



AUSTRALIAN TIMETABLE
ASSOCIATION

TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

RRP \$4.95

No. 351, November 2021

Published by the Australian Timetable Association

RAIL & TRAM NEWS

QUEENSLAND



Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail

The state government is considering a plan to overhaul the south-east Queensland rail network between the Gold Coast, Logan, and Brisbane. The plan would see five level crossings removed (Woodridge, Kuraby, Bethania, Holmview, and Beenleigh), duplication of the line between Kuraby and Beenleigh, improved signalling technology installed between Varsity Lakes and Salisbury to increase the number of trains, and also has the potential to see a straightening of curved sections to increase line speed.

The state's Transport and Main Roads Minister said about the plan, "We're planning to double the number of Beenleigh and Gold Coast services over the next 20 years. At the moment, trains between Kuraby and Beenleigh share a single track in each direction, so that limits the number of peak services we can run".

Community consultation concluded on Friday, 29 October, with the Department of Transport and Main Roads in the process of completing the business case. According to the state government, the state and federal governments have committed a combined \$356 million in pre-construction funding for the project.
QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

Taxpayer subsidy widens

Queensland taxpayers paid \$40.97 for each commuter train trip in 2020/21 (almost double the \$21.15 paid in 2018/19), while support for each bus trip increased from \$4.02 to \$7.30, and for each light rail trip from \$3.64 to \$8.16.

Transport and Main Roads Minister Mark Bailey said that government subsidies for public transport services had increased significantly due to the (COVID-19) pandemic's devastating impact on patronage.

At the height of the pandemic, in April 2020, patronage dropped more than 80 per cent on the south-east Queensland public transport network. During the early August lockdown, sparked by the Indooroopilly Delta cluster, passenger levels on public transport were about 14 per cent of pre-COVID levels, or an 80 per cent drop compared with the weeks prior to it, which were at about 65 per cent of pre-COVID levels.

In the immediate future, the minister said that "subsidies are expected to reduce as patronage returns to the network and once impacts of the pandemic, including lockdowns, lessen". The subsidy is expected to drop back to \$24.21 for each rail trip, \$3.42 for bus and \$4.21 for light rail by 2023-24.

Mr Bailey also said, "It is difficult to accurately predict future patronage levels, with estimates subject to a number of assumptions including vaccination levels and the timing of the opening of Australia's international borders to students and tourists, as well as population growth and the benefits of the Olympics being secured for Queensland in 2032. The pandemic has also led to a preference for people to utilise technology to work and study from home."

A recent study, by Transport and Main Roads and the University of Sydney, found 8.4 per cent of Queenslanders would not use public transport again in the foreseeable future, and 18.3 per cent would only return to public transport once they and their household were fully vaccinated.

Mr Bailey said the state government maintained services during the pandemic so people could continue to go to work or school, and even introduced an extra 105 train services and 960 additional weekly bus services. The state government spends about \$3 billion every year to operate public transport services, with more than 80 per cent of the cost of tickets for buses, trains, trams and ferries subsidised. **THE BRISBANE TIMES**

NEW SOUTH WALES



Lockdown lifts

With the state's successful attainment of 70 per cent double-dose vaccination of people aged 16 and over, the state government stayed true to its word, reducing many social restrictions from Monday, 11 October. The state's public transport network resumed operating to a weekday timetable from the same date. Sydney Trains has labelled its timetable as a "dynamic timetable", with some services removed from many lines in the "peak-of-the-peak", mirroring the two-week "dynamic" weekday timetable implemented in August, when construction activities restarted following a mandatory shutdown.

Fitted face masks are still required on all public transport vehicles, stops and concourses.

NSW: Industrial action

Industrial action continues with various impacts to Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink services. On Wednesday 20 October, there was a 24-hour ban in place on operating all privately-maintained rollingstock. The result of the action was a total reliance on T, K and V set trains for the delivery of services across the electric network. This amounted to roughly 70 per cent of the fleet being unavailable to use on the day.

The plan involved all Airport, Bankstown and Leppington services operated using K set trains (sector 2), all Eastern Suburbs/Cronulla, Western, Northern, North Shore (sectors 1 and 3) and South Coast services operated using T set trains, while Blue Mountains and Central Coast Newcastle services operated using V set trains.

Due to the lack of trains to support the normal weekday timetable, services across the network were reduced to the following frequencies:

T1 North Shore and Western – every 15 minutes alternating between Hornsby/Lindfield and Penrith/Richmond (all stations between Strathfield and Penrith/Richmond).

T2 Inner West Leppington – every 30 mins between City Inner and Leppington, stopping all stations (except Homebush).

T3 Bankstown – every 30 mins between City Inner and Liverpool. Limited buses operated between Bankstown and Lidcombe in lieu of train services.

T4 Eastern Subs/Cronulla – every 15 mins between Bondi Junction and Cronulla/Waterfall (alternating)

T5 Cumberland – all services cancelled, with passengers required to change at Granville.

T7 Olympic Park – services halved to only every 20 mins.

T8 Airport – every 30 mins between City Outer and Campbelltown, stopping all stations. Limited buses operated between Campbelltown and Macarthur.

T9 Northern Line – services operating in a 20/10 min alternating frequency between City Circle Outer and Epping/Hornsby.

South Coast – hourly service between Waterfall and Kiama using 4-car T sets, with buses operating between Wollongong and Port Kembla, with supplemental bussing also provided between Wollongong and Thirroul.

Other NSW TrainLink Intercity – services operated to the weekend timetable.

Stopping patterns were constant throughout the day, with no additional service frequency for either peak period.

Meanwhile, around 04:10 hours, at Kembla Grange station, a 4-car T set (T42) collided with an abandoned vehicle near the adjacent West Dapto Road level crossing, which resulted in the front carriage detaching and derailing well into dirt. Subsequently, emergency bussing operated between Wollongong and Albion Park for the remainder of the day, whilst a trapped 4-car T set was used to provide a shuttle service between Albion Park and Kiama. Due to the resultant infrastructure damage affecting track, signalling and overhead wiring, services were to be suspended between Wollongong and Kiama until at least Monday 25 October, with replacement buses to operate in lieu. **SYDNEY TRAINS**

ETCS Level 2 contracts awarded

Alstom has been awarded two contracts to design, deliver and support European Train Control System (ETCS) Level 2 Atlas and Smartlock trackside signalling technology on the Sydney Trains network.

The contracts cover Erskineville to Bondi Junction on the T4 Eastern Suburbs Cronulla line, with the technology to be operational in 2024, and a view of assisting the future deployment of the technology across the broader network. Alstom's ETCS Level 1 technology already operates on the Sydney Trains and NSW Trains Intercity network. **ALSTOM**

More NIF trains ordered

The state government has ordered 56 more D Set (New Intercity Fleet) carriages as part of a \$100 million contract extension with Rail Connect NSW. The extension also includes a power supply upgrade for the Kangy Angy maintenance facility on the state's Central Coast. The joint venture will maintain the fleet for the next fifteen years.

The trains will not enter passenger service until the resolution of a dispute between NSW Trains and local unions. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW**

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



ACT Budget 2021/22

The territory government finally handed down its 2021/22 budget on 6 October, delayed from the initial 31 August date by the latest COVID-19 outbreak.

Posting the territory's largest-ever deficit, the government will spend \$5 billion over five years on infrastructure projects including transport, hospitals, schools and community facilities.

