



TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

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NEW WORKING TIMETABLES

Queensland Rail 1 July

Queensland Rail Working Timetables (aka Master Train Plans) for the Mt Isa line dated 18 June and the Western and South Western lines dated 1 July 2018 are now on their website at

<http://www.queenslandrail.com.au/forbusiness/access/access-undertaking>

ARTC and NSW 19 and 20 May

A new **Australian Rail Track Corporation** Working Timetable dated 20 May 2018 is available on their website at

<https://www.artc.com.au/customers/operations/mtp/2018-05-20/> There are slight alterations to the eastbound Indian Pacific. Mineral trains for Iluka are still shown north and south of Hamilton, Victoria, although these have not operated for some time.

A new **Transport for NSW** WTT dated 20 May has been published. The times of the eastbound Indian Pacific on Wednesdays in this timetable and the times in the John Holland Rail WTT (see next item) between Bathurst and Lithgow are entirely different. Also this timetable makes no provision for the new stop of the Indian Pacific at Mount Victoria (but see the next two items).

John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network is not re-issuing their WTT, but advise the following alterations from 19 May:

ADDITIONS Southern Region

3373 (PNIN 500m) for -MTWTF- will depart Murrumbidgee 1220, pass Wumbulgal 1235, arrive Griffith 1305 – forms xCM3

Western Region

8823 (PNRB 600m) for -----S runs as tabled by ARTC to pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Parkes 0615, arrive Parkes 0620 – stow, forms 8822 Tue

8822 (PNRB 600m) for --T---- departs Parkes 1000, pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Parkes 1005 then as tabled by ARTC

8932 (PNRB 600m) for --T-T-- runs as tabled by ARTC to pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Parkes 1232, arrive Parkes 1237 depart 1530, pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Parkes East Fork 1535 then as tabled by ARTC

ALTERATIONS Southern Region

3372 (PNIN 550m) for -MTWTF- is reduced in length to 500m – times unchanged

xCM3 (PNIN 1000m) for -MTWTF- will depart Griffith 1410, arrive Leeton 1525 thence as previously tabled

Western Region

4835 (PNRB 900m) for -M----- now retains 900m length for the full path and runs as tabled by ARTC to pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Narromine 0307 *next day*, Trangie 0349, arrive Nevertire 0429, depart 0439, arrive Nyngan 0547, depart 0557, arrive Hermidale 0703, depart 0718, arrive Cobar 0932, depart 0942, arrive Elura 1112 – forms 8436

8436 (PNRB 900m) for --T---- now retains 900m length for the full path and departs Elura 1904, pass Cobar CSA Junction 2004, arrive Cobar 2034, depart 2044, pass Boppy Mountain 2157, Hermidale 2301, Miandetta 2333, Nyngan AWB 2358, arrive Nyngan 0005, depart 0059, pass Mullengudgerie 0134, arrive Nevertire 0207, depart 0217, pass Trangie 0256, Trangie South (Tam Lee) 0301, Mungeribar 0316, Narromine West 0332, CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Narromine 0334 then as tabled by ARTC

4835 (PNRB 900m) for ----T— now retains 900m length for the full path and runs as tabled by ARTC to pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Narromine 0404 .Trangie 0445, arrive Nevertire 0523, depart 0533, arrive Nyngan 0643, depart 0653, arrive Hermidale 0803, depart 0818, arrive Cobar 1033, depart 1043, arrive Elura 1213 – forms 8436

8436 (PNRB 900m) for ----F- now retains 900m length for the full path and departs Elura 2002, pass Cobar CSA Junction 2102, arrive Cobar 2132, depart 2142, pass Boppy Mountain 2255, Hermidale 2359, Miandetta 0031, Nyngan AWB 0056, arrive Nyngan 0103, depart 0159, pass Mullengudgerie 0234, arrive Nevertire 0307, depart 0317, pass Trangie 0356, Trangie South (Tam Lee) 0401, Mungeribar 0416, Narromine West 0432, CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Narromine 0434 then as tabled by ARTC

1837 (PNRB 600m) for ---W--- is increased in length to 700m – times unchanged

8138 (PNRB 600m) for ----T-- is increased in length to 700m – times unchanged

1821 (PNRB 629m) for S---T-S is increased in length to 640m – times unchanged

8122 (PNRB 629m) for -M--T-S is increased in length to 640m – times unchanged

8924 (PNRB 660m) for ----T-- departs Parkes 1605, pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Parkes East Fork 1610 then as tabled by ARTC.

DELETIONS Southern Region

D373 (PNIN 75m) for -MTWTF-replaced by **3373**

Northern Region

1511 (QUBE 800m) for -M-W-F-

5112 (QUBE 800m) for --T-T--

5412 (QUBE 800m) for -----S

Coal LS65 (PNC 850m) for S-----S.

Reference is Country Train Notice 135-2018 at <http://www.jhrcrn.com.au/what-we-do/network-operations-access/standard-working-timetable-swtt/>

For the next Working Timetable change of **30 September**, see the item below about the Chatswood-Epping line closure.

Indian Pacific Mt Victoria stop

As mentioned in the preceding item, the new Transport for NSW Working Timetable ignores the new stop of the eastbound Indian Pacific at Mount Victoria to set down passengers for a tourist excursion around the Blue Mountains. However, this stop is detailed in a Sydney Trains Special Train Notice of 18 April. These times are consistent with the times in the John Holland Rail WTT, not the times in their own Transport for NSW WTT. Strictly speaking, these times apply on 18 April, but in fact, are likely to be applied on every Wednesday. The times are:

Pass CRN West Boundary 0749, Lithgow arrive 0750, depart 0753d, pass Eskbank 0754, Lithgow Yard Box 0755, Lithgow West Turnback 0756, Lithgow Coal Stage Box 0757, Oakey Park 0758, Zig Zag 0802, Edgecombe 0810, Newnes Junction 0814, Newnes Junction Turnback 0815, Mount Victoria arrive 0829, depart 0855, pass Katoomba 0919, Katoomba Up Turnback 0920, Wentworth Falls 0931, Lawson 0942, Lawson East Turnback 0942, Springwood 1009, Valley Heights 1013, Glenbrook 1024, Emu Plains 1036, Penrith 1039, Penrith Up Turnback 1039, St Marys 1048, Rooty Hill Turnback 1055, Blacktown West 1057, Blacktown 1059, Blacktown Junction 1059, Seven Hills 1101, Westmead 1108 hours, then run as tabled.

The Sydney Trains STN also details the times for an Interurban EMU for the Great Southern Rail passengers to complete their journey to Sydney after their Blue Mountains tour. This runs as follows: Additional Empty cars depart Flemington Car Sidings Junction 1108, pass Rookwood 1109, Lidcombe arrive

1110, depart 1112, pass Auburn East Junction 1113, Auburn 1114, Clyde 1116, Granville 1117 WS, S, Parramatta 1119, Westmead 1121, Seven Hills 1127, Blacktown Junction 1129, Blacktown arrive 1129, depart 1131, pass Blacktown West 1132, St Marys 1140, Penrith arrive 1146, depart 1147, pass Penrith Turnback 1148, Emu Plains 1150, Glenbrook 1158, Valley Heights 1208, Springwood 1211, Lawson 1229, Wentworth Falls 1236, Katoomba 1243, Katoomba Down Turnback 1244, arrive Mt Victoria 1300.

Special train departs Mt Victoria 1306 (Empty), Katoomba arrive 1323, depart 1332 (**Passenger**), pass Katoomba Up Turnback 1333, Wentworth Falls 1339, Lawson 1346, Lawson East Turnback 1346, Springwood 1402, Valley Heights 1404, Glenbrook 1415, Emu Plains 1424, Penrith 1427, Penrith Up Turnback 1428, St Marys 1434, Blacktown West 1443, Blacktown 1445, Blacktown Junction 1446, Seven Hills 1448, Westmead 1454, Parramatta 1456, Granville 1458, Clyde 1459, Clyde Up Yard 1501, Auburn 1501, Auburn East Junction 1501, Lidcombe 1502, Rookwood 1503, Flemington Car Sidings Junction 1504, Homebush 1506, Strathfield 1507, Ashfield 1511, Macdonaldtown 1516, Illawarra Junction 1517, Redfern 1518, Wells St 1518, arrive Sydney Terminal 1520

JHR NSW CRN WTT amendments

John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network has the following amendments to their Working Timetable:

Great Southern Rail's eastbound Indian Pacific on Wednesdays from **3 April** departs CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line Parkes 0232 arrive Parkes 0235, depart 0245, pass Parkes Sub Terminal 0255, Bumberry 0322, Manildra 0341, Molong 0406, Borenore 0421, Orange East Fork Jct 0446, Spring Hill 0459, Polona 0509, Blayney 0518, Murrobo 0522, Newbridge 0538, Bathurst 0613, Kelso 0622, Raglan 0627, Tarana 0658, Wallerawang 0730, Hermitage 0749 then as tabled by Sydney Trains.

The effect of this is to convert the former conditional stops at Orange and Bathurst into non-stop timings, in line with GSR's non-carriage of passengers except from major centres from 1 April, to delete the former seven minutes stop at Cox's River, and to run correspondingly earlier. This earlier running will be taken up by the new Indian Pacific's stop at Mount Victoria to detrain passengers for the new Blue Mountains tour.

From 14 March Freightliner's no. 1881 on Tuesdays and Saturdays and no. 8182 on Mondays and Fridays no longer operate.

REVIEW OF THE REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED OCTOBER 2017 TfNSW/SYDNEY TRAINS TIMETABLE

by Geoff Lambert

On 18 April, the *Sydney Morning Herald* transport writer, Matthew O'Sullivan ran a story on a document he had obtained under Freedom of Information legislation

(<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/secret-report-warned-top-bureaucrats-to-delay-new-rail-timetable-20180417-p4za20.html>).

The Report, "October 2017 Timetable Review", was prepared for TfNSW by a London consultancy firm, The Railway Consultancy Ltd, in response to a request from TfNSW. The report that emerged was tagged as "Version 10", but it is unclear whether it had been through ten iterations between TfNSW and TRCL during that time. When the *SMH* released its analysis (see O'Sullivan's story in the main body of *Table Talk*, below), TfNSW said the report was "outdated" and the timetable went through nine more drafts before it was introduced. Since nobody seems to have the first draft, it is difficult to judge how many of the recommendations were acted upon. We do know, however that the major recommendation "Delay it until October 2018" was NOT accepted.

It is difficult to know where to start in analysing the Review. The Review is 84 pages of mild and not-so-mild griping about almost every aspect of this proposed timetable – practically every paragraph is critical. I went through the document and examined every paragraph containing an opinion, awarding "ticks and crosses" according to whether there was praise or criticism. Crosses outnumbered ticks by nearly 5:1- and, even then, the vast majority of ticks were followed by caveats "however"s, "but"s or "unfortunately"s. The consultants repeatedly said that the lack of meeting minutes ("decision paper trail") was a great impediment to divining how the decision-making process worked.

In relation to the predilection of politicians and bureaucrats to promise the Earth and be unable to deliver it, they said, "*We were dismayed to discover that as many as 76 of these detailed public commitments have been made, in respect of detailed timetable outcomes. Purely on the basis of probability, it would seem unlikely that all of these can be delivered.*"

It must have been a very depressing read for TfNSW and Sydney Trains. They did not agree with all of it. I don't think they liked any of it.

For me, the stand-out criticism was not of the technical issues, but of the culture of, and enmity between, TfNSW and NSW Trains. This is a problem first raised by Gavin Gatenby of Ecotransit <https://youtu.be/5upD1WkEvBE> in 2014, at the time that Premier Barry O'Farrell took away timetable production from Rail Corp and gave it to TfNSW. Superficially logical, it was very political at a deeper

level. Barry was a "TfNSW boy" and Gladys was a "RailCorp girl", who, with Mike Baird, was breathing down Barry's neck. As the consultants observe, the resentment of this at what is now Sydney Trains runs deep. I first saw it in action at a Railway Technical Society presentation on the "Art of Timetabling", the full transcript of which was never released because someone, somewhere, blocked it. The consultants noted that revealing such things was seen by both TfNSW and Sydney Trains to be bad publicity for both entities.

The bulk of the report was in the following three Sections:

Rail Service Development Process (4 pages)
Timetabling Process (32 pages): Objectives, Methods Used; Optioneering; Communication and Consultation; Parameters (26 pages); Capabilities
Operational Preparedness (15 pages): Safety Risks; Safety Infrastructure; Service Control [signalling]; Rolling Stock; Staff Issues IR Issues; Information and Communications;

Below is an edited extract of the **Recommendations**: Within each of the major areas of activity (**Process, Timetable planning/rail service analysis, Program management - schedule/risk etc., Communications and stakeholder engagement, Sydney Trains, NSW Trains, Freight, Infrastructure, Commercial planning**) below, recommendations were prioritised according to the urgency: within three months, within six months and in the longer-7term. In each category the most important are those in **bold**.

WITHIN THREE MONTHS

A timetabling solution needs to be found for the Bankstown and Inner West lines which need fewer stopping pattern variants.

Contingency plans need to be drawn up, to ensure that degraded services will still provide reasonable utility for passengers.

Greater analysis is needed of the speed of interlockings in the Cabramatta, Granville and Clyde areas, to understand their impact on the operability of the proposed service.

TfNSW needs to come to a clear view as to what is the critical path for this timetable, and whether current progress is on or behind this.

TfNSW planning staff need pro-actively to engage directly with, and provide information to, their equivalent colleagues (especially in Sydney Trains) about the detail of, and rationale for, proposed changes.

Public consultation for the timetable needs to begin soon.

Publicity regarding the timetable change needs to begin early and be wider in scope than current plans seem to require; International Suburban Rail Benchmarking Group (<https://www.isberg-web.org/>) members may be able to advise.

The PR response to Sydney Metro works needs to be headed off immediately, before it becomes opposition to the proposed timetable changes on the Bankstown line.

Technical operations staff from TfNSW and ST need to meet as soon as possible, in order to understand (a) why TfNSW's simulations give them confidence in the proposed timetable, and (b) why their simulations of train operation in the Parramatta area seem to give contradictory answers.

ST's "Elite Drivers" should be given an early opportunity to try the new timetable on traction simulators, both to give feedback and minimise inter-personal variation.

Undertake trial of commencing despatch after 45 seconds at Town Hall etc.

Undertake trial of drivers not reading through to green:yellow signals on Harbour Bridge.

Inter-station timings for NSW services need to be checked, in the light of potentially poor rolling stock reliability for life-expired stock.

The proposed schedules for longer-distance NSW services need to be checked, in order to avoid any significant inefficiencies of staff utilisation.

