rosewood except for two in each direction on late Saturday afternoon (1635 and 1735 from Ipswich, 1705 and 1805 from Rosewood)! Most lines had additional gaps between services. The Minister for Transport, Stirling Hinchcliffe said “Queensland Rail has assured me that this is a timetable people can rely on. This is a sustainable timetable, which should have commenced when the Redcliffe Peninsula line opened. The new timetable would free up tutor drivers to teach new recruits, which is the longer term solution and a key part of the Palaszczuk Government’s five-point plan to restore services and maintain safety for the travelling public.”

Not surprisingly, the almost complete absence of weekend services on the Ipswich-Rosewood line attracted criticism. Consequently, yet another interim timetable was introduced only three days later on 10 November. In this the meagre two trains per weekend Ipswich-Rosewood were removed, but a full-time weekend bus service was introduced. Most of these buses operate at the former permanent train weekend frequency of hourly. In addition, there are eight express buses on Saturdays and six on Sundays. Also, one round trip on this line on Friday afternoons was replaced by a bus. The timetables were re-issued with the following words on the front: “Effective 7 November 2016, Revised 10 November 2016.” Then from Friday 18 November, QR amended the rail bus timetable between Ipswich and Rosewood to leave at the time the train was tabled to depart. An updated PDF timetable has been issued however the cover date still shows 10 November 2016. This change now results in a 27 minute connection time between the Rail Bus and train at Ipswich. Previously it was 12 minutes.

The current interim timetables on the Translink website are at <https://translink.com.au/service-updates/104191>

Friday 4 November was the worst day since the crisis began. 113 services were cancelled. In early November, the Minister was facing political calls for his resignation. Meanwhile, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union is threatening strike action over a new enterprise agreement.

On 24 November the Queensland government upgraded the independent investigation into Queensland Rail Train Crewing Practices to a Commission of Inquiry so it can secure documents from the former Newman government and QR. Phillip Strachan, who had been appointed to undertake the independent investigation in October, will be a Commissioner with his examination to now be a Commission of Inquiry. The Inquiry will cover two sections.

Circumstances leading up to and associated with the disruptions to the CityTrain timetable:

1. The adequacy of Queensland Rail scheduling, rostering, training crewing, recruitment and training practices, including arrangements put in place to support the new timetable that commenced 4 October 2016;
2. What circumstances led to any inadequacies in part 1a;
3. When deficits in train crew availability were known about and what action was taken ahead of the commissioning of the Redcliffe Peninsula line to address these issues; and
4. The nature and suitability of actions taken by Queensland Rail once the train crewing issues manifested under the new timetable.

Implementation of the five point plan to restore timetabled services and public confidence in Queensland Rail timetabling:

1. Progress with the recruitment and training of the additional 200 drivers (100 approved in

- November 2015, and 100 announced on 24 October 2016) and 200 additional guards (100 approved in November 2015, and 100 announced on 24 October 2016);
2. Future demand and supply requirements for train crew, including for the crewing of New Generation Rollingstock;
  3. Ensuring the suitability of current and proposed Queensland Rail recruitment practices to address the issues in 2b;
  4. The development and delivery of the interim timetable; and
  5. The suitability of arrangements and timeframes to transition from the interim timetable to the full timetable.

**Graham Duffin** adds: The local media are having a field day at the Government's and QR's expense and the Ipswich Mayor Paul Pisasale is referring to them as "dumb and dumber." It was made worse by the local

state member Jim Madden (a Govt. MP) being unaware of the weekend bus replacement until it had started and the Transport Minister Stirling Hinchliffe apparently finding out about it from Twitter on the weekend it started. The *Queensland Times* (Ipswich) has had many articles about it. To date no announcement has been made about when the weekend train services between Ipswich and Rosewood will be restored.

**Comment:** *Timetables matter. We have seen – years ago in New South Wales, earlier this year in Victoria, and now in Queensland – that unworkable timetables and/or sustained bad operations have significant political implications for governments. Great plans and good intentions must be accompanied by realistic planning and by attention to detail in implementation. Business expertise on boards is important but there must also be people with practical railway knowledge and experience.*

## RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

### Infrastructure Australia recommendations

On 23 November, Infrastructure Australia (IA) released its current infrastructure priority list. IA is the Federal government's independent advisory body for infrastructure projects. Its categorisation affects possible Federal government funding. Through this list, the IA aims to identify nationally significant projects and initiatives in every state and territory.

There are no rail projects in the High Priority category (the highest category). Projects identified in this category are: Western Sydney Airport, M4 Motorway upgrade Parramatta to Lapstone, WestConnex Motorway Sydney, Ipswich Motorway Rocklea to Darra, M80 Western Ring Road upgrade Melbourne, and Perth Freight Link (another road project).

Rail and/or Public Transport projects have been categorised as follows:

Priority Projects: Moorebank Intermodal Terminal Sydney, Adelaide to Tarcoola railway upgrade acceleration (already underway), Brisbane to Melbourne Inland Freight Railway;

High Priority initiatives (ie, projects still being developed): Sydney Metro, Chatswood-Sydney CBD-Bankstown), Bus Rapid Transport (Sydney Northern Beaches, Parramatta Road and Victoria Road), Southern Sydney to CBD public transport enhancement, Brisbane Cross-River Rail, Gawler Railway (Adelaide) upgrade, Cranbourne and Pakenham Railway (Melbourne) upgrade, Cranbourne and Pakenham lines level crossings removal, Melbourne Metro Rail, Port Botany (Sydney) freight railway duplication, Chullora Junction (Sydney) upgrade, Port of Brisbane dedicated freight rail connection, National freight and supply chain strategy, Outer Sydney orbital road and rail corridor preservation, Western Sydney Airport railway corridor preservation, Lower Hunter freight railway corridor preservation, Western Sydney Freight railway and

intermodal terminal corridor preservation, East Coast High Speed Railway corridor preservation;

Priority Initiatives: Western line Sydney CBD to Parramatta upgrade, Public Transport access to Parramatta CBD, Gold Coast Tramway stage 2 (already underway), AdelLINK Tram Network, Melbourne level crossings removal (already underway), Melbourne Airport to CBD public transport capacity, Melton (outer western Melbourne) railway upgrade (already underway), Canberra public transport improvements, Port Kembla freight railway access, Moorebank Intermodal Terminal (Sydney) road connection upgrade, Northern Sydney Freight Corridor stage 2 (Additional tracks West Ryde-Rhodes and Thornleigh-Hornsby), Southern Sydney freight line upgrade, Lower Hunter freight corridor construction, Newcastle-Sydney line upgrades, Wollongong-Sydney line upgrades, Western Sydney Airport public transport connection, Beerburrum-Nambour (outer northern Brisbane) rail upgrades, Mount Isa-Townsville rail upgrades, Gawler Craton (central South Australia) freight rail connection for minerals, Melbourne-Adelaide-Perth rail upgrades, Murray Basin (Victoria) rail upgrades (already underway), ARTC Advanced Train Management System implementation.

IA's completed assessments of specific projects can be found at

<http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/projects/project-assessments.aspx>

The Prime Minister told the House of Representatives on 24 November that the Government's five key initiatives were:

- "We will agree urban rail plans with willing state governments for our five biggest cities - the mainland state capitals - that will inform our future investment priorities.
- We will continue reforms to heavy vehicle user charging.

