



TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

No. 269, January 2015

ISSN 1038-3697 RRP \$4.95

Published by the Australian Timetable Association

www.austta.org.au

TOP TABLE TALK

Fast and even faster?

Geoff Lambert writes: In last month's edition of our sister magazine, the *Times*, we discussed briefly how railways awakened the interest of human society in the concept of "speed". By the middle of the nineteenth century, books were being written comparing and contrasting the speeds of trains all over the planet. This continued for decades and became a regular feature in magazines such as the UK-based *Railway Magazine*. For many years Don Steffee ran an "Annual Speed Survey" in *Trains* magazine. This became something of a cause celebre in Australia after the opening of the Melbourne-Albury standard gauge line—because some of the freight trains on it were the fastest scheduled freights outside the USA. This is hard to conceive of now, given the parlous state of that track in 2015.

There has been some debate recently in railfan circles as to where the fastest trains in Australia now run. The ATA is about to embark on its own Annual Speed Survey to settle this issue. We need your help in ferreting out these fastest (and perhaps the slowest?) trains. As with the Steffee survey, we will accept entries for speeds of freight, suburban, intercity and long distance passenger trains on a point-to-point basis (short distance) and on and end-to-end basis. It is perfectly allowable to go "off the rails" on this and to send in your selections for land, air and water by any mode.

Send your selections to Geoff Lambert, the Editor of the *Times* at G.Lambert@iinet.com.au.

The best and worst timetables?

Geoff Lambert writes: Another survey-cum-annual award we have been mulling over for ages is a "best and worst timetable" award. We often decry (and sometimes praise) timetables – not on the service which they portray, but the way in which they portray it. What is your "best and worst"? Send your selection to Geoff Lambert at the above address. To be fair, you should think, not only about how you (the "curmudgeonly collector"), perceive these timetables, but also how the target audience (the dreaded "customer") might perceive them. These days, the latter will surely involve phone-app timetables – few people these days look at "paper stuff". As with the speed survey, all modes are in the running for the awards.

We will try to produce these surveys and make our awards in about March or April for the calendar year immediately preceding, but will accept notable entries from the immediate, or even the distant, past. So, this summer, while you are minding the grandchildren at the beach, take along a bunch of timetables and a laptop and get to work. Keep an eye on the kids, though.

NEW RAIL TIMETABLES

Transport for NSW Passenger WTT 25 January 2015

Transport for NSW / Sydney Trains will introduce a new Passenger Working Timetable, designated version 4.0, from 25 January (weekends) and 26 January (weekdays).

Alterations are:

- Introduction of passenger trains Leppington-Glenfield-Liverpool - every 30 minutes every day. The first service departs Leppington at 0506, and the last departs Liverpool at 2358,
- Altered train numbering, stabling arrangements and revised train rosters for the majority of Sector 2 and selected Sector 3 services
- Deployment of a 4 car Millennium set to the Carlingford line on weekends
- Revised standby train arrangements
- Stabling of sets at Leppington and Auburn Stabling Yards
- Increased Waratah running
- Revised crew training train arrangements at Campbelltown and Auburn Stabling Yard
- Minor passenger time alterations on selected services at various stations
- Altered timing and routing of selected Sector 3 services between Homebush and St Marys
- Revised running times for Blue Mountain services

- Sutherland platform working alterations
- Mechanised Track Patrol and South Coast Hi-Rail alterations
- Kiama platform working alterations, and
- Amended consist of *Indian Pacific* to reflect current length.

It is believed another new WTT may be issued effective from 22 February.

Transport for NSW Freight WTT 25 January 2015

Transport for NSW will introduce a new Sydney area Freight Working Timetable from 25 January (weekends) and 26 January (weekdays).

It is believed another new WTT may be issued effective from 22 February.

ARTC WTT 25 January 2015

ARTC will introduce a new Working Timetable from 25 January 2015. The WTT is on their website at <http://www.artc.com.au/Content.aspx?p=161>

It is believed another new WTT may be issued effective late March.

NSW Country Regional Network WTT 25 January 2015

John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network will introduce a new Working Timetable from 25 January 2015. There are a number of alterations to freight trains in the

NSW Western area (summarised in their Country Train Notice 5-2015). The WTT is on their website at www.jhrcrn.com.au/Documents.asp?ID=67

It is believed another new WTT may be issued effective late March.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Aurizon: Bauhinia line electrified

Electrification of the Bauhinia line from Rangal south to Rolleston mine, 107 km, part of the Blackwater coal network, was completed in late December 2014.

Galilee basin railway

The Queensland government is giving the Indian conglomerate Adani more time to finalise a rail deal for its massive coal mine in the Galilee Basin. In November Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney announced a tight timetable for locking in a final agreement with Adani, which would see the Queensland government taking a temporary minority share in the 300-km rail line. Mr Seeney has now said the deadlines were flexible. Some industry observers have questioned whether Adani can meet its own deadline of beginning construction work on the rail line in the first quarter of 2015. Adani was yet to secure mining leases for its proposed Carmichael coal mine. A Land Court hearing is scheduled to run for five weeks from 30 March.

QR CityTrain: Significant closedown

Between 25 and 29 December, trains between Strathpine and Caboolture were replaced by buses. Works were carried out for the new Petrie to Kippa-Ring line (Moreton Bay rail link), a track slew at Petrie, stormwater drainage work at Lawnton, Petrie platform modifications, Gympie Road bridge straightening and noise barriers installation.

Broadbeach Monorail re-opened

The Broadbeach Monorail from Jupiter's Casino to the Oasis Shopping Centre, 1.3 km, re-opened from Saturday 20 December. It had been closed since February for safety upgrades. It originally opened in 1989. It is operated by the Oasis Shopping Centre. The monorail is close to the southern terminus of the new Gold Coast tramway.

ARTC: Communications system

On 1 December the ARTC completed conversion of its train communications system to a digital radio system, when the last two analogue transmitters were turned off. This completes a seven year project. The NTCS project leverages the Telstra NextG mobile network and provides 100% coverage with the assistance of satellite communications. The project was funded by the Federal Government. While the physical network, including mobile communications towers and satellites, has been in place since June 2010, the retrofitting and testing of ICE (In-cab Communications Equipment) units across the locomotive fleet and multiple operators have been completed. Currently 900 trains with ICE units operate across the country; 704 units were supplied by ARTC as part of the NTCS project.

The NTCS solution also provides a reliable, high speed data network to support existing and future data intensive applications. Using the Telstra NextG, applications such as safe travelling distance technology (proximity alerting), real-time locomotive tracking, sophisticated track and wayside monitoring technology, track awareness support systems and the next generation of ARTC freight management, the Advanced Train Management System (ATMS), have all been able to be tested.

NTCS provides:

- A single network for communications between train control, trains, trackside workers and wayside equipment

- The In-Train Communications Equipment (ICE): the design, and supply of 704 units for train operating companies to install on their motive power units
- Support for both routine and emergency operations
- Seamless coverage across the entire Interstate and Hunter Valley Rail Networks
- Dual redundant communications media – NextG as the primary medium and Iridium satellite as the secondary media
- Communications interoperability with non-ARTC train control areas
- Both voice and data communication support services, at agreed service levels
- GPS tracking
- A communications backbone for data-centric train management systems.

Around 1024 Telstra Mobile sites form part of the communications network along ARTC's network. Telstra provided an additional 81 radio sites along the rail corridor comprising 70 macro base stations and 11 radio fitted tunnels.

Geoff Lambert writes: The predecessor of the NTCS was "CountryNet", invented by John Aitken and set up in NSW by Freight Rail in 1996. This used a mixture of GPS, in-house radio, Telstra CDMA and Optusnet satellite phones, coordinated on the locos by a DOS computer.

