

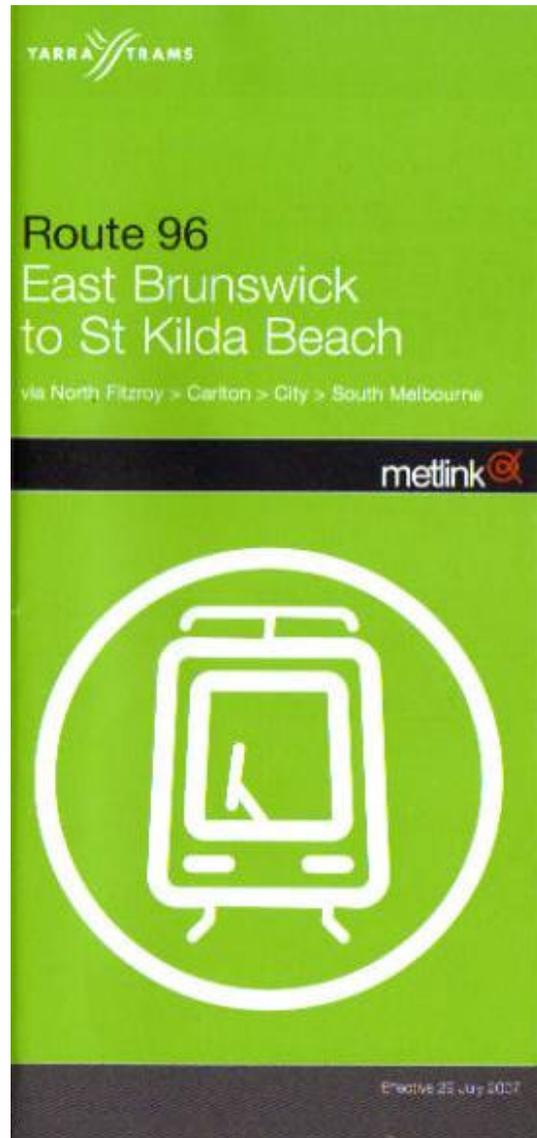
TABLE TALK

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About *Table Talk*

Table Talk is published monthly by the Australian Association of Timetable Collectors Inc. (Registration No. A0043673H) as a journal of record covering recent timetable news items. The AATTC also publishes the *Times* covering timetable history and analysis. Contributions are very welcome and should be sent to the appropriate Editor.

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TOP TABLE TALK

Reid Sexton of the *Sunday Age* examines Melbourne's Tram Timetables:

On our Tramway's Secret Service

14 September, 2008

They don't show up in timetables and cannot be seen on maps. Like the supernatural creatures after which they are named, they can be tricky to find and, on paper at least, their existence is difficult to prove. They are Melbourne's ghost trams, secret services that slash waiting times for passengers in the know. The phantom trams have been rattling around the network for years — but they are not the tramway equivalent of the ghost ship *Marie Celeste*. They ferry passengers to a depot or another point on the network where a tram is needed. It's just that they are unscheduled. They currently operate across 25 of Melbourne's 27 tram routes, but if you've never heard of them you're not alone — Yarra Trams keeps quiet about them.

Adding to the mystery — or confusion — is the fact that they have their own unique route number because they service only sections of a line. This, according to the Public Transport Users Association, is great for tram-spotters who relish a chance to glimpse the number seven to Malvern Town Hall, but not so great for passengers in the city who don't know what route that service takes. Yarra Trams says different route numbers are allocated to avoid confusion. But PTUA president Daniel Bowen said the current system was even more baffling. "It's good that these services run," he said. "But using unknown route numbers that nobody has ever heard of is not good customer service. If the service is running most of the distance of the main route they should just use the main route number ... it doesn't make sense to have so many trams running that no one knows about. "They are not on signs, not on the web and just appear on the streets. If people knew about them they would recognise them and use them."

Yarra Trams said ghost trams showed up on electronic displays at some stops — a claim disputed by the PTUA — and on the mobile phone-based Tram Tracker service. It knows when and where a ghost tram will operate, but said they remained under the radar because printing them on timetables could also confuse customers. This is despite a Yarra Trams spokeswoman saying they account for 10% of the kilometres that Melbourne's trams travel each day and 8% of the network's travel time. "Opportunity trips only service a section of route so are numbered differently and not published in our timetables to eliminate confusion with our passengers," she said. "All our trams have to go back to the depot, anyway. They are bonus services for passengers."