- We will appoint an eminent Australian to lead extensive community consultation on the costs and benefits of road pricing for all vehicles.
- We will develop a strategy to increase the productivity and efficiency of Australia's freight supply chain.
- And we will collect and publicly release data on the performance of transport services, including freight and passenger services, so that we can target improvements to these essential elements in our infrastructure."

Mr Turnbull said the Government is supporting 69 of Infrastructure Australia's 78 recommendations and had committed funding towards 14 of the 15 projects on IA's Priority List. He said that the first stages of construction will start next year on the Melbourne to Brisbane inland freight railway. He also said that the Government is investing over \$4 billion in public transport to provide genuine alternatives for commuters, ease congestion and improve access in our cities and suburbs.

### **Queensland: Cattle and freight trains**

Queensland Department of Transport has called tenders for operation of cattle and general freight trains on inland lines from 1 January 2018 until 31 December 2022, with the option of two one-year extensions. The current operator is Aurizon.

### **Queensland: Kingaroy line**

A proposed coal mine at Kingaroy could result in the re-opening of the Theebine-Kingaroy branch line, 131 km.

### **Bromelton freight terminals**

SCT aims to run its first train service from Melbourne to its newly developed Bromelton Intermodal estate, south of Brisbane, in January. Bromelton's completion will mark "the final piece of the puzzle" for SCT's entry onto the North-South Rail Corridor, it says. Expected to have a capacity of 1.3 million tonnes of freight a year, the \$30 million terminal connects directly into the existing standard gauge interstate rail line. The 134ha site features a 10,500 square metre cross dock terminal, a 5,000sqm container handling area and more than 7.3km of internal rail track.

"Whilst the North South corridor continues to be dominated by the road industry, we're confident that our approach to this particular corridor complemented by SCT's unique rail model, will allow us to provide a strong and unique value proposition to the market," SCT Logistics CEO Glenn Smith says. "Our new Queensland facility will also allow us to expand our business in key regional areas such as Wodonga, whilst enhancing our capabilities on the Melbourne to Brisbane and Adelaide to Brisbane rail corridor will provide competitive and flexible rail solutions to customers going into and out of the state."

Whilst already servicing the Brisbane market, the company reckons its own independent rail services will broaden its service offering and provide customers with the opportunity to utilise its integrated rail network and expanded national footprint.

"This major investment will allow SCT to run a number of weekly services into and out of Brisbane, connecting businesses from Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria directly into the Queensland market," SCT says.

The **Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC)** has purchased nearly 846 hectares of land at Bromelton ARTC CEO John Fullerton said., "Given the site's strategic location and the intended scope for the area to see an intermodal logistics hub or 'inland port' to be developed over time – it was important we looked at the opportunity closely when the land became available. The land is the only area on the eastern seaboard with current direct access to the interstate railway line between Melbourne and Brisbane. The site is also adjacent to B-double transport routes that are less than one hour's drive from the Port of Brisbane and the Brisbane CBD. It's no secret that we see North-South freight flows between Melbourne and Brisbane as a pivotal growth market and that modern terminal development is essential to enabling this."

There are no immediate plans by ARTC to develop the Bromelton site, but early planning for that process will start over coming months.

Bromelton is not only on ARTC's existing north-south mainline, but also on the proposed future Brisbane-Melbourne Inland Freight Railway.

### **Sydney Trains: Infrastructure**

Signalling between Wynyard and Waverton was modified from 12 December to improve headways. This could facilitate future running of more than 20 trains an hour, in the peak, across the Harbour Bridge.

Overhead wiring was removed from Sydney Mortuary platform from 21 November.

### **Sydney Trains: 21 January and October 2017 timetables**

A new Sydney timetable will be introduced from 21 January 2017.

A new timetable is proposed for Sydney Trains in October 2017. Among the changes being considered is an all stations service from the City Circle to Parramatta, using the new Parramatta turnback.

### **Sydney: Parramatta Metro**

On 14 November NSW Premier Mike Baird announced a \$10 billion metro rail line from the City to Parramatta via the Bays Precinct and Olympic Park. The State government will use money from the \$16 billion sale of Ausgrid as well as private investment to construct the project, which has been dubbed "Sydney Metro West". The line will be largely underground and operate with double-deck, driverless trains. It will relieve pressure on the Western line, which is nearing 100% capacity. The government is promising to have the line operational in the second half of the 2020s, and Mr Baird will announce that work will begin within five years. Community consultation will be undertaken and the exact alignment announced in late 2018.

It is understood the government would be open to the concept of extending the line west beyond Parramatta and east beyond the City, perhaps to Malabar.

Mr Baird said, "The addition of a metro line in Western Sydney will effectively double rail capacity between Parramatta and Sydney and transform the way we get around our city forever. This is the first step — we've identified the need for this project, we're committing the government to delivering it and today we begin the work to bring metro rail to Western Sydney."

Rail stations would be established at Parramatta, where the number of jobs is expected to double in the next 20 years to 100,000, and Sydney Olympic Park, where 34,000 jobs and more than 23,000 residents will be located by 2030. The line would also stop at the Bays Precinct, which is expected to become Sydney's innovation hub with 95ha of land to be regenerated and Google to be based there. It would terminate in the CBD, where passengers will be able to change to the other new Metro lines as well as the existing public transport network.

The Transport Minister, Mr Constance said, "Customers won't need a timetable on this 21st century turn-up-and-go system, which will deliver new capacity and more services for generations to come. This new rail line will be able to move about 40,000 people an hour in each direction, delivering a massive boost to public transport. It will also mean faster and more frequent services will be able to be delivered on the Sydney Trains network from other major centres like Penrith and Blacktown."

### **Sydney Tramway to Pagewood?**

Property development company Meriton is proposing extension of the Sydney Eastern Suburbs Tramway, presently under construction, from the terminus at Kingsford Junction via Bunnerong Road to a major development at Pagewood. Meriton's principal, Harry Triguboff, has confirmed the company would contribute millions of dollars towards the cost under the "value capture" concept of developers contributing to transport.

### **Sydney of the future**

The Greater Sydney Commission released a vision of Sydney in 2056. It envisages three major centres: around the existing City, Parramatta, and Badgerly's Creek Airport. Details are at <http://www.greatersydneycommission.nsw.gov.au/towards-our-greater-sydney-2056>

### **NSW Trainlink: Patronage**

NSW Trainlink's 2015-16 Annual Report show patronage of Intercity trains (ie, outer Sydney electrics & DMUs) was 38,452,744 (an increase of 11.31%), Regional trains (ie, long-distance XPTs and Xplorers) was 1,246,669 (increase of 1.82%) (increase on Melbourne and Canberra trains; decrease on Dubbo train), and Regional buses was 510,309 (decrease of 4.89%).

### **NSW TrainLink: New trains**

On 28 October the NSW Minister for Transport, Andrew Constance, announced the allocation of \$50

million to speed up procurement of new trains to replace the XPTs. The procurement process will begin early next year, two years earlier than hitherto planned. Opportunities to replace the Xplorer and Endeavour DMUs will also be investigated. Unkind people pointed to the proximity of a by-election in Orange to the announcement.

### **ARHS, ACT & NSW TrainLink: Canberra & Queanbeyan**

The Canberra-based **Australian Railway Historical Society, Australian Capital Territory Division** has been one of the most active railfan groups in Australia for many years. In recent years, the ARHS, ACT has expanded into various rail related activities. It overreached itself and has gone into significant debt. On 16 November the ARHS, ACT therefore went into liquidation.