When ARTC took over the NSW lease it inherited this system. From that time, until about mid-2013, there was a "public front-end" (CTRLS) to this system where users could track trains across NSW. It had no train control functions, it was merely a tracking system. Railfan photographers who knew the address of this "dark site" used it to chase trains.

ARTC decided to migrate this system to a more modern, nation-wide version based on Telstra's NextG network and its Iridium low-orbit satellite phone service. The introduction of this service was almost infinitely prolonged, but is now in place. ARTC have hinted that they might make the NTCS Train Tracker (4TRAK) publicly available, but this has not yet happened. It is available to locomotive crews and managers of rail operating companies – but they can only follow their own trains.

For further information on both CTRLS and NTCS, see my article "Watching the Trains Go By" in the February 2012 issue of the *Times*.

ARTC: Hexham Relief Roads project completed

The Hexham Relief Roads were brought into use in early December. Each track is over two kms in length and holds trains with two or three locomotives and up to 92 wagons. This will provide options to re-sequence trains and manage train movements in the event of coal chain breakdowns or delays, increasing network reliability. Stage 2 of the project will be completed in mid-2015.

NSW Train Link: Newcastle closure chaos

A brochure issued by the NSW government indicates that replacement buses will operate on new route 110 every 10-15 minutes between Hamilton and Newcastle but:

- Buses leave Newcastle station 25 minutes before train departure time from Hamilton (train time is 6 mins) - so the journey from Newcastle has been lengthened by around 18-19 mins.
- Buses arrive on the north side of Beaumont St level crossing (Hamilton) to deposit passengers to catch a train from the south side platform, while passengers arriving by train will arrive on the north side platform but have to transfer to a bus leaving from the south side of the line
- A minor plus is that a new "station" has been created at Queens Wharf opposite the Stockton ferry terminal providing better coordination, and
- The bus charges fares as if it was a train.

An interim NSW Parliamentary inquiry report issued on 18 December into Newcastle planning decisions said the city's heavy rail line should stay put, until other options are looked at. The government said any delay in cutting the line costs \$220,000 a week. But committee chairman Fred Nile said the truncation should not proceed as planned until there's a peer-reviewed report. There are eight recommendations, including that if a decision is made to truncate the line it should stay put until construction of a light rail service starts. It says only low scale development should be allowed on the vacant rail corridor. Reverend Nile said the government should thoroughly consider the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of alternative options to remove and retain the existing rail line. The interim report said other options include sinking the line, which the committee was told would cost half the amount of truncation. The report said additional overbridges should also be considered and/or level crossings. Reverend Nile said the committee is perplexed by the government's decision to cut the line, noting there is a need to restore public confidence in the planning process in Newcastle.

On 24 December, only two days before the closure was to take effect, a Supreme Court Judge ruled on an action brought against the NSW government by the local Save Our Railway group. He found that the *Transport Administration Act* prevented the government removing the railway without an Act of Parliament, and issued an injunction accordingly. Nevertheless, on Boxing Day, the closure took effect. The replacement buses between Broadmeadow and Newcastle struggled to handle the crowds. The legal situation remained unclear with the State government stating it would appeal against the injunction.

Moorebank Intermodal terminal agreement

The two organisations with competing proposals to develop intermodal terminals at Moorebank, western Sydney, have reached agreement. On 5 December, Moorebank Intermodal Company (MIC) and the Sydney Intermodal Terminal Alliance (SIMTA) comprising Qube Holdings and Aurizon Holdings, announced that they have agreed to develop the Moorebank project on a whole of precinct basis. This is subject to approval by the Boards of Qube and Aurizon and the Commonwealth government. If approved, SIMTA will develop and operate a freight precinct on a land owned by SIMTA and the Commonwealth. The precinct will include an open access import export freight terminal with an ultimate capacity of 1.05 million containers a year, and an open access interstate freight terminal with an ultimate capacity of 500,000 containers a year.

Sydney Trains: Sydney siege 15 December

During the Sydney city centre hostage siege on Monday 15 December, trains passed through but did not stop at Martin Place. The station remained closed on the following day and portion of the third day while investigations continued.

Sydney rare lines coverage

Special trains being operated by the Australian Railway Historical Society, ACT Division, from Canberra to Sydney for New Years Eve and for the Australia Day harbour festivities will be using not the usual route for passenger trains via Transport for NSW lines, but via ARTC's Metropolitan Freight Network from Macarthur South Junction via Enfield to Marrickville Junction. The New Year's Eve trip travelled this way only on the forward journey but in daylight (ARTC Train Alteration Advice 638-2014 refers). The Australia Day trip will traverse the unusual routing in both directions, but in darkness both ways (ARTC TAA 2-2015).

NSW Train Link's holiday

Between Christmas and New Year NSW Train Link operated to Saturday schedules (most of which are different from weekday schedules only slightly, mainly on the Canberra line and the up Bathurst train).

The annual Elvis Express XPT operated from Sydney to Parkes on Thursday 8 January returning on Monday 12 January.

John Holland Rail

The engineering company John Holland has been acquired by the China Communication Construction Company. This includes John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network.

NSW: Maules Creek coal

Railing of coal from Maules Creek in NW NSW commenced in mid December. This is about three months earlier than expected.

Grain transport in NSW & Victoria

An extra one million tonnes of grain in GrainCorp storages in NSW and Victoria has been transported by rail in 2014. But GrainCorp chairman Don Taylor says that more investment is needed by governments to improve efficiencies in the railway network to further improve grain transportation by rail. He said the greater tonnage of grain transported by rail had resulted in significant savings in road maintenance costs and delivered extra community benefits of reduced road congestion and noise and improved road safety.

"Improvement in export rail efficiency will be worth \$5 per tonne across the entire crop," he said. "Competition for grain will convert this into an additional annual \$90 million for grain growers. Mr Taylor said an estimated \$50 million to \$75 million was required to upgrade government-owned rail sidings which were a source of inefficiency because they were not long enough to hold a full train for loading. He said GrainCorp had to deal with three state governments and the federal government through the Australian Rail Track Corporation. He said he was confident the respective governments would consider GrainCorp's requests on rail investment. At more than half of the 60 key grain sites, rail siding track extensions and improvements are badly needed so loading and unloading operations can accommodate today's longer grain trains. "Government-owned rail sidings are a major source of inefficiency because they cannot currently hold a full unit train for loading," Mr Taylor said.

New GrainCorp CEO Mark Palmquist said the company was expecting lean grain receipts due to the east coast drought.

Victoria & NSW: Significant shutdowns

On Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 December 2014, due to a Metro Trains occupation between Sunshine and Sunbury,

and V/Line occupation between Sunbury and Bendigo, **V/Line** trains were replaced by buses between Melbourne Southern Cross and Bendigo. Services to Swan Hill and Echuca remained as trains beyond Bendigo. **Metro Trains** were replaced by buses between Sunshine and Sunbury.

On 27/28 December ARTC trackwork caused all **V/Line** and **NSW Train Link** passenger trains to be replaced by buses between Melbourne and Albury. Then when trains resumed south of Albury, XPTs north of Albury were replaced by buses – and freight trains did not run - on 29/30 December. (ARTC Train Alteration Advice 1088-2014 refers).

V/Line's holiday

On Christmas Day, V/Line trains operated to Sunday schedules with a very limited bus service. On Boxing Day and New Year's Day, a Saturday timetable applied. On New Year's Eve there were additional late night services. On Christmas Day and after 1800 on New Year's Eve, travel was free.

V/Line alterations

Minor amendments to platform working at Southern Cross came into effect from Sunday 7 December to facilitate altered carriage working, and minor amendments to some freight train times near Melbourne from the next day.