WITHIN SIX MONTHS

Particular detailed timetable attention needs to be paid to the p.m. peak ramp-up period, as this will determine the starting level of train service performance for that peak.

Train service simulation work for the inter-peak period needs to be attempted with greater modelling of freight trains.

The whole area of driver behaviour (appropriate levels of defensiveness, variation between individuals, management view of SPADs, [signals passed at danger] etc.) needs to be examined thoroughly.

Platform headwall countdown clocks should be installed at key locations, to improve despatch.

Signal 91452 (protecting Parramatta from the West) needs to be converted from a shunt to a full signal.

A call-on signal needs to be provided at Wickham, to enable easier train movements associated with the coupling of trainsets in the platform.

Introduction of the new timetable needs to be marketed more widely as a package which might include new promotional material, elements of new staff uniform, etc.

WITHIN TWELVE MONTHS

The way in which objectives are developed needs to be much more transparent.

Mid-level operating managers need to be involved much sooner, in order to ensure that local details are included at an earlier stage of the planning process. Whilst we are supportive of a more disaggregate approach to the application of timetable pathing time, this needs to be (a) more standardised between trains, and (b) applied less to the earlier parts of train journeys.

Greater allowance needs to be made for despatch times in the calculation of station stop times. More research is needed into the reasons for increasing train lateness on the North Shore – Central line section during the p.m. peak, and appropriate actions taken thereafter.

Delay ratios should be calculated, to help quantify the robustness of the proposed timetable.

Capacity utilisation ratios should be calculated, to help understand the likelihood of timetable success.

More up-to-date research needs to be commissioned on service frequency elasticities.

In the light of measures implemented after the accident at Waterfall, a wider study of risks across the railway needs to be undertaken, to ensure that the appropriate balance is being made between safety and operational performance.

Trade unions need to be involved earlier and more positively in this type of process, in order to ensure staff 'buy-in'.

ST's corporate objectives need to be less focussed on "% of trains on time".

Encourage Freight operators to move towards more effective braking systems (such as ECP or dual-pipe conventional), to maximise network capacity.

Sydney Trains: Secret report warned top bureaucrats to delay new rail timetable

By Matt O'Sullivan, Sydney Morning Herald, 18 April 2018

The state's top transport officials were warned to delay the recent timetable changes for Sydney's stretched rail network until early this year after independent experts found "simply too many underlying issues which have not been fixed", a high-level report reveals. The "sensitive" report, obtained by the *Herald* using freedom of information laws, also details tensions and resentment between transport agencies, and an unwillingness to relay information to mid-level managers for fear of "politically-difficult leaks". Despite the warnings, the new timetable was introduced on 26 November, and later partly blamed for widespread delays and cancellations on Sydney's rail network in December and January. Sydney Trains has since cut some train services to make the timetable more reliable.

The UK consultants who wrote the report were commissioned by Transport for NSW to assess plans to introduce the new timetable as early as October last year and rate its chance of success. Following their investigation, they urged senior officials to delay it by several months until early this year due to a "substantial risk of failing to deliver the level of performance which the public will expect" Their report warned there was "little room" for rail systems or obsolete equipment, such as signalling, to fail before the "service might disintegrate substantially", especially during the afternoon peak. This is, in effect, what occurred.

The final report by London's Railway Consultancy was handed to Transport for NSW in March last year. As well as citing concerns about the practical difficulties of the timetable, the report reveals divides and communication gaps within and between transport agencies. One was an unwillingness by Sydney Trains' senior management to pass on "sufficient detail" to middle managers.

"One of the reasons for this is political concern about bad publicity which might emanate from the identification of 'losers' (passenger journeys likely to get worse)," the report says. "However, the confidentiality imperative (to avoid politically-difficult leaks) has unfortunately led to insufficient consultation during the process, and the ability of other rail staff to contribute to, or challenge, the timetable development."

The report also raised concerns that "political worries about particular groups of passengers being disadvantaged" limited the amount of information shared between the lead agency, Transport for NSW, and Sydney Trains.

A second concern was the relationship between Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains. Much of the detailed planning for the new timetable occurred within Transport for NSW's rail service delivery office, which employs more than 100 people, rather than Sydney

Trains. This led to tensions between planners at the two agencies.

The confidentiality imperative (to avoid politically-difficult leaks) has unfortunately led to insufficient consultation. There was "certainly some resentment and unhappiness" at Sydney Trains, the report said. This could have been due to poaching of staff by Transport for NSW, as well as people who were previously at a higher level "now seemingly on the receiving end of instructions". But Sydney Trains executive director Tony Eid said the report was outdated and written about an early draft of the timetable, which went through nine further drafts before final implementation. "While we didn't agree with everything the report said, it helped us identify a number of actions that were closed out before the timetable was implemented," he said in a statement.

Mr Eid said the timetable was pushed back by six weeks from last October, and both Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW agreed a start date in November was the best option. "There were no issues that stopped Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains working together effectively," he said. "Any suggestion otherwise is simply wrong."

In relation to the timetable, the report's authors found that "there clearly are concerns about the probability of its success", cautioning that "matters can turn nasty very quickly in the political environment and may be irrecoverable for many years. Unsuccessful timetables are remembered, and this one cannot afford to fail," they wrote. We believe there to be a wide range of operating consequences which will be barely satisfactory, leaving [Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW] at the mercy of equipment failures, random incidents, adverse passenger comment and political interference."

An internal document reveals that delays to Sydney's trains are likely to be "cumulative and irrecoverable" during peak hours following incidents. Leaked documents have previously revealed that Sydney Trains warned before the timetable was introduced that delays were likely to be "cumulative and irrecoverable" during peak periods following incidents. Sydney Trains' key indicator of success is the percentage of trains arriving within five minutes of scheduled times. That emphasis on punctuality, the British experts said, could lead to "services being planned and operated without due consideration of a rail service which passengers are known to find important" such as journey times. They recommended senior managers improve the "KPI system so that railway management address a wider range of outcomes rather than just '% on time'".

The timetable will undergo further changes ahead of the closure of the Epping-to-Chatswood line on 30 September for seven months, when it will be converted to carry single-deck metro trains as part of a \$20 billion-plus project. Next year, temporary closures of

the Bankstown line will also begin to allow for construction of a metro line from Sydenham to Bankstown.

In their report, the British consultants did warn that a “more complex stopping pattern” at stations under the new timetable for trains on the Bankstown line, “before

then migrating to a higher frequency/slower metro-type service, is rather illogical”. They said local and political opposition to “metroising” the Bankstown line could turn into disapproval of the new timetable, and “needs to be ‘headed off’ by communications in the very near future”.

APPENDIX: This is a page from the Review released under the NSW Government Information (Public Access) Act: In terms of providing guidance as to the likelihood of success against various objectives, we set out our results below in a risk format, where a score of 1 implies a low probability/consequence, and 5 is the highest.

Issue	Likelihood of Issue	Severity of Consequence	Overall Risk to timetable	Time-frame for resolution
Insufficient signalling headways on North Shore	5	5	25	3 months (temp); Dec 2018 (full resig)
Driver performance	5	4	20	3 years
Insufficient traction power supply and qualified OHLE staff	5	3 (unknown, so mid est taken)	15	2018
Quicker despatch at key stations	5	3	15	3 months (manual); 12 months (headwall clocks)
Inadequate freight train timetabling margins	4	3	12	6 months
Bankstown/inner West stopping pattern complexity	5	2	10	6 months
New NSW TrainLink trains (NIF)	5	2	10	3 years
Disruptive Metro works	4	2	8	7 years
Excessive variation in day-to-day timetable	5		10	3 years
Insufficient journey times	2	4	12	6 months
Lack of coordination with other infrastructure providers	4	2	8	6 months
Insufficient station capacity impacting on dwell times		2	8	7 years (metro 2024)
Lack of long-term sustainable maintenance strategy.	2	4	8	5 years
Amount of recovery time	2	3	6	6 months
Infrastructure deterioration	2	1-5, depending on location	2-10	6 months
No freight pathing yet to/from other infrastructure networks	3	2	6	3 months

Two different timetabling packages	5	1	5	1-2 years
Lack of integrated timetabling system	5	1	5	3 years
Wickham interchange	5	1	5	7 months
Insufficient NSW	3	1	3	6 months

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Budgets

The **Federal** Budget, to be presented on 8 May, is expected to include generous funding for infrastructure projects, including for railways and public transport. Specifically, it is believed likely to include funding for:

- Extension of the Inland Freight Railway from the Acacia Ridge terminal to the Port of Brisbane;
- Brisbane Cross River Rail tunnel;
- Brisbane inner city Metro;
- Planning for a railway to the Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek;
- Improvements to passenger commuter railways from Sydney to Newcastle and Wollongong, and
- Improvements to passenger commuter railways from Melbourne to Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.

The **Victorian** Budget, to be presented on 1 May, is likewise expected to include significant funding for improvements to railways and public transport. The Victorian government will include \$50 million in their Budget for detailed investigations into a preferred route for a proposed high-speed rail link between **Geelong** and Melbourne. The cities, roughly 75 kilometres apart, could be linked by trains travelling between 250 and 300 kms an hour under the plan. There will be detailed planning work and technical investigations for the potential infrastructure upgrades, costs and train requirements. The government is looking into a dedicated fleet of trains for the initiative.

\$572 million will be appropriated for works on the Cranbourne, Pakenham and Sunbury lines. Most of this will be for power upgrades and modern signalling needed to enable new high-capacity metro trains with room for an additional 234,000 peak-period passengers each week.

The Budget will also allow for more services to run on the Dandenong, Hurstbridge and South Morang lines.

NOTE: *Both of these Budgets will be covered in the next edition of Table Talk. Both will also be covered in a special Budget edition of Table Talk Newswire, which is the email advance Rail news edition of Table Talk (and which is available upon request to the Rail Editor at abvi@iinet.net.au) It is expected that the special Budget edition of Table Talk Newswire will be dispatched on Federal Budget evening, 8 May, before any other Rail-related publication.*

Infrastructure Australia priorities

Infrastructure Australia, the Federal government's infrastructure advisor, has identified over \$55 billion worth of nation-shaping projects in its latest

Infrastructure Priority List, with an additional \$25 billion of projects now off the list and under delivery across the country. Based on the Australian Infrastructure Audit and more than 500 submissions from governments, stakeholder groups and the community, the Infrastructure Priority List is a list of nationally-significant infrastructure investments Australia needs over the next 15 years.

"In the 10 years since Infrastructure Australia was formed, the Priority List has helped establish a longer-term view of our collective needs as a nation — one that enables our leaders to look beyond elections and budgetary cycles and make evidence-based investment decisions," said Infrastructure Australia Chair, Julieanne Alroe.

"In this latest update to the Priority List, we have identified more than \$55 billion worth of potential nation-shaping infrastructure investments in our cities and regions, including six High Priority Projects and six Priority Projects. In addition, there are a further 24 High Priority Initiatives and 60 Priority Initiatives. These are the strategic investments recommended by the independent Infrastructure Australia board to best meet the connectivity needs of Australia's growing cities, strengthen our global role as an exporter of goods and services and make our infrastructure more resilient," Ms Alroe said.

"Reflecting the demands of a growing population, Australia's cities and public transport needs are a major focus of the revised Priority List. "New investment-ready projects like the \$1 billion Brisbane Metro and the \$800 million Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade in South East Queensland have been prioritised because of their potential to deliver national productivity gains. We have also added new initiatives to improve rail network capacity in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth to meet unprecedented demand in major capital cities. The Priority List identifies a number of additional opportunities to improve connectivity between capitals and neighbouring cities. This includes improvements to rail capacity on the Melbourne–Geelong and Brisbane–Gold Coast rail lines, as well as rail upgrades on lines from Sydney to the regional centres of Newcastle and Wollongong. Upgrading this infrastructure will be key to enable our satellite cities to develop stronger economic and employment foundations and links to our bigger cities. As we identify new investment priorities, Infrastructure Australia is also pleased to see \$25 billion worth of projects now off the list and entering the delivery phase. This is a testament to the effectiveness of the

Priority List in providing clear advice to governments on the projects that represent the best use of our infrastructure funding. With this updated evidence base, governments at all levels can embrace the opportunities in the short, medium and long term to deliver better infrastructure services for all Australians," Ms Alroe said.

The revised Infrastructure Priority List is available at www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au. Projects in the highest **High Priority** category are:

- M80 Melbourne Western Ring Road upgrade.
- M4 Motorway upgrade Parramatta to Lapstone.
- Sydney Inner West Connex motorway.
- Sydney Metro – City and Southwest.
- Western Sydney Airport.

Railway and Public Transport projects in other categories are:

Priority:

- Beerburrum to Nambour Rail upgrade, Queensland north coast.
- Inland Freight Rail, Melbourne to Brisbane.
- Eyre Peninsula freight infrastructure, SA.

High Priority Initiatives (business case not yet complete):

- Sydney rail network capacity.
- Brisbane Cross River Rail.
- Melbourne rail network capacity.
- Southern Sydney to CBD public transport enhancement.
- Rail Network Optimisation Program in cities.
- Preserve optimisation for western Sydney Freight line.
- Public transport capacity, Northern Beaches, Parramatta Road and Victoria Road, Sydney.
- Preserve corridor for Outer Sydney Orbital road and rail.
- Preserve corridor for western Sydney rail connection.
- Sydney Metro West, CBD to Parramatta.
- Preserve corridor for East Coast High Speed rail.
- Port Botany freight rail duplication.
- Chullora Junction upgrade, western Sydney.
- Gawler railway upgrade, Adelaide.
- Port of Brisbane dedicated freight rail connection.
- **Priority Initiatives** (business case not yet complete):
- Brisbane to Gold Coast railway capacity, Kuraby to Beenleigh.
- Perth rail network capacity.
- Melbourne level crossings removal.
- Canberra public transport improvements.
- Melbourne Airport to CBD public transport capacity.
- Fishermans Bend public transport access, Melbourne.
- Parramatta public transport capacity.
- AdeLINK tram network.
- Sydney Central station redevelopment.

- Moorebank Intermodal Terminal road connection, Sydney.
- Port Kembla freight rail access.
- Burnie to Hobart freight corridor strategy.
- Mt Isa to Townsville rail corridor upgrade.
- Gawler Craton rail access, SA.
- Northern Sydney Freight corridor stage 2, West Ryde to Rhodes and Thornleigh to Hornsby.
- Melbourne-Adelaide-Perth rail upgrade.
- Melbourne-Geelong rail capacity enhancement.
- Southern Sydney Freight line upgrade.
- Newcastle-Sydney and Wollongong-Sydney rail upgrades.
- Public transport connection to western Sydney Airport.
- Advanced Train Management System on ARTC network.
- Preserve corridor for Salisbury to Beaudesert railway.
- Melton railway upgrade, western Melbourne.