All rail operations by the ARHS, ACT have now ceased and its accreditation as a rail operator has been suspended.

(November's *Table Talk* (page 11) referred to the demise of **Espee Rail**, a subsidiary of the ARHS, ACT. At that time, the Editor was discreet and did not include that Espee's closure was another symptom of the ARHS, ACT's financial troubles).

There were, in fact, two unusual events at the relatively small station of **Queanbeyan** that week.

Queanbeyan station was the site of the only railfan operated railway booking agency in Australasia. The ARHS, ACT had operated this for about 25 years. When the ARHS, ACT went into liquidation, all activities were closed, including the Queanbeyan railway booking agency. The agency was trading profitably. However, not surprisingly, Transport NSW will not conduct business with an entity that is in administration.

In an unrelated event, from 12 to 17 November Queanbeyan station was closed to enable the platform to be rebuilt. On the weekend of 12/13 November this was part of a general closedown for civil engineering works on the NSW Southern line between Sydney suburbs and Queanbeyan. From 14 to 17 November **TrainLink's** passenger trains still operated, but passed through Queanbeyan non-stop. Passengers were bussed the wrong way to and from Canberra to join trains. TrainLink produced two large posters, just for this one station. One poster provided a general explanation, and the other gave the times of the substitute buses, including of empty running between Queanbeyan and Canberra and v.v.

### **NSW: Blayney-Port Kembla freight**

In September Pacific National ceased operation of the Blayney-Port Kembla concentrates train, and Qube took over this service. Qube is using the new Sealink sidings east of Blayney, rather than Blayney yard. Qube is operating three or four trains a week.

## NSW transport information

From December, NSW train passengers will be able to receive personalised messages through Twitter, letting them know if their daily journey is disrupted on the suburban and intercity networks. Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Andrew Constance announced the partnership with Twitter, which is an Australian-first, set to individualise transport information. The pilot will run for three months. If the technology proves successful, Transport for NSW will look to work with buses, ferries and light rail to improve mobile personal messaging.

On 2 November, Mr Constance announced a trial of public transport services that arrive when and where commuters need them. "We have Netflix, Stan, and Foxtel to give us movies on demand – so why can't we have our public transport respond to where people are and what they want?" he said. "Imagine a NSW where you don't need to check the timetable because the right numbers of trains, buses or ferries arrive when and where they need to. This future is not far off if we are quick off the mark today. This is why we are calling on industry and tech leaders to get involved and submit expressions of interest to run the trial, which will be working by the end of 2017. I want to see the end of timetables, and a network that can cut down on travel delays by automatically putting on extra trains in wet weather or extra buses from a footy team's home suburbs to away games," he said.

Data, including how people travel, weather, and special events, will be used to create public transport planning changes in real time – a timetable that is flexible and responds to what customers need. Mr Constance said the trials could include special bus services on suburban routes that respond to where and when extra buses are needed. Expressions of interest for the on demand transport trial will be released in December 2016 with responses from industry due by February 2017. Following an evaluation period, all pilot programs are expected to be operational by the end of 2017.

## ARTC: Victorian NE

The ARTC undertook intensive work on the Victorian NE line between 9-16 November and 21-28 November. It is reported that mud holes have re-appeared in places along the line.

## V/Line; Working Timetable (NSP) 26 June

Since mid-November V/Line's Working Timetables (aka Network Service Plan) of 26 June 2016 have been on their website at <https://corporate.vline.com.au/Network-Access/Network-service-plan>, although the documents are undated.

We must acknowledge with gratitude the work by ATA member Richard Talbot in his persistent submissions to V/Line that its current Network Service Plans be uploaded promptly onto the V/Line website. V/Line has now advised him that it has "recently modified the system to allow the working tables to be automatically updated when there is a change. This will ensure that

the NSP is updated swiftly, corresponding with the release of new timetables".

**Geoff Lambert** adds: "Although it contains a few formatting glitches, the 2016 NSP is a vast improvement on the 2015 NSP. The 2016 NSP has been enhanced with information on train rostering—the backbone of a "zig-zag diagram". The pages of the Central Region have been split into two parts – passenger services which transit the Region and empty car and light engine movements confined within the Region. The effects of the VLocity "wheel crisis" of early 2016 can be seen in the various changes to platform use at Southern Cross station, with many more service routed away from the notorious North Melbourne Flyover. There has been a considerable rearrangement of the loco-hauled services, principally by switching 4VN with VN sets and *vice versa*. As mentioned elsewhere in this issue of *Table Talk*, use of the new Rowsley Loop has been indefinitely postponed. The 016 NSP has finally seen the "retirement" of 2-car (2VL) VLocity sets. Since the NSP was issued, a number of minor amendments to services have been made by S-Notice, principally due to the arrival of the next batch of VLocity cars. The travel times of the NESG services were extended by five minutes over the time that have been in effect since the start of the services. The Freight NSP is also on the web-site but is modified more frequently than the Passenger NSP, most often because of changes of operators for some services.

"ATA has reformatted and amalgamated the full set of NSP tables and all its supporting documents into a single 511-page document. This will be made available in ATA's December Distribution List, along with equivalent NSP documents (including a full logistical analysis) for the June 2015 NSP. 2016 is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the issuance of this timetable under the "NSP" banner and the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disappearance of it under the old name of "Working Time Table". ATA was only six years old when this happened. Some of our members were born after the WTT disappeared!"

## V/Line & Metro Trains: 29 January 2017 timetable

New V/Line and Metro Trains timetables will be introduced from 29 January 2017. The V/Line timetable will substantially introduce the major improvements foreshadowed in the 2016 Victorian Budget – approximately 172 additional services a week. The Minister states: "The 80 new regional train services are the first of more than 170 announced as part of the 2016-17 Victorian Budget, and are on top of the 340 new services the Labor Government introduced last year. Another timetable change is scheduled for mid-next year, which will introduce even more regional services:"

## South Western: Geelong additional 52 and Warrnambool additional 12 = 64

Weekdays - Additional loco hauled Warrnambool - Geelong return trip 0745 Up and 1700 Down with cross platform transfers at Geelong to

VLocity services. Geelong Weekday evenings goes to every 40 minutes instead of hourly, all trains to Waurin Ponds.

Saturdays - Geelong between 0700 and 1900 goes from hourly to every 40 minutes with all services to/from Waurin Ponds.

Sundays- Warrnambool additional return loco hauled to/from Melbourne. Believed to be 1300 Up and 1700 Down. Geelong between 0700 and 1900 goes from hourly to every 40 minutes with all services to/from Waurin Ponds.

**Western - Ballarat: additional 28 and Maryborough additional 10 = 38**

Weekdays – Day mainly every 40 minutes instead of hourly, with a Down and Midday Up extension to/from Maryborough.

Weekends - Two extra return trips each day, standardizing service frequency.

**Northern – Bendigo: additional 28**

Daily - Two extra return trips to standardise service frequency.

**North Eastern / Goulburn Valley: additional 14**

Daily - An extra return trip to Shepparton, as extensions of existing Seymour services, but as loco hauled trains.

**Eastern: additional 28**

Daily - Two extra Traralgon return trips standardising service frequency.

**V/Line: Warrnambool line**

The Warrnambool line was closed on 17 November following the faulty performance of boom gates. Trains were to be replaced by buses for at least a week. V/Line spokesman Rob Curtain said the lights, bells and boom gates did not activate in time shaving off five seconds of the warning time. "Safety is our number one priority. Any variation to our time frames for activation is taken seriously," he said. "There was no danger to passengers, staff or road users."