Melbourne Metro tunnel

The new Victorian Labor government has stated that the metro rail link may be difficult to deliver in the current economic environment. The incoming Treasurer, Tim Pallas has dampened expectations for the capacity-boosting rail link, warning the high cost and a refusal by the Abbott Federal government to fund commuter rail would make the project "difficult to put away". "I want to be frank with people, it will challenge the government, particularly in the current economic environment," he said. "It is a very large capital outlay [and] we have got a Federal government who have no interest in making a contribution to rail." Labor put the project firmly on its agenda in its "Project 10,000" transport blueprint released in November last year, promising to spend \$300 million to begin planning the \$9 billion cross-city rail tunnel, which was seen as vital to boosting the capacity of the City Loop.

Although no timeframe was put on the project, Labor said it expected to contribute \$3 billion, with the remaining cost equally shared by the Commonwealth and the private sector. "I've got to say the few discussions I've had with the federal government, they've been pretty adamant about this. Quite frankly it is disappointing for rational transport infrastructure delivery if the Federal government distorts its investment into only one form of infrastructure such as roads."

At the opening of the new State Parliament on 23 December, the Governor outlined the new government's policy: "The government will invest \$300 million towards Melbourne Metro Rail, a project that will double the size of the city loop, build five new stations and a new underground line, and reduce the gridlock in the train system."



Adelaide Metro's holiday

Travel was free in Adelaide from midnight to 0600 on New Year's Day and extra services operated, especially on the tram for the revelers' favourite location at Glenelg:

Entertainment Centre to Glenelg

- 1800 to 2100 - every 10 minutes
- 2100 to 0200 - every 7.5 minutes
- 0200 New Year's Day to 0400 - every 10 minutes
- 0400 New Year's day to first service - every 20 minutes
- normal Sunday/public holiday service from 0720.

Glenelg to Entertainment Centre

- 1800 to 0100 - every 7.5 minutes
- 0100 to 0400 - every 10 minutes
- 0400 New Year's Day to first service - every 20 minutes
- Normal Sunday/ public holiday service from 0620.

Reduced holiday timetables were in operation on both the train and tram networks on weekdays from 22 December until 2 January.

Due to "crucial track maintenance works", the tram line was closed between South Terrace and Rundle Mall from 2100 Saturday 27 December to 1200 Sunday 28 December 2014 and from 2000 Saturday 3 January to 1300 Sunday 4 January 2015. Substitute buses operated.

Perth Light Rail deferred

Perth's MAX light rail project could be deferred further as the WA government invests in other infrastructure and grapples with mounting debt. In late 2013, the State government shelved the \$1.9 billion northeast Metro Area Express project for four years, citing ailing finances. On 11 December, a WA Parliamentary estimates hearing was told the Public Transport Authority was considering constructing a heavy rail line to northeast Perth. That did not mean MAX had been axed, Premier Colin Barnett said, but he would not be drawn on whether the new completion timetable of 2022 would be met. "That remains to be seen," he told reporters. A rail link to the airport would come first, he said. "MAX is not dead, but the government has made a decision to defer that - we just simply cannot afford to do two major projects together." The final form of MAX is to be determined, but that is something into the future.

The State government originally hoped the Federal government would contribute half the cost, but those hopes were dashed during the Federal election campaign when Tony Abbott said the coalition would not fund urban rail.

Amtrak timetable 12 January

A new Amtrak timetable comes into effect from 12 January. It includes re-routing of the *Vermont* in New England via the Pan Am Railway.

Thanks to Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Len Regan, Roger Wheaton, www.railpage.com.au, *Age*, *Victorian Hansard* and *Weekly Times* for Rail news.

BUS NEWS

Australia Capital Territory

Holiday Timetables

Canberra commuters faced reduced peak hour bus services from 22 December until 9 January whilst a revised holiday timetable was in operation. In many cases this saw 15 or 20 min peak frequencies reduced to half-hourly, although largely operating on a clockface pattern. Minor timing changes also occurred outside of peak periods on selected routes, although frequencies remained consistent. Xpresso routes generally operated as normal.

On Christmas Day, free travel was provided across a special network as follows:

- 300 (Belconnen to Tuggeranong Blue Rapid)
- 90 (City – Alexander Maconchie Centre)
- 91 (North Tuggeranong Loop)
- 92 (Weston Creek Loop)
- 93 (Woden Valley Loop)
- 94 (South Canberra Loop)
- 95 (West Belconnen Loop)
- 96 (East Belconnen Loop)
- 97 (Gungahlin Loop)
- 98 (North Canberra Loop)

No direct City services operated from Gungahlin, with passengers forced to travel via Belconnen. Services on Route 300 operated half hourly between 09:00 & 16:00, while hourly services generally operated on the loop services between 09:30 & 15:30. A 90 min to 2 hour gap applied at lunchtime.

A Sunday timetable applied on Boxing Day, New Year's Day along with Saturday 27 December & Saturday 3 January. Although many Canberians leave the City for the coast over the holiday break, operating a Sunday timetable on regular Saturdays is likely to catch some travellers unaware, especially at night when buses finish three to four hours earlier.

A 152-page bus booklet was produced outlying the revised weekday timetable along with maps and timetables for the Christmas Day network. For the first time NXTPbus stop IDs were included in the booklet, similar to the format used by Adelaide Metro. ACTION welcomed feedback on this initiative, and sought reports from passengers on any discrepancies.

As reported in the December *Table Talk*, Nightrider routes operated overnight on New Year's Eve.

Summernats Buses

The annual Summernats car-racing event was held at EPIC from 1 to 4 January 2015. On 1, 3 & 4 January spectators could catch Routes 950, 956 or 958 to the gate, running to a Sunday timetable, while 2 January a holiday Friday timetable was in place on Routes 56, 57, 58 and 200. Free charter buses departed EPIC between 19:00 & midnight on 2 and 3 January.

New South Wales

CDC arrive in Blue Mountains

The handover of Blue Mountain Bus Company from the Pearce family to ComfortDelGro Cabcharge (CDC) reportedly took place on 1 December. The operation will gradually be rebranded as Blue Mountains Transit, with a new logo in a similar styling to Hillsbus & Hunter Valley Bus.

Improved Echo Point & Scenic World timetable

Blue Mountains Transit introduced an improved timetable for their 686 service between Katoomba, Echo Point & Scenic World on 22 December. Additional school holiday trips now operate before midday, while afternoon holiday trips have been retimed to provide a flat 15 min frequency – previously buses often operated at lumpy 5 then 25 min intervals. A common timetable now operates 7 days per week.

Festive Timetables

In the lead-up to Christmas, Sydney Buses operated additional Friday and Saturday night trips for those attending functions in the City, plus shopping extras along major corridors.

Transit Systems added additional Saturday shopper trips on T80 (Parramatta – Liverpool) between 29 November & 20 December, boosting headways to 10 mins.

Additional 607X and 610X services were provided following Carols in the Domain on 20 December.

Hillsbus cancelled selected peak period trips on Routes 607X, 610X, 612X, 616X, 620N, 620X, 621 & 642X on weekdays from 22 to 31 December. An initial list online had showed selected late evening trips cancelled, but this was actually additional trips cancelled on New Years Eve and was later replaced. Additional trips ran on Christmas Eve after midday on 607X, 610X, 612X, 620X & 642X to cater for those knocking off early.

On Christmas Eve, Sydney Buses only ran inbound express services during the morning peak with reduced afternoon peak services departing City, Milsons Point, North Sydney, Chatswood and Parramatta. Additional services operated from 12:00 until 16:00 to cater for increased commuter demand.

A Sunday timetable applied across most metropolitan Sydney operators on Christmas Day & Boxing Day, with the exception of Punchbowl, who again operated to their special Christmas Day & Boxing Day timetable, unchanged from previous years. It is surprising that was not resolved with the new contract which came into affect mid-year, to provide consistency across the city. The free 555 CBD shuttle did not operate on Christmas Day.