See the Bus News section for an overview of expenditure commitments on transport-related projects by the ACT government.

New smartcard system

The territory government is in the process of procuring a new smartcard ticketing system to replace MyWay within two years. The government is shortlisting potential providers after an initial Expression Of Interest process closed in September.

The government has been working on this for some time, with a preferred provider already previously decided, but negotiations broke down between the parties in January 2021 over price, so the government went back to the market.

RiotACT reports that the system would be 100 per cent cashless, based on passengers paying by credit/debit card and mobile phone.

Under the package, the provider would also incorporate a real-time passenger information system into the platform for passengers to plan and pay for travel using the same interface. This would replace the existing Nxtbus service.

At least \$40 million has been allocated to fund the program over the 2022/23 and 23/24 financial years by the government. *RIOTACT, THE CANBERRA TIMES*

VICTORIA



Melbourne: Night Network resumes

From Friday 22 October, Melbourne's Night Network (which runs midnight to dawn) recommenced on a heavily restricted basis. The Night Network was suspended since August due to the recent COVID-19 lockdown.

Trams on routes 19, 67, 75 and 109 recommenced running as did buses on routes 207 (Box Hill - City), 250 (La Trobe University - City), 905 (The Pines SC -

City), 907 (Mitcham - City) and 908 (The Pines - City via Eastern Freeway).

The full network, including the revised bus network, which sees most of the original Night Network routes cut back in favour of existing daytime routes being extended (e.g. 630 Elwood - Monash University via North Road), will recommence Friday, 29 October.

This includes the V/Line Night Network which sees several coaches running between 01:00 and 03:00 after the passage of the last train to destinations including Geelong, Traralgon, Ballarat and Bendigo.

A Night Network weekend bus map is provided on page 9. *STEVEN HABY*

V/Line: Disruption

Updating this article from last month's edition, Full V/Line services resumed from Monday, 27 September. This followed a period of mass staff isolation required due to COVID-19 safety guidelines. *V/LINE*

Yarra Trams: Disruption

Due to a driver testing positive for COVID-19, Yarra Trams services were "severely" impacted in early October with reduced service levels on some routes.

Yarra Trams reported that on Friday 1 October, routes 57, 58, 59, and 82 would experience a "high number of service cancellations. One positive test among operational staff has meant that a significant number of drivers based at Yarra Trams' Essendon Depot and City (Tram Hub) Depot have been required to isolate". Most were reported to be secondary contacts and returned to work once receiving a negative test result.

From Tuesday 5 October, for at least the remainder of that week, services on routes 35 (City Circle), 11, and 86 were impacted as "a significant number" of drivers from New Preston Depot were required to isolate. City Circle trams were cancelled outright, while many individual route 11 and 86 services were cancelled. Some Transdev Melbourne bus services were also reported to be impacted.

On Wednesday 20 October, a driver at Malvern depot tested positive to COVID-19, resulting in 100 drivers requiring to undergo testing and quarantine at home. The depot underwent a deep clean, while the following routes were impacted:

- **5** (University - Malvern) – operated all-day as per the evening schedule, with a shuttle service between Orong Road and Malvern, and connections via route 64.
- **6** (Glen Iris - Moreland) - reduced service frequency.
- **16** (Kew - University) - operated between Kew and St Kilda Junction only.
- **58** (West Coburg - Toorak) – reduced service frequency.

- **72** (Camberwell - University) - reduced service frequency.

ROSS MORRISON, STEVEN HABY, YARRA TRAMS, PUBLIC TRANSPORT VICTORIA

NORTHERN TERRITORY



V/Line: VLocity standard gauge testing

Signal compatibility testing between Seymour and Benalla continued in October, with train 3VS93, and a maximum running speed of 80 kilometres per hour. This continues on from the initial article in last month's *Table Talk*. (page 6).

On Tuesday, 5 October, the train was scheduled to return back to South Dynon Loco (13:00) from Seymour Loop (09:35).

On Friday, 8 October, the train was to depart South Dynon Loco at 07:30 to run back to Seymour Loop to enter the absolute occupation at 10:54 (with Pilot) until 17:31. Testing was to continue daily on 9-14 October for up to eight hours per day. The testing was subsequently scaled back to end on 12 October, as advertised by circular. The train was to return to South Dynon Loco at 13:05 on Wednesday, 13 October.

Continued testing on the line saw an impact to Albury V/Line services, with coach replacement provided on 13-29 October for the following services:

- 12:05 Southern Cross to Albury
- 12:45 Albury to Southern Cross
- 17:20 Albury to Southern Cross (weekdays only, 13-22 October inclusive)

LEN REGAN, V/LINE

V/Line: TM Sanding Test Train

On Saturday, 23 October, V/Line planned to conduct testing using a 9-car VLocity consist, with all running constrained to a maximum speed of 80km/h.

The train was scheduled to depart Southern Cross at 05:34 to run to Ballarat East, and enter the occupation under a Pilot's instruction, for the purposes of this testing from 07:28 to 16:13 between Ballarat and Lal Lal. Following the completion of testing, the train was to return to Southern Cross. **LEN REGAN, V/LINE**

Level crossing removal project

The state government continues its work on advancing this project, with another contract awarded in August.

The team of Laing O'Rourke, Jacobs, and Metro Trains Melbourne has been awarded a \$631 million contract to fast-track removal of the Union Road, Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert level crossings.

Following initial infrastructure works, major level crossing removal works will begin in the new year. **VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT**

Cattle trains

The territory's Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade is conducting a study into the viability of transporting cattle using the existing Ghan rail line to Darwin and into South Australia.

ABC Rural reports that a desktop review suggests it would be cheaper for pastoralists to use rail instead of road trains, as they do now. This is despite rail being used to transport cattle in the past, and a practice which ceased in 1998.

The department's agribusiness development manager, James Christian says "if you compare the cost of freight travelling south ... 98 per cent of the herd in the NT can travel down to South Australia, for example, at \$120 per head less if you travel on the train".

He also said stations would truck cattle to rail heads in centres such as Alice Springs or Tennant Creek where they would be loaded onto trains and taken to their prospective markets. "There's already a rail yard built at Kulgera ... there's the yard here in Alice. Both need a bit of a makeover, they need a touch up, and the rail line would need to be inspected to make sure its okay. It's obviously not quite that simple, there are many other things to consider ... but the backbone is there".

Herbie Neville, a cattle industry veteran and branch manager of Elders Alice Springs, used to organise cattle trains for markets in South Australia, however says he struggles to see the likelihood of a return.

The trains were as frequent as three loads a week and travelled no faster than 30kph. They could carry up to 3,000 head of Territory cattle across the arid landscape of the Central Australian desert and into either Darwin ports or the bustling stockyards of Adelaide.

Transporting cattle on rail was at its height in the mid to late 1980s, however the trains made their final stop in the late '90s as roads took over livestock transport.

"[Now] There's no spur line down in the south and there's so many different markets, and the feed-lotters have got their own trucks, their own spelling yards. I can't see it coming back."

Andy Summers, who was 16 when he worked as a train drover, said life on the rail was characterised by long days, vast country, and periodic stock checks.

"I was on the old Ghan, we used to go from Alice to Marree. It was a pretty slow trip," he said. "When the train stopped you had about 20 minutes to run down the line and check all your cattle."

