



TABLE TALK

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RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Budget speculation: Victoria & Inland Rail

According to the *Herald Sun* on 7 April, the Federal Budget, to be presented on 9 May, is expected to include more than \$1 billion funding from the sale of the Port of Melbourne for upgrades to:

- the Albury line;
- the Bairnsdale line;
- the Warrnambool line; and
- a railway to Melbourne Airport.

According to the ABC on 20 April the Federal Budget will include funding of more than \$1 billion for construction of the Brisbane-Melbourne Inland Freight Railway. This was obviously a deliberate Federal government leak,

The Federal government on 20 April announced the first physical work on the **Inland Rail** project. In May two bridges will be built at Tomingley West and Narwonah between Parkes and Narromine on the ARTC cross-country line. The \$1.3 million project will replace two timber bridges by reinforced concrete culvert structures designed and built to Inland Rail engineering specifications.

Recipients of Table Talk Newswire will receive a special Budget Eve edition with details of railway and public transport measures. (Table Talk Newswire is a between-editions email newsletter, available to members upon request to the Rail Editor, whose address is at end of this magazine.)

Non-connections

Following is a list of current rural passenger services which do not connect with trains to State capitals but do appear in current Public timetables. Services marked P are basically placement runs.

Queensland Rail Travel trains:

0830 Daily Cairns-Kuranda
0930 Daily Cairns-Kuranda
1400 Daily Kuranda-Cairns
1530 Daily Kuranda-Cairns
0830 Wed Normanton-Croydon (isolated line)
0830 Thur Croydon-Normanton (isolated line)

Savannahlander train:

0630 Wed Cairns-Almaden
0800 Thur Almaden-Forsayth
0830 Fri Forsayth-Mt Surprise
0800 Sat Mt Surprise-Cairns

NSW TrainLink trains:

0342 Mon-Fri Lithgow-Bathurst P
0519 Sat/Sun Lithgow-Bathurst P
2217 Sat/Sun Bathurst-Lithgow P
2227 Mon-Thur Bathurst-Lithgow P
2255 Fridays Bathurst-Lithgow P

NSW TrainLink buses:

0835 Daily Casino-Tweed Heads (connects from 0555 XPT from Brisbane)
0610 Fri Narrabri-Burren Junction P
0730 Mon Narrabri-Wee Waa P
1745 Mon Wee Waa-Narrabri P
1825 Fri Burren Junction-Narrabri P

V/Line buses:

Many buses, Traralgon-Maffra-Sale, Traralgon-Rosedale-Sale, Bairnsdale-Lakes Entrance-Marlo, Genoa-Mallacoota, Wangaratta-Beechworth, Wangaratta-Bright, Wangaratta-Corowa, and v.v., but they are not listed in full because this again raises the conundrum of what is a V/Line bus and what is a non-V/Line bus.

QR Travel Timetable 1 April 2017

QR Travel (long distance) has issued a new Public Timetable dated 1 April. It is online at <http://www.queenslandrailtravel.com.au/Planyourtrip/timetable> The only detected change is that the RailBus connection between Rockhampton and Yeppoon / Emu Park no longer operates. This is believed to be due to declining patronage.

Despite expectations that the Electric Tilt Train refurbishment program would be complete by April, the replacement diesel-hauled, slower trains continue on some days of the week (Brisbane-Rockhampton Mon, Thur, Sat; Rockhampton-Brisbane Tue, Wed, Fri, Sun; Brisbane-Bundaberg Tue, Wed, Fri, Sun; Bundaberg-Brisbane Mon, Thur, Sat).

QR Citytrain to the Commonwealth Games

QR Citytrain services from Brisbane to the Gold Coast will be doubled to eight per hour during the Commonwealth games from 4 to 15 April next year.

However, Rail Back On Track spokesman Robert Dow says that will result in chaos for other parts of the train network unless Queensland Rail fast-tracks improvements. "If someone doesn't sound the alarm now, it will be calamitous, Trains and crews will have to be taken from other areas to boost the Gold Coast services. They will probably need to close some lines down altogether for the period of the Games," he said.

QR Citytrain Easter services

Over the Easter long weekend train services were reduced from the usual half-hourly off-peak frequency to hourly on most lines. This was said to be to ensure service reliability. There were half hourly services on the Airport line, and additional services before and after sporting events. Due to trackwork between Park Road and Kuraby, these trains were replaced by buses.

Cyclone Debbie

Prior to the arrival of Cyclone Debbie on 28 March **QR** and **Aurizon** ceased operating north of Mackay and south of Cairns. On the Mt Isa line, no trains operated east of Hughenden. Aurizon shut down operations on the Newlands and Goonyella systems and removed all stored rollingstock at the Townsville Port (mainly sugar sets) to yards at Stuart and Partington. The Ports of Abbot Point, Dalrymple Bay and Hay Point were closed from 25 March. Abbot Point was closest to the crossing point. Significant inland flooding occurred across the Bowen Basin mining region impacting many of Queensland's biggest mines. There was significant damage to railway lines.

Portions of Aurizon's Central Queensland Coal Network are expected to be out of action for at least five weeks, after Debbie struck. Significant landslips occurred on the Goonyella System- the most important and busiest system - which connects to the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal and Hay Point Coal Terminal. It is expected to re-open in early May. The Newlands System, which connects to the Abbot Point Coal Terminal re-opened on 14 April – it had minor damage at a number of sites, but no major damage. Two weeks was also the time for return for the Moura System, which takes coal to the Port of Gladstone. This system re-opened on 12 April. The Blackwater System, which also links to the Port of Gladstone, was re-opened on March 31, but further flooding in Rockhampton again closed the line on 1 April. It re-opened from 10 April.

Aurizon has lowered its earnings forecast for FY17 by between \$100 million and \$115 million, because of extended shutdowns after Cyclone Debbie. However, Aurizon had earlier said the cost of repairing the infrastructure, and the loss of network revenue, is expected to be recovered "as part of the established regulatory process with the Queensland Competition Authority.

As the remnants of the cyclone moved south, there was massive rain in SE Queensland and NE NSW on 30 March. In the Brisbane area, free public transport was provided to keep people off the roads. From 31 March until 2 April **QR Citytrain** Beenleigh and Gold Coast lines were suspended between Kingston and Ormeau due to flooding with replacement buses operating. On 31 March **NSW TrainLink** trains and buses were suspended north of Taree. Next day, XPT services had returned, but TrainLink's bus services remained disrupted.

Olive Downs coal mine

Coal mining company Pembroke Resources South is proposing an open cut coal mine at Olive Downs in Central Queensland. The project includes an 18 km railway branching from the Norwich Park line.