Premier Illawarra operated to modified timetables on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day, although the 'Gong shuttle ran to a standard weekend timetable.

On Boxing Day, Sydney Buses ran extra late night services in addition to the Sunday timetable.

On the three weekdays between Boxing Day & New Years Day, Forest once again operated to a Saturday timetable on most routes with extra trips at peak times, although 194 and 260 ran as normal. A special timetable was available online listing the extra services, produced in Forest's format rather than Transport for NSW style.

Sydney Buses ran reduced weekday peak services on 29 to 31 December & 2 January. No express routes operated on these four days with the exception of a reduced frequency on X39.

Hillsbus timetabled extra outbound trips in the late evening on New Years Day on 607X and 610X to avoid overcrowding.

Further afield, Qcity Transit ran to their reduced weekday timetable from 29 December until 2 January, with a number of trips marked "Y" cancelled. Their sister operation, Transborder also ran to a reduced timetable over these days, although information about the actual service levels was scarce, with the website incorrectly referring to trips marked "Y" being cancelled.

Owing to the public holiday on consecutive Thursdays, the 850 Bungendore Link operated on Tuesdays 23 & 30 December.

NYE Buses

On NYE Sydney Buses provided additional services after 15:00 on a number of routes, with passengers required to consult the Transport Info website timetables or trip planner to determine which services would be running past midnight.

Hillsbus provided supplementary services on Routes 607X, 610X, 620X & 642X from 13:00 onwards to cater for crowds travelling into the City, along with special trips on 612X and 622 during the late afternoon. Return buses operated following the family and midnight fireworks, departing the City on 607X, 610X & 620X. Special 612X and 622 buses departed Pacific Hwy North Sydney from 21:45 onwards.

Busways ran hourly overnight services on T75 & 750 from Blacktown and 750 & 780 from Mt Druitt.

Transit Systems operated hourly services on T80 between Parramatta & Liverpool on New Year's Eve.

Forest's 271 services after 20:45 on New Year's Eve were diverted to/from Chatswood Station. Passengers wishing to reach Forestville, St Ives or Terrey Hills after midnight could catch Route 196 departing Gordon or Route 282 departing Chatswood, both half-hourly.

Northern Territory

Christmas Timetables

As per past years, no buses operated in Darwin on Christmas Day. Normal services operated on all regular weekdays throughout the festive break.

NYE buses

Territorians enjoyed free bus travel across Darwin from 19:00 on New Year's Eve until 06:30 New Year's Day. Buses ran every 30 to 60 minutes on five special routes:

- Red (largely route 4)
- Green (combination of 2 & 9)
- Blue (as per route 8)
- Black (route 10 diverting via McMillians Rd & Lee Point Rd to serve Jingili & Moli)
- Palmerston Connection (similar to peak 76 but serving parts of Gunn & Bakewell).

Queensland

Christmas Day Timetables

A hotchpotch of different service levels applied across south-east Queensland on Christmas Day, varying by operator.

Routes operated by Bribie Island, Caboolture, Clarks Logan City, Kangaroo, Mt Gravatt & Thompsons did not run.

Sunday timetables applied for services operated by Brisbane Transport, Bus Queensland (Lockyer Valley, Ipswich & Park Ridge depots) & Hornibrook.

Special Christmas Day timetables applied on Sunbus, Surfside & Transdev routes.

Normal services operated on all regular weekdays throughout the festive break.

277 extra buses to stop in Rochedale

As of 12 January, Transdev Routes 276 (Victoria Point - City), 279 (Victoria Point Jetty - City), 280 (Point Talburpin - Griffith Uni) & 281 (Point Talburpin - City) will now call at the stop on Gardner Rd at Arise Bvd, providing an extra 277 weekly services for Rochedale residents, in addition to existing services on Mt Gravatt Routes 260, 262 (Capalaba - QE II Hospital) & 261 (Mackenzie - City). Timetable leaflets have been updated for 270/276/277/279 & 280/281.

South Australia

Holiday Timetables

For the first time, on weekdays between 22 December & 2 January, a number of Adelaide Metro routes operated to special timetables reflecting reduced demand. This included reductions to off-peak frequencies in some cases, such as reducing the Glen Osmond Rd Go-Zone (861, 863, 864 & 865) & 222 (Mawson - City) from 15 mins to half-hourly

Affected routes included:

- Outer North: 222, 224, 225, 226F, 228, 400, 401, 403, 404, 405, 411, 415, 421, 430, 440, 441, 451, 452, 491, 492, 493 & 494,
- East & West: 100, 101, 115, 117, 118, 141, 142, 144, 147, 148, 150, 155, 157, 162, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 174, 177, 178, 179, 190, 195, 196, 197X, 230, 232, 281, 286, 287, 288, 333, 376, B10, B12, H20, H21, H22, H23, H24, H30, H32, H33, J1, J1X, J2, W90 & W91
- Outer South: 681, 682, 720, 721, 722, 724, 725, 733, 734, 737, 741, 743, 745, 747, 750, 751, 752 & 755
- Hills: 839, 840X, 861, 863, T840 & T863

To further complicate matters, East-West buses (operated by Torrents Transit) only ran to the reduced timetables from 29 December until 2 January, while north-south corridor routes and O-bahn routes (operated by Light City Buses) to the outer north-east largely ran as normal, other than where regular timetables indicate changes during this period - for instance, most morning 556 trips ex St Agnes terminate at Paradise instead of heading into town.

Combined PDF timetable timetables for each region were available for download from the Adelaide Metro website.

Sunday timetables applied on Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Year's Day. To cater for anticipated demand from Boxing Day shoppers, extra buses were on standby.

NYE Buses

Adelaide Metro in conjunction with Motor Accident Commission again provided a free bus services after the midnight fireworks on New Years Eve to assist partygoers get home safely, on what is undoubtedly Australia's most geographically extensive NYE network. Buses operated in both directions. Passengers were able to request to alight at any safe location along routes, in addition to designated stops.

Routes operating overnight included:

- North & North-East: 202, 208, 222, 224, 228, 229, 273, 281, 400, 401, 411, 443, 451, 502, 503, 506, 541, 542, 545, 557, C1, C2, G10 & M44
- East: 141, 142, 144, 147, 174, 178 B10, H20, H22, H30, H33 & W90
- West: 118, 150, 155, 157, 168, 230, 235, 253, 287 B10, H20, H22, H30 & J1
- South: 171, 172, 190, 200, 248, 262, 681, 682, 720, 721, 722, 725, 733, 734, 741, 743, 747, 750 G10, G21, M44 & W90
- Hills: 863 & 864

Selected routes also ran additional services during the evening to assist to those heading to Glenelg or the City, including 168, 224, 229, 720, 721, 722, 733, 734, C1, C2, G10, H20 & H33.

Second double-decker arrives

Adelaide Metro have announced that their second double-decker bus will enter service on 12 January, operating on the popular T840 service between the City and Mt Barker in the Adelaide Hills. Its introduction was deferred a week due to Adelaide Council requiring additional time for tree trimming. The bus is also due to operate on a new weekend service, T843, commencing on 25 January, which operates to a similar route to T840 but also stopping in Hahndorf.

The double-decker bus will operate alongside the initial unit operating to/from Adelaide Airport on the new Jet Express service. The state government is currently evaluating the suitability of double-decker buses to increase capacity on Adelaide's bus network.

Victoria

Transdev Greenfields Stage 2 unveiled

On 1 December, Transdev and PTV unveiled their stage 2 Greenfields changes set for implementation in 2015. The timing was suspicious, less than 48 hours after the state election was held and suggested the former Liberal transport minister Terry Mulder had expected backlash over many of the changes and advised consultation to be held off until the election campaign had concluded. It is not known if the ALPs new transport minister, Jacinta Allen, will support the changes in their current form. Consultation took place during December, including a series of drop-in sessions and an online survey.