Gary Prior, another player in the NT's cattle rail game, used to run the Roe Creek Cattle Yards in Alice Springs during the 1980s and recalled fondly, "I did really enjoy it, it was a good job and a good era to be in," he said. **ABC NEWS**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



25 Sept: Grand Final arrangements

Perth had a unique opportunity to host the AFL Grand Final on the last Saturday in September. In addition, the lack of widespread COVID-19 cases in the days leading up to the match gave the state government the encouragement to allow the match at Optus Stadium to go ahead with a full capacity crowd.

Armadale line services stopped at Stadium station all day, with **Thornlie** line services stopping there from 08:50. Special event **Fremantle** line services operated between Fremantle and Stadium station every 15 minutes 14:48-16:18 and return 20:02-20:57. Special event **Joondalup** line trains operated between Butler and Stadium station every 15 minutes 13:50-15:50 and return 20:06-20:52 (some of these return services terminated at Clarkson). Direct shuttle services also operated between Perth and Stadium stations from 13:41.

See 'Bus News' for an overview of bus arrangements on this day. **ROSS MORRISON, TRANSPERTH**

NEW ZEALAND



Hamilton-Auckland service in jeopardy

Chairperson of the Waikato Regional Council Russ Rimmington has raised the alarm at “shocker” passenger numbers for the new Hamilton-Auckland rail service, known as Te Huia.

Auckland Transport (AT) has so far resisted calls to allow the train run past Papakura into downtown Auckland on weekdays, as it wants to maintain service reliability on its network.

Stuff Online reports passengers numbers averaged 40 per train during period 19-23 July (inclusive, also were school holidays), 40 per train during period 26-30 July (inclusive), while on Saturday 31 July, the service averaged 127 per train. The Saturday service only began regularly running through Papakura on 24 July, so it is unknown if the Saturday numbers will settle down in the coming months.

Hamilton councillor Dave Macpherson is pushing for an inter-regional passenger rail policy, saying that “unless we are pushing the government to fix the system, we are going to end up with endless frustrations fighting AT and Auckland council for years to come”.

Massey University lecturer Imran Muhammad said a strategy for inter-regional rail was completely missing

from national debate, requiring thinking beyond the three-year electoral cycle. He said that New Zealand was decades behind centres in Europe, Asia and Australia who had the debate, invested in, and started implementing inter-region and inter-city rail - “I was in Melbourne 20 years ago when there was a whole debate about this, then they built an inter-city rail system where there is high-speed electric rail between Melbourne, Bendigo and Ballarat for example”.

AT, meanwhile, is eager to see what the impact of the upcoming \$4.4 billion City Rail Link line will be on its network, saying its network is already full, unable to “even handle the [trains] it was running in 2019”.

According to the National party, the Te Huia service was a “white elephant”, with average daily revenue of \$1,559 and an operating cost of \$25,932. “The train is not running at the time people want it, it's not running as fast as people need it, and it's not going to the destination that they thought it would, which is Auckland Central”. Transport Minister Michael Wood countered, saying that the National party “hates rail”. **STUFF.CO.NZ**

Auckland: The secret plan

Stuff Online reports that Auckland Transport hatched a plan in 2014 to create a single entity to manage and maintain the city's rail network as well as own and control the freight and passenger services within the city.

Documents for “Project Ridge”, which *Stuff* reports were deliberately withheld from the media outlet for nearly two years, showed that a joint venture, Joint Rail Operating Company, would be formed between AT and KiwiRail, with a minority shareholding given to New Zealand Transport Agency. The Plan would have the network geared up to the needs of commuter rail (the dominant user), which demands a higher standard of track and infrastructure.

A business case developed by consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2014 said “Auckland's rail network is currently a freight network that also services passengers, rather than a passenger network that also services freight. Significant recent and ongoing investment is required to transform the network to the higher standard necessary for passenger transport”.

In recent years, as regular *Table Talk* readers will know, AT has spent several hundred million dollars in essential infrastructure works to keep services running, which has also delivered a rolling calendar of disruption to rail commuter journeys in the past two years.

National transport minister, Michael Wood, is convening a joint governance group meeting with the heads of KiwiRail, AT and Greater Wellington Regional Council to sort through frustrations between the agencies, for example AT's claim for compensation from KiwiRail (*Table Talk*, October 2021, page 7). The minister also said that a Project Ridge-style restructure “isn't a live option that is on the table at the moment”. However, the government would revive its intention to fundamentally review the KiwiRail structure, initially

due in 2020, but delayed by the pandemic, “in terms of how we treat the network, how we look at freight, how we look at commuters, how we look at the fact that KiwiRail owns the asset and is also the operator”, said Mr Wood. *STUFF.CO.NZ*

Wellington: Return to full timetable

The city's return to COVID-19 level 2 alert on Wednesday 8 September, saw Metlink bus services resume their normal weekday timetables, after running on a rolling Saturday timetable on Mondays to Saturdays during the previous level 4 lockdown. Excluding dedicated school services, passengers on all revenue services must be seated on buses, fitted face masks are mandatory, front-door boarding and cash payments for fares have been reintroduced. *THE DOMINION POST*

INTERNATIONAL

UK: Night Tube resumes

London's Night Tube finally has a restart date, 27 November, following what will end up being a 20-month suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the restart will initially only see services resume on the Central and Victoria lines. Meanwhile, Transport for London said there was no easy start date for Night Overground services, which remain suspended. *PAUL BROWN, TRANSPORT FOR LONDON*

UK: Northern line extension

Transport for London opened the new 3-kilometre Northern Tube line extension from Kennington to Nine Elms and Battersea Power Station on Monday 20 September, the first new stations on the line for 80 years. The new stations enjoy a peak service of six trains per hour (tph) and off-peak service of 5tph, which are set to double by mid-next year. *TRANSPORT FOR LONDON*



New Kennington to Battersea Power Station Tube extension (source: Transport for London).

UK: Govt takes over Govia contract

Under arrangements previously reported in *Table Talk*, the national government has again pulled the lever on becoming the “operator of last resort” (OLR) after one operator failed to declare £25 million in taxpayer funding which should have been returned to the government.

Govia, owned by Go-Ahead Group (65 per cent) and Keolis (35 per cent), has been stripped of its 'Southeastern' contract, with the Department of Transport assuming control from 02:00 on Sunday, 17 October.

The franchise operates services in the south-east of Britain, including London, Kent, East Sussex, and also operates the High Speed 1 line with nearly 400 trains and 4,000 employees.

Govia, which had operated the franchise since 2006, faced threats over its government contract in 2018 after a period of poor service reliability.

The OLR arrangement, where services are operated by a government company, called Operator Of Last Resort, already operates the London North Eastern Railway and Northern contracts. Its chief executive, Robin Gisby, said it has “a very experienced team... and there are many exciting improvements for passengers to look forward to, including the continued roll-out of new trains”. *DAILY MAIL, RAIL NEWS*

ENDS

BUS & COACH NEWS

QUEENSLAND



Northshore Hamilton adjustments

Effective from Monday 8 November, TransLink routes 302-5 will have timetable changes, as follows:

- Peak-period route **302** will be curtailed to only operate Brisbane City-Fison Street East, Eagle Farm. Pinkenba passengers will continue to have access to bus route 303 (Doomben station-Myrtle town), and can interchange at Eagle Farm/ Gateway stop on Kingsford Smith Drive. Some timing changes will also be made to trips.
- Route **303** has timing changes to trips.