ARTC & JHR WTTs 5 May 2017

ARTC's Working Timetable of 5 May 2017 is now on their website at <http://www.artc.com.au/customers/operations/mtp/2017-05-07/>

The schedule for the winter Ghan Explorer (ultra-touristy train) is now included from Tarcoola to Adelaide.

John Holland Rail (NSW Country Regional Network) WTT of 5 May is now on their website at <http://www.jhrcrn.com.au/what-we-do/network-operations-access/standard-working-timetable-swtt/>

In addition to the minor alterations in the John Holland Rail WTT noted in the April *Table Talk*, page 4, there is now a third daily Pacific National freight on Mondays to Fridays to Crisps Creek (arrive 1415) on the Canberra line, conveying Sydney rubbish to fill up the Woodlawn mine, but still only two empty return journeys. On Saturdays, there is still only one rubbish freight.

JHR NSW CRN planning document

John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network have placed on their website a document entitled *Possessions List – Major*. This is much more interesting document than the name indicates. It lists forthcoming track possessions from 21 March 2017 until 13 May 2018. In addition, it lists known forthcoming special trains, whether special passenger trains, work trains, AK track inspection/measurement trains or SPENO rail grinding trains. In regard to track possessions it lists the line covered, the civil engineering work to be undertaken and the relevant Country Train Notice. For example, on the Joppa Junction to Canberra line there will be weekend closedowns for work on 13-14 May and 19-20 August 2017, 3-4 February and 12-13 May 2018. Although not relevant to the Joppa Jnc-Canberra line, because these closedowns coincide with ARTC closedowns on the Main South line, they also advise that certain freight trains – 7SP5, 6BA2, 7YN2 and ADDL – will be diverted to operate via JHR CRN's Western line. Appended to the list are Network Availability Maps showing the scope of works for April, May and June 2017 and a more detailed map of the Main West Closedown on 22-23 April 2017.

The list also extends to advice of the dates of forthcoming editions of Working Timetables – 6 May (as already reported in *Table Talk*) and 23 September 2017. No doubt this will also be the date of new Transport for NSW and ARTC Working Timetables.

The list can be accessed at <http://www.jhrcrn.com.au/what-we-do/network-operations-access/network-access-planning-performance/> under the heading of Possession Programme – March Release.

Qube expands

Railway freight operator Qube has acquired rail freight forwarding company Austrans Container Service. Qube says there are no immediate changes for the business.

ACCC rejects ARTC access rates

In a draft decision issued on 20 April, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said the Australian Rail Track Corporation is not being realistic with its proposed access terms for the Hunter Valley network. After six years operating the network under the 2011 Hunter Valley Access Undertaking (HVAU), the ARTC is scheduled to replace that scheme with the 2017 HVAU by 30 June. But the ACCC has rejected the ARTC's proposed 2017 HVAU, saying it disagrees with key figures calculated in the document. The ACCC draft decision is open for public comment until 12 May.

ACCC Chairman Rod Sims said it was trying to act in the best interest of all parties involved. "In making its decision the ACCC has recognised the need to balance the economically efficient operation of, use of, and investment in the Hunter Valley rail network with the legitimate business interests of ARTC and the interests of all access seekers, including passenger trains, coal and non-coal freight," he said.

Two key issues raised by the ACCC are with the ARTC's calculations of rate of return (RoR) and weighted average mine life (WAML) figures within the terms of the access deal. Both sets of figures will be crucial for determining the prices the ARTC can justifiably charge users for access to the network. The ARTC is proposing a new RoR of 6.51% (real pre-tax) and 7.86% (nominal pre-tax) – a pair of figures the ACCC calls "not appropriate".

Instead, the ACCC is proposing an RoR in the new deal of 4.60% (real pre-tax) and 7.11% (nominal pre-tax). As for WAML, the ARTC is calculating 16.5 years – but the ACCC says a WAML between 20 and 32 years would be more accurate, saying the ARTC's figure is "inappropriately conservative".

Moorebank terminal

Construction on the long-anticipated intermodal terminal at Moorebank, south western Sydney, began in early April. The site has a direct rail link to Port Botany and the interstate freight network. The Commonwealth has committed to contribute \$370 million to the project, along with 158 ha of land. The terminal is expected to open by late 2018, and the

interstate terminal to open in 2020. Both terminals are to operate under an open access regime.

Sydney Trains October timetable

The following changes will take place from October 2017:

- Homebush services to be extended to Parramatta.
- Y-Link services to run between Richmond and Leppington.

Sydney Trains: 2019 timetable planning

ABC News in Sydney reported on 19 April on Sydney Trains timetable planning for 2019 following the opening of the North-West Metro line. The document indicates that the operation of the privately run Metro will have a complex domino effect on the Sydney system as existing services are rerouted, or even cancelled.

The ABC claimed that direct train services from Penrith will be reduced, but there would be new express trains to the Northern line. Penrith currently enjoys 11 fast trains to the city during the 0700-0800 peak period, but a 2018 concept map suggests it could lose four services with capacity for up to 4,000 passengers. From 2018 on, Penrith's peak-hour travellers lose direct access to the City Circle and the North Shore, with trains instead terminating at Central.

The Northern line services will be boosted as trains are re-routed away from the converted Epping-to-Chatswood line. Two new peak-hour services are also accommodated in the concept timetables. During peak-hour, five fast trains will depart Epping and service just five stops — Eastwood, West Ryde, Rhodes, Strathfield and Central — supporting high-rise population centres. The document suggests Central Coast trains via the North Shore line may be re-routed down the Northern line via Strathfield, with most services commencing from Gosford.

The re-timetabling of peak-hour trains and slower stopping patterns down the Northern, Southern, Inner-West and Western lines is another impact of the Sydney Metro. For instance, travellers from Liverpool can expect to take up to 10 minutes extra to the CBD. A rail planning map reinforces this and shows two extra Northern line trains travelling between Strathfield and Central during the morning peak, to as many as 15 per hour in 2019.

There are also hints that Sydney's suburban trains may become more crowded. An impact document predicts a reduction of 'West to North' capacity by 25%, suggesting more passengers on already crowded trains from Sydney's western suburbs.

The 2014 planning documents were secured after a successful three-year legal battle by the ABC with Transport for NSW to release the information.

The document may be accessed at <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3672950-Draft-Timetables-and-Map-for-2018-Sydney-Train.html>

Comment: *The report needs to be treated with considerable reserve. Firstly, the ABC's report was*

based on a document dating from 2014 which is now likely to have been overtaken. None of the current proposed changes are included. Secondly, the document appears to be basically a fleet plan, rather than a timetable.