Last year, *The Age* revealed the existence of ghost trains on the rail network that shuttle passengers across the city as they head back to their stabling yards.

But Yarra Trams doesn't like to use the word ghost in this context because, it says, a "ghost tram" is one that has lost electronic contact with the control room. By contrast, these "ghosts" are contactable — they're just not often talked about. But Mr Bowen disagrees, saying the sooner they lose some of their mystique the better. "Of course they're ghost trams," he said.

"They are almost invisible, not on timetables and show up out of the blue." If these trams are running every day, they could be taking more passengers and the mystery needs to be removed."

Peak hour Tram services stuck at 1999 levels

7 September 2008

Despite a 35% increase in passenger numbers during the past 10 years, peak tram services are being run like it's 1999. The number of peak hour tram services operating along some of Melbourne's busiest routes has fallen since the network was privatised, despite record patronage growth in the same period.

The *Sunday Age* can reveal no new peak services have been added to the majority of lines examined in a new analysis, while many have fewer services than they did nine years ago. The review was done across 11 of Melbourne's 26 tram lines using timetables from 1999 provided by the Public Transport Users Association. The Department of Transport refused to release their copies of the timetables, at first denying they existed. It later admitted it had them.

News of a decline in services will come as little surprise to commuters, who increasingly report being unable to board trams. Passenger numbers have soared 35% in the past decade, resulting in increasing overcrowding and heightening calls for an overhaul of the network. The department would not say how many more trams it has in its fleet compared to 1999, but the current number — 493 — is not believed to be significantly greater than it was nine years ago. Recently leaked documents show a lack of storage space for trams is compounding the problem of overcrowding.

There have been service cuts along route 57 during the afternoon from the city to West Maribyrnong and the route 55 morning services from West Coburg to Domain Road, two of the busiest lines on the network. The most significant cut has occurred during the morning peak from East Brighton to Melbourne University, where nine services now run instead of 12. Yarra Trams defines peak hour as weekdays between 7.31 and 9.30am and 3.31 and 6.30pm.

The analysis looked at 25 peak periods on weekdays across the 11 routes, mainly focusing on city-bound morning services and suburban-bound afternoon services.

For services not terminating or originating in the city, it included morning and afternoon peak periods in both directions. The analysis found that of the 25 periods, 12 had the same number of services, while eight had fewer and five more.

Opposition transport spokesman Terry Mulder said the failure to boost services when they were needed most was a direct result of sustained underinvestment in the tram network by the Labor government. He said Labor had failed to initiate the purchase of one new tram since it came to power in 1999. "John Brumby is happy to spruik population growth in Victoria, but despite record government revenues ... Labor cannot even be dragged kicking and screaming to invest in our iconic tram network."

Transport advocate Paul Mees said the number of services had been declining during peak periods for 20 years. Dr Mees said it beggared belief that as patronage had soared most routes had not had new peak services added. "If I was Yarra Trams I would want to make as big a profit as possible so, of course, I wouldn't be adding any extra services. But where are the Department of Transport?" he said. "They are the ones supposed to be monitoring and regulating Yarra Trams in the public interest. Why haven't they been requiring Yarra Trams to add extra services and worse still why have they been covering up for Yarra Trams for 10 years by not alerting the public to the fact ... there's been no extra services in line with patronage."

Daniel Bowen, president of the Public Transport Users Association, condemned the cutbacks and said a major overhaul of the network was needed to ensure more trams could run more efficiently on the system. The Government needs to seriously re-evaluate its priorities."

The Department of Transport said peak hour tram services have increased "slightly" since 1999 but would not provide any evidence to support the claim. It said the total number of kilometres travelled by Melbourne trams had increased from around 426 million to 445 million in the past five years and it was implementing various measures as part of the Think Tram project to improve tram priority on the road. A spokesman for Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky said the Government's major transport plan, due to be released in November, would focus in part on the how to improve the tram network.

NEWS

RAIL & TRAM

ARTC Information

The following is from ARTC's website in mid-September:

“ARTC's 2007 Interstate Access Undertaking was accepted by the Australian Competition and Consumer Council on 31 July 2008, after extensive consultation with stakeholders and the ACCC, and is effective from 21 August 2008 for a period of ten years.