- Route **304** has a routing change to operate along Racecourse Road, will no longer service Doomben station, and run half-hourly in the weekday inter-peak period. Timing changes will also occur to trips, with off-peak services towards the city enabling transfer onto route 300 services.
- Route **305** will be extended to Northshore Ferry Terminal via Nudgee Road, and has timing changes to trips.

This update addresses passenger feedback made to TransLink and provides a high-frequency service from Northshore Hamilton into Brisbane City, with 50 extra trips for locals each weekday across the four routes.
TRANSLINK

Further timetable adjustments

Effective from Tuesday 5 October, route 260 was withdrawn, with all trips subsumed into existing route **262**, and all trips now providing a “consistent all-day service in both directions” between Capalaba and Griffith University (Mount Gravatt). Services on the upgraded 262 operate hourly weekdays (06:30-18:30), Saturdays (08:30-17:30) and Sundays (08:30-16:30).

A new trip has also been provided on weekdays, departing Capalaba at 18:27 for Eight Mile Plains station.

TransLink said benefits would include a 30-minute service frequency along Gardner Road when combined with route 280, two new Gardner Road bus stops to meet passenger demand, more trips servicing Capalaba and Alexandra Hills residential areas, more services for local schools, ability to transfer at either Griffith University or Upper Mount Gravatt stations to travel to the University's Nathan Campus (134, 135, 155) or QEII Hospital (120, 125, 598, 599).

A new timetable for routes 261, 262 and 299 has been issued from this date.

Meanwhile, Saturday services have been added for two routes:

- From 18 September, route **535** has two-hourly services operating across the daytime (funded by developers of Greater Flagstone Priority Development Area; patronage and service levels will be monitored), and
- From 9 October, route **531** has two-hourly services operating 08:00-18:00.

TRANSLINK

Ekka Day

The Ekka Day public holiday, postponed from earlier in the year due to COVID-19 lockdown, saw bus services adjusted across the city on Friday, 29 October.

- Clarks Logan City Bus, Park Ridge, Transdev Queensland, Westside, and Sunshine Coast

Sunbus routes continued to operate to a **weekday** timetable.

- Brisbane City Council, Caboolture, Hornibrook, Kangaroo and Thompson routes operated to a **Sunday/public holiday** timetable.
- Brisbane Bus Lines and Mount Gravatt Bus Service routes **did not operate**.

Meanwhile, QR trains ran to the Saturday timetable, and ferries to the Sunday/public holiday timetable.

TRANSLINK

NEW SOUTH WALES



Sydney Service Changes

Effective from Sunday 18 October, route and timetable adjustments were made, affecting Western, North Shore and North-west Sydney bus routes. The key changes are as follows:

- Route **610X** weekday peak-hour services between Kellyville and Castle Hill no longer run; all services now only operate between Castle Hill and the City. Routes 601, 626, 632, 633 and 715 are available for affected passengers, with links to Sydney Metro or other bus routes at either Hills Showground or Castle Hill stations. Weekday early morning and off-peak frequency has been improved to every 10 minutes. Additional weekend early morning and evening trips have been provided, while minor timing adjustments made across the week “to better reflect traffic conditions”. An additional 30 trips are timetabled across the week.
- Route 607N (City to Tallawong) trips have been curtailed to only operate City-Bella Vista and integrated into route **607X**. Route 607X weekend service frequency is improved to every 15 mins. Affected passengers from the city that travel past Bella Vista can use NightRide route N92 (City to Tallawong).
- **611** (Macquarie Park to Blacktown) - service frequency on Sundays improved to every 15 mins. An additional 40 trips are timetabled across the week.
- **619** (Macquarie Park to Castle Hill). Changes to service hours during weekday morning and afternoon peaks, with a reduction in shoulder-peak trips. Service frequency maintained during the busiest part of the AM & PM peaks.
- New route **643** (Rouse Hill-Gables via Box Hill) - operates every 30 mins on weekdays and weekends, providing bus services for newly developed areas of Box Hill in the Mount

Carmel Drive and Brahman Road area. 440 trips have been timetabled across the week.

- Busways route **779** (St Marys-Erskine Park) has been extended to Kemps Creek, and made a full-time service with extended operating hours, to support the new Oakdale West precinct and new employment areas in Erskine Park and Kemps Creek. An additional 170 trips are timetabled across the week.

Routes **141, 193, 280** and **619** have also incurred timetable changes “to better reflect traffic conditions”, while routes **141, 193, 280, 602X, 607X, 611, 612X, 613X, 614X, 615X, 616X, 619, 620X, 622, 642X, 652X** had minor timing adjustments. *Report by HILAIRE FRASER, source TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

Lockdown lifts

With the state's successful attainment of 70 per cent double-dose vaccination of people aged 16 and over, the state government stayed true to its word, reducing many social restrictions from Monday, 11 October. The state's public transport network resumed operating to a weekday timetable from the same date. With schools re-opening on Monday, 18 October and 25 October (depending on the grade), bus companies ran a school holiday timetable for the week commencing 11 October.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



ACT Budget 2021/22

The territory government finally handed down its 2021/22 budget on 6 October, delayed from the initial 31 August date by the latest COVID-19 outbreak.

Posting the territory's largest-ever deficit, the government will spend \$5 billion over five years on infrastructure projects including transport, hospitals, schools and community facilities.

The **existing** transport-related projects securing funding are:

- Building Light Rail to Woden and Raising London Circuit (\$43.2 million),
- CIT Woden Campus and Bus Interchange (\$39m),
- Better buses to support the new bus network (\$19.8m),
- Woden Bus Depot Augmentation (\$3.78m),
- Future Bus Network (\$3.21m),
- New Mitchell Light Rail Stop (\$2.07m),
- Supporting more Canberrans to Park and Ride (\$1.91m),

- Strengthening infrastructure supporting Canberra's new public transport network (\$1.65m),
- Real-Time Passenger Information System (\$1.56m),
- Planning and design for a zero emissions bus network (\$780,000),
- Better public transport infrastructure for Canberra (\$674,000),
- Delivering a smart technology ticketing system for Canberra's integrated public transport network (\$500,000),
- Integrated bus and light rail ticketing (\$97,000).

The **new** projects securing funding are 'Growing the public transport network' (\$1.8m), and 'Woden Public Transport Stops' (\$1m). As part of the government's *Better Infrastructure Fund*, 'Accessible Bus Stops' has been allocated \$1.57m. *THE CANBERRA TIMES, ACT GOVERNMENT*

VICTORIA



Disruption: Transdev Melbourne

Transdev Melbourne continues to be affected by its bus drivers testing positive to COVID-19, with services running from Doncaster and North Fitzroy depots severely disrupted in the second and third weeks of October. Many routes ran to either a 30 or 60 minute frequency. Some routes to Fishermans Bend were cancelled altogether. *STEVEN HABY*

Metropolitan Bus Franchise awarded

Kinetic will take over from Transdev Melbourne as operator of the Melbourne Bus Franchise from 31 January next year, to run for seven years, with an option to extend until June 2031. Curiously, the state government media release announcing the winning tenderer said that Kinetic would operate the franchise right through to 2031. According to the state government tender documentation, the \$2.3 billion contract includes 49 commuter bus routes, 134 school bus routes, 1,064 bus drivers, another 203 full-time equivalent employees, 527 buses, six bus depots, and an operational control centre.