NSW passenger train punctuality

The NSW Auditor-General released a report into NSW passenger train punctuality on 11 April. She found that rail agencies are well placed to manage the forecast increase in passengers up to 2019, including joining the Sydney Metro Northwest to the network at Chatswood. Their plans and strategies are evidence-based, and mechanisms to assure effective implementation are sound.

However, based on forecast patronage increases, the rail agencies will find it hard to maintain punctuality after 2019 unless the capacity of the network to carry trains and people is increased significantly. If recent higher than forecast patronage growth continues, the network may struggle to maintain punctuality before 2019.

Transport for NSW has undertaken considerable work on developing strategies to increase capacity and maintain punctuality after 2019, but remains some way from putting a costed plan to the government. There is a significant risk that investments will not be made soon enough to handle future patronage levels. Ideally, planning and investment decisions should have been made already.

Passenger rail punctuality indicators adopted in NSW are good practice, and include measures of train punctuality and customer delay. Measurement of punctuality is reasonably accurate, but there is some minor room for improvement. More information could be published on punctuality performance, particularly the Customer Delay Measure.

The report found that the rail network around North Sydney creates punctuality problems for afternoon peak services heading to Western Sydney and to Hornsby via Strathfield. East Hills express services performed well below target during the afternoon peak. The punctuality of intercity trains lags behind suburban trains, and there was an extended period of declining punctuality between 2011 and 2014.

The Auditor-General recommended that:

1. Transport for NSW should ensure that programs to address rail patronage growth over the next five to ten years are provided to the government for Cabinet consideration as soon as possible.
2. Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW should
 - a) maintain effective oversight and resourcing for all strategies designed to address rail patronage growth
 - b) adjust strategies for any patronage growth above projection.
3. Sydney Trains, NSW Trains and Transport for NSW should publish Customer Delay results by June 2018.

4. Transport for NSW, Sydney Trains and NSW Trains should agree by December 2017:
 - a) specific performance requirements for intercity train, track and signal availability and reliability
 - b) guidelines for train priorities during disruptions and indicators of control centre performance in implementing these guidelines.
5. Sydney Trains, NSW Trains and Transport for NSW should by June 2018:
 - a) improve the accuracy of patronage measurement and develop a better understanding of patronage growth trends
 - b) address small errors in the adjustment factors used for determining a train's punctuality status
 - c) improve their understanding of the factors impacting on intercity punctuality.
6. Transport for NSW should, commencing June 2017, explore the potential to use behavioural insights to encourage more passengers to travel outside the height of the morning peak (8 am to 9 am).

The report can be accessed at

<http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/latest-reports/rail-punctuality>

NSW TrainLink: Newcastle line

The *Newcastle Herald* analysed the Auditor-General's report on 12 April. According to the report the punctuality of intercity trains has continued to lag well behind Sydney's suburban trains since 2011, peaking at an almost 11% difference in the middle of 2015 and hovering at about a 5% difference in July 2016.

And, unlike other services that improve during inter-peak periods throughout the day, intercity trains like the Newcastle to Sydney line actually get worse. For example, services from Hamilton to Central averaged 90.9% AM peak punctuality on weekdays in the period between July 2015 and March 2016, below the 92% peak punctuality benchmark. But the service actually got worse as the day wore on – falling to 87.5% in the inter-peak period, and down to 85.1% in the PM peak.

The report found that rail agencies “were not able to provide evidence-based explanations” for why the service is so slow, but that it probably has to do with a lack of investment. “A key factor in the relatively poor performance of NSW Trains' intercity service may be the old age of its trains and of the tracks and signals outside the metropolitan area,” the report found. “Transport for NSW acknowledged that recent investment in the NSW Trains intercity fleet and track and signal infrastructure had been relatively lower than investment in suburban trains and the suburban network. Transport for NSW also advised that the recently announced Intercity Fleet will address some of this relative under-investment.”

The issues with punctuality are impacting on customers, too. The latest customer delay figures from April 2016 for the morning peak to Central show the Newcastle and Central Coast line was the worst performer on the network, at a four minutes and 22 seconds delay average.

At least part of the problem, according to NSW Trains, is a lack of control over the network. Between July 2015 and March 2016 the agency said 72% of train lateness was down to "other agencies and infrastructure and fleet failures".

In a statement, a spokesman for NSW TrainLink said that the last few months had seen punctuality on services to Newcastle "affected by extreme weather", including hot conditions that caused "speed restrictions to be placed on trains and the impact of storms on the rail network". The spokesman said intercity trains are also "more exposed to impacts of breakdown of freight trains during the off peak during the day which can disrupt the afternoon peak. There are a range of impacts on punctuality, some of which are beyond our control. He said the overnight period provided an opportunity to "reset" the system which "typically enables better punctuality in the morning peak. The afternoon peak is more likely to be impacted by flow-on effects of delays on the rail network during the day."

Newcastle Tram

NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance announced on 18 April that the new 2.7 km light rail line in Newcastle will operate without catenary for much of its length to reduce the line's visual impact. The fleet of six CAF Urbos trams will be equipped with an onboard energy storage system. The line is due to open in 2019.

See Letter to the Editor below

Sydney Trains & NSW TrainLink: Easter Show

The following additional and altered services operated for the Sydney Royal Easter Show (6 to 19 April):

Weekdays Sydney Trains

- Express services between Central and Olympic Park every 20 minutes from 0730 to 1030, then every 30 minutes until 2300, stopping at Redfern and Strathfield.
- Lidcombe to Olympic Park every 10 minutes from 0530 until midnight.

NSW TrainLink Blue Mountains Line: Up trains made extra stops at Lidcombe between 0925 and 1500 and down trains between 1900 and 0100.

Easter Long Weekend (14-17 April) Sydney Trains

- Express services between Central and Olympic Park every 8 minutes from 0900 until midnight, stopping at Redfern and Strathfield.
- Lidcombe shuttle services to Olympic Park every 10 minutes from 0530 to 0900, then extended to run Blacktown to Olympic Park every 10 minutes between 0900 and 2200 and between Olympic Park and Penrith /

Schofields every 30 minutes between 0900 and midnight.

NSW TrainLink Blue Mountains Line:

- An additional service to Katoomba from Central at 1847.
- The 1718 to Mount Victoria extended to Lithgow.
- Trains between 0800 and 2230 made additional stops at Lidcombe.

Central Coast & Newcastle Line:

- An additional train from Hamilton at 0656, stopping at Broadmeadow, Cardiff, Fassifern, Morisset, Wyong, Tuggerah, Gosford, Woy Woy, Hornsby then Olympic Park.
- An additional train from Hamilton at 0759, stopping all stations to Tuggerah, Gosford, Woy Woy, Hornsby and Olympic Park.
- An additional train from Wyong at 0845, stopping all stations to Berowra, Hornsby and Olympic Park.
- Trains to Gosford departing Central at 1845 and 1945 were extended to Wyong.