More details are at

<http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/projects/infrastructure-priority-list.aspx>

Brisbane Cross-River Rail: Promises

Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, has pledged \$2.4 billion for the Brisbane Cross-River Rail project.

Inland Freight Railway

The Commonwealth and Queensland governments will fund a joint study to investigate improvements to freight rail connections to the Port of Brisbane, including the option of a dedicated link to the Inland Rail project. Along with exploring possible options for improved connections between Acacia Ridge and the Port, the \$1.5 million study focuses on current and future demand and the existing infrastructure capacity.

Brisbane Metro

frequency public transport system promoted by Brisbane City Council. The BCC claims it will cut travel times, reduce CBD bus congestion and improve services to the suburbs. It says that with two metro routes operating every three minutes in peak periods, it will deliver a network of turn-up-and-go services linking the suburbs with the inner city, and with the Queensland government's Cross River Rail project, Brisbane Metro will unlock existing capacity constraints at the core of the transport network, helping to support future jobs and population growth across the region. In March 2018, Brisbane Metro was confirmed as a High Priority Project on the national Infrastructure Priority List - the only public transport project in Queensland to that category.

Brisbane Metro comprises a turn-up-and-go metro network across 21 kms of existing busway linking the Eight Mile Plains, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and University of Queensland Lakes busway stations.

The alignment will feature two new high-frequency, high-capacity metro lines:

- Metro 1 - Eight Mile Plains busway station to Roma St busway station
- Metro 2 - RBWH busway station to UQ Lakes busway station.

The project will use a fleet of 60 vehicles, each with capacity for up to 150 people, that can use the busway alongside other bus services. A new underground station for metro and bus services is proposed at the Cultural Centre, and a new depot for the metro fleet near the busway at Rochedale.

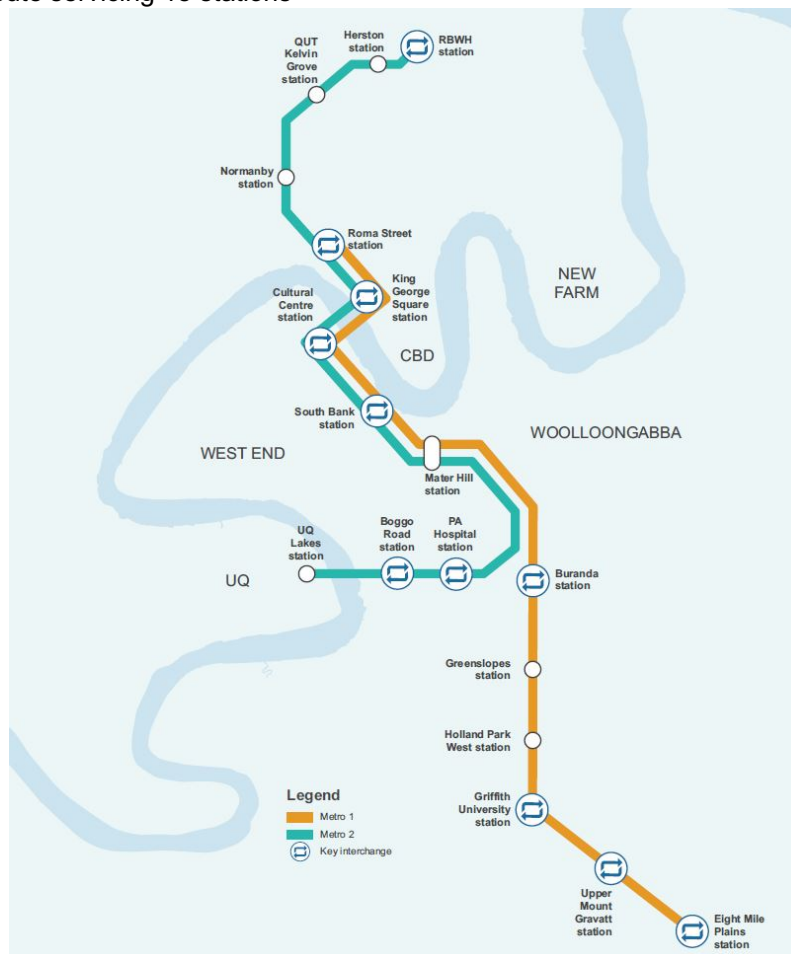
Some high-frequency bus routes will continue to operate on the busway, providing a network of suburbs-to-city services for residents across Brisbane. Other services will provide regular, frequent connections from the suburbs to high-frequency metro services at busway stations. Improvements such as off-board ticketing and all-door boarding will also help to improve journey times and reliability.

BCC claims the Brisbane Metro will deliver:

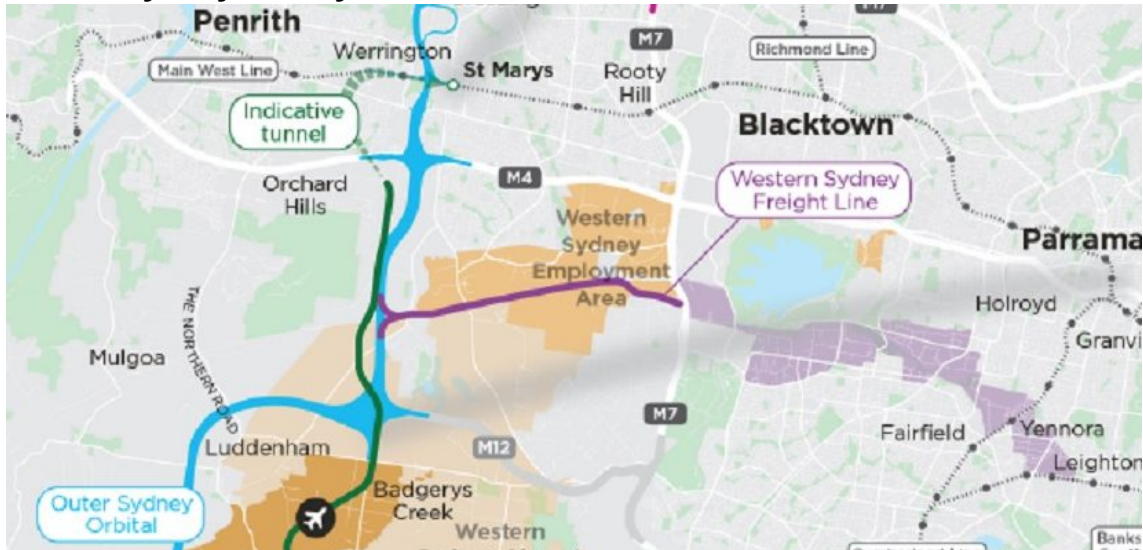
- high-frequency services every three minutes in peak periods on weekdays, with a metro every 90 seconds between Roma St and Mater Hill busway stations
- high-frequency services every five minutes on weekdays between the peak periods, providing a high level of convenience and reliability for passengers throughout the day
- a 21 km dedicated route servicing 18 stations

- upgrades to 17 existing stations, including ticketing improvements to speed up boarding
- interchange opportunities at 11 locations.
- faster journey times and more reliable services
- more bus services for the suburbs across Brisbane
- improved CBD amenity through reduction of buses on inner city streets
- better connections between key health, education, knowledge and entertainment hubs
- fix key bottlenecks at the Cultural Centre, Victoria Bridge and North Quay
- complement the State government's Cross River Rail project.

Based on assessments undertaken as part of the Business Case, Brisbane Metro is expected to cost \$944 million. As part of its 2017-18 Budget, Council announced funding for two-thirds of the project's capital cost. Council is seeking a funding contribution from the Federal government for the remaining one-third of the capital cost of Brisbane Metro. Council continues to work closely with the State and Federal governments to progress detailed planning. Subject to approvals and funding being in place, Council expects procurement activities for Brisbane Metro to commence in mid-2018. Detailed design and construction of Brisbane Metro is planned to commence in 2019, with services commencing in 2023.



Future Western Sydney railways



Map from Rail Express

A freight rail connection between Port Botany and Western Sydney via the Southern Sydney Freight Line and a north-south passenger connection for Western Sydney Airport are among a collection of corridors identified in a draft report by the NSW government, which on 26 March released a Western Sydney corridors summary report, with the aim of identifying and protecting the corridors that will be needed to “help establish the Western Sydney Parkland City”.

Four corridors have been identified for rail, or at least contain a rail component. The first is for the proposed **North South Rail Line**, which Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull agreed to help develop on 4 March. The line would connect to Sydney Trains Western line near St Marys, and to the Main South line near Macarthur, and pass through the new Western Sydney Airport. Sections of tunnel would need to be used at either end of the line: between St Marys and just south of the M4 Motorway, and between Oran Park and Macarthur. The report identifies land for future train stations at Oran Park and Narellan.

The second corridor would be for a **South West Rail Link Extension**, which would connect the South West Rail Link – opened in 2015 – to the proposed North South Rail Line at Bringelly.

The third corridor identified for protection is the **Outer Sydney Orbital** road-rail corridor, running all the way from Box Hill in the north, to Menangle in the south. Its protection would be to support integrated transport options to support “unprecedented growth” throughout Sydney’s west, the report states.

The fourth corridor is for the **Western Sydney Freight Line**, a future dedicated rail freight connection between Port Botany and Western Sydney via the existing Southern Sydney Freight Line. The line would extend between the existing freight line at Leightonfield and Villawood, to the Outer Sydney Orbital's freight rail corridor.

Melbourne Airport rail line

On 12 April Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull pledged \$5 billion towards construction of a rail link to Melbourne airport – subject to a matching contribution from the Victorian government. This would allow construction to start as early as 2020, once one of four routes is chosen. This is expected to be the largest infrastructure investment in the 8 May Federal Budget. Private investment might also be an option, to meet a price tag of up to \$15 billion.

The rail link will likely offer both an express service and services stopping at current or new stations. It is estimated 60 million passengers a year will use the airport by 2030.

“The time for talk is over,” Mr Turnbull said. “There have been countless reviews, reports and recommendations, but Melbourne is still waiting for a service almost all of the world’s great cities take for granted. With our commitment of up to \$5 billion ... we are guaranteeing the Melbourne airport rail link will be built.”

Mr Turnbull will today encourage Mr Andrews to match his commitment by injecting the \$2 billion Victoria receives from selling its share of the iconic Snowy Hydro scheme into the airport rail project. The Premier promised last November that construction on the rail link would be under way within the next decade, but the government has argued a train can’t run until the Metro Tunnel opens in 2026.

The business case will include options for unsolicited bids or other private sector contributions. The Commonwealth is keen to capitalise on the commercial value of a new suburb within 10km of the city. Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has backed the link.

The Federal government preferred routes through Maribyrnong would link to Highpoint shopping centre and Victoria University, and open up a major new suburb of 6000 homes on former defence land. Each

route would likely end in a new underground airport station and connect to the city either directly through Southern Cross, around the City Loop, or into the new Metro Tunnel. A business case will, by September, present options for new railway stations in Melbourne's inner northwest.

All routes are likely to enter Tullamarine via a tunnel and into an underground station, to avoid worsening congestion in an already chaotic forecourt used by cars, taxis, ride-sharing services and buses. Three of the four options could see the airport train run around the City Loop, stopping at Flinders St, Southern Cross, Melbourne Central and Parliament stations. The planning process is considering all options for access to the city, so the route could potentially take travellers all around the CBD. A direct connection into Southern Cross, long the popular option, is also still on the cards.

The fourth route, known as the Albion East option — which the *Herald Sun* understands is preferred by the state government — would enter the CBD through the Metro Tunnel, not due to open until 2026.

The Flemington and Direct Tunnel routes are believed to be preferred by the Federal government because both options would open up access to a new suburb to be built on the 127ha former defence site in Maribyrnong. The land, on the banks of the Maribyrnong River, is less than 10km from the city centre and could fit up to 6000 new homes and provide for thousands of new jobs. Those two options would be the most expensive, because they require extensive tunnelling, but they would also be the most direct.

The Albion East alignment, which has long been touted for a Tullamarine airport rail link, would be cheaper because it would be almost entirely above-ground and use some existing tracks. The Craigieburn link would be a cheaper option, but it appears less likely to be chosen, because it stops at least 13 times along the existing railway line running through Melbourne's north.

Once the business case is finalised, the State and Federal governments will face a choice between four options with vastly different strengths and weaknesses.

Yarra Trams: Rowville tram?

A major new tram route is being planned for Melbourne's south-east, linking Chadstone shopping

centre and Monash University's Clayton campus to the tram network. It would run between Caulfield station and Rowville, about 18 kms, under one proposal being considered by Transport for Victoria. Trams would run in the median of Dandenong Road, along the Princes Highway and the centre of Wellington Road, beyond EastLink, to Stud Road.

The Victorian government will commit \$3 million in the 2018-19 budget for planning and design to cover investigations of potential alignments, stop locations including for possible park and ride centres, and travel times. Early investigations suggest the route could transport up to 3000 people an hour in the peak, assuming high-capacity E-Class trams run every four minutes.