As predicted, many of the changes implemented in July formed the first stage of the ultimate Greenfields network. As such, Routes 200, 232, 234, 235, 236, 237, 246, 250, 251, 270, 303, 350, 370 & 380 are not set to see any further route or service level changes as part of the upcoming changes.

Most significantly is the proposal to split the three orbital SmartBus routes (introduced in 2009 & 2010) into a number of shorter routes, Transdev states this is intended to improve service reliability, better match passenger demand and improve train connectivity (by running harmonised headways). Media reports have also suggested a possible move away from the SmartBus branding to enable Transdev more operational flexibility with their fleet, with PTV confirming the premium brand is under review. Proposed service reductions in the northern suburbs (as detailed below) would see these routes fail to meet the existing SmartBus service standards.

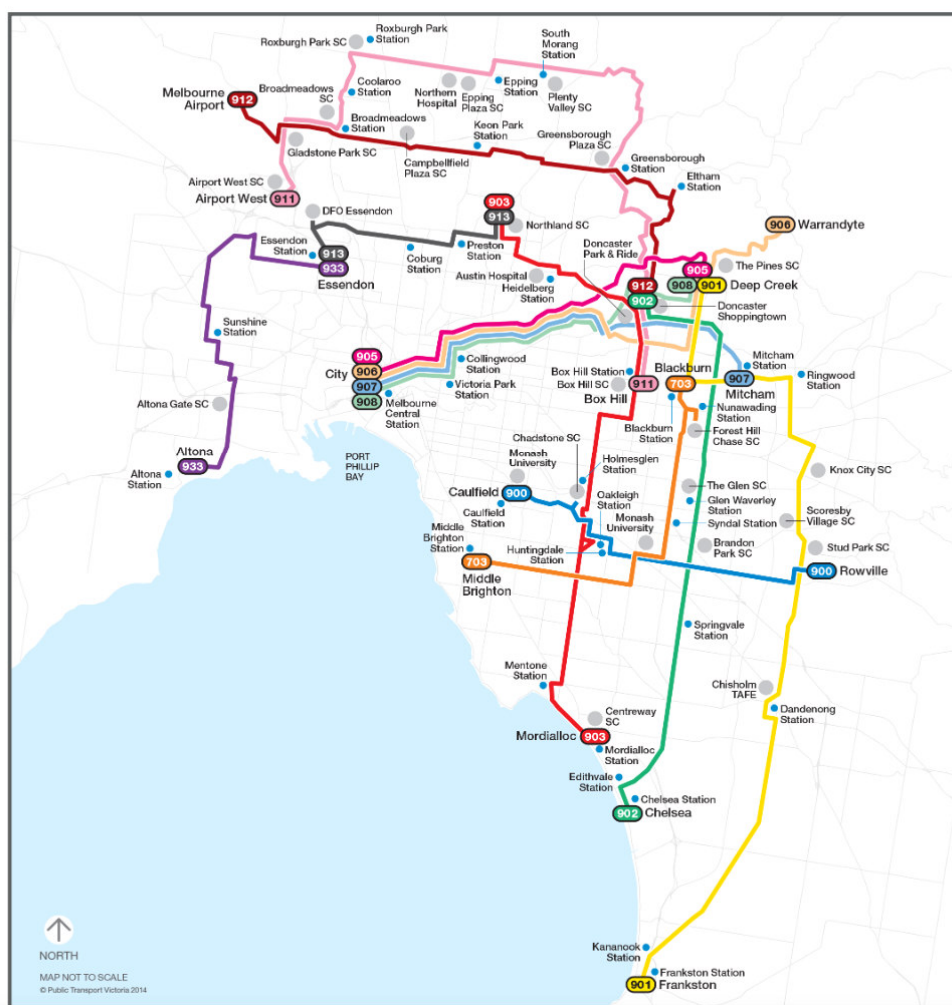
The proposal sees the orbital routes divided as follows:

- 901 (Frankston – The Pines): As per the eastern half of 901.
- 902 (Chelsea – Doncaster): As per the eastern half of 902.

- 903 (Mordialloc – Northland): As per the eastern third of 903.
- 911 (Box Hill – Airport West): This route will absorb 281 & 293 along Elgar Rd to Doncaster Shoppingtown, before following the 281 to Templestowe Village. It will then assume the 293 alignment through Montmorency, then operate as per 901 from Greensborough to Gladstone Park (via South Morang, Epping & Broadmeadows). It then follows the western end of 902 to Airport West.
- 912 (Doncaster – Melbourne Airport): This route replaces the existing 902 as far as Gladstone Park (via Greensborough, Campbellfield & Broadmeadows) before operating to Melbourne Airport in lieu of Airport West. A trip from Doncaster to Melbourne Airport will be achievable in less than 90 mins, a tolerable option for those wishing to bypass the CBD, and provide a more direct link from Greensborough than the existing 901.
- 913 (Northland – Essendon): As per the northern third of 903
- 933 (Essendon – Altona): As per the western third of 903. Later editions of the consultation material refer to short workings running between Essendon and Sunshine early morning and at night, suggesting the Millers Rd portion may only operate during the day.

Notably, the direct connection between The Pines & Greensborough will be withdrawn without replacement, although passengers may transfer buses at Fitzsimons La between 309 or 905 with 911 or 912. This also sees the removal of a SmartBus option in parts of Lower Plenty.

PROPOSED ORBITAL BUS NETWORK



Peak services on 901 & 902 are planned to increase from 15 mins to 10 mins, with weekend frequencies boosted to 20 mins. Sunday frequencies on 903 will go from 30 mins to 20 mins. Consultation material suggests a 10 min Saturday headway along 903, but it is not clear if this along the entire route or the busier sections serving major shopping centres – currently an additional trip operates each hour between Box Hill & Mordialloc, creating a lumpy 15 - 15 - 30 min headway.

911 & 912 in the outer north will be downgraded on weekdays to run every 20 mins (instead of every 15 mins), while Sunday buses will only run every 40 mins. 913 maintains the current status quo. 933 faces the most dramatic service reductions. Peak services drop from 15 mins to 20 mins, while inter-peak services halve to just half-hourly. Weekend services will be limited to every 40 mins.

Sunday night services on Routes 901, 902, 903 & 933 will now extend to midnight, while Routes 911, 912 & 913 will conclude an hour later than now at 22:00.

A number of changes are also earmarked across Manningham affecting both City and local routes, including:

- 207 (City – Doncaster Shoppingtown) / 305 (City – The Pines): Building on July's changes, which saw 207 truncated at Doncaster Shoppingtown instead of Donvale, and 305 limited to George St between Doncaster Shoppingtown & The Pines outside of peak times, it is proposed that 207 be extended to The Pines via George St, replacing the 305 shorts. This would provide a direct Kew connection to a large section of eastern Manningham. It would also allow George St passengers the option to transfer to a freeway bus at the Doncaster Park+Ride, although frequencies are not harmonised with 907. A significant failing of the July timetable for 305 is that buses are not timed to connect with a City service at Doncaster Shoppingtown, and to connect with the 907 requires a 5 min walk to Doncaster Junction. Peak frequencies on 305 proposed to be reduced from 10 mins to 15 mins.
- 271 (Box Hill – Ringwood) & 273 (Nunawading – The Pines): Further changes are proposed to rationalise bus services in Nunawading North. 271 would be modified to operate between Box Hill & The Pines, amalgamating the western half of 271 with the northern section of 273, with weeknight evening & Sunday services to operate along Springvale Rd in Donvale for the first time. A new 371 service would operate between Mitcham & Ringwood to serve Park Orchards & Ringwood North, with proposed service reductions in peak times (dropping from 20 to 30 mins) & on Saturdays (halving to 60 mins). Park Orchards will continue to miss out on a Sunday service.
- 279 (Box Hill – Templestowe / Doncaster Shoppingtown) & 295 (Doncaster Shoppingtown – The Pines): The existing Templestowe branch of 279 is set to be replaced by a new 278 service to The Pines Shopping Centre, incorporating 295 north of King St. This will reinstate a direct Box Hill link for those living in parts of Templestowe and Doncaster East, although those travelling to Doncaster Shoppingtown will need to change buses instead. A modified 280 will assume coverage along Serpells Rd. 278 & 279 will combine to form a high frequency corridor along Wetherby Rd & Middleborough Rd, with weekend services operating every 20 mins, a boost from existing 30 min Saturday services and hourly Sunday services. Saturday evening services, deleted in service cuts by National Express in 2001 will also be reinstated.