Since October there have been speed reductions through 17 level crossings between Geelong and Warrnambool where there is limited line of sight. The incident has pushed V/Line to reduce further risk by extra inspections, vegetation reduction, and the reconfiguring of frequencies and other settings at level crossings. Motion detectors to activate the crossings are also being adjusted to provide the maximum warning, regardless of train speed.

**V/Line: Ballarat line**

A project team within the existing Melbourne Metro Rail Authority will oversee the \$518 million upgrade of the Ballarat line. The project includes duplication of 18 km from Deer Park West junction to Melton and a three km section west of Warrenheip, new crossing loops and train stabling, second platforms at Bacchus Marsh and Ballan, and extension of the existing platforms at Rockbank.

The on-time performance on the Ballarat line for the twelve months ending September 2016 was 87.1%. In September this had improved to 91.6%, which is

attributed to the 26 June timetable and to the opening of Rowsley crossing loop. (No trains are scheduled to cross at Rowsley in the current timetable, but it is useful for out of course crossings. It is believed it will come into regular use with the January 2017 timetable.) Since the opening of the Regional Rail Link in June 2015, patronage on the Ballarat corridor has increased by 12.5%. Almost a quarter of all V/Line trips are taken on the Ballarat corridor, with more than 335,000 trips in September 2016.

**Metro Trains Melbourne: Altona direct trains**

From 30 January 2017, five weekday return services will be extended through the Altona Loop direct to Flinders St. Between 0900 and 1100, the trains will stop at all stations between Laverton and Flinders St. The new timetable for Altona Loop services will be available at [ptv.vic.gov.au](http://ptv.vic.gov.au) from early January

**Metro Trains Melbourne: Mernda extension**

Construction of the extension from South Morang to Mernda will begin next year, and trains are expected to be running on the new line by 2019. John Holland have been awarded a \$600 million construction contract including two intermediate stations. Weekday patronage is projected at 8,000 daily.

**Metro Trains Melbourne: Infrastructure**

To allow for the construction of new stabling sidings at Pakenham East for Metro Trains, the boundary between Metro Trains and V/Line has been moved four kms in the down direction.

Control of Sunshine was transferred to Metrol on 23 October. Sunshine signal box is abolished.

**Metro Trains Melbourne: System closedown**

On Friday 11 November at about 2000 Metro Trains' Metrol (central control room) was evacuated in response to what was later determined to be a false alarm. The entire system was closed for about 30 minutes. Delays continued for the rest of the evening.

**South Australia: Freight**

The SA Government has awarded a \$200,000 grant for Bowmans Rail to establish an intermodal terminal near Leigh Creek in northern SA. Regional Development Minister Geoff Brock said the inland regional port will provide an integrated road and rail service from Adelaide to the Cooper Basin, reducing inbound freight costs and creating transport efficiencies. The Leigh Creek line has been without trains since carriage of coal to the now-closed Port Augusta power station ceased in early 2016.

"Bowmans Rail, through the Leigh Creek Intermodal, will provide an alternative transport method to cater for the oil and gas industry in the Far North, broadening the competitiveness of the region and improving its economic prosperity," Brock said. "This project, with the support of the Upper Spencer Gulf and Outback Futures Program, will stimulate new business activity,

support community sustainability and create job opportunities for the region. Establishing the Leigh Creek intermodal will invest a project total of \$800,000 into the local economy and create five new ongoing positions.”

Bowmans Rail chief executive Scott McKay said the company was grateful for the grant, which he said would greatly assist construction of the facility. “With this project we aim to service the oil and gas industry in the Cooper Basin and make future exploration more attractive by reducing supply costs and providing an opportunity to transfer minerals from this emerging region to export market,” he said. “Bowmans Rail provides an integrated, high-value service to its customers and we look forward to offering additional value-add opportunities for South Australia’s resource sector with this new intermodal container terminal.”

Northline is to expand beyond its existing north-south intermodal business into east-west intermodal traffic. Its terminal at Regency Park, Adelaide, conveniently next to Pacific National’s terminal, will be expanded at a cost of \$23 million.

### **NZ: Shaky Isles 14 November**

The main effect of the earthquake centred on the north-east of NZ’s South Island early on the morning of 14 November is significant damage to the Christchurch-Picton line. It is believed that about 32 km of track was destroyed. It is expected to be a long time before the line is re-opened.

On 14 November all train services in Wellington - suburban and long-distance - were suspended. Bus services did not commence until about 0800. Ferry services were cancelled. People were urged not to travel into Wellington CBD. KiwiRail cancelled the Coastal Pacific (Christchurch-Picton and return), the TranzAlpine (Christchurch-Greymouth and return), Capital Connection (Palmerston North-Wellington and return) and Interislander ferry services until full assessments were made. The Northern Explorer operated on that day only between Auckland and Palmerston North, rather than all the way into Wellington. KiwiRail suspended freight trains south of Palmerston North and north of Christchurch. A freight

train was stopped in its journey near Kaikoura on the line from Christchurch to Picton.

On the following day, Tuesday 15 November, the Northern Explorer started from Palmerston North. Other services returned to normal, except there were no trains on the Christchurch-Picton line, including the Coastal Pacific passenger train. Interislander ferries resumed for vehicles and freight, but not for foot passengers, due to wharf damage at Picton.

### **Auckland patronage**

Total public transport patronage in Auckland for September 2016 increased by 3.4% compared with twelve months earlier. Train patronage was up by 13.8% - the result of the full electrification services operating. (Buses were up 0.4%, and ferries up by 6.7%.)

### **Swiss Timetable final publication**

The very fine, comprehensive Swiss rail, bus, ferry and mountain railway Timetables will be published in December for the last time. From 2018 they will only be available on the internet. The final edition will include the new passenger train services through the new 57 km Gotthard Base Tunnel, with other associated changes.

If anyone is interested in obtaining one of these timetables, they can be ordered through ATA. The timetables weigh 3kg, so the postage cost is very high. When converted to Australian dollars, the timetables cost \$23 and the postage \$80, a total of \$103 at the current currency conversion rate. To reduce costs, the timetables will be sent direct from Fahrplancenter in Switzerland to your own postal address. If you are interested, please contact Len Regan by phone on 0409 209 114 or by email at [treasurer@austta.org.au](mailto:treasurer@austta.org.au) and he will place the order for you. Your payment will be made to ATA.

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## **RECOMMENDED READING**

The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics has issued useful new Fact Sheets, *Five facts about commuting in Australia* and *A dozen facts about transport in Australia*. See <https://bitre.gov.au/>

BITRE, in association with the Australasian Railway Association, have released *Trainline 4*. It documents growth in passenger journeys and freight movements in 2014-15. Rail freight movements in Australia grew 11% in 12 months, transporting 1.23 billion net tonnes in 2014-15, up from 1.11 billion tonnes in 2013-14. Passenger patronage grew 5% in 12 months, providing 849.48 million passenger journeys during 2014-15 or 2.3 million passenger journeys every day. Rail freight now moves almost half of Australia’s national freight task, a huge jump from approximately 36% in 2000. It can be accessed at [https://bitre.gov.au/publications/2016/train\\_004.aspx](https://bitre.gov.au/publications/2016/train_004.aspx)

# BUS NEWS

## New South Wales

The NSW Government is expected to seek tenders for services presently operated by **Sydney Buses**. Keolis Downer and Transit Systems are eager to bid, but their bids may encounter opposition from unions, which fear it will lead to cuts to drivers' wages and conditions, as well as bus routes deemed unprofitable. The contract to operate a new bus corridor known as the "B-Line" from Sydney's CBD to the lower north shore and northern beaches from next year is also expected to be opened up to private companies.