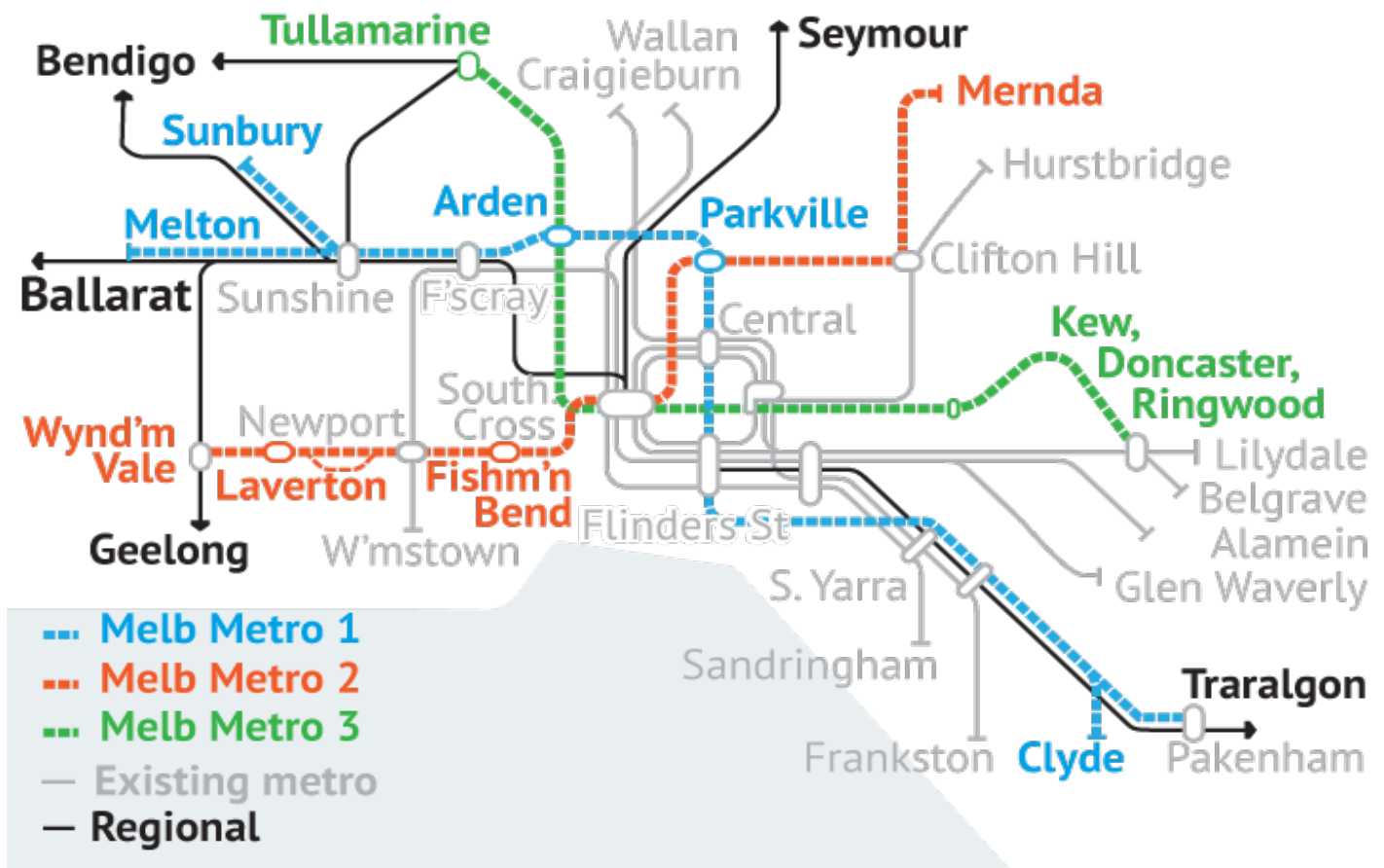
The first stage would be from Caulfield to Monash University, terminating at the intersection of Blackburn and Wellington Roads. This would align with the employment hub housing the Australian Synchrotron, the Monash Medical Centre and the future Victorian Heart Hospital.

Stage two would extend the route to outer suburban Rowville. This would involve laying tram tracks along the alignment of the Rowville railway line, which has languished for almost half a century since it was first proposed in the 1969 Melbourne Transportation Plan.

Eastern suburbs councils have been lobbying for well over a decade for a railway to Rowville. A 2012 PTV study, commissioned by the Baillieu government, found a future line would ultimately attract about 68,000 passengers a day, and would be required in about 15 years' time. The study did not propose building a tram line ahead of a future heavy rail line, favouring a boost to bus services instead. The estimated cost of the new tram route will be determined during planning and design, which is expected to take up to a year. The most recent major addition to Melbourne's tram network, the three-km extension of route 75 to Vermont South in 2005, cost \$23 million.

Premier Daniel Andrews said the future route was "the missing link for the south-eastern suburbs" and would boost economic activity. "Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs are growing and a new tram link between Caulfield and Rowville will help ease traffic on some of our busiest roads and get people home faster," he said.

Melbourne growth



Melbourne needs two more underground rail tunnels by 2035 to cope with exploding population growth, the City Council has proposed. It also says trams need road and traffic light priority throughout the city – as in Zurich – to cope with the demand. Its vision is to expand the public transport network, as it prepares for an extra 116,000 people taking trains into the city in the morning peak by 2031 – almost double the present number. There is room for improvement, the council's discussion paper concedes. Trains are overcrowded, trams are impossibly slow and tram stops are poorly designed and cramped.

By 2030, Melbourne Metro 2 – a tunnel linking Newport to Clifton Hill via Fishermans Bend – could be built, the document said. This would quadruple passenger capacity for the Werribee line corridor, improve east-west accessibility and deliver benefits to those in the south-west and north-east, the experts found.

Melbourne Metro 3 – a second airport rail line to Southern Cross, via Arden, Macaulay and Maribyrnong – could be built by 2035, the council paper said. The eastern end could extend to north-east Richmond and beyond to Kew, Doncaster and Ringwood, filling a gap in the heavy rail network.

The council is looking to Zürich, where trams spend only 6% of their time at traffic lights, compared to Melbourne tram's 17%.

The conjectured future Melbourne rail network. Map is from the Age 20 April.

TransPerth: Ellenbrook line

Consultancy firm Arup has won a tender to work on planning for the early stages of the future Morley- Ellenbrook line in Perth. This will include an options analysis exploring potential locations. A potential option is a 21km spur line from the existing Midland line just east of Bayswater to Morley, Noranda, Malaga, Bennett Springs, Whiteman and Ellenbrook.

Auckland: Light rail and railways

The NZ government and Auckland Council on 27 April announced a \$28 billion funding injection into Auckland's transport system over the next ten years, including investments in a light rail link to the city's airport, electrification of the heavy rail line to Pukekohe, and in the City Rail Link project. Approximately \$8.4 billion of the package will go towards accelerating the development of Auckland's rapid transit network, including \$1.8 billion in funding for light rail links – one extending to the city's airport and another in the Northwest transit corridor.

A further \$940 million will fund heavy rail upgrades, including the electrification to Pukekohe and the provision of more electric trains on the western, southern and eastern lines.

This funding would also provide for track upgrades between Wiri and Quay Park, including a third main rail line, upgrades to Westfield junction and access

improvements to the Port, rail level crossing upgrades, and Britomart station remodelling.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Queensland Rail North Coast line

The Queensland government will spend \$46 million to replace 18 timber rail bridges on the North Coast line between Townsville and Cairns, in an aim to boost the safety and longevity of the line. The bridges are located south of Cardwell to El Arish, and will be replaced with steel and concrete

Queensland Rail Travel: Rain

Due to heavy rain covering the line, trains did not run between Townsville and Cairns between 28 and 31 March.

Queensland Rail Citytrain: NGR derailed

The problem-plagued New Generation Rollingstock, ordered by the preceding State government, risks being put off the tracks after a final decision by the Australian Human Rights Commission on 29 March rejecting the government's application for an exemption from disability access laws. The Queensland government argued for an exemption on the basis that the new trains were urgently needed for the Commonwealth Games in April and to replace existing trains that had hit retirement age. But the Commission said this was not "sufficiently persuasive to suspend the rights of people who might experience discrimination" on the New Generation Rollingstock trains, eight of which have already been put on the tracks. It has rejected the exemption request, paving the way for the disability sector to seek a court injunction to put the trains off the tracks until they are fixed. The timing could not have been worse, just days before the Games' opening ceremony.

Problems with the trains include aisles too narrow for people in a wheelchair and non-compliant toilets. The Commission, in its final decision, repeats its criticism of the Government for botching the design. "Despite being procured in 2013, the New Generation Rollingstock trains do not comply with sections of the Transport Standards. In passing the DDA and making the Transport Standards, the government sought to reverse a history of exclusion from areas of public life for people with disability. It created a comprehensive regimen intended to ensure the accessibility of public transport for people with disability. The Commission considers that exemptions to this law and national standards should not be granted lightly. Given the significant legal consequences for potential complainants, the Commission must be satisfied that a temporary exemption is appropriate and reasonable, and evidence is needed to justify an exemption. While the Commission acknowledges that the Queensland Government has agreed to allocate funds to bring the

trains into substantial compliance with the Transport Standards within three years, the Commission is not convinced that this commitment is sufficiently persuasive to suspend the rights of people who might experience discrimination on the NGR trains during this time to make a complaint under the (Disability Discrimination Act)," it states.

LINX to operate Enfield

LINX Cargo Care Group, a logistics company owned by Canadian engineering company Brookfield, announced on 20 February that it has been successful in its bid to operate the Enfield Intermodal Terminal in Western Sydney formerly operated by Aurizon. LINX C will also operate a port shuttle service between Enfield and Port Botany.

Sydney Trains and Sydney Metro: Chatswood-Epping closure

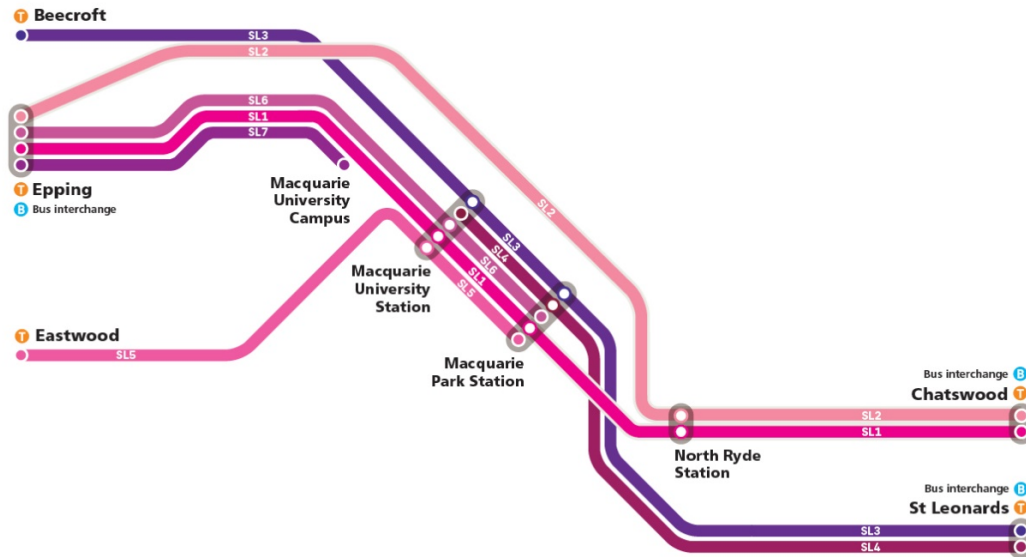
Sydney Trains' line from Chatswood to Epping will close from Sunday **30 September** for conversion to metro-style for incorporation in the NW Metro currently under construction. The conversion will take about seven months.

Effective 30 September there will be new North Shore, Northern and Western lines Public timetables. There will also be a new system-wide Sydney Trains Working Timetable. There will also be new WTTs for ARTC and John Holland Rail from that date.

NSW government publicity for the closure emphasised the high frequency buses that will operate during the conversion period, under the name of Station Link. More than 120 new, fully accessible, air-conditioned buses will be provided at a cost of \$49 million. Key features will be:

- High frequency, turn-up-and-go services to stations between Epping and Chatswood at least every six minutes during the peak.
- More than 110 services per hour in the busiest parts of the day.
- A dedicated high frequency service to Macquarie University Campus from Epping station.
- A loop service running at least every 10 minutes 7 days a week to all stations between Epping to Chatswood.

Station Link bus services will be available on the trip planner at transportnsw.info, and on real time apps. A package of road and intersection upgrades, including bus priority measures, will be completed by the introduction of Station Link to improve public transport reliability.



The five stations, Epping, Macquarie University, Macquarie Park, North Ryde and Chatswood, will have screen doors along the full length of the metro platforms. There will be new signalling and communications systems, electrical and fire and safety systems. The existing tracks and overhead wiring will remain and will be used by the new metro system.

Between Waverton and Artarmon, the medium speed aspect of signals is being removed, thus lowering the speed of trains. It is believed that this is because the headways in the Waverton area are too close to the theoretical minimum to avoid a system collapse should even a minor thing go wrong.

Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra Line to stand alone in a decade: report

A report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 28 March claimed that Transport for NSW aims to create the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra lines as independent of the rest of Sydney's rail system. It claimed that this was with the long-term aim of creating opportunities for private companies to run more of the city's transport network. The author said that handing these lines to a private operator has long been a goal of transport bureaucrats.

The State Infrastructure Strategy, released in March by Infrastructure NSW, said the first three stages of the SmartRail program developed by Transport for NSW "should be delivered over the next 10 years". The first stage would involve capacity upgrades to the T4 Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line and the T8 Airport line, and the second would involve more upgrades and the introduction of a new intercity fleet of trains. The third would include "deploying automation and providing the transformative programs needed to separate inner urban and intercity services on the T1 Western and Northern line and the T4 Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line. SmartRail will allow the independent operation of rail lines across the system, improving the capacity, frequency and reliability of the network and permitting the conversion of lines to provide high-frequency all-day services in the future,

with the T4 Illawarra Line as the top priority for transformation," the strategy says.

Transport for NSW says the plans do not relate to privatisation. "Upgrades to help parts of the network operate more independently are about improving capacity, frequency and reliability. There are no plans to privatise the existing heavy rail network," a spokesman said.

Sydney Trains & NSW TrainLink: Royal Easter Show

For the annual Royal Easter Show at Olympic Park on **Weekdays** Friday 23, Monday 26 to Thursday 29 March and Tuesday 3 April:

- Trains ran between Central and Olympic Park every 20 minutes from 0759 until 1130, then every 30 minutes until 2300, stopping at Redfern and Strathfield, as well as the usual shuttle service from Lidcombe every 10 minutes from 0530 until midnight.
- **Up Blue Mountains line** trains made an additional stop at Lidcombe between 0925 and 1500 and return services between 1900 and 0100.

Weekend Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 March:

- Express trains ran to and from Olympic Park:
- **Central** Approximately every 10 to 20 minutes from 0840 until 2100, stopping at Redfern, Strathfield then Olympic Park. Return services approximately every 15 minutes from 0900 until midnight
- **Blacktown:** every 30 minutes from 1345 until 2145, stopping at Seven Hills, Westmead, Parramatta, Granville, Lidcombe then Olympic Park. Return express services every 30 minutes from approx 1415 until 2215.
- The usual shuttle service from Lidcombe at ten minute intervals.
- **Blue Mountains line:** services between 0630 and 2230 made an additional stop at Lidcombe.