- 280/2 (Manningham Mover): The poorly patronised Manningham Mover loop is set to be split up after six years of operation. 280 will now originate at Doncaster Shoppingtown and follow the existing eastern half of the loop to Andersons Creek Rd, where it will operate via King St, Tuckers Rd & Serpells Rd to Templestowe Village, replacing a branch of the 279. This however removes the direct connection to The Pines for Donvale locals. Weekday frequencies will be cut from 30 mins to 40 mins, and Sunday services abolished. A new 283 service will be introduced between Templestowe Village & Heidelberg operating directly along Templestowe Rd every 40 mins on weekdays. There would appear to be potential for buses to through-route into the truncated 280. Other sections of the route will be abandoned in parts of Bulleen & Templestowe Lower, such as along Ayr St, Golden Way & Pleasant Rd, leaving some residents 1km or more from their nearest bus.
- 281 (Templestowe Village – Deakin Uni) & 293 (Greensborough – Box Hill): As stated above, 281 & 293 will largely be replaced between Greensborough, Templestowe Village & Box Hill by the new 911 SmartBus. The weekday Box Hill – Deakin Uni portion of 281 will be retained, with a boost of frequency from 30 mins to 20 mins, although removes the original intent of a direct service from the Doncaster area. Further service upgrades on this corridor are likely in the medium-term as part of the ALP's bus policy.
- 284 (Box Hill – Doncaster Park+Ride) & 285 (Camberwell – Doncaster Park+Ride): Bizarrely, the proposed changes will see these routes joined together to form a 285 linking Camberwell with Box Hill. While this will provide a direct Box Hill link from Balwyn North, greater benefit would be achieved by reinstating services back to Doncaster Shoppingtown or implementing the bus review recommendation of a link further north to Heidelberg and/or La Trobe Uni. Service levels remain unchanged, with no buses on Sundays.
- 302 (City – Box Hill) & 304 (City – Doncaster Shoppingtown): Sunday frequencies on each route are proposed to increase from hourly to every 40 mins, providing a 20 min service along Belmore Rd, with 302 services also set to continue until 22:00 instead of finishing at 20:00.
- 309 (City – Donvale): 309's peak extensions along Springvale Rd to Donvale will be discontinued, with all trips ending at The Pines. To compensate for the removal of the 901 SmartBus and 280/282 Manningham Mover along Reynolds Rd, significant service upgrades are proposed outside of peak times. Weekday off-peak services would jump from hourly to every 20 mins, while weekend services running every 40 mins would be added for the first time. Weeknight buses also extend until 21:00 – currently the last bus departs Queen St at 17:55. The route map suggests the off-peak 309 services will be truncated Doncaster Park+Ride, similar to 908 which shares the High St corridor.
- 318 (Deep Creek – The Pines): A route change at the northern end would see the bus operating via Blackburn Rd between Heidelberg-Warrandyte Rd & King St, rather than Andersons Creek Rd, with buses operating via The Pines. A major boost to peak frequency is proposed; increasing trips each way from 4 to 17 or 18. It appears the boost is to reduce overcrowding at choke points on 906, including The Pines & the Middleborough Rd on-ramp.
- 364 (Ringwood – Warrandyte Reserve): Despite the initial truncation of services on 364 at Warrandyte Bridge in 2010, the service has begun creeping westward, extending to Harris Gully Rd in 2011 and Warrandyte Reserve last July. The latest proposal

would see services reinstated to The Pines, now duplicating a significant section of 906. Given the downgrade to the SmartBus brand in many other suburbs, a more sensible move would be to replace 364 with extended 906 trips to Ringwood, as per the previous 304 services. A planned upgrade on weekends would see services increase from hourly to every 30 mins.

- 905 (City – The Pines): Weekday inter-peak services may be downgraded to every 20 mins. This is a further cut for Thompsons Rd passengers, after with July's changes saw trips per hour trips drop from 6 to 4 with the truncation of 305 at Doncaster Shoppingtown. Weekend frequencies remain half-hourly.
- 906 (City – Warrandyte Bridge): As part of the upgrade to 318, and extension of 364 west to The Pines, minor route changes are proposed to slightly speed up journey times from Warrandyte. Buses would now operate via Andersons Creek Rd to Blackburn Rd, with only off-peak services deviating via The Pines. Minor reduction in peak trips, however off-peak service levels unchanged.
- 907 (City – Mitcham): Proposed upgrade of inter-peak headways from 15 mins to 10 mins, with weekends increasing from half hourly to 20 mins.
- 908 (City – The Pines): Buses continue to terminate at Doncaster Park+Ride outside of peak times. To maintain harmonisation with the connecting 907, weekend services boosted to every 20 mins. Weekday inter-peak services likely to be downgraded to every 20 mins, however combined with upgraded 309 services, would provide a 10 min corridor along much of High St in Lower Templestowe.

Additionally, major changes are forecast for the former Melbourne Bus Link routes in the western and southern suburbs, the first in over a decade, including:

- 215 (Caroline Springs – Highpoint): A loop is proposed to serve Albion Station. Currently buses bypass the station on the Ballarat Rd overpass, and customers must walk 500m to the next stop west of station. It would also appear peak shortworkings between Caroline Springs Square & Deer Park West will now operate the entire route, doubling frequency to half-hourly.
- 216 (Caroline Springs – Brighton Beach) & 219 (Sunshine South – Gardenvale): To improve service reliability and better reflect patronage levels (the western halves of these routes are significantly busier than the southern halves), it is proposed to split the 216 in the inner suburbs, with sister route 219 abolished altogether. It is proposed that western half of 216 extend to Caroline Springs Square, rather than terminate at Rockbank Middle Rd. Services from the west would terminate in the City at Flinders La & Queen St, operating via Queen Victoria Market on approach to the CBD, as a result of changes to 220 (see below). The southern half of 216 would be replaced with 248, operating between Alfred Hospital & Sandringham, incorporating the existing 922 south of Brighton. Those wishing to travel into the City would have the option of transferring to either 249 (see below) or 72 tram. Suggestions have been made that 248 & 249 would be timed to offer connections, although inter-peak frequencies are not harmonised. 219 is to be deleted without direct replacement, although Sunshine South residents can use 428 introduced in July, or the nearby 903 SmartBus. No replacement is planned between Bay St, Brighton & Gardenvale, a very poorly used segment. Passengers between Sunshine & City may see some frequency downgrades, including off-peak services dropping from 15 to 20 mins, and Saturday services

halved to half-hourly. On Sundays services are slated to end at 22:00 instead of midnight. It is not clear from the information provided if all trips will continue to Caroline Springs – if so, this would see a notable increase of service in this corridor.

Service levels proposed for 248 reflect passenger numbers and the proximity of neighbouring train & tram services. Weekday peak services operate every 15 mins (as now), off-peak services every half-hour (currently 15 mins) and weekend services every 40 mins (currently 15 mins on Saturday & 30 mins on Sunday). Services Monday to Saturday would finish at 21:00 instead of midnight, with Sunday services would cease as early as 19:00.