Southern Highlands Line: an additional train from Campbelltown at 2355, stopping all stations to Moss Vale.

There was no trackwork scheduled over the Easter long weekend.

Victorian Fares Manuals

New editions of the Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual (including maps of public transport networks) and the Victorian Regional Bus Fares Manual dated 1 January 2017 are available. See <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/general-information/victorian-fares-and-ticketing-manual/>

ARTC & V/Line: NE line

Federal Transport and Infrastructure Minister Darren Chester has indicated that the Victorian government will need to commit to share the cost of upgrades to the north-east line, if the Commonwealth is to help fund the work in the upcoming budget. Chester visited the region and rode the rails in early April.

See also the article below on Victorian infrastructure.

Due to a V/Line possession of the North Melbourne Flyover on the weekend of 13 and 14 May NSW TrainLink will substitute a bus service between Southern Cross station and Albury. V/Line will terminate services at Broadmeadows and provide a bus service from Broadmeadows to Southern Cross.

V/Line: Echuca line

Following a boom barrier malfunction in mid-March, trains were replaced by buses. On 30 March, the Minister for Transport, Jacinta Allen, announced an upgrade of all 12 level crossings between Bendigo and Echuca. The buses continued while this took place, resulting in five weeks of bustitution.

From 10 April the 0115 container freight from Westgate Port Siding to Deniliquin Rice Growers Siding via Bendigo is replaced by a train departing at

0001 and running via Seymour (0227-0232) and Toolamba (0332-0337), arriving Deniliquin at 0717.

V/Line: Geelong line

Jeroen Weimar, the CEO of Public Transport Victoria, said on 3 April in an interview with the *Geelong Advertiser* that a train shortage and insufficient track access in and out of Melbourne is choking the Geelong line. He said the shortages meant express trains weren't a possibility for the line — regional Victoria's busiest commuter corridor. "I've got significant pressure on how many trains I've got, how much track access I've got and how many passengers I've got. Running an express train from Geelong to Southern Cross will sacrifice too many paths that I frankly can't afford."

V/Line data for February shows 7 of 12 services leaving Geelong and arriving at Southern Cross before 0900 on a weekday are running at more than 95% capacity. It also shows the Geelong line has failed to meet its punctuality target of 92% in 28 of the past 31 months.

In July and September about ten more services are to be added to the line. "We haven't yet nailed down exactly how many additional services we are putting in but there will be a significant number," Mr Weimar said. This comes after 18 services were added in January.

Mr Weimar said commuter pain could not be eased with longer trains as many of the Geelong line platforms could not accommodate trains longer than six carriages. Moving Tarneit and Wyndham Vale stations on to Melbourne's Metro network is too steep a task. "To take the metropolitan line all the way down to Wyndham Vale and Tarneit would be a significant expansion of the electrified network," Mr Weimar said. He said extending the Geelong line to Torquay or duplicating the Geelong line between South Geelong and Waurn Ponds were not currently part of PTV plans.

V/Line: Western line

A report into *Grampians and Barwon South West Region Passenger Services* was commissioned by western Victoria councils and carried out by John Hearsch Consulting. The very comprehensive result, dated March 2017, can be accessed at <http://www.sthgrampians.vic.gov.au/Page/Download.aspx?c=7636>

The report identified significant unmet needs for better public transport in the region. The Study found that residents, businesses, government agencies and local governments in the region were not being provided with fast public transport access to Ballarat and Melbourne. It found that regional residents, including young people, the aged, those in need of medical specialities and those in need of access to choices in work and education, often had inadequate public transport access to regional centres like Horsham, Ararat or Hamilton, let alone Ballarat, Geelong or Melbourne. It found that the public passenger services that are being provided beyond Ararat are sub-standard, having been little improved from 30 years

ago, and offering limited access to regional centres and inadequate connectivity.

In response to these deficiencies, the Study Team looked at rail and coach services in the region from the passengers' point of view. It then developed and costed staged proposals for public transport improvement in the region.

The proposals made in the Report range from improvements capable of immediate implementation to those requiring substantial investment, particularly needed as Victoria's western rail network moves toward gauge standardisation.

The most immediate **Stage 1** recommendation is to increase the Ararat to Melbourne train service from 3 to 4 daily return services, including a new early morning train to Melbourne and a return afternoon train from Melbourne. This will greatly assist business travellers. By 2019, Ballarat line upgrades will allow a further improvement to 5 daily return trains between Melbourne and Ararat.

The central conclusions of the Study are that rail passenger services can and should be reinstated to Horsham and Hamilton, and that the railway between Ballarat and Ararat should be converted from broad to standard gauge, in **Stage 2** of the recommended process, between 2021 and 2026. By 2026, or sooner if possible, there should be four daily trains, with comfort and performance at least comparable with the popular VLocity trains, in each direction from Horsham, three from Hamilton and six from Ararat, with passengers changing at Ballarat for rapid and frequent Melbourne services. There are currently 22 daily trains to choose from at Ballarat and more are likely to be added after the \$518 million Ballarat line upgrades approved in the 2016 state budget are completed.

After the currently funded Ballarat line improvements are completed, Ararat train service should be increased to five weekday services, accelerated by Ararat trains omitting stops served by other trains, i.e. Ardeer, Deer Park, Caroline Springs, Rockbank and Melton, and increases to four return services on weekends

Upgrading of these services is considerably more complex than elsewhere in Victoria due to differences in rail gauge, fragmented control of rail corridors, the need to procure suitable standard gauge passenger rolling stock and related maintenance facilities, and the need to upgrade many level crossings, signalling, safe working and stations in the regions.

Safety upgrades are recommended including signalling improvements such as automated train protection warning systems and the upgrading to active protection (booms and barriers) of 77 level crossings between Ararat, Horsham and Hamilton.

The Study recommends that, ultimately, the Ballarat line should be quadruplicated as far as Caroline Springs and thence duplicated to Ballarat (plus a standard gauge line alongside from Warrenheip to Ballarat).

The Study also looked at coach connections servicing the region and identified important improvements in coach services, including additional services between Hamilton and Ballarat and new weekend services to Casterton and Mount Gambier. Coach service improvements are also proposed for a number of towns to provide better regional connectivity, including Balmoral, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld and Lake Bolac.

Other improvements are recommended to better overcome isolation in smaller communities and to provide tourist-friendly coach schedules that would enable more public transport-based holidaymakers to visit the region's many attractions, including the northern and southern Grampians, the Pyrenees, the Wartook Valley, Little Desert, West Wimmera and Glenelg shire attractions. Such access is currently very limited; better access will help accommodation and hospitality industries in these areas.