While private companies such as Hillsbus and Transdev operate bus services in Sydney, STA-run Sydney Buses carries most of the city's bus passengers. The STA contracts cover the CBD, the northern beaches, Parramatta, the eastern suburbs and south to suburbs such as Mascot. It has 12 depots in Sydney and about 3700 drivers, almost all of whom are members of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union.

Transport for NSW said a decision had yet to be made on the STA contracts, which would expire in mid-2018. The contracts had an option for the transport authority to extend them for up to two years, a spokesman said. The "proposed service approach" for the operation of the B-Line bus services to the northern suburbs was also still under consideration, he said.

Tenders for Newcastle Buses have also been sought.

The following routes run without timetables, as directed on fine summer days. They do not appear on websites or in Trip Planners:

- X24 operates express from Circular Quay to Watsons Bay (stopping only at Double Bay and Rose Bay) on Boxing Day for the Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race. From October 2015 it has also been seen operating on fine summer weekends park St-Watson's Bay.
- X80 ran in 2000 from Park St via Bondi Road to Bondi Beach-in conjunction with the City2Surf in August. It was renumbered X81 in 2001. By 2011 the route had been altered outwards via Birriga Road and Curlew St, inwards via Curlew St and Old South Head Road. It runs as directed on fine summer weekends, holidays and some week days.
- X82 was first noted running Bondi Beach-St James station to convey crowds to the start of the City2Surf from 2006.

New and additional **Sydney Buses** services from Sunday 20 and Monday 21 November include:

North Shore and Northern Beaches

- 35 additional weekly trips on **routes 270, 271 and 274** between Terrey Hills, Davidson, Belrose, Frenchs Forest and the City, during shoulder peak times.
- 30 additional weekly trips on **route 197** between Mona Vale and Macquarie Park via

Terrey Hills and Gordon, providing additional trips on weeknights.

- 25 additional weekly trips on **route 196** between Mona Vale and Terrey Hills, on weeknights.
- These service changes commenced Monday 21 November.

Inner West and Northern Suburbs

- 102 additional weekly trips on **route M41** between Burwood and Macquarie Park via Concord Hospital and Ryde, providing extended hours of operation to midnight every night, with services running every 30 minutes after 2100. There were also be minor timetable adjustments resulting in some altered departure times during the day.
- Seven additional weekly trips on **route 438** between Abbotsford and the City via Five Dock and Leichhardt, providing services running throughout the night on Fridays and Saturdays.

Southern Sydney

- 272 weekly trips on new **route 985** between Cronulla and Miranda, serving the Woolooware Bay development.

Western Sydney

- 76 new and additional weekly trips on **routes 749, 757 and 778** in the St Marys, Marsden Park and Riverstone districts.
  - New **route 749**, providing weekday peak hour services between Marsden Park and Blacktown approximately every 30 minutes (towards Marsden Park in the morning and towards Blacktown in the afternoon).
  - **Route 751** between Blacktown and Colebee was extended to and from Marsden Park, providing new peak hour services between Marsden Park and Colebee.
  - **Route 757** operates via Elara Estate at Marsden Park on weekdays and Saturdays.
  - **Route 778** between St Marys and Claremont Meadows was be extended to provide new daily services to Caddens.
  - Selected trips on weekday **route 781** between Penrith and St Marys diverted via Caddens.
- Minor timetable changes to departure times for other St Marys district routes, including **750, 754, 755, 756, 758, 770 and 771**.

Blue Mountains

- 47 additional weekly trips on **route 686** between Katoomba, Echo Point and Scenic World, providing new morning and afternoon peak trips and additional weekend trips. During daylight saving (October to April), **route 686** runs two later evening trips on Saturdays and

Sundays. In addition, existing trips that only run during school holidays on Sunday were converted to run on all Sundays throughout the year.

#### Central Coast

- Four additional weekly trips on **route 40** between North Gosford to Gosford to provide earlier and later trips on weekends.
- Diversion of most weekday and all weekend **route 40** services to run to and from Wyoming Shopping Village.

There are new State Transit timetables for the October timetable change for:

136, 137, L60, 155, 156, 158, E86, 182, E83, 185, E85, L85 (also with the timetable for temporary route 181).

**Blue Mountains Transit** has changes for Upper Blue Mountains route 686 from 20 November.

It is believed that there were to be changes to **Transdev** route 925 in late November.

## Queensland

**Brisbane Transport** is introducing new timetables for most routes effective 12 December to allow for CBD street closures as a result of the Queens Wharf Resort Development and to better reflect traffic conditions. The new timetables are in the Translink format with green covers in use for private operators since January 2014. Exceptions are the 30 Spring Hill and 40/50 City Loop services which have yellow and red covers respectively. The new timetables show the new fare zones effective 9 January 2017 and have a banner to this effect on their cover. The new Sunshine Coast and Nambour timetables effective 23 January 2017 to incorporate the changes described in the September *Table Talk* are available on-line and also show the new fare zones. **Logan City Bus Services** also have new timetables effective 12 December for 555 and 572/3/4/5 as does **Bus Queensland** for P546.

Details of the new **Nambour** bus network from 23 January 2017 are at <https://translink.com.au/about-translink/projects-and-initiatives/nambour>

## Tasmania

**Metro** is perceived to have a large fleet of old buses, but the fact is now official. Metro's latest Annual Report states the current fleet is by far the oldest in Australia, with the average age at 16.3 years. It is hoped that the purchase of 100 new buses will result in a decrease in the average age to 11.6 years – a figure more in line with other state capital city operators. Delivery of the first of seven new Scania articulated buses for Hobart is scheduled for March 2017. Five of these new buses will replace the last of the Volvo B10M artics which date from 1986-87, while the other two will facilitate growth in the number of services operated by articulated buses.

Metro's Annual Report for 2015-16 reported that a 25% increase in boardings on buses operating between the University campus at Newnham and the Launceston CBD on a new "Turn Up and Go" service

led to the University of Tasmania continuing to assist Metro to fund the expanded service in 2016.

In an ongoing operation to improve the level of Metro's compliance with the Disability Standards for Accessible Transport 2002 for bus stop infrastructure, Metro is rolling out an upgrade of bus stops and shelters in Berriedale, Chigwell, Claremont, Montrose and Rosetta. Part of this program is to eliminate stops very close to other stops, to reduce the number of stops requiring an upgrade and speed up the service. From 31 October 2016 ten stops in Claremont, Chigwell and Rosetta were removed.

## Victoria

### Cranbourne's hand-me-downs

As reported in the November *Table Talk*, Sunday 13 November saw the introduction of a new Cranbourne bus network, with four new services introduced (792, 863, 890 and 899), with more frequent and streamlined services across a further thirteen routes (789, 790, 791, 796, 798, 799, 843, 847, 891, 892, 893, 897 and 898). Two poorly patronised circular routes in central Cranbourne (797 and 896) were withdrawn.