The undertaking covers the following parts of ARTC's network:

1. Adelaide (Dry Creek) - Parkeston
2. Adelaide (Dry Creek) - Melbourne (Spencer Street)
3. Melbourne (Tottenham) - Macarthur
4. Newcastle (Islington Junction via mains) - Queensland Border (Border Tunnel)
5. Crystal Brook - Parkes
6. Cootamundra - Parkes
7. Adelaide (Dry Creek) - Pelican Point
8. Port Augusta – Whyalla
9. Moss Vale – Unanderra

Under Clause 2.7(b) of the undertaking, ARTC has committed to make available, on the ARTC website, information which will assist Access Seekers with development of an Access Application, and will assist during the negotiation of an Access Agreement with ARTC.....

“In order to encourage utilisation of the ARTC Network, ARTC already publishes significant information of this type and, where appropriate, links to this information will exist.

“ARTC will also be publishing information other than that required by the undertaking, which it believes will provide further guidance to access seekers.

“The information provided should be considered as indicative only and ARTC will take all reasonable steps to ensure it is accurate and up to date.

“Information forming part of ARTC's Network Interface and Coordination Plan, as well as ARTC's operating schedules can change frequently, and may not be immediately reflected in information provided on the website. Access Seekers who are undertaking detailed service planning are encouraged to contact ARTC for more recent information if required.”

What does this mean for us? Possibly not much, as ARTC already provide a great deal of information on their website, including Working Timetables. But possibly it will lead to more information, and/or a different approach. One possibility is the integration of information relating to the Interstate network and the NSW network (including WTTs) which are at present in different parts of their website.

ARTC has issued at least one NSW Train Advice, (no. 0599-2008) which appears at the top as a standard ARTC NSW Train Alteration Advice and at the bottom as an ARTC National Working Timetable amendment. We will watch developments with interest.

ARTC North-South Mainline loops

In late September, the ARTC opened passing loops at Tamrookum and Greenbank in Queensland on the north-south mainline. They are 1570m long to cater for 1500m trains and, combined with the existing 1500m loops at Bromelton and Glenapp, will provide increased mainline holding capacity and an efficient path in and out of the Acacia Ridge terminal.

ARTC CEO David Marchant said the loops are an important milestone in the north-south strategy to cut the transit time from Melbourne to Sydney to as low as 10 hours 40 minutes and 15 hours 35 minutes between Sydney and Brisbane.

In June, construction commenced on the passing lane which will extend from the existing Tullamarine Loop to the existing McIntyre Loop. This will be achieved by conversion of V Line's parallel broad gauge goods line to dual gauge. Construction was also underway at Kilmore East, and at Tallarook.

ARTC Wodonga bypass

On 26 September Victorian Premier John Brumby and Commonwealth Infrastructure and Transport Minister Anthony Albanese turned the first sod on the Wodonga Rail Bypass. This is the first major step in the \$501.3 million North-East Rail Revitalisation Project which will also convert 200-kilometres of the NE broad gauge line to standard gauge. The five-kilometre bypass alone will cut 10 minutes off interstate train trips and remove 11 level crossings in the centre of town. It involves the construction of a single-track, five-kilometre line and a new passenger railway station in west Wodonga.

The North-East Rail Revitalisation Project will be completed in 2010.

ARTC NSW Coal lines improvements

ARTC have completed various projects in the Hunter Valley and NW NSW as part of their major program to upgrade the coal network lines. In early September three bridges were replaced between St Heliers and Muswellbrook. The Muscle Creek underbridge replacements are part of the Antiene to Muswellbrook duplication work which is due for completion in May 2009. The new ballast top bridges will replace the current transom type bridges and enable duplicated track to be constructed between September 2008 and May 2009.

Rail relaying between Murulla and Kankool will replace 53kg/m rail in selected track sections will be replaced with 60kg/m head hardened rails.

ARTC opened a new 2 km loop at Wollar on the Ulan line on 1 September. The loop will facilitate growing coal traffic including an increase in train length from 42 wagons to up to 72. Further loops are planned for completion in coming months.