- 220 (Sunshine – Gardenvale): As per 216, it is also proposed to split the 220 in the City to improve service reliability and reflect patronage levels. Services from the west are proposed to be extended further into Docklands, before operating via La Trobe St Bridge and Lonsdale St to terminate at Flinders La / Queen St. Southern suburb passengers are catered for by 249. It's not clear where the bus originates in the City, although one would assume Queen Victoria Market. To cater for high demand between Sunshine & Footscray, it is proposed to improve inter-peak frequencies in this section to 10 mins, with a 20 min service into the City (currently every 15 mins). Saturday frequencies on the western half may drop from 15 mins to 20 mins, however Sunday frequencies would increase from 30 mins to 20 mins. Unlike 248, service levels along Orrong Rd are not set to be cut as drastically, although inter-peak and Saturday frequencies would drop from 15 mins to 20 mins. Sunday services may be boosted to 20 mins (currently 30 mins), although with last bus 2 hours earlier at 22:00.
- 223 (Highpoint – Yarraville): Service levels on 223 are due to be reduced. Weekday & Saturday services will be cut from 15 to 20 mins, while services will cease at 21:00 rather than midnight. Routes 406 & 82 tram significantly duplicate the service, and may be part of the justification for the changes. Inter-peak and Saturday services on 406 also operate every 20 mins, so potentially buses could be offset 10 mins apart.
- 600 / 922 / 923 (St Kilda – Southland): A drastic clean-up of these routes is set to take place, reversing messy integration with parts of the former Moorabbin Transit 822 & 823 services in Brighton and Beaumaris in 2002. The three routes north of Sandringham will be deleted, The New St corridor will continued to be served by the 248 service (in effect a replacement for 216), which is designed to continue to Sandringham via Holyrood St and Hampton St, incorporating a portion of 922, with a school times deviation is being considered for Haileybury & St Leonards Colleges. This means the direct link from the bayside suburbs to St Kilda severed, forcing passengers to travel via Elsternwick or Balaclava, and sees the removal of buses from St Kilda St in Brighton along with a major downgrade along Broadway & Ormond Rd in Elwood. Historically this was the corridor of the former Victorian Railways tram to St between St Kilda & Brighton, replaced in the 1958 by MBBL services, with multiple vehicles often meeting arriving trains in peak times. It is unknown if CDC's 606 will be boosted from it's current 40 min headways to compensate Elwood passengers. South of Sandringham it is proposed to return to a single service, following the existing 600 alignment, the traditional corridor of the former VR railway bus. Reserve Rd and Weatherall Rd would merely retain a school times deviation to serve Sandringham College & Beaumaris North Primary, while services would be abolished on the southern end of Charman Rd.

Furthermore, Black Rock and Beaumaris passengers may lose their connection with most trains at Sandringham, with planned service reductions seeing peak services drop from 12 to 15 mins, inter-peak services cut from 15 to 30 mins, while weekend frequencies will halve to 40 mins and finish by 22:00.

It is unclear at this stage if the changes are due to implemented in April at the same time the regional rail link opens, or whether they commence later in 2015.

Community consultation for new bus networks in Geelong and Bendigo also took place during December. A summary of the proposed changes in both provincial cities will be included in next month's *Table Talk*.

Summer Holiday Timetables

The number of routes operating to a reduced summer holiday timetable in Melbourne has declined to just six routes in 2014/2015:

- Kastoria: 475 (Moonee Ponds – Keilor East) & 501 (Moonee Ponds – Niddrie), from 29 December to 23 January
- Moonee Valley: 503 (Essendon – Brunswick East) & 506 (Moonee Ponds – Westgarth), from 22 December to 16 January
- Eastrans: 605 (City – Gardenvale), from 22 December to 23 January
- Ventura: 733 (Box Hill – Oakleigh), from 22 December to 16 January

Ventura's 788 (Frankston – Portsea) is running to an enhanced weekend timetable from 26 December to 26 January to cater for increased demand on the Mornington Peninsula from holidaymakers and daytrippers.

Peter Parker's *Melbourne on Transit* blog (<http://melbourneontransit.blogspot.com.au/2011/01/taming-melbournes-summer-timetables.html>) previously noted that in 2005/2006, one-third (or 89) routes operated to a holiday timetable. Following upgrades as part of the minimum standards program, this had halved to 14% by 2010/2011, and reduced dramatically last summer when Transdev operated normal timetables as part of their new contract, after a number of years of reduced timetables on the National & Melbourne Bus Link networks, abolishing the concept in Melbourne's north-east and inner west. Route 476 (Moonee Ponds – Hillside) is the latest route to operate as normal over this period, following changes in July.

With so few routes now operating to a holiday timetable, one would hope PTV may consider the minor funding boost to eliminate them altogether, especially given the extended period these timetables operate compared to interstate, although perhaps this will wait under the next contracts are signed. The varying range of dates is also disappointing, after efforts to apply consistent timeframe in recent years.

It should be routes such as 401, 601, 612, 768 & 796 also operate reduced timetables over this period, although these apply for longer periods & more regularly during all university and/or school breaks.

Most bus routes in Melbourne ran to a Sunday timetable on Christmas Day, with the exception of 605, 681, 682 & 684. Buses in regional centers generally did not operate, with the exception of the La Trobe Valley where normal Sunday timetables were in operation. Varying timetables applied on Boxing Day and New Year's Day, as per most Victorian public holidays.

Due to Christmas Day and New Year's Day falling on a Thursday, two regional routes operated alternate days. The

Mansfield – Woods Point service ran on Tuesday 23 & 30 December, while the Sale – Seaspray service ran Monday 29 December & Friday 2 January.

NYE Buses

For the first time relievers travelling home to Bulleen, Templestowe, Doncaster, Donvale & Warrandyte enjoyed overnight DART services on NYE on 905, 906, 907 & 908. Services operated in both directions. The 961 Doncaster NightRider also ran. The *Manningham Leader* reported that initial plans did not include the popular 906 service, with services added later following the article's publication, with times not available on the PTV website until 31 December. It will be interesting to see if all night services operate in February for the popular White Night festival.

NightRider buses also operated on NYE to serve several suburbs away from the train and tram network, with 966 (Croydon/Lilydale), 968 (Knox City/Belgrave), 970 (Frankston/Mornington) & 980 (Dandenong) operating 15 min headways as per weekends in the lead up to Christmas, although this proved excessive, with poor loadings recorded, as parallel train and tram services were provided. Timetables on the PTV indicated last drinks would be at 04:30, however Ventura were noted operating to a Sunday morning timetable, with trips as late as a 06:30 departure for Dandenong. Online timetables also failed to show outer-suburban NightRider feeders 788, 943, 965 or 981 as operating.

CDC Melbourne rebrand

In October, ComfortDelGro Cabcharge (CDC) began the transition of its Melbourne businesses to the new CDC Melbourne brand, replacing the former Westrans, Eastrans & Western Coach Services brands. Staff cars and coach vehicles were first to emerge wearing the new brand, before new logos began appearing on buses recently updated into the orange & white PTV livery. Older vehicles in the fleet, PTV signage and PTV website still refer to the former brands.

The change of name follows the rebranding of the Benders and Davis operations in July to CDC Geelong and CDC Ballarat respectively, and comes six years after the taking over the operation from the Kefford family.

Deakin Cube withdrawn

At the end of trimester two, Deakin Uni announced that their privately funded shuttle service from Surrey Hills Station to the Burwood campus would cease after 14 November. The service was introduced in March and allowed students to avoid entering Zone 2. The decision to stop the service is in response to zone changes (zone 1 prices now covering the metro area), international student discounts (concession fares available for the first time), budget constraints and low utilisation. The ALP's bus policy has since committed to an upgrade of bus services departing Box Hill, although no time frame has been set.