Kinetic has also agreed to introduce 36 electric buses into the Melbourne fleet by mid-2025, while the state government claims the new contract will also deliver “an uplift in operational performance”, although how this would be achieved from an already privatised operation with a global operator was not specified. *ROSS MORRISON, VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT*



Night Network Bus routes

Overnight bus services on weekends

For more information visit ptv.vic.gov.au/nightnetwork or by scanning the QR code



WESTERN REGION

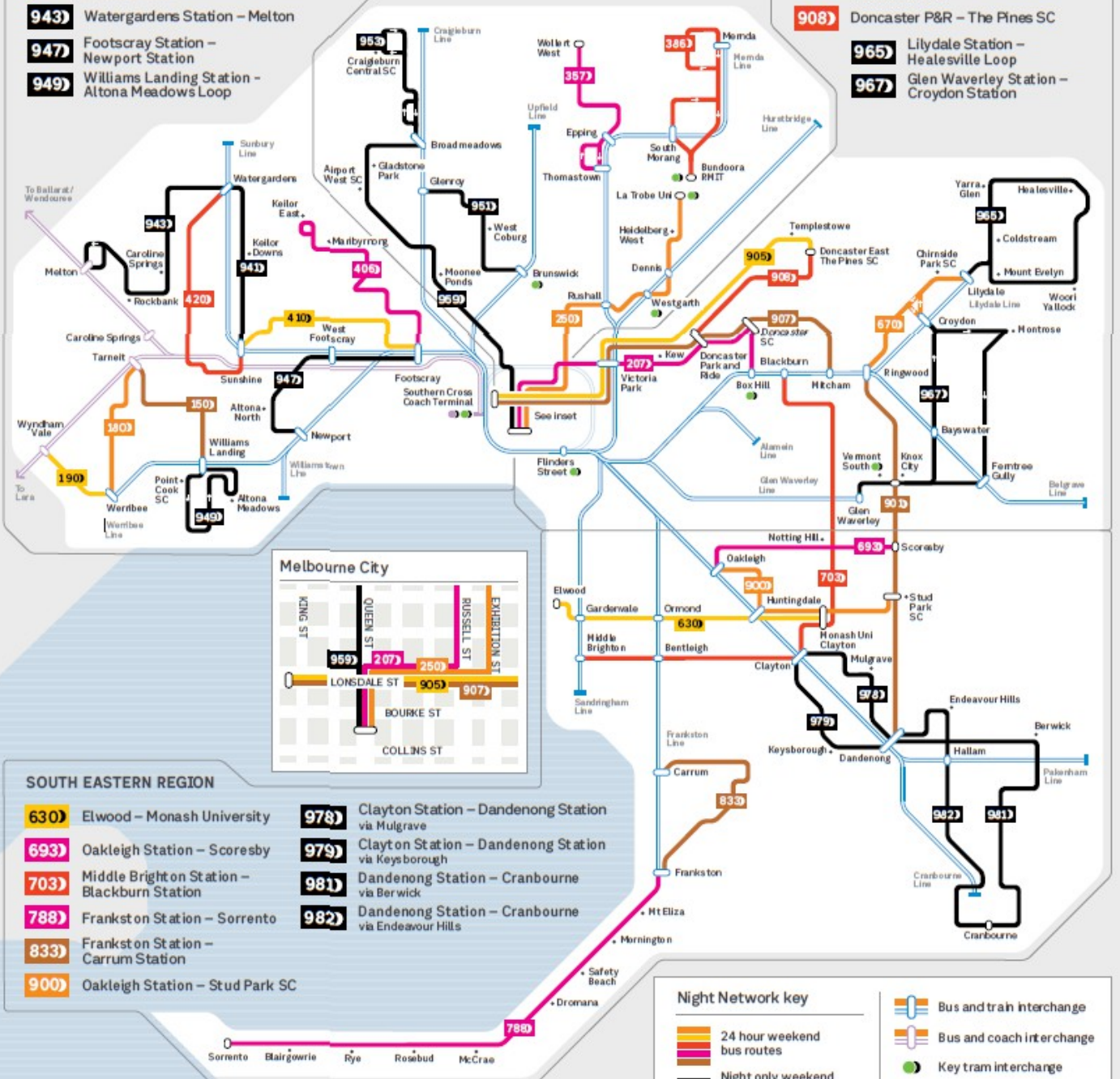
- 150** Williams Landing Station – Tarneit Station
- 180** Werribee Station – Tarneit Station
- 190** Werribee Station – Wyndham Vale Station
- 406** Keilor East – Footscray Station
- 410** Sunshine Station – Footscray Station
- 420** Sunshine Station – Watergardens Station via Deer Park
- 941** Sunshine Station – Watergardens Station via Keilor Downs
- 943** Watergardens Station – Melton
- 947** Footscray Station – Newport Station
- 949** Williams Landing Station – Altona Meadows Loop

NORTHERN REGION

- 250** City – La Trobe University
- 357** Thomastown Station – Wollert West
- 386** Mernda Station – Bundoora RMIT
- 951** Brunswick Station – Glenroy Station
- 953** Broadmeadows Station – Craigieburn
- 959** City – Broadmeadows Station via Airport West

EASTERN REGION

- 207** City – Doncaster SC – Box Hill
- 670** Ringwood Station – Lilydale Station
- 703** Middle Brighton Station – Blackburn Station
- 900** Oakleigh Station – Stud Park SC
- 901** Ringwood Station – Dandenong Station
- 905** City – The Pines SC
- 907** City – Mitcham Station via Doncaster P&R
- 908** Doncaster P&R – The Pines SC
- 965** Lilydale Station – Healesville Loop
- 967** Glen Waverley Station – Croydon Station



SOUTH EASTERN REGION

- 630** Elwood – Monash University
- 693** Oakleigh Station – Scoresby
- 703** Middle Brighton Station – Blackburn Station
- 788** Frankston Station – Sorrento
- 833** Frankston Station – Carrum Station
- 900** Oakleigh Station – Stud Park SC
- 978** Clayton Station – Dandenong Station via Mulgrave
- 979** Clayton Station – Dandenong Station via Keysborough
- 981** Dandenong Station – Cranbourne via Berwick
- 982** Dandenong Station – Cranbourne via Endeavour Hills

Night Network key

- Bus and train interchange
- 24 hour weekend bus routes
- Night only weekend bus routes
- Bus route interchange
- Bus and coach interchange
- Key tram interchange
- City coach terminal Only metropolitan area coach services shown



Perth service changes

Effective from Sunday 10 October, timetable amendments were made to dozens of the city's bus routes, as follows:

Route 84

- The 23:46 Saturday trip to Perth Busport was withdrawn due to poor patronage.

Routes 219, 240, and 241

- Underwent time changes to accommodate the ongoing road works within the Kelmscott Town Centre.

Route 345

- Underwent time changes to improve connections with Route 66 services at Morley Bus Station.
- Some trips are now linked so passengers can stay on the same bus through Morley Bus Station.

Route 375

- Underwent time changes.
- Also, the Saturday deviations via Bloodwood Drive were removed due to low patronage.

Routes 376, 377, 378, and 386

- Underwent time changes.
- Also, trips on weekends no longer deviate via Newpark Shopping Centre due to low patronage.
- Route 386 still operates the same number of trips on weekends. On weekdays, selected trips continue to deviate to Newpark Shopping Centre.

Route 391

- Underwent time changes.
- The trip departing from Joondalup station on Wednesdays at 3.18pm and on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 3.38pm has been withdrawn due to poor patronage.