Cranbourne Transit (Pulitano Group) has reportedly ordered eighteen new Scania K310UB Volgrens to cater for the upgrade, but only seven had arrived in time for the introduction of the new timetable. As a result, seven second hand Volvo B10Bs ex Sita Bus Lines are being used to deliver the Monday to Friday timetable. These buses, which retain the orange and white Sita livery, were purchased via auction to replace the former State Transit Mercedes Benz O405s at the sister Mansfield Mt Buller Bus Lines operation for their ski fields shuttles – two had already spent time up there this winter, and are operating signwritten for MMBL!

All four remaining Volvo B10Ms in Cranbourne Transit fleet with traditional black and white Phillips colours are also being used, with sightings of up to ten high floors out on route duties across a single peak. They have also been heavily used during the day on weekdays. Although unusual, it is reminiscent of previous upgrades at Cardinia Transit and Peninsula Bus Lines in the 2000s, where older buses in the Grenda fleet were called back to route duty until newbies arrived.

The former Sita units retain roller blind destinations, which posed challenges for both drivers and passengers trying to adjust to the new network, with paper route number signs displayed in the windscreens. The vehicles are fitted with bus tracking equipment but passengers enjoy a free ride, as myki devices were removed prior to being sold.

After becoming accustomed to low floor buses on almost all services in the outer south-east for several years now, this mass return of high floor vehicles has caused issues for some passengers. People in wheelchairs have been left on the side of the road for the next bus, while those with prams and shopping jeeps have struggled to board and alight. Online and printed timetables incorrectly advise a fully accessible

service, when about a fifth of trips aren't – cases of consecutive high floor trips on the same route have been observed.

Ventura's Dandenong and Pakenham depots received eight new Volvo B7RLEs in the weeks leading up to the new timetable, and have been able to maintain a fully accessible service.

A number of significant signage issues have further challenged passengers and your bus news correspondent has been in contact with PTV to get these rectified. PTV's new interactive "Melbourne by Bus" map was not promptly updated with the changes, with the new routes only appearing towards the end of the second week of operation of the upgraded network. A new local area PDF for Casey has been uploaded to the PTV website along with incomplete versions for Frankston and Greater Dandenong that fail to show all the changes. At the end of November revised maps were yet to be provided for Cardinia or Knox.

### **Ventura updates**

Further Ventura routes are receiving timetable updates from 4 December to improve service reliability with more accurate runtimes and revised train connections (many timetables were unchanged since the Grenda takeover in January 2012). Arrival and departure times have varied up to 14 minutes while journey times are up to 13 minutes longer on weekdays and 9 minutes longer on weekends.

As reported last month, the timetables reintroduce Sunday services on 703 between Bentleigh and Brighton for the first time in nearly 20 years. Meanwhile, 823 (Southland – North Brighton) gains a new return trip after school plugging a previous hour-long gap. The 2337 Saturday evening trip on 788 ex Frankston to Mornington (a remnant of the old NightRider timetable) appears to be extended to Rosebud however there is conflicting advice if this is actually the case. While total trip counts are unchanged, there are consequences with new runtimes resulting in longer gaps in peak times – the 828 has two consecutive 30 minute gaps in the AM peak, on a route that otherwise runs an average headway of every 20 minutes. This also affects hourly routes such as 811, 812 and 813.

Routes with timetable changes include:

#### Dandenong Depot

- 800 (Dandenong – Chadstone)
- 811 (Dandenong – Brighton)
- 812 (Dandenong – Brighton)
- 813 (Dandenong – Waverley Gardens)
- 828 (Berwick – Hampton)
- 857 (Dandenong – Chelsea)
- 885 (Glen Waverley – Springvale)

#### Moorabbin Depot

- 631 (Southland – Waverley Gardens)
- 705 (Springvale – Mordialloc)
- 708 (Hampton – Carrum)

- 811 (Dandenong – Brighton)
- 812 (Dandenong – Brighton)
- 821 (Southland – Clayton)
- 822 (Chadstone – Sandringham)
- 823 (Southland – North Brighton)
- 828 (Berwick – Hampton)

#### Oakleigh Depot

- 701 (Oakleigh – Bentleigh)
- 703 (Blackburn – Middle Brighton)
- 767 (Southland – Box Hill)

#### Pakenham Depot

- 835 (Berwick – Narre Warren Circle)
- 836 (Berwick – Eden Rise Shopping Centre)
- 841 (Cranbourne – Narre Warren North)
- 846 (Berwick – Eden Rise Shopping Centre)
- 926 (Fountain Gate – Pakenham)

#### Rosebud Depot

- 786 (Rye – St Andrews Beach)
- 787 (Safety Beach – Rosebud – Rye – Sorrento)
- 788 (Frankston - Portsea)

At the time of writing the online timetables on the PTV website were littered with numerous issues: with trips and even entire directions missing; timepoints absent; footnotes omitted; trips shown stopping along incorrect variants; and a failure to show day restrictions (such as Friday nights only).

### **Sunbury peak boost**

There are revised runtimes and additional; peak services in the outer-north west fringe suburb of Sunbury on routes 481, 485 to 489 from 4 December. Additional trips operate during school pick up/drop off times, eliminating two 80 minute gaps around 0830 and 1515. Sunbury Bus Services' 2010 network had introduced pulse school buses departing the station, eliminating deviations past schools, but this effectively tied up buses from performing route duty. It appears the route network will transport some students into the station, with primary school deviations again operating on 488 (Jacksons Hill) and buses on 485 passing Sunbury Downs College at an appropriate time.

Frequencies on 485 (Wilson's Lane) & 486 (Rolling Meadows) are being boosted for CBD commuters interchanging with trains, with services 15 to 20 minute headways instead of every half hour. Instances of counter-peak trips running direct paths to/from outer termini have largely been eliminated although they still feature on the 487 (Killara Heights) and 489 (Canterbury Hills) timetables early morning. An additional Saturday morning trip has also been added on each town route, meeting the 0757 train to Melbourne. The 483 (Moonee Ponds) service will now operate to a revised timetable but service levels are unchanged.

### **Consultation for proposed 343 to Hurstbridge**

During November PTV undertook community consultation regarding a new 343 service between Greensborough and Hurstbridge due to commence in

the new year. The service, funded in the 2016/2017 state budget as part of the Hurstbridge line upgrade, is designed to supplement the rail service which is nearing capacity at peak times due to the single track sections beyond Greensborough. Initial suggestions were that the service would only operate to Diamond Creek, but this has been revised, providing service to a residential pocket near Wattle Glen.

Feedback was sought on two route options, one providing a direct route along Diamond Creek Rd and the other operating via St Helena for expanded residential coverage at the expense of competitive journey times. It is proposed buses will operate at 20 minute intervals at peak times and 40 to 60 minutes interpeak depending on the route taken. It appears no weekend service will be provided. The route operates in suburbs served by Transdev, Dysons and Panorama, along with myki school runs operated by both Mees and Diamond Coaches, so it'll be interesting to see who gets the contact.

### **Frankston bus stop circus**

As reported last month, works are underway for a \$13 million redevelopment of Young St and the Frankston station bus interchange, due for completion in May 2017. The alternative locations introduced from Sunday 6 November (see below) are hardly user friendly with many stops as far as a six minute (450m) walk from the station entrance – buses continue to depart at the same time, so tight train connections are no longer reliable – PTV's brochure advises passengers to allow extra time for connections, but this could consequently mean getting a train 30 minutes earlier in some cases! The dispersed locations require passengers doing a bus-bus interchange to walk up 700m between connections, such as travelling from Carrum Downs to Frankston Hospital. Meanwhile, 771 to Langwarrin previously departed opposite the Cranbourne-Frankston Rd services but with the buses now departing in Beach St and Fletcher Rd respectively, passengers must walk eight or nine minutes between stops if they find a long wait for the next bus at the first stop.