The Report also highlights the need to upgrade facilities for disabled and elderly travellers, as most coach stops and stations in the region don't currently comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act*. As well as upgrading these to compliance, the Report also recommends improved disabled toilet facilities, such as "Changing Places" adult disabled facilities at several stations and staff to assist passengers with luggage at major interchanges. All stations in the regions - including Stawell, Murtoa, Horsham, Glenthompson, Willaura, Dunkeld and Hamilton - will need to be restored and upgraded as part of the process, improving local infrastructure and providing local employment.

Longer term possibilities for Hamilton and Horsham trains to also travel to Geelong or via Geelong to Melbourne are also outlined and costed for consideration.

The cost of proposals in the Report has been estimated in a peer-reviewed process. Stage 1 of the proposals (those for early implementation) - are costed at \$1.6m; Stage 2, including new trains and standardisation of the Ballarat to Ararat railway and associated train stabling, maintenance and signalling, has an estimated capital cost of \$369m and an additional annual operating cost of \$6.1 million. Although the required investment is substantial, all major transport investments involve large spending to provide the access and connectivity communities need. The investments are spread over several years and will be reflected in employment opportunities as well as wider economic social benefits.

V/Line: Maryborough line

To accommodate visitors to the annual Clunes Booktown Festival, V/Line is again operating a service of special VLocity DMUs on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 May. Special trains depart Ballarat at 0955, 1210 and 1530, returning from Maryborough at 1100, 1335 and 1705.

Yarra Trams timetable 1 May

New Route 58 from West Coburg to Toorak merges routes 8 and 55 to improve services to meet high

demand in the city's inner west and north-west. Route 58 delivers low-floor trams to the Parkville hospital precinct and Melbourne Zoo for the first time.

Route 6 will be extended to operate through from Moreland to Glen Iris: The new route 58 has enabled Route 6 to be extended from Moreland to Glen Iris via Melbourne University. Train connections include Prahran and Armadale stations.

Journey times have been updated to reflect increasing congestion on Melbourne's roads (75% of the network is on shared roads).

There will be some reduction to services on routes 96, 86, 19, 59, 11 and 67, mainly to night services:

- Route 96 from East Brunswick: Removing three weekday city-bound peak hour services between 0800 and 0900.
- Route 19 to Coburg North: Four Friday night services removed, reducing frequency between 2000 and 2100 from every ten 10 minutes to a 20-minute frequency. Two Sunday night services have also been cut.
- Route 86 to Bundoora: Friday night services between 2130 and 2300 reduced from every 15 minutes to 20 minutes.
- Route 67 to Carnegie: The last tram on Sunday night removed.
- Route 59 to Airport West: One Sunday night service removed.

Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan said, "Like all timetable changes, we will monitor how passengers are using the new services and make further adjustments if necessary." Last year tramway patronage increased 12 % to 203.8 million journeys.

Yarra Trams to the Grand Prix

On 25 and 26 March, the weekend of the Grand Prix in Melbourne, Yarra Trams operated an intensive service to the gates either side of Albert Park:

- From Spencer and Collins Streets along the St Kilda light rail line (gates 1 and 2);
- From Spencer and Collins Streets to Albert Road, South Melbourne (gate 3);
- From Swanston and La Trobe Streets along St Kilda Road to the Esplanade, St Kilda (gates 5, 8, 9 and 10);
- From Swanston and La Trobe Streets along St Kilda Road to Dandenong Road, Windsor (gates 5, 8 and 9).

The down side was that all tram lines branching from St Kilda Road were reduced to shuttle services from their respective junctions, and there were no trams beyond Wright St on the St Kilda light rail line (but there were replacement buses).

Melbourne Airport railway from the Age 30 March

Runaway population growth in Melbourne's north-west has put plans for a rail line to Melbourne Airport in jeopardy, just as calls by the airport for a rail connection grow more urgent. The Andrews government has been warned it will need to invest billions on a new rail link between the airport and the

city in future years, or hope the Tullamarine Freeway can continue to carry the load, despite warnings from the airport that it faces gridlock within a decade if a rail line is not built. Melbourne Airport believes a rail link is needed within 10 to 15 years.

The government's \$10.9 billion Melbourne Metro tunnel was designed to create capacity for Melbourne's rail system to support a link to Tullamarine, with airport trains proposed to run via the planned Metro tunnel some time after it opens in 2026. But the tunnel must

As recently as 2013, Public Transport Victoria published plans for the Metro tunnel that included an airport link with six trains an hour. But the most recent service plan for Melbourne Metro, published in the 2016 business case, makes no mention of a rail line to Melbourne Airport. Rather, it predicts the tunnel will be used by up to 14 trains an hour to and from Sunbury and nine trains to and from Melton. It will handle 23 trains an hour, which would leave no capacity for an airport line.

The government now faces calls to build an entirely new tunnel for airport trains. The proposal, by the Rail Futures Institute, involves building a new line between Southern Cross station and Sunshine, mostly underground. The new line would also have new dedicated trains with luggage storage.

Put to the Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan in recent weeks, the airport link would be a major investment for the Andrews government, which has never committed to building a rail line to Melbourne Airport. This is despite predictions from the airport that the Tullamarine Freeway will soon struggle to handle peak-hour traffic, despite the current \$1.8 billion widening project. Melbourne Airport predicts it will have 64 million visitors a year by the early 2030s and says the freeway will fail to cope with peak demand by then. A spokesman for Melbourne Airport said it supported building an airport rail link.

See also the first news article above.

Adelaide Metro: Closedowns

The plan of scheduled closures of the Adelaide suburban rail network for civil engineering works during 2017 is posted online – see http://www.infrastructure.sa.gov.au/RR/rail_revitalisation/rail_maintenance_calendar

TransPerth: Aubin Grove station

On Sunday 23 April 2017, Aubin Grove station, at 23.7 km between Cockburn Central and Kwinana on the Mandurah line, opened. The first service departed at 1056 to Perth. A new timetable has been issued for the Mandurah line. Details of changes to bus services in the area are detailed below in the Bus News section.