Route 425

- Underwent time changes
- Weekend service frequency upgraded with a bus every 15 minutes between Stirling station and Karrinyup Bus Station. These additional trips have been funded by Karrinyup Shopping Centre.

Routes 443 and 444

- For both routes, one trip departing Warwick station between 17:00 and 18:00 has been withdrawn.

Route 449

- Underwent time changes
- The trip departing John Septimus Roe Mirrabooka Campus on school days will now operate express up to the corner of Mirrabooka Av and Beach Rd.

Route 480

- Underwent time changes
- At Clarkson station, buses now depart from Stand 1.

Route 481

- Underwent time changes
- At Clarkson station, buses now depart from Stand 6.

Route 594

- Underwent time changes.
- Due to changes to the road configuration, there has been a route adjustment in Dawesville. While the service still serves the same roads, buses now run anti-clockwise around Dawesville East at all times.

Meanwhile, routes **15, 81, 82, 83, 85, 219, 240, 241, 343, 345, 370, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 390, 402, 403, 404, 407, 410, 412, 413, 414, 415, 421, 422, 423, 424, 427, 428, 441, 442, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 470, 471, 473, 474, 482, 483, 484, 490, 491, 970 and 990** underwent time changes to trips. *Report by HILAIRE FRASER, source TRANSPERTH*

Grand Final arrangements

Perth had a unique opportunity to host the AFL Grand Final in the last Saturday of September. In addition, the lack of widespread COVID-19 cases in the days leading up to the match gave the state government the encouragement to allow the match at Optus Stadium to go ahead with a full capacity crowd.

Pre-match, Transperth advised buses "frequently" operated on the following routes:

- **661** (CBD Shuttle) – departed St Georges Terrace before William Street 13:52-16:47.
- **650** – departed Karrinyup Bus Station, Stand Four, 13:37-16:32, with additional services from Adelaide Tce before Hill St.
- **652** – departed Mirrabooka Bus Station, Station 12, 13:39-16:34, with additional services from Dianella Plaza.

- **653** – departed Morley Bus Station, Stand Six, 13:44-16:39, with additional services from Beaufort St after Stuart St stop.
- **654** – departed Ellenbrook Town Centre 13:22-16:17, with additional services from Bassendean station.
- **655** – departed Kalamunda Bus Station, Stand Three, 13:35-16:30.
- **656** – departed Livingston Marketplace 13:33-16:28, with additional services from Bentley Plaza.
- **657** – departed Curtin University Bus Station, Stand Six, 13:50-16:40.
- **658** – departed Hamilton Hill Hall 13:24-16:19, with additional services from South St after Yarrick St and Booragoon Bus Station.
- **659** – departed Fremantle station, Stand Two, 13:34-16:29, with additional services from Melville Plaza, Canning Bridge station, and Canning Highway before Norton St stop.

All routes stopped at “designated Stadium stops”, available on the Transperth website.

Post-match, services on each of the above routes operated for the two hours following the final siren, departing Stadium Bus Station - route 659 from Stands 1-3, 658 from Stands 4-5, 655 from Stands 6-7, 657 from Stands 8-9, 656 from Stands 10-11, 654 from Stands 12-13, 652 from Stands 14-15, 653 from Stands 16-17, 661 from Stand 18, 650 from Stands 19-21).

See 'Rail News' for an overview of train arrangements on this day. *ROSS MORRISON, TRANSPERTH*

Proposed bus network with Airport Line

Transperth has released details of the proposed Airport Line-supporting bus network, with consultation open to Friday, 19 November. The new twin-bored tunnel railway line will branch from the Midland Line after Bayswater station, cross Swan River, then have stations at Redcliffe, Airport Central and High Wycombe.

Bus interchanges will be provided at Redcliffe and High Wycombe stations. Route numbers 270 to 278 have been revived to cover new routes. Previously, these route numbers were used in Perth’s northern suburbs prior to the use of 400 series numbers with the commencement of the Joondalup Line bus network.

The new network will comprise the following routes:

- **38** (Perth-Cloverdale via Wright St) - weekday inter-peak frequency increased from hourly to

every 15 minutes, replacing route 288 (Perth-Forrestfield) along Wright St.

- **39** (Perth-Redcliffe station) – route extended from Grand Parade to Redcliffe station (Monday-Friday inter-peak frequency 30 mins).
- New route **270** (Perth-High Wycombe station via Forrestfield) - replaces routes 286/7/8 (Perth-Forrestfield) (Inter-peak frequency 30 mins).
- New route **271** (High Wycombe station-Edinburgh Village, Forrestfield) – replaces routes 286/7/8 through Forrestfield North (Inter-peak frequency 30 mins).
- New route **273** (Kalamunda-Kalamunda East Loop) - replaces 282/3 through Kalamunda East (Inter-peak frequency 60 mins).
- **274** (Kalamunda-Gooseberry Hill) – renumbered from 291 (two trips per direction).
- New route **275** (High Wycombe station-Walliston via Kalamunda Rd) - replaces the eastern section of routes 295/9 (Perth-Walliston) (Inter-peak frequency 30 mins).
- New route **276** (High Wycombe station-Kalamunda via Gooseberry Hill Rd) - replaces the eastern section of route 296 (Perth-Kalamunda) (Inter-peak frequency 30 mins).
- New route **277** (High Wycombe station-Midland station via Midland Rd) - replaces the northern sections of routes 294 (Midland-Westfield Carousel), and 297 (Midland-Kalamunda) (Inter-peak frequency 30 mins)
- New route **278** (High Wycombe station-Midland station via Stirling Crescent) (Inter-peak frequency 30 mins).
- **279** (Maddington-Kalamunda) – This school service remains unchanged.
- New route **280** (High Wycombe Station-Westfield Carousel via Forrestfield) – replaces the southern section of 294 (Midland-Westfield Carousel) (Inter-peak frequency 30 mins).
- **281** (Forrestfield-Lesmurdie) – This school service remains unchanged.
- **282** (Oats St station-Kalamunda via Grove Rd) – outside peak periods, this route no longer runs through to Perth (Inter-peak freq. hourly).
- **283** (Oats St station-Kalamunda via Lesmurdie Rd) – outside peak periods, this route no longer runs through to Perth (Inter-peak frequency hourly).
- **284** (Belmont-Curtin University) – remains unchanged (Inter-peak frequency 120 mins).

- **285** (Oats St station-Kewdale) – This peak service remains unchanged.
- New route **290** (Redcliffe station-Midland station via Guildford) – replaces the northern section of route 36 (Perth-Midland) (Inter-peak frequency 60 mins).
- New route **291** (Redcliffe station-Midland station via South Guildford) – replaces route 304 (Midland-South Guildford) (Inter-peak frequency 60 mins).
- **293** (Redcliffe station-High Wycombe station via Abernethy Rd) - Previously operating Perth-Kewdale, this peak service also replaces the northern section of 298 (Perth-Maida Vale).
- **307** (Midland station-Kalamunda via Helena Valley) – Extended from Helena Valley to Kalamunda (Inter-peak frequency 90 mins).
- **935** (Kings Park-Redcliffe station) – previously operated Kings Park-Perth Airport (Inter-peak frequency 10 mins).
- New route **940** (Perth-Redcliffe station via Great Eastern Highway) - replaces routes 36 (Perth-Midland), 40/380 (Perth-Airport), 295/9 (Perth-Walliston), and 296 (Perth-Kalamunda along Great Eastern Hwy) (Inter-peak frequency 10 mins).
- **998** CircleRoute Clockwise - remains unchanged (Inter-peak frequency 15 mins).
- **999** CircleRoute Anti-clockwise - remains unchanged (Inter-peak frequency 15 mins).