- **Central Coast and Newcastle:** The 1846 and 1946 Sydney-Wyong trains were extended to Morisset.
- **Southern Highlands Line:** An additional service departed Campbelltown at 2355, stopping all stations to Moss Vale.
- Express trains from ran to and from Olympic Park each day of the Easter weekend **Friday 30 March to Monday 2 April:**
- **Central** every 8 to 10 minutes from 0900 until 2100, stopping at Redfern, Strathfield then Olympic Park. Return express services every 8 to 10 minutes from 0900 until 0015.
- **Blacktown:** every 30 minutes from 0825 until 1300 and then every 10 minutes from 1320 until 2340, stopping at Seven Hills, Westmead, Parramatta, Granville, Auburn, Lidcombe then Olympic Park. Return express services every 30 minutes from approx 0900 until 1300 and then every 10 minutes until 0010. These included: **Penrith and Schofields:** every 30 minutes from 1300 until 2300, stopping all stations to Seven Hills, Westmead, Parramatta, Granville, Auburn, Lidcombe then Olympic Park. Return express services every 30 minutes from 1340 until 0010.
- The usual shuttle service from Lidcombe at ten minute intervals.
- **Blue Mountains line:** The 1724 train to Mount Victoria was extended to Lithgow. Trains between 0800 and 2230 made an additional stop at Lidcombe.
- **Central Coast and Newcastle line:** An additional service from Newcastle at 0707, stopped at Broadmeadow, Cardiff, Fassifern, Morisset, Wyong, Tuggerah, Gosford, Woy Woy, Hornsby and Olympic Park. An additional service from Wyong at 0823, stopping all stations to Berowra, Hornsby and Olympic Park. The 1846 and 1946 Sydney-Gosford trains were extended to Wyong.
- **Southern Highlands Line:** an additional service departed Campbelltown at 2355, stopping all stations to Moss Vale.
- Electric interurban services were generally built up to 8 carriages.

NSW TrainLink: More bus services

Following the introduction of trial bus services in NW NSW from 12 March (see April *Table Talk*, pages 2-3), NSW TrainLink now proposes to trial additional weekday bus services from mid-year to supplement existing train services in southern areas:

Goulburn-Canberra: Goulburn 0655, Canberra Civic 0800, John James Hospital 0810, Canberra Hospital 0820, Canberra station 0835, Queanbeyan 0850. Queanbeyan 1350, Canberra station 1405, Canberra Hospital 1405, John James Hospital 1430, Canberra Civic 1440, Goulburn 1550.

Goulburn-Sydney: Goulburn 0420, Marulan 0444, Tallong 0452, Wingello 0502, Penrose 0508,

Bundanoon, 0518, Exeter 0528, Moss Vale 0540 to connect with 0548 train which arrives Campbelltown 0706 and connects with train which arrives Sydney at 0810. This is 30 minutes earlier than the earliest Goulburn service arrives now.

Connection from the 1720 train ex Sydney which arrives Campbelltown at 1814 to connect with new bus departing at 1820, Bundanoon 1930, Wingello 1946, Tallong 1956, Marulan 2004, Goulburn 2030. Goulburn 1550, arrive Campbelltown 1720 to connect with 1734 train arriving Sydney 1830.

Wagga Wagga-Albury day return stopping at The Rock, Henty and Culcairn.

NSW TrainLink is also investigating possible new bus services from **Goulburn** to events such as the Sydney Royal Easter Show, or for weekends at the South Coast, Wollongong and Canberra.

NSW TrainLink: Southern Highlands trains and buses

From the timetable change of 26 November 2017 the 1601 Central – Goulburn M-F now has a restriction in that its stops at Glenfield and Campbelltown are to pick up only.

Timetables for the loop line Picton-Mittagong-Bowral bus have been omitted from this public timetable.

Timetables for the Wollongong-Moss Vale bus have been omitted from both the Southern Highlands and South Coast public timetables.

Lotsa, lotsa trains: Maitland 14-15 April

Maitland is always the best location in Australia (even better than North Melbourne) for train observation and photography, due to the combination of trains every few minutes, the variety of trains (coal trains of immense length, freight trains of big length, long-distance and local passenger trains), and accessibility.

During the annual Maitland Steamfest, there are even more trains than usual. At this year's event on the weekend of 14 and 15 April, there was continuous activity. Many special trains were fitted around the many regular trains. As well as special trains along the various mainlines through Maitland, special trains operated, as has been the case for the past couple of years, on both days on two non-passenger lines, providing great outings for people who enjoy travelling on "rare mileage" - to and through the Port Waratah Coal Port complex, operated with steam and diesel locomotives by NSW Transport Heritage, and on the Mount Thorley Coal mine line as far as Saxonvale Junction, operated by the Rail Motor Society.

There were also lotsa, lotsa people. All special trains were very heavily patronised. In addition, NSW TrainLink augmented their usual Weekend hourly service between Newcastle and Maitland by interposing additional trains throughout both days to provide a half-hourly service. NSW TrainLink trains, regular and extra, were very well patronised.

One of the two ARTC displays at the event included a mimic, electronic display panel. This meant that the progress of all trains could be monitored.



Photo by Agnes Boskovitz

Details of the trains are in the following ARTC Train Alteration Advices (which as usual with ARTC TAAs remain on their website):

- 136 – 2018 – Transport Heritage NSW steam and diesel locomotive special trains.
- 325 - 2018 – Additional NSW TrainLink services Newcastle-Maitland and v.v.
- 327 - 2018 – Rail Motor Society special trains.

NSW TrainLink: Rare diversion 15 April

On Sunday 15 April a bushfire at Holsworthy, SW Sydney, closed the railway between East Hills and Glenfield. All trains were diverted. The Editor was a passenger on the 1206 Sydney to Canberra NSW TrainLink Xplorer DMU. This took its normal route only as far as Sydenham. It was then diverted via ARTC's Metropolitan Freight line through Enfield as far as Sefton Park Junction. It was probably routed this way because of the additional suburban electric trains on the route via Strathfield and Regents Park. So this shows that railways can take initiative at short notice. Unfortunately, some of the gloss was taken off by a long wait (32 minutes) at Chullora Junction for an incoming freight train of Independent Rail. This delay

at Chullora, plus slow running on the Freight line meant the train well and truly lost its path. Therefore it additionally had a slow run through the suburban area, and even behind a down freight into Goulburn. It arrived in Canberra 77 minutes late – with profuse apologies from TrainLink, but in the circumstances no-one complained.

Sydney Trains T8 services from City to Macarthur were all running express from Glenfield to Central, via Liverpool. On most trains this was producing about an extra 30 minutes travel time. There were also a few trains running a Macarthur-Glenfield shuttle. There seemed to be a lot of sets out of position on Monday morning.

Canberra Tram stage 2 route

ACT Transport Minister Meegan Fitzharris announced the government's preferred route for stage two of the tram to Woden through Parkes and Barton. However, as a portion passes through areas of national significance, this will rely on approval from the Federal government.



“Light rail stage two has been going through a rigorous planning process that involves negotiation with the National Capital Authority and Commonwealth government due to the heritage and national importance of the parliamentary triangle,” Ms Fitzharris said. “What’s clear is that the ACT government is committed to extending light rail to Woden, and we will continue to work with relevant stakeholders on the exact alignment through the parliamentary triangle.” The ACT government’s final business case for stage two of the project hinged on working through details of the route with relevant Federal government authorities, Ms Fitzharris said. “It’s not appropriate for the ACT Government to finalise the business case for the project until the NCA’s requirements and alignment details are worked through. “We’re hopeful we can continue to progress these negotiations in good time so that we can get on with delivering a world-class public transport network for Canberra.”

“It would also be Canberra’s first light rail route with a section that doesn’t follow a current road,” Ms Fitzharris said last year. “This design option would allow the route to get through Barton more quickly while also servicing more employment hubs and our important national institutions and tourist attractions.” Ms Fitzharris said she was confident the community would support the Barton and Parkes proposal. “This route provides the best access through the Parliamentary zone to employment hubs, cultural institutions and other places of interest such as Manuka Oval,” she said. “There is no question that the City to Woden stage will be the most difficult section of a city-wide network to design and build.”

Sydney Tram delayed

Construction of Sydney’s \$2.1 billion light rail project will not be completed until March 2020, a year later than promised. The ALTRAC consortium charged with delivering and operating the line has told the government that it is now working towards a completion date of March 2020. Construction began in late 2015 and was originally due to be finished in March next year, the time of the next state election.

It follows the Spanish company building the line, Acciona, launching a \$1.1 billion lawsuit last week against the state’s lead transport agency for “misleading or deceptive conduct” in the lead-up to it signing a contract in 2014 to design and build the project. The sub-contractor claims Transport for NSW led it to believe power company Ausgrid had agreed to a plan to deal with utilities under the route of the line when it had not.

Until now, the NSW government has repeatedly declined to say when its signature project would be finished, and last month Transport Minister Andrew Constance accused the contractor of being unwilling to provide a “meaningful timeline” for completion of the project. He has chided Acciona for being on a “go-slow” and raised concerns about the “poor quality” of its work, “numerous site safety incidents” and “ever-dwindling numbers of workers”. Acciona has denied suggestions it is to blame for delays or a blowout in the cost of the project.

While the laying of tracks has been completed in nine of 31 zones, civil construction has yet to be finished in any of the zones along the entire route. The original schedule was for all of the major civil construction, which includes poles and footpaths, to be finished this month.

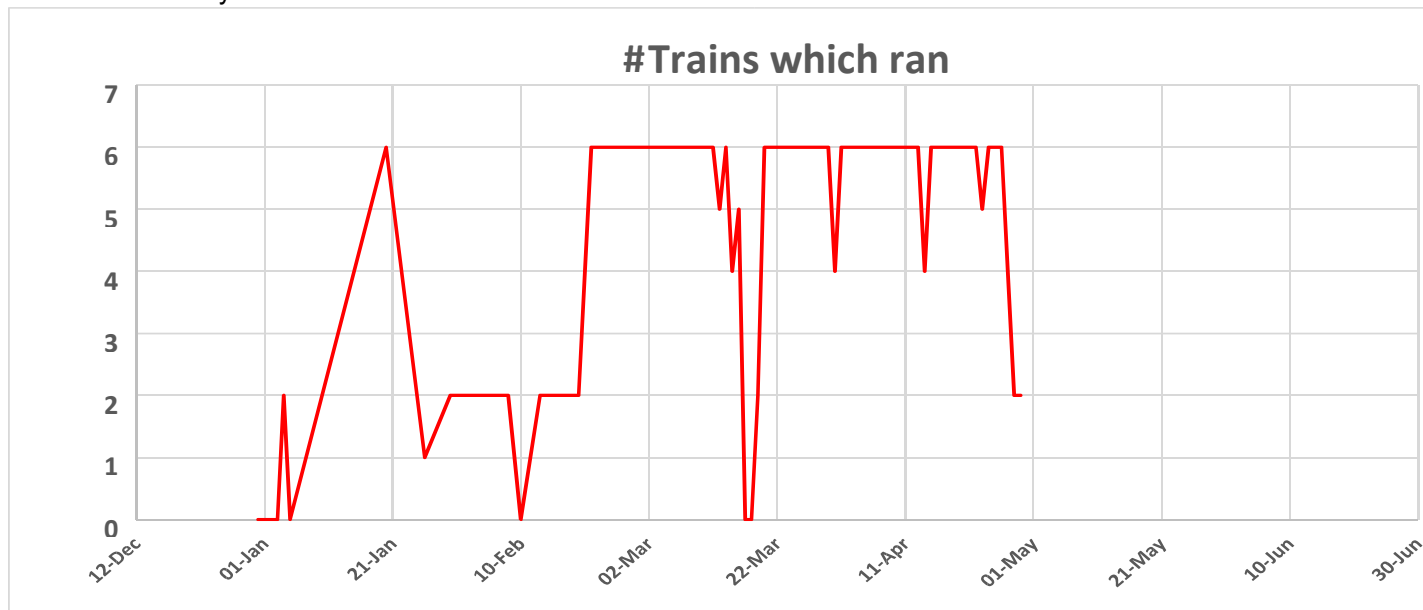
ARTC and V/Line: Victorian NE line

A steel coil fell from a southbound Pacific National freight train on the Victorian North East line on the afternoon of Good Friday, 30 March, damaging 37 wagons and fouling both tracks. Both tracks were closed until that evening causing delays. Then until the damaged wagons could be repaired and removed after Easter, the East line was closed between Benalla and Seymour, with all trains having to use the West line. There were slight delays to some passenger and freight trains.

V/Line passenger trains continue their history of unreliability on this line. Despite their being four standard gauge locomotives and four SG carriage sets to run a timetable that requires two sets, many trains continue to be cancelled because of failure.

Geoff Lambert provides the following graph of cancellations this year. Six trains are timetabled each

day. 17-18 March was an ARTC closedown weekend for works.:



V/Line: More Shepparton trains and buses

A fifth train service to Shepparton will be introduced in 2019, ahead of the original timeframe of 2020. In the interim, 29 additional bus services will operate between Seymour and Shepparton from mid-2018, to address gaps in the current timetable and spread services throughout the day. Five extra bus services will run between Seymour and Shepparton each week day, three extra services on Saturdays, and one extra on Sundays. These will stop at Mooroopna, Murchison and Nagambie station, with a second stop in Nagambie being investigated. These changes will address gaps in the current timetable and spread services more evenly throughout the day. Timings of the extra morning coach services from Shepparton to Seymour on weekends will be determined following consultation with the community.

In addition, the government is providing a grant of \$268,000 to Greater Shepparton City toward bus interchange improvements as part of the CBD revitalisation project. The new centrally located bus interchange will provide more convenient options for Shepparton residents to access the CBD by public transport.

Meanwhile, the Victorian Opposition has pledged to bring the Shepparton line up to eight return daily services to Melbourne with a \$77 million upgrade to the line, if elected in November. Shepparton trains could travel at speeds up to 130km/h under an upgrade package.

V/Line: Tocumwal line

Upgrade of the Shepparton/Tocumwal line, at a cost of \$43.5 million announced in the Victorian Budget 2017/18 will commence soon, ahead of the original timeframe. The project will provide sidings at Shepparton station to stable trains needed for the fifth daily return service to Shepparton. It also includes extending a crossing loop. The final location of the

crossing loop is currently being assessed. The delivery of the Shepparton Line Upgrade will be overseen by the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority as part of the Regional Rail Revival program

Near Numurkah, north of Shepparton, maintenance on five level crossings, mud hole removal and replacement of 30,000 timber sleepers is expected to be completed by the middle of April, and other works about the middle of May.

V/Line: Trains for literate travellers

Once again, V/Line is operating special trains for the annual Clunes Booktown Festival on Saturday 5 May and Sunday 6 May. On both days, a three-car VLocity DMU will depart Ballarat for the 55 minute run to Clunes and Maryborough at 0955, 1210 and 1530, returning from Maryborough at 1100, 1335 and 1655.