Routes departing Beach St:

- 770 (Frankston – Karingal Hub)
- 771 (Frankston – Langwarrin)
- 773 (Frankston – Frankston South)
- 776 (Frankston – Pearcedale)
- 788 (Frankston – Portsea)
- 832 (Frankston – Carrum Downs)
- 833 (Frankston – Carrum Downs)
- 887 (Rosebud – Monash Uni (Peninsula Campus))
- 901 (Frankston – Melbourne Airport)

Routes departing Young St south of Wells St:

- 772 (Frankston – Eliza Heights)
- 774 (Frankston – Delacombe Park)
- 775 (Frankston – Lakewood)
- 779 (Frankston – Belvedere)
- 780 (Frankston – Carrum)
- 781 (Frankston – Mt Martha)
- 782 (Frankston – Balnarring – Flinders)
- 783 (Frankston – Hastings)

- 784 (Frankston – Osborne)
- 785 (Frankston – Mornington East)

Routes departing Fletcher Road:

- 789 (Frankston – Langwarrin)
- 790 (Frankston – Langwarrin)
- 791 (Frankston – Cranbourne)

Signage elected to direct passengers for the changes was poor, although rudimentary notices sticky-taped to bus shelter windows appeared by lunchtime on the first day. Thankfully PTV provided Hoban staff members to direct lost passengers for several days, who handed out a DL brochure on the changes, including a map. An alternative version of this map is available on the Vicroads website but the PTV website only has a text-based news item advising of stop changes (without specific stop locations). With the exception of the Cranbourne Transit routes, PTV's GTFS data has not been updated to show the locations of the relocated stops, which causes misleading results in journey planner results both on their site, Google Transit and countless third party apps.

### **City2Sea detours**

Runners again affected Sunday morning commuters in the inner south, this time on Sunday 20 November for City2Sea. Transdev Routes 216, 219 and 220 were detoured via City Road, Alexandra Avenue and Punt Road until 1300, while 600 and 922 terminated at Acland St and Barkly St in St Kilda. CDC Melbourne's 606 services from Port Melbourne were once more truncated at Park St, St Kilda before 1400 – Elsternwick passengers were advised to take a 3a or 16 tram to St Kilda Junction and swap to a 67 tram while any Elwood passengers were left to find their own route.

### **World Cup of Golf shuttles**

This year's World Cup of Golf was held at Kingston Heath Golf Course in Heatherton, with CDC Melbourne providing spectator shuttle buses to/from nearby Moorabbin Station, supplementing nearby local routes 631 (Southland – Waverley Gardens), 821 (Southland – Clayton) and 903 (Mordialloc – Altona). A 20 minute frequency operated on Wednesday 23 November for the Pro-Am day, while buses departed every 5 to 8 minutes for Rounds 1 to 4 held from Thursday 24 November to Sunday 28 November. Crowds were significantly down compared to the Australian Masters held at Kingston Heath in 2009 when Tiger Woods won the tournament.

### **New bus punctuality measures**

Quietly announced in the 67<sup>th</sup> edition of PTV's quarterly *Track Record* publication were significant changes to the ontime performance measures for buses. Previously buses were considered ontime if they arrived at termini no more than 5 minutes 59 seconds late, which in the past had led to some operators adding significant padding to the last section of trips - officially buses arriving more than 1 minute early was not meant to be considered ontime, it is assumed this was largely ignored in the manual data collection.

Effective 1 July the regime has been brought into line with metropolitan trains and trams, with punctuality now measured as the proportion of services departing timing points along the route no more than 59 seconds early and no more than 4 minutes and 59 seconds late. The arrival at the termini does not appear to be considered. This is a stricter measure than used in Sydney with TfNSW only considering services not ontime if they start their trip more than 1 minute before or 5 minutes after their scheduled departure time, a somewhat lenient measure – eg the crosstown 400 could be over 20 minutes late into Bondi Junction and still be considered ontime! Likewise Hillsbus M2 services in the PM peak can pass suburban timepoints over 10 minutes early if traffic is flowing well (thus getting commuters on-board home faster but potentially leaving someone behind in Cherrybrook who wanted to go Thursday night shopping at Castle Towers).

It should be noted that Melbourne trams currently are only tracked at 4 of 5 points along a route, however reports suggest the tram franchise contract extension will see this become up to 20 points along a route.

Along with PTV's stricter regime, the BusTracker GPS system is now solely used to collect data. Until July 2015 the data was effectively self-reported, with operators manually collecting a sub-set of just 5% to 10% of trips, which had often raised the eyebrows of the Victorian Auditor General. A transition phase using both methods had applied during the 2015/2016 financial year.

The new ontime regime came into effect at the same time PTV began to enforce punctuality and reliability penalties for Transdev services as part of their contract that began in August 2013. As the 67<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Track Record* covers the April to June quarter there is no separate reporting of Transdev's services – it will be interesting to see this is done in the next edition.

A comparison of the old and new measures is provided, which indicates a difference of ten percentage points, effectively bringing buses in line with ontime running observed for trams. This comes on top of a loss of a further 3 to 4 percentage points when they began incorporating the BusTracker data.

2014/2015 statistics:  
(solely using the manual data collection method)

- Jul – Sep 2014: 93.3%
- Oct – Dec 2014: 93.2%
- Jan – Mar 2015: 93.2%
- Apr – Jun 2015: 93.2%

Jul – Sep 2015: old 2015/2016 stats: (using a combination of manually reported figures and BusTracker data. The old measure being up to 5 mins 59 seconds late at termini, with the new measure being up to 4 minutes 59 seconds late at timepoints along the route.)

89.8%, new 80%

- Oct – Dec 2015: old 90.8%, new 78.5%

- Jan – Mar 2016: old 89.6%, new 78.6%
- Apr – June 2016: new 79.4%

It is not clear if the manual reporting for reliability continues – there are ongoing issues where depot staff fail to enter buses into the tracking equipment and on occasion an entire depot might not be tracked! The usual figure of more than 99.9% of services across the metropolitan bus network operating was again listed.

#### **PTV website refresh survey**

PTV are currently conducting a survey regarding the functionality of the PTV website. One would suspect a refreshed website will be delivered in the new year coinciding with the launch of the new Transport for Victoria (TFV) authority.

### **Western Australia**

**TransPerth:** From Sunday 4 December the following changes occurred:

- Routes 30, 31 and 34 extend to Perth Busport and have time changes
- Route 32 has time changes, and a number of deviations to Hurlingham Road are removed due to poor patronage
- Routes 33, 35, 70, 72, 75, 285, 288, 298 have time changes
- Routes 36, 39, 40, 286, 287, 293, 295, 296, 299, 380 and 935 have a minor route change in Victoria Park. These services no longer service Stop 14509 (Craig St after Burswood Road) and Stop 14451 (Great Eastern Highway before Burswood Road). New stops are located on Burswood Road
- Routes 286, 287 and 293 have time changes
- Route 345 no longer extends to Whiteman Park due to poor patronage. The trips still operate but terminate on Bennett Springs Drive. Passengers travelling to Whiteman Park can catch routes 955 and 956 on Lord St. An accessible bus operated by Whiteman Park will travel on Whiteman Park Road from Lord St to the village centre
- Route 471 has time changes and a route change to serve the Burns Beach Estate. Route 471 now runs via Grand Ocean Ent, Whitehaven Avenue and Ocean Parade, to terminate at the Burns Beach Sunset Village
- Routes 473 and 474 have a minor route change in Kinross, with both routes no longer running along Geoff Russell Avenue. Instead they run via Kinross Drive, reinstating regular bus services between Edinburgh Avenue and Connolly Drive
- Route 473 has one additional early morning weekday trip from Kinross to Joondalup station.