Report by **HILAIRE FRASER**, source **TRANSPERTH**

NEW ZEALAND



Palmerston North review

Palmerston North authorities are conducting a review of local bus operations, to help prepare for expected population growth. The existing contract, with Transit, expires in November 2023.

According to Council, recent feedback has said that “the current [25-year-old] network does not meet these [simple, connected, frequent and fast] requirements”. The review examined systems in other cities across the country and internationally, then narrowed down the many options through workshops with stakeholders.

Council has put two options on the table as part of the review, both include binning the existing looped routes in favour of direct linear routes:

- Option 1 – more routes, but less frequent peak services (half-hourly all day).
- Option 2 – fewer routes, but more frequent peak services (every 15 minutes in peak, half-hourly at other times). This would also inevitably mean longer walk-up times for some residents.

Both options include extended operating hours of 06:30-20:00 Sundays to Wednesdays and 06:30-21:00 Thursdays to Saturdays, route coverage extended into the Longburn area to cater for residential development, and additional daily trips to/from Ashhurst.

Massey University services would also be simplified to complement the new network, with a direct route to/from the city every 15 minutes in peak times, and half-hourly outside peak, and other routes operating to/from the university at key times, as well as year-round timetables and a plan for additional buses to be provided to boost capacity at busy times of the tertiary year.

Councillor Brent Barrett, said “people are pretty locked into cars because the bus system isn't delivering real choice [at the moment]”. **MANAWATU STANDARD, HORIZONS REGIONAL COUNCIL**

Palmerston North: Feilding service

Horizons Regional Council has confirmed that it will finally establish a dedicated Feilding loop bus service next year, to be operated by existing commuter bus operator Uzabus. It follows lengthy deliberation by Council on whether they should establish the dedicated loop or instead expand the pre-existing Feilding-Palmerston North commuter service.

The Feilding-Palmerston North commuter route does a 15-minute clockwise loop around Feilding (see map next page) before running down to Palmerston North city centre with a variable 30 to 60 minute peak frequency and 90-minute daytime off-peak service on weekdays. Four trips operate on Saturdays and most public holidays in each direction.

The new loop service was initially proposed to begin in March 2021, however lack of funds for a new bus and ticketing system installation delayed the plan.

Manawatu Mayor, Helen Worboys, said she hoped it would start as a free service to encourage use before joining the Bee Card ticketing system. However, she also previously sounded concern over whether running both the dedicated loop service and the existing commuter route bus would be financially sustainable, with consideration taken to curtail the existing commuter route on the Feilding side. *(Next page >)*



FEILDING TO PALMERSTON NORTH ROUTE
 Manchester Square, Kimbolton Rd, South St, West St, King St, Grey St, Manchester St, West St, North St, Duke St, Derby St, Marlborough St, North St, Kimbolton Rd, Aorangi St, Waugh's Rd, Campbell Rd, Stony Creek Rd, Cleveley Line, Railway Rd, Airport Drive, Milson Line, Ruahine St, Grey St, Princess St, Main St Terminal

* Services to and from Palmerston North Girls High School and Boys High run via Campbell Rd and do not travel via Duke St or the Airport
 Shaded services operate during school term only
 Times in **BOLD** are scheduled, all other times are approximate.



PALMERSTON NORTH TO FEILDING ROUTE
 Main St Terminal, Princess St, Grey St, Rangitikei St, Featherston St, Ruahine St, Milson Line, Airport Dr, Railway Rd, Cleveley Line, Stony Creek Rd, Campbell Rd, Waugh's Rd, Aorangi St, Eye St, Manchester St, Manchester Square, Kimbolton Rd, South St, King St, Grey St, Manchester St, West St, North St, Duke St, Serby St, Marlborough St, North St, Kimbolton Rd, Aorangi St

* Services to and from Palmerston North Girls High School and Boys High run via Campbell Rd and do not travel via Duke St or the Airport
 Shaded services operate during school term only
 Times in **BOLD** are scheduled, all other times are approximate.



Map of existing Feilding-Palmerston North commuter bus route operated by Uzabus (source: Horizons Regional Council).



New Feilding loop map (source: Manawatu Std/Horizons RC).

Maps for both routes are provided with this article, showing the new dedicated bus loop will mostly follow the route taken by the pre-existing commuter service, with three deviations.

For the impending clockwise loop service, Council will acquire a 40-45 seater bus and install infrastructure prior to the service commencing in the new year. **MANAWATU STANDARD (2)**

Ritchies sold

A majority stake in bus and coach operator Ritchies Transport was sold to international private investment fund Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR) in August. Ritchies Transport company holds over 1,600 vehicles and 42 depots. However, the Ritchie family will continue to be involved in the business, with a smaller stake in the business, and Andrew Ritchie to be appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer, replacing Glenn Ritchie by way of retirement. Final government approvals for the purchase are expected by the end of the year. **ABC MAGAZINE**

ENDS

FERRY & SHIP NEWS

NEW SOUTH WALES



Fleet renewal

Sydney's Queenscliff ferry, part of the historic Freshwater class, was retired on Wednesday, 13 October. A new timetable was introduced by Harbour City Ferries, effective from Saturday 9 October. President Hilaire Fraser provides an overview of the timetable changes:

AIR NEWS

DOMESTIC



The traditional timetable allowed for departures from Circular Quay on-the-hour and half-hour and Manly at quarter-past and quarter-to-the-hour. The journey time was 30 minutes with a turnaround at each end of 15 minutes. The round trip took ninety minutes, and the timetable was fulfilled by three ferries with a spare.

The new hybrid timetable effective October 9 is provided by two "Freshwater" class ferries with departures from Circular Quay at five-past-the-hour and Manly at twenty-to-the-hour. Thus, with a thirty-minute journey time, a five-minute turnaround at Manly and a 55-minute turnaround at Circular Quay, the round trip takes two hours.

Two smaller "Emerald" class ferries will provide departures from Circular Quay on the half-hour and 10 minutes-to-the-hour, with departures from Manly on-the-hour and twenty-past-the-hour. The journey time is 22 minutes, and with a turnaround at each end of eight minutes, the round trip takes sixty minutes. Later the "Narrabeen" will be retired leaving one "Freshwater" class on the timetable. This will occur when the delayed arrival of the first of three new "Emerald" class ferries occurs. Three "Emerald" class ferries alone can provide a 20-minute service between Circular Quay and Manly. **HILAIRE FRASER, SYDNEY MORNING HERALD**

VICTORIA



Searoad Ferries' Queenscliff - Sorrento

The current ferry timetable provides a service every two hours on weekdays from 06:00 to 16:00 ex Queenscliff, and 07:00 to 17:00 ex Sorrento. Additional trips were added from Monday 25 October, with a 18:00 departure ex Queenscliff and 18:40 ex Sorrento. Weekend trips still operate every two hours. **STEVEN HABY**

Westernport Ferries' Stony Point - French Island - Cowes

A reduced timetable has been operating since Monday, 23 August (concludes Friday, 29 October) due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Sailings ex Stony Point weekdays are at 07:10, 07:50 (Cowes), 10:00, 11:50, 15:25, 16:15, 17:15 (Cowes) and 18:50. Saturday sailings are at 09:15, 10:00 (Cowes), 14:00 and 16:30 (Cowes). Sunday sailings are at 09:15, 10:15 (Cowes), 12:00, 15:20, 16:05 (Cowes) and 17:35. **STEVEN HABY**

ENDS

Qantas brings flights forward 1

The gradual release of Australia from pandemic state border restrictions has seen Qantas eager to bring forward its plans to re-introduce domestic flights. Plans of a December restart have now become November, with travel between New South Wales and Victoria re-opening on 5 November, and significantly increasing regional flights across New South Wales from 25 October to 40 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

However, Qantas said it would delay the restart of flights between Western Australia and New South Wales/Victoria by two months to 1 February next year, based on WA's continuing strong stance on its border. **ROSS MORRISON, QANTAS**

Rex extends stand down

On 27 September, Regional Express (Rex) announced an extension of their domestic services and reduction of regional flights until 31 October in light of continuing travel restrictions across the country.