V/Line: Mildura line I

From 23 April the following is the freight train service on the Mildura line, recently converted to standard gauge:

- Mondays Ararat 2235, Maryborough 0232-0237, Dunolly 0305-0307, Ouyen 0842-0847, Merbein 1110.
- Fridays Ararat 1605, Maryborough 2002-2007, Dunolly 2035-2037, Saturdays Ouyen 0212-0217, Merbein 0440.
- Tuesdays Merbein 2115, Ouyen 2239-2244, Wednesdays Dunolly 0521-0526, Maryborough, 0556-0601, Ararat 1010.
- Saturdays Merbein 1600, Ouyen 1824-1829, Sundays Dunolly 0006-0011, Maryborough 0041-0046, Ararat 0455.

V/Line: Mildura line II

The Coalition Opposition in Victoria's has promised to return passenger trains to a portion of the Mildura line, 25 years after former Liberal premier Jeff Kennett killed them off. On 24 April it promised if elected in

November to extend V/Line rail services from Maryborough to Donald, a distance of 115 km, at a cost of \$32 million.

The Maryborough line is one of Victoria's quietest. It carried 12,400 passengers in 2016-17, an average of about 34 people a day.

The Coalition also promised to complete a \$4 million business case for the potential return of V/Line passenger rail to Horsham, also cut by the Kennett government in 1993, and to Hamilton in western Victoria.

V/Line: Gippsland line temporary timetable

For the closedown of the Gippsland line from Friday 30 March until Sunday 15 April (see *April Table Talk*, page 8), V/Line issued a special public timetable showing the bus replacement services. The timetable was eight A4 glossy pages. Most buses operated to Southern Cross, but on weekday peaks some operated to/from Flinders St, Parliament or Dandenong stations.

V/Line: Cancellations

Fifty-two V/Line trains — including 11 on one day — were cancelled or altered in February and March on the Geelong line due to staff sickness. Track congestion and "maintenance requirements" also delayed more than 100 trains over the past two months while signal faults affected more than 80 trains. In March, 33 trains were altered or cancelled due to staff sickness, including 11 on Monday 26 March. Nine trains were affected on Friday, 2 March, including three reduced from six to three carriages — stripping 660 seats from the line. Nineteen trains were either cancelled or altered in February and commuters were left stranded for 45 minutes on 2 February when the 2204 Waurin Ponds to Southern Cross was cancelled. On that day six trains were cancelled and another three services were replaced by buses. It failed its punctuality target of 92% 39 times in the past 42 months — a target that allows trains to run up to six minutes late and still be considered on time.

On the Ballarat line almost one in four trains failed to arrive within six minutes of the stated time. March figures show just 76.9% of services arrived on time. The Albury line in March had the worst result since July 2013. More than 45% of trains failed to arrive on time. Of the 170 scheduled Albury Line trains, eight were cancelled, while only 88 operated on time. On the Albury line V/Line reached their reliability goal of 96% four times since April 2017, and their punctuality target of 92%, once.

V/Line chief executive James Pinder said in March that 54.3% of services arrived on time while 95.3% of services were delivered, 13% more than in February. "We do have ongoing speed restrictions on the line due to the condition of the track and that is contributing to the delays." Mr Pinder said delays were also caused

by copper wire theft and a large steel coil falling from a freight train, obstructing the track. (See item above.) V/Line has more than 1800 workers and about 445 drivers.

Western Victoria passenger services

Wimmera Rail Services, a new company, is proposing passenger rail services be reinstated on a daily basis between Horsham and Ararat before being connected on a direct service to Ballarat. Stage two would include standardising the existing line between Ararat and Ballarat to connect Horsham train services directly to Ballarat. The proposed travel time was two hours and eight minutes. The final stage would upgrade the rail line between Horsham and Ballarat to allow trains to operate at 160 kms per hour.

But Wimmera Rail Services' first challenge is to get government funding. It comes amid a campaign driven by eight councils, called the Western Rail Project, calling for the return of passenger rail to the Wimmera. A spokesman for the company estimates the three staged project would cost \$292 million.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Timetable plans

When the railway between Caulfield and Dandenong re-opens on Monday 18 June (see next item) there will be a new timetable. The existing daytime ten minute frequency will be extended into the evening. There will be additional services in the morning and evening shoulder peaks.

The South Morang and Hurstbridge lines will receive a completely new timetable later this year, when the \$600 million eight km, Mernda line extension is completed and tunnelling and level crossing works finished on the Hurstbridge line (see item below). The Mernda extension will add an expected 8000 commuters a day to the line. An extra five peak-hour train services will run from Mernda in the morning, and an extra four outbound trains in the evening. In all, 980 trains a week will run between Mernda and the City.

In August, four extra peak-hour services a day will also be added to the Hurstbridge line in Melbourne's north-east, after the \$140.2 million duplication of the single track bottleneck between Heidelberg and Rosanna stations and the removal of level crossings at Grange Road, Alphington and Lower Plenty Road, Rosanna.

Extra evening services are also planned for the Werribee line from August, on the edge of the peak. The extra services might not benefit all travellers though - stopping patterns on some services will be altered "to ensure consistency", the Metro letter says. The extra services will be funded in the 2018-19 state budget, to be handed down on 1 May.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Dandenong and Frankston lines

Between 0130 on Friday 30 March and 0330 on Monday 16 April works were undertaken to commission new signalling and infrastructure between **Huntingdale and Westall**. The following principal alterations occurred:

- The existing Smartlock electronic interlocking between Westall and Springvale, along with its supporting Sigview train control system, was decommissioned and replaced with a Westlock computer based interlocking.
- The existing double line rail configuration extending between Huntingdale and Westall was abolished and replaced with a viaduct.
- The viaduct section of railway enabled the closure of the Clayton Road and Centre Road level crossings.
- From Friday 30 March until Tuesday morning 4 April absolute occupation was in force between Oakleigh – Westall – Dandenong.

The new elevated Clayton station opened on Monday 16 April. The elevated station's curved canopy has been completed, and work is currently underway on platform areas, lighting, CCTV, and passenger facilities. Further works will continue on the station's ground level buildings following the removal of the old train tracks under the station.

The new Noble Park station is on the first 1.5 km stretch of elevated rail, which has eliminated three level crossings. The remaining level crossings between Caulfield and Dandenong will be removed by the end of the year. At Clayton the new elevated station enabled the removal of level crossings at Clayton Road and Centre Road. The boom gates at the latter, which were regularly down for up to 75 minutes during the morning peak, have just been removed, reducing congestion on the busy route.

Intensive work continues:

- Each night from 2030 Sunday 29 April - Wednesday 2 May while maintenance works take place, buses replaced trains between South Yarra and Caulfield.
- Each night from 2000 Sunday 29 April - Wednesday 2 May while maintenance and Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project works take place, buses replaced trains between South Yarra and Westall.
- Buses replaced trains between Caulfield and Westall stations from Sunday 6 May to Wednesday 9 May 2000 to last train each night.
- Buses replace trains between Caulfield and Dandenong stations from Saturday 12 May to Sunday 13 May, first train to last train.
- Buses replace trains between Caulfield and Westall stations from Monday 21 May to Wednesday 23 May, 2000 to last train each night.
- Buses replace trains between Caulfield and Westall stations from Saturday 26 May to Sunday 27 May, first train to last train.
- Then from 29 May until 17 June buses replace all trains between Caulfield and Dandenong.

When the line reopens, four congested level crossings at Murrumbeena Road, Grange Road, Poath Road and Koornang Road will be gone and two new stations at

Murrumbeena and Carnegie will be in use. A new station at Hughesdale will open later in the year.

Intensive works at **Frankston** are to commence in May to complete the removal of the level crossing between Skye and Overton Roads and the construction of the new Frankston station. Buses will replace trains between Frankston and Carrum from 4 to 27 May, and between Frankston and Kananook from 28 May to 17 June. Buses will also replace trains on the Stony Point line between Frankston and Leawarra from 28 May to 17 June.

The removal of the level crossing will be accompanied by the erection of a rail bridge above the road. 24 u-shaped viaducts, each weighing 280 tonnes, will be transported from a factory in Kilmore to the Frankston site. Precast beams will then be put in place by specialist heavy-lifting machinery. VicRoads and the Level Crossing Removal Authority are working together to complete the complex logistical task. Frankston station is expected to be closed from mid year for reconstruction.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Mernda line

Work on the railway from South Morang to Mernda is six months ahead of schedule. Construction has been underway on the \$600 million project since late April 2017. The project includes three new stations, three rail bridges and two underpasses, as well as a train-stabling yard at the terminus.

The names of the three new stations has been announced: Mernda, Hawkstowe and Middle Gorge. 8,000 commuters are expected to use the new stations every day, easing traffic congestion along Plenty Road.

The first test trains to Mernda are expected to be running by the end of September. The government has said that a timetable for the opening of passenger services along the new line will be released in the coming months.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Hurstbridge line

From Wednesday 2 May the following principal alterations were implemented:

- The single line section from Heidelberg and Rosanna was duplicated through the new tunnel adjacent to the existing tunnel.
- The signal control panel at Heidelberg was abolished and transferred to a new workstation at Epping.
- The Grange Road, Alphington level crossing closed and grade separation provided, with the railway beneath the road.
- A new viaduct section of railway at Rosanna enabling the closure of the Lower Plenty Road level crossing.
- The new railway station at Rosanna, located on the viaduct brought into use.
- Axle counters utilised as the primary method of rail vehicle detection between Fairfield - Alphington and Eaglemont - Rosanna.

- The signalling power supply between Fairfield and Rosanna was upgraded from 2.2kv to 3.3kv.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Delays

By Timna Jacks, the Age, 9 April

Almost all city train lines are more delayed now than they were 20 years ago, official data shows. Melbourne's roads and public transport system are struggling to keep up with a population boom that has seen around 1 million people added to the city since 2006. On the Metro Trains system, a huge increase in patronage has created significant overcrowding during peak periods and increased "dwell times" – the time taken for people to get on and off at stations. Fresh government data shows that 14 of Melbourne's 16 metropolitan train lines were less punctual in 2017 than they were in 2001. Despite Victoria paying billions of dollars to private operators over the past two decades in a bid to improve reliability, an ageing train network plagued by signal and equipment faults is straining under the weight of demand.

There are 237 million people using the metropolitan network a year, up from 130 million people in 2000. Meanwhile, there are 300 more services on the metropolitan network, and 600 more on V/Line.

The *Age* has analysed data from Public Transport Victoria that shows delays have become more frequent on some of the network's busiest lines. Nearly one in 10 trains on the Craigieburn line did not arrive on time last year. Back in 2001, 96.5% of trains were punctual. On the Cranbourne line, 93.3% of services arrived on time in 2001, but this fell to 87.7% by 2017. On the Werribee line, 95.8% of services were punctual 17 years ago. In 2017, 91.6% of services arrived on time. The only train lines to maintain their level of punctuality over the 17 years were the Glen Waverley (96%) and Sandringham (95%) lines.

A train is considered late if it arrives more than four minutes and 59 seconds behind schedule. Before 2009, it was late if it arrived after five minutes and 59 seconds. Train reliability, which measures the proportion of scheduled trains that are delivered, went backwards on eight train lines.

On the regional V/Line network, six lines including the Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong lines, were less punctual and less reliable in 2017, compared with 2005. (The analysis only goes as far back as 2005 and excludes the Albury and Swan Hill and Echuca lines, due to inconsistencies in the data.)

The state paid \$1.9 billion to Connex over five years from 2004, before Metro signed a \$3.8 billion seven-year contract in 2009. Victoria is now paying \$6.3 billion to Metro over the next seven years. The company will be paid \$330 million annually for maintenance and renewal works – a rise of 32%.

Getting Melbourne's trains to arrive on time is not a new problem, nor one that is unique to Metro Trains. Punctuality across the network dropped steadily under

the previous operator, Connex, to between 86 and 88% of services arriving on time. This was in the face of a 12% annual increase in patronage between 2006 and 2008. Punctuality rose above 90% from 2012 under Metro Trains and has hovered around 92% since.

Metro spokesman Marcus Williams said the company had made this improvement to train punctuality "against a backdrop of huge increases in patronage. We are now in a period of massive investment that is modernising the network by adding capacity and building brand-new infrastructure," he said.

PTV chief executive Jeroen Weimar said the number of services had "dramatically increased" over the past decade, "despite the overall design of our rail networks remaining largely unchanged".

He said the Metro Tunnel, the removal of level crossings and a \$1.57 billion plan to improve regional rail services would deliver a boost.

Rail Futures Institute president John Hearsch said urgent improvements were needed on the network, such as extending the Cranbourne line to Clyde and duplicating the single section of the track. He said 50-year-old signalling and the use of the old trains built by Comeng that first entered service in the 1980s were contributing to worsening reliability. Increasing dwell times due to overcrowding was also causing a drop in punctuality, he said. "As soon as you have that [an increase in dwell time], those delays tend to cascade."

In 2016, Victoria's Auditor-General found that the condition of both train and tram infrastructure had deteriorated in the seven years leading up to the audit. But the problem was not being monitored properly by PTV.

Yarra Trams: 20 May timetable

A new tram timetable will be implemented on Sunday, 20 May, adding extra off-peak services and turn-up-and-go frequencies (every ten minutes) on two busy routes on weekends. Extra services are being added to St Kilda Road (routes 1, 3, 5, 6, 16, 64, 67 and 72) and the north-west (routes 19, 57, 58 and 59) in the shoulder peak in an attempt to provide more options for people affected by construction of the Metro Tunnel.

Route 58 is being upgraded to a turn-up-and-go 10-minute frequency from 1000 until 1900 on weekends through the provision of extra services.

Route 86 will also be upgraded to a turn-up-and-go frequency from 1200 until 1600 on Sundays, and will align with route 96 in Bourke Street to create a regular service along this busy corridor.

Routes 1, 6, 19, 57, 58 and 59 will have more evening trams on weeknights, arriving every 15 minutes until 2100.

More low-floor trams will be used in the inter-peak on Route 58, which links medical institutions such as the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Royal Children's Hospital,

Royal Women's Hospital and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

Yarra Trams: St Kilda Road works

Works in preparation for major construction of the new Anzac station for Melbourne Metro affected St Kilda Road trams from 1 to 17 April:

- Sunday 1 April, 2000 to last tram: Buses replaced routes 3/3a, 6, 16, 64, 67 and 72 between stop 14 Arts Precinct and stop 22 Toorak Road.
- 2000 Sunday 1 April to last tram Tuesday 17 April: Buses replaced route 58 between stop 119 Wells St and stop 123 Fawkner Park.
- Thursday 5 April, 2130/2200 to last tram: Buses replaced route 6 between stop 14 Arts Precinct and High St/St Kilda Road: Buses replaced route 72 between stop 14 Arts Precinct and stop 26 Alfred Hospital. Buses replaced routes 3/3a, 16, 64, and 67 between stop 14 Arts Precinct and stop 30 St Kilda Junction.
- Friday 6 April to Tuesday 17 April, first to last tram: Buses replaced routes 3/3a, 5, 16, 64, and 67 between stop 19 Shrine of Remembrance and stop 25 Commercial Road. Buses replaced route 6 between stop 19 Shrine of Remembrance and High St/St Kilda Road. Buses replaced route 72 between stop 14 Arts Precinct and stop 26 Alfred Hospital.