Perth Metronet

The new WA Labor government has started planning for its Perth Metronet plan. Transport Minister Rita Saffioti says business cases are being prepared for the extensions of the Joondalup line to Yanchep and the Thornlie line to Cockburn. She said they would be submitted to the Federal government, to be considered

also handle booming demand on the Sunbury and Melton lines, both of which serve rapidly growing populations. Melton line passenger numbers are expected to quadruple within 15 years, overtaking the busy Frankston line, the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority says, and numbers on the Sunbury line have grown at a runaway rate of 12% a year. Both those lines will feed into the Melbourne Metro tunnel. This soaring demand has forced state rail planners to rewrite long-term service plans for the tunnel, and an airport line has effectively been jettisoned.

for Commonwealth funding from the \$1.2 billion promised to WA for the now defunct Roe Highway 8 and 9. However, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has said several times that the funding will not be repurposed for any other project.

During the election campaign, Labor promised to build the \$474 million Thornlie extension and the \$386 million Joondalup extension by 2021. While the previous Coalition government had done some work on both rail projects, Ms Saffioti said the plans were being reworked to incorporate improved land use. "It's not just a matter of working out where the stations will be," she said. "We want to make sure we use public transport investment as a vehicle for positive planning and transport outcomes. Metronet is as much a land-use plan as a transport plan. Too many times we have planned public transport and then tried to retrofit planning outcomes, usually at a greater expense. We need to get the planning right from the start. Focusing on creating a vibrant, well-connected centre that people want to live in, our train stations need to be part of the community — close to where people live, as well as somewhere people feel safe. They should be more than just places where we tag on and tag off. We want to make sure we use public transport investment as a vehicle for positive planning and transport outcomes." Ms Saffioti said that improving land-use outcomes would not be restricted to new train stations. She would also look at improved infrastructure along Perth's heritage rail lines — Fremantle, Midland and Armadale — with a view to increasing housing density where possible.

Ms Saffioti said preparations were also under way on the design stage of the Ellenbrook railway.

TransPerth: Airport line

A website gives detailed information about the Forrestfield-Airport line under construction – see <http://www.forrestfieldairportlink.wa.gov.au/>

Australian Rail Timetables on the web

Further to the article "What Timetables Are Published" in April *Table Talk* (page 1) a pdf timetable of Sydney Central to Dulwich Hill light rail service is available at <https://www.transportnsw.info/timetables/> Enter L1 into the search box and a pdf timetable will be displayed for downloading or printing.

The final paragraph of the article about timetable compilations got slightly mangled. This paragraph should have read:

Privately produced compilations of passenger train times are:

Australian Rail Maps (timetables for main routes only)
<http://www.railmaps.com.au/#>

Train Times: Passenger Trains of Australia and New Zealand (including working times where available)
www.traintimes.net.au

Swiss timetabling

From 2018 freight and passenger trains will have equal access to the allocation of paths on Swiss railways. Freight operators are expecting more daytime paths to be made available. These are likely to receive fixed

slots at regular intervals, reflecting the structure of the regular-interval passenger services. This change follows legislation that abolished the priority formerly given to passenger services, as a reflection of voters' wishes to have more freight carried by rail.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Geoff Hassall writes about **Newcastle Light Rail**:

At first it sounds utterly bizarre. A large proportion of local residents wanted the railway to stay: Nope. OK, so let's have light rail on the corridor: Nope. OK, let's at least have it run to useful suburban destinations - hospital, university, stadium, shopping centres: Nope. Well, let's have it connect with the main railway line

and a car park at Islington, to remove some of the traffic from city streets: Nope. But guess what? We are getting it without wires, something that no-one was worried about. Why? Because the line will be so short and useless that it is a good place to risk using new technology. Then, if it doesn't work, that's OK. After all, it's only Newcastle.

ODD SPOT

From 1 April passengers ("guests" as GSR calls them) have not been allowed to board Great Southern Rail trains without the presentation of current visual ID - passport or Australian driver's licence.

Users of the current 2017 hard copy version of the Bulgarian Railways, BDZ, timetable may be surprised,

because the book commences and ends with pictures of a steam locomotive. This seems to be advertising special excursion trains. However, knowledge of Bulgarian and the Cyrillic alphabet is too limited to say for sure. However, this is not a problem with using the book to plan international train journeys. This section is presented in the familiar Latin alphabet.

BUS NEWS

Australian Capital Territory

ACTION services through the Gungahlin Town Centre were diverted from the main thoroughfare, Hibberson St, from Monday 10 April. This is to allow for work on the new light rail line from Gungahlin to the City. Buses which formerly used Hibberson St now use The Valley Avenue.

Despite the introduction of a full-time ACTION service to Canberra Airport from 20 March (see April *Table Talk*, page 11), **Royale Coaches** also continues its service. It operates at 50 minute intervals on weekdays, 45 minute intervals on weekends (with a lunch break every day). It claims to offer a premium service.

New South Wales

Sydney Buses routes 891, 348, 370, 400, 410, 418, 891 and M50 have been diverted near the University NSW as tram construction progresses along Anzac Parade.

With construction of the CBD and South East Light Rail proceeding, CBD Coordinator-General Marg Prendergast on 22 March announced plans to relocate the Central Station Coach Terminal to allow work to begin along Eddy Avenue from 28 April. Buses currently operating from Eddy Avenue will relocate to the Western Forecourt in late-April. Buses operating from Pitt St will not be affected.

Victoria

LaTrobe Valley upgrades

The Victorian government and LaTrobe Valley Bus Lines are introducing upgrades to bus services on 9 April. The main trunk service, route 1, linking Moe, Morwell and Traralgon will no longer travel via Newborough, speeding trips up by 12 minutes, with end-to-end trips now taking 38 minutes. The deleted section in Newborough will be covered by a new local route, route 15, running hourly to/from Moe seven days a week, compared to the half-hourly Route 1 it replaces, with time-span reduced at either end of the day, although later Friday evening trips continue, unlike other Moe town routes. Newborough continues to be served by the two-hourly route 5 to Traralgon via Yallourn North and the hourly route 14 to/from Moe.

Route 13 to Moe North has been expanded to operate west of Moe Racecourse, serving Mitchell Grove Estate and Querencia Retirement Village, but the timetable remains two-hourly.

The bus interchange in Moe will be relocated from Market St to nearby Albert St. Churchill residents gain from later weekend trips on route 2 from Morwell, at 1840 and 1930. Furthermore, the timetable has also been adjusted to better link with route 30, reducing travel times to/from Morwell - most route 2 trips through-route with route 30, the Churchill Town Loop. Route 30 runs later, with a new 1908 trip on weekends, additional 1913 and 2013 trips on

weeknights and 2118 and 2213 trips on Fridays.

Route 45 to Traralgon North now travels via the new homemaker centre on Argyle St.

Weekday time-span has also been improved by three hours for town routes in Traralgon, with earlier and later services for those commuting outside the town and catering for a greater range of jobs and activities. Routes 40 (Cross's Road) and 45 (Traralgon North) now operate 0600 – 2000, instead of 0800 – 1800, while routes 41 (Traralgon West), 42 (Southside), 43 (Traralgon East) and 44 (Ellavale) now commence two hours earlier at 0530 and finish an hour later at 1930.