The airline's board also said that the date of resumption for most services would match the date that its customer-facing staff are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The move means Rex staff stood down will remain in limbo for at least another month. **ROSS MORRISON, REGIONAL EXPRESS**

Jetstar starts ticket sale

Qantas offshoot, Jetstar, started a major ticket sale from 12:00 Tuesday, 28 September, with 500,000 discounted tickets, including 22,000 on offer for just \$22, with three travel periods available: October to December 2021, mid-January to mid-April 2022, and late April to late June 2022.

A number of states, namely Queensland and Western Australia, have threatened to keep their borders shut despite the National Cabinet resolution for state borders to reopen upon the country achieving 80 per cent double-vaccination of the 16+ population. **ROSS MORRISON, AUSTRALIAN AVIATION**

Bonza to launch in Australia

Low cost carrier Bonza is set to establish operations in Australia. Limited information is available but it is believed that services might start in 2022. **STEVEN HABY**

INTERNATIONAL



Qantas brings flights forward 2

The gradual release of Australia from pandemic restrictions has seen Qantas eager to bring forward its plans to re-introduce international flights. Plans of a mid/late December restart have now become mid-November, with thrice weekly flights Sydney-London and Sydney-Los Angeles to resume from 14 November. **SAMCHUI.COM**

SIA expands travel lane

Singapore Airlines (SIA) has extended its “vaccinated travel lane” flights (VTL), with 14 countries now included in quarantine-free travel to/from Singapore. Pre-travel and post-arrival PCR testing and proof of full vaccination is required. After arriving in Singapore, there will however be a period of isolation, intended to be up to 24 hours whilst arrival test results are pending.

Singapore's government added Brunei from 23:59 on 8 September, Germany and Canada from 23:59 on 18 October, while France, UK, USA, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Spain are due to be added from 23:59 on 14 November.

SIA announced it will operate VTL flights from Amsterdam, Barcelona, Copenhagen, London, Los Angeles, Milan, New York, Paris and Rome from the week commencing 19 October, and Seoul from 16 November. The London route in particular sees the re-introduction of the A380 by SIA, with daily flights from 18 November. **SAMCHUI.COM**

United takes Transatlantic on

United Airlines announced in October it plans to re-introduce some routes suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- By 26 March (Tokyo Haneda-Washington, DC/Los Angeles/New York Newark)
- April 23 (Chicago-Zurich daily, and Frankfurt-New York Newark second daily flights)

- April 29 (New York Newark and Nice, France daily)
- May 26 (San Francisco-Bangalore daily)

Between March and June next year, United also plans to expand existing services to Europe as follows:

- Denver-Munich extra daily flights from around March
- Chicago-Milan extra daily flights
- Washington, DC-Berlin daily flights
- extra daily flights New York Newark-Dublin and New York Newark-Rome.

It will also expand its flight network to a number of destinations, as follows:

- 5 May (Washington, DC-Amman, Jordan thrice weekly)
- 13 May (New York Newark-Ponta Delgada, Portugal daily using the new B737 MAX 8).
- 20 May (New York Newark-Bergen, Norway thrice weekly using B757-200)
- 2 June (New York Newark-Palma de Mallorca, Spain thrice weekly using B767-300ER)
- 9 June (New York Newark-Tenerife, Canary Islands thrice weekly using B757-200)

SAMCHUI.COM

US: Southwest cancellations

American budget airline, Southwest Airlines, cancelled over a thousand flights on the weekend of 9-10 October – with 27 per cent of its Sunday schedule affected – blaming a mix of poor weather conditions and air traffic control issues.

According to the airline, on Friday 8 October, poor weather resulted in the airline implementing a Federal Aviation Administration-imposed air traffic management program which caused the mass cancellations. Other airlines were reported to be nowhere near as severely impacted as Southwest. Southwest also said the disruption resulted in the airline needing to rectify the issue of displaced crew and passengers.

Southwest has recent form with staff shortages, fuelling the cancellation of hundreds of flights across the northern summer this year. Southwest responded to this issue by re-evaluating its forward schedule for October-December after the reopening of much of the country saw a surge in domestic flight demand, which left the airline strained. **NBC NEWS**

Kenya: More funding required

Kenya Airways has secured another equity injection from the national government, saying its operating costs are rising faster than the revenue it is receiving, making bankruptcy more likely as time passes. It will receive an amount to be provided in the next financial year as part of the new year budget. However, the exact amount to be provided has yet to be decided, with stakeholder hearings ongoing at the moment, and the Budget Bill not expected to be approved by parliament until 31 March.

The government has already injected \$US90 million (\$AU120m) into the airline to keep it going through the COVID-19 pandemic. Alarmingly, Airspace reported that the airline's chief executive, Allan Kilavuka, said "we are in a negative equity position, which means we are insolvent as an organisation". **AIRSPACE**

DRC: Aircraft purchase in disarray

A \$272 million contract to purchase four Embraer aircraft by Democratic Republic of Congo's national airline, Congo Airways, is in jeopardy after an audit report found instances of embezzlement and inflating of purchase invoices at the airline.

The contract would include two E195-E2s, and also included a previous deal for two smaller E190-E2 aircraft. The airline's chief executive officer, Desire Bantu, said previously about the deal, "We see an opportunity in our market and the crisis we are all facing for Congo Airways to emerge stronger – which is why we are not waiting to place this further order. These new jets will allow us to extend our passenger and cargo operations regionally to high demand destinations such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Abidjan. As we prepare for future success, we will have the flexibility, and the right-sized, most efficient aircraft, to serve our customers as the market returns." **AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE, SIMPLE FLYING**

ENDS

About *Table Talk*

Print ISSN 1038-3697, Online ISSN 2209-718X.

Table Talk is a monthly publication produced by the Australian Timetable Association Inc. (ATA) (Registration No. A0043673H) as a journal of record covering timetable and other transport-related news. The ATA also publishes **The Times** covering timetable history and analysis. ABN 74248483468.

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Membership of the Australian Timetable Association includes monthly copies of *The Times*, *Table Talk*, the ATA Distribution List of timetables, and Auction catalogues. The membership fee is Adult \$60, Student \$36, Family \$5 pa. All membership enquiries should be directed to our Membership Officer, Len Regan, at membership@timetable.org.au.

Back issues of *Table Talk* are available on our website, www.timetable.org.au, two months after print publication.

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Table Talk is a production of the **Australian Timetable Association**