**TransGoldfields** is continuing its services to and from Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie (route 865, Thursday) and Kambalda (route 866, Saturday) for a further 12 months from Sunday 13 November. The viability of these services will be reviewed every 12 months.

**Thanks** to Jason Blackman, Ian Cooper, Hilaire Fraser, Craig Halsall, Geoff Hassall, Michael Kane, Bradley Matthews, Peter Parker, Richard Peck, Lourie Smit, David Whiteford and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board* for Bus news.

# FERRY NEWS

## NSW

**Manly Ferry service timetable competition.** Sydney Ferries, who run the “big slow boats” to from Manly to Circular Quay suffer both a feast and a famine on their services. The feast arises from their promotion of a cheap Sunday Excursion \$2.50 Family Fare. Whatever the price elasticity for ferry services might be, this practice completely overwhelms it. As a consequence the half-hourly service is fully laden (1100 passengers most of the day on Sunday) This looks good on the traffic statistics returns, but is totally terrible at the cash register. Why charge at all?

One the other hand - the famine. Competition from Manly Fast Ferries (whose cash prices match Sydney Ferries' prices in rush hour) has taken away at least 80% of the commuter traffic (Example: patronage on the 0700 service out of Manly has fallen from 400 to 50). The Fast Ferry IS fast; it runs a 250 seat service every ten minutes; it charges no more, has better ambience, all-round water-level views—and it has a bar. The Fast Ferry also has its equivalent of the Opal card at a discount. What more could a commuter want? Two other ferry operators also compete, as does Sydney Buses which can get commuters to the city for one-third the price of the ferries.

## Tasmania

**MerseyLink**, operators of the Trans–Mersey “Spirit of Devonport” ferry were expected to resume operation on 15 November after completion of reconstruction of the western shore pontoon wharf. The June 2016 floods, which impacted heavily on North Western Tasmania, seriously damaged the pontoon. At the height of the floods all shipping activity on the Mersey River, including both “Spirits of Tasmania”, and two roll-on roll off cargo ferries was suspended because of the enormous volume of timber, logs and debris being carried by the river to Bass Strait.

A year-round ferry service between Triabunna and **Maria Island** will start in March operated by the Navigators Group with three sailings a day each way during the peak period and regular sailings during the off-peak period. The contract is for five years. Navigators Group, owned and operated by the Roche family, runs a number of ferry and cruise services on the River Derwent and around the Tasman Peninsula.

## Victoria

### **Portarlinton ferry continues for another three years**

The trial of a private ferry between Portarlinton and Melbourne Docklands will continue for a further three years, after an announcement made by Port Phillip Ferries owner Paul Little along with local MP and Minister of Water, Lisa Neville on 21 November, with final details of the agreement still being negotiated. Services resumed the following day with a day of free travel.

The introduction of the service comes as the state government constructs a \$15 million safe harbour at Portarlinton, which had caused some service disruptions at the start of the trial. The safe harbour is needed to avoid choppy conditions causing service cancellations during strong winds, which also prevented sailings on some days.

A daily trial service had operated from 11 August until the vessel was taken off the service for scheduled maintenance works from 14 October. The return fare has increased from \$25 to \$27 although a cheaper \$12 single fare applies with a 10-trip ticket.

Local residents were said to be overjoyed at the announcement after a decade of lobbying for a service. The peak hour 100km drive to Melbourne can take more than two hours, meaning the ferry provides a competitive option despite the limited timetable, with the ferry currently timetabled at 90 minutes. With the announcement that the service will continue for three years, Paul Little will continue to work with Parks Victoria to lift the speed limit on the Yarra, which could cut to journey time to as little as 75 minutes each way. With the announcement, Little repeated his hope that he'll find viable routes from other Port Phillip towns once the Portarlinton route is established.

While the town of Portarlinton has only about 3,500 residents, the service will attract commuters from nearby towns such as Drysdale, Ocean Grove and Queenscliff. The Bellarine Peninsula is also a tourist hotspot over the summer period, which will further strengthen the route.

The revised timetable has maintained the previous weekday 0700 departure and 1730 return for CBD commuters. (McHarry's 60 bus provides alternative options home should one miss the return voyage, with the last connection meeting the 2015 train from Melbourne.)

Bellarine residents may enjoy a mid-week daytrip to Melbourne departing at 1145 Mondays or 1115 Wednesday and Friday while Melbournians can enjoy a weekday outing on the Bellarine Peninsula with a 0930 or 1000 service depending on the day. On Tuesday and Thursday then can return to Melbourne at 1530, or catch the daily 1915 sailing after an early dinner. On weekends and public holidays the ferry departs Portarlinton at 0900, 1600 and 1930 and Docklands at 0715, 1045 and 1715 catering for various daytrip options in either direction.

The Wyndham Harbour service, which was previously been scaled back to weekends only from 10 August before being suspended in October, has sunk due to poor patronage.

**Thanks** to Tony Bailey, Ian Cooper, Craig Halsall, Geoff Lambert and Oscar Verlander for Ferry news.

## AIR NEWS

### Domestic

**Skippers Aviation's** contract for air services to Laverton, Leonora and Wiluna (operating since 2011) has been extended to November 2017. The WA Department of Transport is preparing recommended options for long term decisions regarding the northern air routes for next year. These will be provided to whatever Government is in power after the state elections expected in March. Skippers uses different sized aircraft with seating for 50, 36, 30 or 19 thus allowing flexibility for their routes.

### International

**Singapore Airlines** is delaying the start of its Sydney-Jakarta-Singapore service, which was due to commence on 23 November, because of repairs to Jakarta Airport runways.

By January 2017 **China Eastern Airlines** will launch direct services from Sydney to Kunming and Hangzhou in November 2016. Its Melbourne to Shanghai service will increase to double daily flights from November 2016 to February 2017. December 2016 will see the introduction of Brisbane to Shanghai flights, four times weekly, with an increase to daily flights between January and February 2017. The Sydney to Shanghai service will increase to double daily flights from mid-December to February 2017. Sydney to Beijing services (codeshared with Qantas) will commence in January 2017, along with the launch of a new Sydney to Wuhan route the same month. Thus by January 2017 it will have flights from Sydney to Shanghai, Hangzhou, Beijing, Kunming, Nanjing and Wuhan, operating 58 flights weekly between the two countries.

**Thanks** to Tony Bailey, David Whiteford and the *Australian* for Air news.

## About Table Talk

**Table Talk** is published monthly by the Australian Timetable Association Inc. (Registration No. A0043673H) as a journal of record covering recent timetable news items. The ATA also publishes the **Times** covering timetable history and analysis. Contributions are invited and are very welcome. Please send these to the appropriate Editor. ABN 74248483468.

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

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