Adelaide Metro: 22 April timetable

Train service frequency will increase with scheduled services at least every 30 minutes from morning peak to last service every week day and all day on weekends on the Belair, Gawler, Outer Harbor and Seaford lines. Timetables are online at <https://www.adelaidemetro.com.au/timetables/trains>

Belair line: More trains stop at Millswood. Some services speeded up.

Gawler line: Improved capacity, especially during peak periods.

Outer Harbor line:

- Three morning trains originating from Osborne will run express from Woodville to Adelaide,
- Four morning trains originating from Outer Harbor will run express from Port Adelaide to Adelaide,
- Four morning peak services commencing at Glanville,
- Trains commencing at Glanville and Grange now stopping all stations,
- Reduced travel times on some services,
- 15 minute morning peak frequency at certain stations.

Seaford line:

- Improved overall travel times by up to two minutes on most services,

- Increased number of semi-express services in morning and afternoon peak,
- Significant improvement to transit times of up to six minutes for passengers travelling to and from Seaford Meadows,
- Services in the morning peak now commencing from Noarlunga Centre, next to the Park 'n' Ride at the Noarlunga Interchange.

CBH grain train

WA agribusiness CBH Group has broken its own record for Australia's longest grain train, running a 1.8-km train to its terminal at Kwinana, south of Perth. It comprised 120 wagons and three locomotives, and delivered over 9,000 tonnes of wheat to the export site in a single trip in mid April. The movement broke CBH's previous grain industry record of 88 wagons, set in July 2016, by a 1.3 km train carrying 6,500 tonnes of wheat. CBH general manager for operations David Capper said the new record train was part of a trial undertaken to better understand how CBH could transport grain in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. After setting the previous record in 2016, CBH continued using 88-wagon trains as part of its suite of transport options.

Mr Capper said the success of the new 120-wagon train trial would enable the company to drive further efficiencies and provide more options to utilise its wagons more effectively. He said CBH worked in consultation with network operator Arc Infrastructure to ensure the record train met safe operating standards.

Perth area freight

A WA government subsidy has increased rail freight share by 2.5% from 14.8% to 17.3% compared to 12 months earlier. On 1 January the container rail subsidy increased from \$30 to \$50 for each loaded twenty-foot equivalent (TEU) unit between the North Quay Rail Terminal, Forrestfield and Kwinana, in a bid to reduce truck traffic on roads around Fremantle Port. Its aim is to get the monthly rail market share up to 20%.

Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto expects to have all 200 locomotives on its Pilbara iron ore line operating without drivers by the end of 2018. Following its first trial with an autonomous train in October, it is now addressing final software issues to complete its AutoHaul project.

TranzScenic: TransAlpine slowed

From an unknown date, possibly 1 October 2017, the TransAlpine passenger train was slowed by about 20 minutes in each direction. Times are now Christchurch 0805 (unchanged), Greymouth arrive 1305 (was 1243), Greymouth depart 1405 (was 1345), Christchurch arrive 1831 (was 1804).

Metlink Wellington

New timetables are expected to be introduced on the Kapiti Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa lines from 15 July.

Biggest ever timetable change in UK?

Govia Thameslink Railway, the UK's largest rail franchise, claims that they will introduce the biggest timetable shakeup in the UK rail history in May affecting almost a million journeys a day. The GTR network, which consists of Thameslink, Great Northern, Southern and Gatwick Express, is the UK's most congested railway with passenger numbers doubling in 12 years. GTR, runs up to 3,200 trains a day, equal to one every 27 seconds, and the times of all of these will change.

The new timetable will be in operation from 0200 on Sunday 20 May across the GTR network from

Cambridge and Peterborough to Brighton and Southampton.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Agnes Boskovitz, Paul Brown, Scott Ferris, Hilaire Fraser, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Ross Morrison, Len Regan, Tris Tottenham, www.railexpress.com.au, www.railpage.com.au, *Catchpoint*, *Newsrail*, *Railway Digest*, *Transit Australia*, *Age*, *Australian*, *Ballarat Courier*, *Border Mail*, *Courier-Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Geelong Advertiser*, *Herald Sun*, and *Sydney Morning Herald* for Rail news.

ODD SPOT

An official timetabled walk

St James Rail, tour operators, ran a major excursion from Sydney to Ararat (for the Grampians and the Great Ocean Road), from 23 to 28 April. ARTC's Train Alteration Advice 286-2018 contained the times for this trip. It introduced a new reason for a train stoppage. On Monday 23 April the timetable read in part, "arrive Junee 1537, passenger leg stretch, depart 1557".

Consider your verdict - V/Line or Non V/Line? Eildon bus

Ambiguity about the status of the Eildon to Melbourne daily bus services continues. Is it a V/Line or a Non V/Line service? Here is the evidence:

- Is there a V/Line paper timetable? No.
- Is there a V/Line electronic timetable? No.
- Is it included in the V/Line journey planner? No.

- Is it included on the V/Line overall system map? Yes.
- Is it included in the V/Line North Eastern Region map? No.
- Is it included among V/Line destinations in the Victorian Fares Manual? Yes.
- Is it included among V/Line arrivals/departures on the information screens at Southern Cross station? Yes.
- When last sighted, was the bus in V/Line livery? No.
- When last sighted, did the bus have a banner across the windscreen saying "V/Line service"? Yes.

The bottom line is that it probably doesn't matter. Rural bus contracts are let by the Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. Some are managed on-day-by-day basis by V/Line. Some are not.

RECOMMENDED READING

Tramways and Urban Transit (UK) magazine, April 2018, no. 964, is a special edition about Australia. There are articles about new tramlines in the Gold Coast, Canberra, Newcastle, Sydney and Adelaide.

"On-time performance or high speed service: Will passenger trains still benefit from higher speeds if time is lost through congestion?", by Brian Solomon, *Trains* (US), March 2018, page 13. Discusses some principles of passenger train scheduling in the US.

FERRY NEWS

On 24 March **Captain Cook Cruises** introduced a 30 minutes headway weekend service from King St Wharf to Sydney Fish Markets. **Thanks** to Tony Bailey and *Transit Australia* for Ferry news.

BUS NEWS

Australian Capital Territory

ACTION: The Gungahlin Bus Interchange opened on Saturday 21 April, replacing temporary stops In Gozzard St. The new Interchange is adjacent to the future Gungahlin tram terminus, opening late this year.

New South Wales

Station Link services between Chatswood and Epping from 30 September are detailed in *Rail news* above.

Additional **NSW TrainLink** bus services are detailed in *Rail news* above.

New **NightRide** timetables were introduced on 1 March with new routes and new operators. Details are:

- N10 and N11 now operated by State Transit;
- N20 operated by Punchbowl Bus Company. This route to Riverwood now commences in the City and operates via the Airport to Rockdale;
- N30 and N40 operated by Transdev;
- N50 N60 N61 N70 N71 operated by Hillsbus. N71 is now a nightly service to Schofields with some trips extending to Richmond;
- N80 is now operated by Hillsbus;

- N81 is a new route City to Parramatta via Olympic Park operated by Hillsbus;
- N90 is now operated by State Transit. Previous short journeys to Gordon have been discontinued in favour of new route N91;
- N91 is a new route Bondi Junction to Macquarie Park operated by State Transit; and
- N100, previously Bondi Junction to Central, has been discontinued.

State Transit has won contracts to continue to operate services in Region 7 (Ryde, Chatswood and North Sydney), Region 8 (Northern Beaches and Mosman) and Region 9 (Eastern Suburbs and CBD). These contracts are from 1 July to 2021.

State Transit Sydney Inner West and Macquarie changes effective 6 May:

- 422 Kogarah to Martin Place changed to run via Parramatta Road and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (Missenden Road) to start and finish at Central, Pitt St instead of Martin Place.
- 444 Balmain East Wharf to Campsie. Weeknight and Saturday night services have been increased from hourly to every thirty minutes.
- 462 Ashfield to Cabarita and Mortlake operating 45 minutes weeknights and 30 minutes Ashfield-Enfield, hourly Ashfield-Cabarita/Mortlake weekend nights has been replaced by 464 Ashfield-Mortlake and 466 Ashfield-Cabarita each operating hourly every evening.
- 463 Burwood to Bayview Park operating at a two-hourly frequency has been replaced by a diversion of 466 Ashfield-Cabarita operating 30 minutes Monday to Saturday daytime and hourly Sundays and evenings. 466 no longer serves Strathfield station.
- 504 Chiswick to Domain has earlier and later morning peak hour services and an additional earlier afternoon peak service.
- 545 Parramatta to Chatswood via Eastwood, Macquarie Centre, Macquarie Park and North Ryde has been split into 545 Parramatta to Macquarie Park via Eastwood and Macquarie Centre and 259 Macquarie Centre to Chatswood via Macquarie Park and North Ryde. Although the new 545 keeps a 15 minute Monday to Friday frequency, 259 has a 30 minute Monday to Friday frequency.
- L38 Martin Place to Abbotsford and L39 Martin Place to Mortlake have an additional afternoon peak service.

Central Coast: From Sunday 6 May there are additional trips on routes 36, 37, 38 and 64:

36 Gosford to Ourimbah and Tuggerah via Narara Valley: Most PM services start/end at Pacific Highway and Burns Road on weekdays and weekends, Span of

hours increased by 30 minutes on weekdays, Services extend to/from Tuggerah on Sundays.

37 Gosford to Ourimbah and Tuggerah via Settlers Park and Wyoming; Most PM services start/end at Pacific Highway and Burns Road on weekdays and weekends; 15 additional trips added, travelling to and from Tuggerah on Sunday, Replaces the 38/7 trips (Gosford to Tuggerah) on weekday evenings, Replaces the 37/8 trip (Tuggerah to Gosford) on Saturday morning.

38 Gosford – Wyoming – Gosford: Replaces the 37/8 trip on Saturday morning, Replaces the 38/7 trips on weekday evenings.

64 Woy Woy to Gosford via Empire Bay and Kincumber Saturday changes: All trips which formerly did not service St Huberts Island now service the Island, One trip currently departing Gosford (terminating at Kincumber Church) extending to Ettalong. Sunday changes: Services will travel via St Huberts Island, Brickwharf Road and Burge Road at Woy Woy, Increased services with extended hours of operation, One additional trip added, Five existing trips extended resulting in two additional trips commencing at Woy Woy, and three additional trips extending to Woy Woy, One existing afternoon trip extends to Ettalong from Kincumber Church. Passengers travelling from Erina Fair to Bensville, St Huberts Island and Ettalong will be able to travel later than the former timetable.

To accommodate these changes, other Central Coast timetables have minor changes to departure times.

Newcastle Buses: Keolis Downer confirms changes to bus timetable (Newcastle *Herald*, 20 April): "Direct connections between eastern Lake Macquarie and two of the region's major shopping hubs" (Charlestown & Newcastle CBD) will be restored with a timetable change in July. One of many complaints with the privatisation timetable issued at the end of last year was the severing at Belmont of direct services between Swansea Heads, Charlestown and Newcastle. Also announced are a connection between Cardiff /Macquarie Hills and Kotara, between Cardiff South and Charlestown, and between southeastern Lake Macquarie (unspecified) and Charlestown. There is also an improved bus service to the House With No Steps, Lambton. One hopes that more improvements will be announced in June.

Keolis-Downer reports an increase in patronage of 5% in January 2018 compared with January 2017. However, that figure has been questioned by observers, citing improved supervision of Opal Card as a factor.

CDC ceased operation of their Katoomba area tourist Trolley Loop Run from 3 April. Their Jenolan Caves tours continue under the name of CDC Tours.

New Zealand

On 15 July 2018 **Metlink** will introduce a new bus network in central **Wellington**. Also on this date new train timetables will commence and also new bus timetables for Kapiti Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa. Additional services will be introduced in these areas and electric double-deck buses should be in service in central Wellington. Details of the new network are:

High Frequency Routes (weekday off-peak frequency in brackets)

- 1 Island Bay-Basin Reserve-Wellington-Johnsonville (10) then Johnsonville West (30), Churton Park (30), Grenada Village (30)
(North-South Spine replacing 1 Island Bay, 53 Johnsonville West, 54 Churton Park and 55 Grenada Village)
- 2 Karori Park-Wellington-Haitaitai-Seatoun (10) (East-West Spine replacing 2 Miramar, 3 Karori Park and 11 Seatoun)
- 3 Wellington-Massey University-Onepu Rd (10) then Lyall Bay (20), Rongatai (20) (replacing 3 Lyall Bay, 10 Newtown Park and 11 Seatoun)
- 7 Wellington-Kingston (15)
- 21 Wellington-Ghuznee St-Kelburn (15), then Wrights Hill (30)
- 22 Wellington-The Terrace-Kelburn-Mairangi (10), then Johnsonville (60) (replacing 22/23 Mairangi and 47 Johnsonville).

Standard Routes (weekday off-peak frequency in brackets)

- 12 Kilbirnie-Strathmore Park (30) (replacing 25/43/44 Strathmore Park)
- 14 Wilton-Wellington-Roseneath-Haitaitai (30)
- 17 Brooklyn-Kowhai Park (30) (replacing 8 Kowhai Park)
- 18 Kilbirnie-Miramar (20) (replacing 2 Miramar)
- 19 Johnsonville-Churton Park Loop (30)
- 20 Wellington-Mt Victoria-Kilbirnie (60)
- 23 Houghton Bay-Newtown-Vogeltown-Kingston (replacing 21 Vogeltown and 23 Houghton Bay)
- 24 Johnsonville-Broadmeadows-Wellington-Miramar Heights (60) (replacing 24 Miramar Heights, 46/50 Broadmeadows)
- 25 Khandallah-Wellington-Aro Valley-Highbury (30) (replacing 9 Aro St, 20 Highbury and 43/44 Khandallah)
- 29 Newtown-Southgate-Island Bay-Owhiro Bay-Brooklyn (30) (replacing 4 Owhiro Bay, 22 Southgate and 29 Southern Shopper)
- 52 Wellington-Johnsonville via Newlands, Woodridge and Paparangi (30)
- 60 Johnsonville-Tawa-Porirua (30) (replacing 210 Titahi Bay 211 Poirua)
- 91 Queensgate-Wellington-Airport (20).