Further changes in the Gippsland towns of Warragul and Drouin are due to be introduced on 14 May.

Moonee Valley update

Moonee Valley Coaches introduced new timetables for routes 503 (Essendon – East Brunswick) and 506 (Moonee Ponds – Westgarth) on 26 March, although, as neither route runs on Sundays, they actually began the following day. Runtimes on Saturdays have been adjusted to reflect current traffic conditions, with trips taking up to six minutes longer. The 25 minute Saturday morning frequency on 503 now drops to half-hourly at 1100 due to the extended runtimes, but this pattern now continues until 1500, when the service drops to 40 minutes, with trips skipping Windy Hill until last bus at 1835. Previously there were three consecutive 50 to 60 minute gaps early afternoon. Meanwhile, Saturday afternoon headways on route 506 have increased from 25 to 30 minutes due to the longer time allowed for round trips, which now include four minute layovers at either end (previously there was none after 1500). The 20 minute Saturday morning headway has been maintained. In addition to the revised Saturday timetables, the East Brunswick terminus for route 503 has shifted from the traditional location on Blyth St to the first stop on Nicholson St. The new location better serves the relocated and upgraded tram terminus for route 96 (north of Blyth St) opened in July 2015. Buses continue to operate the turning loop via Stewart St and Robert St.

Avalon Airshow 2017 shuttles

The bi-annual Avalon Airshow was held from 28 February to 5 March, with the last three days open to the public. CDC Victoria won the contract to run the shuttle buses from Lara station to Avalon Airport, with all depots (including Ballarat) providing around seventy buses, including higher capacity 14.5m and articulated vehicles. V/Line offered through-tickets, while those travelling on myki had to buy a separate shuttle ticket.

West Footscray Festival of Colours

Due to the West Footscray Festival of Colours on Sunday 26 March, buses on route 220 were diverted from Barkly St to Essex St until 2220, missing stops over a 2km stretch. PTV advice implied buses would run express along the detour but drivers were advised to pick up passengers waiting at the route 216 and 219 stops along parallel Essex St.

Route 605 Metro Tunnel changes

The Victorian State government and PTV have

announced route changes to CDC Melbourne Route 605 between the City and Gardenvale from 25 June in conjunction with the works for the Metro Tunnel. Works to construct the new Domain station will see the western end of Domain Road closed to traffic for several years. As a result, trams on the newly formed Route 58 (West Coburg – Toorak) will soon be diverted to travel along new tracks due to be laid during June and July along Toorak Road West. This will result in the removal of trams along Domain Road, which will affect local businesses and residents along with hundreds of students attending Melbourne Girls Grammar. To compensate, Route 605 will be diverted to serve the eastern end of Domain Road, no longer travelling via the Melbourne Park sports precinct or its current clockwise City Loop along Flinders St, Queen St, Lonsdale St and Exhibition St, a change made relatively recently in November 1999 when the famous Batman Avenue was closed to make way for Federation Square.

Buses will now continue along Alexandra Avenue to Anderson St, before heading along Domain Road, Birdwood Avenue (beside the Royal Botanic Gardens), Southbank Boulevard, Queens Bridge, Queen St, La Trobe St and William St to terminate adjacent to Flagstaff station, before heading along Lonsdale St, Queen St and the reverse back to Alexandra Avenue. Passengers wishing to access other parts of the CBD will need to transfer various east-west trams or alternatively (but more unlikely) City Loop trains at Flagstaff

A new timetable has yet to be released however it is unclear if there will be any upgrades to the span or weekend frequency (which currently includes 80 minute headways on Saturday afternoons and Sundays).

Route 695 & 695F timetable reprint

PTV have issued another reprint of the 22 April 2012 print-on-demand timetable for Routes 695 (Belgrave – Gembrook) and 695F (Gembrook – Fountain Gate). Two previous versions (one with U.S. Bus Lines branding and one with Ventura branding) had incorrectly shown the Friday timetable for 695F towards Fountain Gate twice (on the bottom of page 3 and top of page 4) but did not show the Friday 695F times towards Gembrook. This has now been rectified, thanks to a report from your bus news correspondent.

Online school bus information

Local Melbourne operators Tullamarine Bus Lines (north-west suburbs) and Cranbourne Transit (outer south-eastern suburbs) have placed timetables and maps for their various myki school runs in recent months on their websites, joining larger operators such as Ventura, Transdev and Donric Group (including Sunbury Bus Service).

Unlike agencies interstate, PTV still fails to carry school bus information online, advising parents to instead contact their child's school or with local operators. This is a clumsy system, with schools sometimes providing parents with outdated information or operators unaware of services provided by a

neighbouring operator. Operators can also be slow to recognise name changes to schools and even forget some runs have designated mid-route pick-ups or drop-offs.

Meanwhile, Ventura relaunched their website in mid-April with a refreshed layout.

Cranbourne cancellations

With the return of school for term 2, Cranbourne Transit twice found themselves completely short of drivers for afternoon and evening shifts. On Tuesday 18 April, eight trips were cancelled across Routes 798, 891 and 893, including the 2134 Fountain Gate – Lynbrook on 891, the last southbound trip.

On Thursday 20 April, a further eight trips were cancelled over Routes 795, 891, 895 and 898, including the last northbound trip on 891, departing Lynbrook at 2130.

White Night in Ballarat

Just a fortnight after the hugely popular annual arts and cultural festival White Night in the Melbourne CBD (attracting 600,000 people), Ballarat hosted Victoria's first regional White Night overnight on 4 March into 5 March, attracting up to 50,000 spectators. V/Line ran hourly coaches all night every hour to/from Melbourne, Maryborough and Ararat. CDC Ballarat ran a special network of buses overnight. This is unusual, as there are generally no services after 1900 on Saturdays, and even on New Year's Eve there is no additional service provided. Each route was given a special "WN" designator as follows:

- WN1 ran to Alfredton
- WN2 did an anti-clockwise loop through North Ballarat and Wendouree,
- WN3 ran an anti-clockwise loop via Canadian, Eureka, Brown Hill and Black Hill
- WN4 operated to Federation Uni
- WN5 ran a large clockwise loop via Golden Point, Mount Pleasant, Sebastopol & Redan.

Services to Wendouree (WN2) and Sebastopol (WN5) ran half-hourly from 2000 to 0000 while the other routes departed hourly. After midnight, all five routes departed once an hour, with last departures between 0710 and 0735. Park & Ride express bus services also ran from Federation Uni and Stockland Shopping Centre in Wendouree every half hour, departing from a special bus hub in Armstrong St.