A previous timetable change in July saw the PM peak clockface timetable replaced by one based on GPS data, presumably developed by the Cube's operator, Ventura.

The Deakin Cube service between the two campuses in Geelong continues to operate.

Regional PTV hubs

In a surprise move in November, PTV opened two new PTV hubs in the provincial cities of Bendigo & Geelong, complementing the existing two hubs in Melbourne at Southern Cross Station and the foyer of the head office building in Docklands.

Both hubs are located as kiosks in the main shopping centre for each city and are open the same hours as the shopping centre, including for late night shopping and Sundays and offer the full suite of PTV hub services, including myki top-up, concession, seniors and veterans cards and computers for trip planner.

A welcome sign for the travelling public & timetable collectors alike is the regional hubs offer self-service timetable racks offering the full set of local 'print-on-demand' timetable leaflets, which ironically only appeared in October to replace the former booklet timetables previously available.

Revised 689 times

A previously unreported timetable dated 27 July has been sighted for Ventura's 689 (Croydon – Montrose) service. The 14:50 ex Croydon on weekdays now departs 7 mins later, to await the 14:52 train arrival.

It is further noted that the public holiday service on 689 has been withdrawn. Prior to the purchase of US, Ivanhoe & Grenda, an attempt was made in 2009 to standardise all Ventura and National routes to run a Saturday timetable on public holidays, regardless if they had a minimum standards upgrade or not. This seems this been reversed on 689, although the timetable for 766 (Box Hill - Burwood) still shows services operating a Saturday service on Boxing Day & New Years Day.

Western Australia

Christmas Day Timetables

Bus services in Perth operated to a Sunday & Public Holiday timetable on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day and standard timetables on all other days. Bus-train connections were disrupted on Christmas Day due to a reduced 30 min frequency in operation on the rail network.

Normal services operated on all regular weekdays throughout the festive break.

NYE Buses

Perth's partygoers were able to catch all night buses home on NYE, including:

- Departing Esplanade Busport: 37, 60, 72, 102, 106, 212, 299, 940 & 950
- Departing Roe St Bus Station: 354, 389, 887, 889 & 990
- Departing Bull Creek: 501 & 507
- Departing Clarkson: 481 & 483

- Departing Cockburn Central: 530
- Departing Cottesloe: 102
- Departing Fremantle: 99, 106, 501, 520, 530 & 920
- Departing Midland: 324
- Departing Mirrabooka: 372, 376
- Departing Morley: 98, 955, 344 & 345
- Departing Murdoch: 98, 99 & 204
- Departing Rockingham Station: 555 & 920
- Departing Rockingham Beach: 555
- Departing Stirling: 425
- Departing Warwick: 441
- Departing Whitfords: 461

Prior to midnight, Transperth operated an additional 22:30 trip on 98 from Oaks St Station to Fremantle, along with half-hourly services on 555 between Rockingham Station & Rockingham Beach.

Long Distance

Bus Queensland expands coach network

Bus Queensland, owned by the Pulitano family, have successfully won contracts for the following long distance coach routes effective 1 January:

- Brisbane to Mt Isa (previously operated by Greyhound)
- Brisbane to Charleville (previously operated by Greyhound)
- Charters Towers to Townsville (previously operated by Douglas Coaches)
- Mt Isa to Townsville (previously operated by Greyhound)

It would appear that the operation has moved away from the Coach Queensland brand that had previously been worn on buses operating their existing long distance network to St George, Cunnamulla, Lightning Ridge & Rockhampton.

Greyhound has introduced a new daily express service between Roma and Brisbane to compete against the subsidised service through to Mt Isa.

Changes to long distance services in Queensland will be analysed in further depth in the next edition of *Table Talk*.

Thanks to: Jason Blackman, Roger Wheaton & various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*.

AIR NEWS

International

In August 2015 **Qantas** will begin direct flights from Brisbane to Tokyo Narita Airport, operating four times a week. There will also be a new daily Sydney-Tokyo Haneda service. Qantas will also fly to Narita on three alternate days from another Australian port, which will be finalised soon.

Jetstar will commence a new service from Cairns to Bali on 31 March. In 2015 it may introduce a service from Townsville to Bali.

Etihad will begin a second daily non-stop flight from Melbourne to Abu Dhabi in August. It will then have 42 flights a week from Australia to its home base – double daily from Sydney and Melbourne, and daily from Brisbane and Perth.

Thanks to the *Australian* for Air news.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Newcastle rail line

Geoff Hassall writes: The Newcastle to Hamilton rail issue has been going on for 20 years. But at no time during those years was there any consideration given to a compromise. Many of us were prepared to (grudgingly) accept a light rail line on the existing right-of-way to an interchange at Woodville Junction as a beginning of a wider system. Over 80% of *Newcastle Herald* readers agree according to a recent poll. Yet the government has shown no signs of even considering such an alternative.

The participants in the rally on 14 December were truly inspiring - elderly people marched with walking sticks and frames, young families were prominent, some with babies and a lot with placards. Add to that university students and lecturers, country people, trade unionists and many other groups and you have a good cross-section of residents of the Hunter and lake. A referendum on the issue across the region (not just in the city) would, I believe, replicate the *Herald's* poll and the proportions of letter-writers over the years - more than 80% of us are unhappy. Isn't that enough for a change of mind?

Melbourne Airport SkyBus

Albert Isaacs writes: In *Table Talk* for December 2014, page 10, it is stated: "Passenger numbers continue to grow on SkyBus services between Southern Cross and Melbourne Airport, with boardings increasing from 2 million passengers

in 2010 to 3.4 million in the (sic) 2013. ... Market share from airport travellers has also hit 10% for the first time, from 7% 3 years ago... ". Then on page 11 the following appeared: "Passenger numbers at Melbourne Airport increased 5.8% to 2.9 million in the year to October ... " Now, I concede that there may be some non-air-travellers on SkyBus who are going to see others off, but a combination of these two statistics in the same magazine would suggest that over nine out of ten SkyBus passengers are non-air-travellers, and this is just blatantly wrong.

Victor tells me that the *Table Talk* item about Melbourne Airport was taken from the *Australian*. However, the quoted passenger tallies for Melbourne Airport seemed to me to be extremely low and a Google search has shown that I was correct. According to the Corporate Information page on the Melbourne Airport website <http://melbourneairport.com.au/about-melbourne-airport/corporate-information/facts-figures/performance-statistics.html>, recent passenger volumes at Tullamarine are: 2011 – 28 million; 2012 – 28 million; 2013 – 30 million. The thought crossed my mind that the 2.9 million figure in the *Australian* may have actually been the number of international passengers but, no, even here the quoted figure is just a fraction of the reality. The above web page also shows that as many as 7 million passengers flew through Melbourne in 2013.

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.

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

Editor, Bus: Craig Halsall, craig.halsall@gmail.com, 27 Edithvale Road Edithvale VIC 3196.

Production and Mailout: Geoff and Judy Lambert.

Proofreaders: Agnes Boskovitz, David Cranney and Geoff Hassall.

Original material appearing in *Table Talk* may be reproduced in other publications but acknowledgement is required.

Membership of the Australian Timetable Association includes monthly copies of the *Times*, *Table Talk*, the Distribution List of timetables, and the monthly Auction catalogues. The membership fee is \$60 (Adult) and \$36 (Junior) pa. Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Officer, Michael Smith, at volvob10m0007@hotmail.com

Back issues of *Table Talk* are available on the Australian Timetable Association's website, austta.org.au, after three months.

Table Talk Newswire is an advance monthly email of Rail news. To obtain this, ask the Rail Editor at abvi@inet.net.au