Peak and Extended Routes

- 12E Wellington-Haitaitai-Strathmore Park (replacing 25 Strathmore Park)
- 13 Wellington-Glenmore St-Mairangi

- 17E Wellington-Kowhai Park (replacing 8 Kowhai Park)
- 18E Karori Park-Kelburn-Ghuznee St-Massey University-Miramar (replacing 18 Karori Park-Miramar)
- 19E Wellington-Churton Park Loop
- 23E Wellington-Houghton Bay
- 26 Wellington-Ngaio-Khandallah (replacing 45)
- 28 Strathmore Park Shops-Beacon Hill
- 29E Wellington-Southgate-Island Bay, Wellington-Brooklyn-Owhiro Bay-Southgate-Newtown
- 33 Wellington-Glenmore St-Karori South (replacing 3S)
- 34 Wellington-Glenmore St-Karori West (replacing 3W)
- 35 Wellington-Haitaitai (replacing 5)
- 36 Wellington-Haitaitai-Lyall Bay (replacing 6)
- 37 Wellington-The Terrace-Kelburn-Wright's Hill (replacing 17 Kelburn and 21 Wright's Hill)
- 56 Wellington-Johnsonville via Paparangi
- 57 Wellington-Woodridge
- 58 Wellington-Newlands
- 60E Wellington-Tawa-Porirua.

Peak Only Express Routes

- 30X Wellington-Haitaitai-Moa Pt/Scorching Bay (replacing 30 Moa Pt/Scorching Bay)
- 31X Wellington-Haitaitai-Miramar North (replacing 31 Miramar North)
- 32X Wellington-Island Bay-Houghton Bay (replacing 4 Owhiro Bay and 32 Houghton Bay).

Queensland

Brisbane: Minor timetable changes were made on 22 January. The Maroon City Glider was extended by one stop to now terminate at the Cooparoo shopping centre. A new route P228 was introduced between Cannon Hill and Brisbane CBD. Short trips on routes 227 and 230 were discontinued. On route 232 three inbound trips were extended to start at Cannon Hill Interchange.

Murrays added services to its Brisbane-Toowoomba route from 1 May. The new services depart Brisbane at 1100 (originating at the airport), 1300 and 2200 (originating at the Airport), and from Toowoomba at 0700 (continues to the Airport) and 1100. Murrays competes with Greyhound on this route, probably as a result of Greyhound coming into the Sydney-Canberra route where Murrays dominates.

South Australia

Adelaide Metro: Four southern suburbs bus timetables changed from Sunday 22 April, in line with new train timetables, to maintain connections along the Seaford line: 681/682/683 743/744, 745/747 and 741/750/752/755/756.

A further 49 bus timetables changed from Sunday 29 April. O-Bahn bus timetables have been updated as the new O-Bahn tunnel has delivered greater time savings than originally estimated. These are: 500/501/502, 503/507, 506/546, 528, 541, 542, 543, 544x, 545, 548, 556/557/559, C1/C2, G40, and M44.

A new cross-suburban express service runs from Tea Tree Plaza to Port Adelaide and return on weekdays – route 361x.

The times on a number of bus routes have been adjusted to better reflect actual travel times for more reliable services: 176/579, 190, 200, 202/203/209F, 206/208/528, 230/232, 235/238/239, 241/245/248, 251/252, 253/254, 262/263/265, 271/273, 281, 286/287/288, 300, 361, 600/601/605/G30F, 645/646, G10, and G20/G21/G22/320.

Bus stops A1 and Z3 on King William Road have been removed with the introduction of the new Festival Plaza tram stop. Services which operated to these stops now go to the next closest stop on their route. The following services have new timetables to reflect this: 190, 195/196/197x, 222, 224, 225, 228/T228, 229, 230/232, 719/720, 721/T721, 722/T722, and 723/733.

To reduce traffic hazards at some bus stops, a number of timepoints have been changed on the following routes: 150/155/157 timepoint moved from Port Road stop 18 to stop 22; and 411 timepoint moved from Burton Road stop 45D to 45C.

Link SA has revised its Victor Harbor service. Train transfers are now made at Seaford instead of Noarlunga. Two additional trips are timetabled on weekdays, being short workings from Goolwa to Encounter Bay and return. The new timetables commenced on 25 February.

Victoria

Additional **V/Line** bus services to **Shepparton** are reported in the *Rail news* section above.

The Victorian government has begun overhauling the contracts for Melbourne's bus network. Minister for Public Transport Jacinta Allan announced on 2 April that new contracts had been signed with three metropolitan bus operators, which make up around two thirds of the services to be re-contracted - **Ventura**, **CDC Victoria** and **Donric**. The new contracts provide more flexibility to improve and expand services where they are needed most. The contracts also emphasise on-time running and customer service, to provide passengers with a more professional and reliable service. The new bus contracts begin 1 July 2018 and will run for ten years if the operators meet strict performance targets.

The Cornwall family (trading as Ventura) has been operating bus services since 1924, growing from a single route between Box Hill and Melbourne CBD to become Victoria's largest bus operator. Donric, another local family-operated business, has been delivering bus services in and around Sunbury and Diggers Rest since the early 1980s. CDC Victoria began providing bus services in 2009 to passengers in the inner-east and western suburbs of Melbourne and the Greater Cities of Ballarat and Geelong. Contract negotiations with the remaining metropolitan bus operators are progressing as planned and are

expected to be finalised before the contracts expire in June 2018.

Melbourne: Revised timetables were issued on 18 February for routes 401, 402, 403, 505 and 546 due to diversions in Parkville associated with the building of a new underground station.

Other new timetables issued were for routes 601, 630, 704 and 900 in conjunction with a new bus interchange at Huntingdale station. Additionally route 601 evening services now operate every eight minutes between 1915 and 2140 on university days. Route 900 has been upgraded to every ten minutes in the peaks.

Wallan: Bus services were expanded from 30 April. A new Wallan station to Wallan Central service maintains connections with trains. A new Wallan station to Springridge service travels north along High St. Both new services run from Monday to Saturday, giving Wallan residents a weekend town bus for the first time. A new shuttle bus between the Wallara Waters estate and Wallan station connects weekday passengers to trains in the morning and evening. Services on all three routes connect with trains at Wallan station. 25 new bus stops have been installed.

The Victorian government is consulting Heathcote, Axedale, Knowsley and Junortoun residents on proposed changes to the **Heathcote-Junortoun-Bendigo** bus service, including a new Saturday bus. The proposal would introduce three return bus services between Heathcote, Junortoun and Bendigo Station on Saturdays for the first time, as well as five return trips each weekday. The changes would improve local transport options on Saturdays and simplify the weekday timetable by making it consistent Monday to Friday. There are two route options. The first is for buses to travel between Heathcote and Bendigo station via Mclvor Forest Drive, Strath Village Shopping Centre and La Trobe University, while the second option would be to and from Heathcote direct to Bendigo station via Mclvor Forest Drive and Mclvor Highway. It's also proposed to extend Bendigo's Route 63 bus so it runs between La Trobe University and Bendigo Hospital via Bendigo station on weekdays. This would give people access to Bendigo Hospital by bus every 30 minutes from Bendigo station. It would also strengthen the links between two important education and health hubs for medical students and local workers. The new services will be introduced in late 2018 after all feedback has been considered.

Western Australia

Transperth introduced new timetables on 28 January for routes 15 27 28 206 207 210 211 212 220 334 335 336 337 355 402 403 404 445 446 447 470 471 473 474 480 481 482 483 484 491 503 517 518 519 525 530 535 536 543 564 565 594 597 930 955 998 and 999. All received minor timetable changes. In addition the following routes received additional trips: 229 307 313 376 378 490 513 514 531 532 and 956. Other changes include routes 310, 311 and 377 losing a trip; route 249 withdrawal of all weekend services; route

379 totally withdrawn; route 391 having a route change within the Banksia Grove Town Centre.

Further timetable adjustments occurred on 29 April. The following routes had time changes:

- 557, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567 and 568;
- 111, 114, 115, 150, 158, 160 and 910;
- 321 and 322.
- The following changes also came into effect:
- The introduction of new Route 353 between Ellenbrook and Bassendean station
- Two additional Route 322 trips extended to Helena Valley Road, to coordinate with the extension of Route 307 to Kalamunda Senior High School;

- Route 567 had a minor route change to travel via Stillwater Drive;
- Route 565 extended two school time trips to Mother Teresa Catholic College.

Bunbury: Two routes were introduced on 1 April for a three-month trial. Both routes operate two return trips on Tuesday and Saturday - route 846 Eaton Fair Shopping Centre - Dardanup and route 847 to Burekup.

Thanks to Agnes Boskovitz, Hilaire Fraser, Alan Gray, Geoff Hassall, Victor Isaacs, Lourie Smit, Tris Tottenham and *Herald* (Newcastle) for Bus news.

AIR NEWS

Domestic

Virgin Australia will commence services between Brisbane and Alice Springs from 19 June on Tuesdays and Thursdays: Brisbane 1015, Alice Springs 1305, Alice Springs 1340, Brisbane 1700.

Airline delays: Data supplied by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics show that flights between Sydney and Melbourne had below-average performances for the year to February, with 24% of southbound flights and 22% heading north arriving late across all airlines.

The average rate for delayed arrivals across Qantas, Virgin Australia, Jetstar, Tigerair and Regional Express for all domestic services was 18% for the period.

Sydney to Melbourne is the world's second busiest air route, with 60,059 aircraft trips in 2017, according to the Bureau—a 12% increase over five years.

Melbourne Airport expects that delays will get worse, predicting that its domestic on-time performance to fall from better than 80% on most days now to as low as 60% by 2022, when it hopes to have a third runway operational to ease congestion. Sydney is looking to ease congestion with the opening of its second airport at Badgerys Creek in 2026.

Eight of the 10 worst services in Australia for the period were operated by Tigerair, topped by its Canberra-Brisbane service which arrived late 45% of the time. A Tigerair spokeswoman said its performance had been negatively affected recently by weather, "unscheduled engineering requirements" and its fleet transition program.

The Bureau defines a flight as being "on time" if it lands at the gate within 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time. A flight is considered cancelled if it is pulled out of service within seven days of its scheduled departure.

Qantas' conditions of carriage only say that if it significantly changes or cancels a flight for reasons within its control it will offer a refund, re-book customers on the next available service, pay for food

and refreshments, and pay for accommodation where necessary. It offers refunds for flights delayed by more than five hours. For events outside of its control, Qantas will "use reasonable endeavours" to re-book on the next available flight or offer a refund.

Virgin says that if a flight is delayed and it is the airline's fault, it will move customers to the next available flight after a two-hour wait. For delays and cancellations, both within and outside Virgin's control, it offers customers a credit voucher for the value of the flight if they choose not to fly.

International

A few days after the first non-stop flight from Perth to London, **Qantas** CEO Alan Joyce said he believed non-stop routes from Brisbane to Chicago, Seattle, or Dallas are possible with the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner. For September 2018, Qantas has already announced a line from Melbourne to San Francisco. Before the first non-stop flight from Perth to London, the airline evaluated the wind and weather conditions along the route for ten years. The company has done the same for the Brisbane-Chicago, Brisbane-Seattle and Brisbane-Dallas routes. Technically, all three routes would be possible, according to the Qantas' boss Alan Joyce. The big plan is a non-stop connection between Sydney and London. Airbus will be in the race with A350-900ULR and Boeing with the 777-8.

Virgin Australia is to commence flights Sydney-Wellington and Melbourne-Queenstown from late October. Virgin will increase frequencies Sydney-Auckland, Melbourne-Auckland and Brisbane-Auckland, but cut frequencies Brisbane-Wellington and Melbourne-Christchurch.

From 25 March **Air Vanuatu** flies Port Vila – Sydney and return on a daily basis.

Donghai Airlines will start the direct non-stop service from Shenzhen to Darwin from 30 May. This will be the first Chinese airline to fly to the NT.

Virgin America operated its final flight on 25 April before it was taken over by Alaska Air as part of a

\$US2.6 billion (\$A3.4 billion) deal. The final flights departed San Francisco at 2132 to Los Angeles.

The **World's busiest air routes** in 1991 and 2017 according to *Australian Foreign Affairs Weekly*:

1.	LONDON > PARIS	260,000	
	HONG KONG > TAIPEI	452,000	
2.	LONDON > NEW YORK	185,000	
	JAKARTA > SINGAPORE	322,000	
3.	HONG KONG > TAIPEI	173,000	
	KUALA LUMPUR > SINGAPORE	269,000	
4.	KUALA LUMPUR > SINGAPORE	170,000	
	SEOUL > OSAKA	234,000	
5.	HONG KONG > TOKYO	160,000	1991
	HONG KONG > SHANGHAI	226,000	2017

Thanks to Paul Brown, Dennis McLean, Ross Morrison, Tris Tottenham, *Airline Watch Newsletter* and *Australian Foreign Affairs Weekly* for Air news.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Tris Tottenham writes about **misleading maps**: My letter in the March *Table Talk*, p. 15, should have referred to "Maps" not "Apps". (Editor's error) It should read: "I am disgusted with Maps (especially in NSW) that show an operator's services but not those of other operators' routes that run into their area. Examples are:

- Busways, Campbelltown, where Interline terminate at Campbelltown Hospital and also don't show Picton Coaches.
- Newcastle map that says other operators "operate in this area" on the periphery of the region.

EDITORIAL

Table Talk's Rail Editor has also been filling in as the Acting Bus Editor for a long time. This is not his area of expertise, nor his interest. Readers may have noticed that Bus news is not of the same breadth or quality as the Rail section. To put this another way: compilation of Rail news is an active process – as well as contributions, the Editor actively seeks out news. The Bus news, however, is a passive process – the Editor merely gratefully accepts contributions and adds what is obvious. This will continue to be the case while there continues to be an Acting Bus Editor.

POSITION VACANT

The readers of *Table Talk* will be delighted to have a **Bus News Editor**. If you like Bus news, this will be a very satisfying position. Criteria are:

- Comprehensive knowledge of bus industry operations throughout Australia;
- Strong ability to write good, clear English;
- Ability to work to deadlines and within a small group.

Appointment is at the discretion of the ATA Committee.

Send your expression of interest to the Acting Bus Editor at tabletalk@ Austta.org.au

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 last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

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Back issues of *Table Talk* are available on the Australian Timetable Association's website, [Austta.org.au](http:// Austta.org.au), after two months.

Table Talk Newswire is an advance monthly email of Rail news. To obtain this, contact the Rail Editor.