Ballarat Begonia Festival shuttles

March also saw Ballarat play host to the annual Begonia Festival at the Botanical Gardens on March 11 to 13. CDC Ballarat provided shuttle buses from Ballarat station meeting each train arrival and departure from 1000 to 1700 each day, while a Park & Ride shuttle operated out of Victoria Park from 0930 to 1730.

O'Connell's (Omeo) sells

Local Omeo operator O'Connell's sold to the Dyson Group effective 1 April. The O'Connell family have operated buses since 1958 as D.M. (Max) and D.J. (Dot) O'Connell. The business was managed by their son Rod from 1976. He later purchased the business

and registered it as a company on 21 November 1995.

Other than local school runs in the Dinner Plains area, since May 2007 O'Connells have operated the Omeo – Mount Hotham –Bright. 'Alps Link' PTV intertown route, initially started as a one year trial, operating a return trip each Monday and Friday. By 2010 it was thrice weekly, Monday/Wednesday/Friday in summer and Wednesday/Friday/Sunday during the snow season. It is currently operating on a five-year contract until mid-2018.

Easter Timetables

Easter saw yet another example of inconsistent (and therefore confusing) public holiday timetables operating in Victoria depending on route or location.

Contact was made with various town bus operators, with buses in Ararat, Bacchus Marsh, Ballarat, Bellarine Peninsula, Colac, Echuca, Geelong, Horsham, LaTrobe Valley, Maryborough, Mildura, Mt Egerton, Portland, Strathfieldsaye, Warrnambool and Wodgona all confirming that their usual Saturday timetables would apply on Easter Saturday.

Seymour Coaches (Seymour), Fallons (Shepparton & Wangaratta) & Swan Hill Bus Lines (Swan Hill) each advised, however, that their services would not be running, despite the PTV website and journey planner showing otherwise. Castlemaine Bus Lines (Castlemaine) and Trotters (Hamilton) failed to reply.

Furthermore, Tullamarine Bus Lines did not operate their demand-responsive Route 490 between Airport West Shoppingtown and Gowanbrae on Easter Saturday, but all other Melbourne operators provided service on their 6-day-a-week services.

On Easter Sunday most operators across Victoria adhered to their usual Sunday timetables, although Warrnambool Bus Lines advised that their various town buses would not be operating. The PTV website was initially showing an "Easter Sunday" timetable for the routes, but this was corrected mid-afternoon on Maundy Thursday thanks to a report made to PTV.

Western Australia

TransPerth changes effective 23 April 2017 in conjunction with the opening of the Aubin Grove station are:

- 525 Cockburn Central-Hammond Park West via Banning Avenue is split into 525 Cockburn Central-Aubin Grove via Banning Avenue (weekday frequency increased from 60 minutes to 30 minutes) and 535 Aubin Grove-Hammond Park West.
- 526 Cockburn Central-Hammond Park East via Wentworth Parade is split into 526 Cockburn Central-Aubin Grove via Wentworth Parade (weekday frequency increased from 60 minutes to 30 minutes) and 536 Aubin Grove-Hammond Park East.
- 527 Cockburn Central-Wandi via Atwell is split into 527 Cockburn Central-Aubin Grove via Atwell and 537 Aubin Grove-Wandi.

- 534 Aubin Grove-Wattleup is a new school days service with one am trip to Aubin Grove and one pm trip from Aubin Grove.

Other changes are:

- 19 Perth-Yokine, weekday late evening services discontinued.
- 34 Perth-Cannington: additional early morning Curtin Uni-Perth services.
- 67 Perth-Mirrabooka: weekday late evening services discontinued.
- 101 Canning Bridge-Curtin Uni: weekday service increased from 60 minutes to 30 minutes.
- 115 Perth-Hamilton Hill: weekday evening service after 2100 reduced from 30 minutes to 60 minutes
- 150/160 East Perth-Booragoon-Fremantle: last service from Perth weeknights and last service from Fremantle Saturdays one hour earlier.
- 464/465 Whitfords-Joondalup: weekday late evening services discontinued.
- 469 Whitfords-Wangara: pm outward, am inward services discontinued.
- 500 Bull Creek-Booragoon: weekday 0653 service from Bull Creek discontinued.

- 501 Bull Creek-Fremantle: Sunday services increased from 30 minutes to 15 minutes.
- 505 Bull Creek-Murdoch: weekday service reduced from 60 minutes to 120 minutes.
- 510 Murdoch-Booragoon: Saturday and Sunday evening services discontinued.
- 530 Cockburn Central-Fremantle: extra schooldays trip am from Cockburn Central and pm from South Fremantle Senior High School.
- 568 Warnbro-Baldivis: the weekday 1448 journey departing Baldivis Secondary Collage is now operated by an articulated bus and the 1450 journey departing Baldivis Secondary College is now extended to Fifty Road.
- 950 Morley-QE II Medical Centre: earlier starting times weekdays and Sundays and weekday pm contra-peak from Morley now operates until around 1800 before reducing to a 15 minute frequency.
- Time changes on routes 16, 20, 60, 66, 68, 100, 352, 406, 450, 462, 514, 532, 549 and 554.

Thanks to Jason Blackman, Hilaire Fraser, Craig Halsall, Jason Holmes, Victor Isaacs Geoff Lambert, Michael Marshall, Peter Parker, David Whiteford and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*, for Bus news.

AIR NEWS

International

Virgin Australia is dropping Abu Dhabi from its network before it has even begun. It is concentrating its international long-haul flying on routes to the United States and North Asia. It will no longer commence Perth-Abu Dhabi nonstop flights that were scheduled to begin in June. This decision follows Virgin ending its thrice weekly Sydney-Abu Dhabi flights in February. "Subsequent changes in market conditions have made the route no longer viable for Virgin Australia," Virgin said. Cutting capacity to Abu Dhabi highlights Virgin's increasing focus on North America, where the airline is returning to the Melbourne-Los Angeles route from 4 April after a two and a half year absence.

Virgin Australia will commence services between Melbourne and Hong Kong from 5 July with five return services weekly. Flights depart HK at 1950 on Mon, Tue, Wed, Thur and Sat. Flights depart Melbourne on Mon, Wed, Thur and Sat at varying times.

Virgin Australia commenced flights between Melbourne and Los Angeles on 4 April. Flights depart LA at 2055 on Tue, Thur, Fri, Sat and Sun, and depart Melbourne at 1130 on Mon, Tue, Thur, Sat and Sun.

Thanks to Paul Brown, Victor Isaacs and *Australian Aviation* for Air news

About Table Talk

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

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