Canberra line regression

Work on new signalling for the introduction of Train Order working on the Goulburn – Canberra line has halted while some local issues are resolved about its operation. Meanwhile there are problems with the present Electric Staff system because of thefts of copper wiring which connects the machines. Hence, Electric Staff will be replaced by an Ordinary Train Staff and Ticket system. The technology of the 1870s will be replaced with that of the 1860s!

Rail Corp Working Timetable 14 September 2008

As foreshadowed in the September *Table Talk* (page 3), a new NSW Rail Corp Working Timetable has been issued dated 14 September 2008, dated just one week later than the much amended WTT of 7 September. Perhaps this is the shortest ever interval between dates of Working Timetables.

Glendale Station

NSW Rail Corp has lodged a Development Application with Lake Macquarie City Council for the construction of a new station and bus interchange at Glendale between Cockle Creek and Cardiff, near the Stockland Glendale shopping centre.

Cityrail changes 14 September 2008

There were changes to Cityrail services on the Southern Highlands line from 14 September, in particular an additional down train in the evening peak.

Weekdays:

- The 1430 Campbelltown-Moss Vale departs 5 minutes later at 1435, running 5 minutes later throughout, arriving Moss Vale at 1606.
- An **additional** service departs Campbelltown at 1725, stopping all stations to Moss Vale, arriving Moss Vale at 1845.

The additional train is provided by abandoning the former practice of running double sets between Campbelltown and Moss Vale and dividing at Moss Vale, hence there is no net increase in the number of carriages provided.

- The 1734 Campbelltown-Moss Vale departs 21 minutes later at 1755, running 21 minutes later throughout, arriving Moss Vale at 1915.
- The 1822 Campbelltown-Goulburn runs 2 minutes earlier from Moss Vale to Goulburn.
- The 1726 Central-Campbelltown is **extended** to Macarthur.

Weekends:

- The 500 Moss Vale-Goulburn runs 15 minutes earlier, departing at 445. (This is basically just a placement run).
- The 604 Goulburn-Central departs 9 minutes earlier at 555 and stops all stations, resuming its former times from Macarthur.
- The 1612 Central-Moss Vale now stops all stations, thus arriving Moss Vale 8 minutes later at 1817.
- The 1725 Central-Goulburn now also stops all stations, thus arriving Goulburn 9 minutes later at 2026.
- The 1834 Campbelltown-Moss Vale departs 30 minutes later at 1904, runs 30 minutes later throughout, arriving Moss Vale at 2024.
- The 2035 Moss Vale-Campbelltown departs Moss Vale 12 minutes later at 2047, runs 12 minutes later throughout, arriving Campbelltown at 2206.

In view of the fact that Cityrail provides almost identical timetables on Saturdays and Sundays, one wonders why they persist in the ancient practice of introducing changes on Sundays.

Cityrail 12 October 2008 Working Timetable

Cityrail has issued a new Working Timetable dated 12 October 2008. This is not a new book, but a reprint of the 2006 book. It includes a redesigned Section 5, in which the Epping-Chatswood line appears – but without trains.

Cityrail 2009 Timetables

More details are emerging about Cityrail timetables to be introduced next year. When the Epping-Chatswood line opens in February 2009, it will operate as an independent shuttle. In June, a complete new timetable will be introduced. Four trains an hour from/to Hornsby will then be diverted to the new line, operating through to the City. There will therefore be four fewer trains an hour south of Epping on the Main Northern line. These four paths will be provided to additional Western line trains, providing capacity for an extra 12,000 commuters daily.

Sydney: When is the train coming?

The Black Hole in Sydney is not the start of the construction of proposed rail projects, rather it is the dire state of New South Welsh state finances. Consequently, there is political and media speculation that the following projects may not proceed:

- North West Metro (City-Epping-Hills District) (\$12 billion)
- South West rail line (Glenfield-Leppington)(\$1.37 billion)
- Kingsgrove-Revesby quadruplication (\$450 million)
- Quakers Hill-Vineyard duplication (\$432 million)
- Liverpool turnback (\$93 million), and
- Macarthur fourth platform (\$32 million)

Melburnians: Get yourself organised, or pay

The Premier of Victoria, John Brumby, told a Transport Summit on 5 September that the government is considering making travel on suburban trains on weekdays free after 2000, to help to ease evening peak loads. This follows the success of free travel before 700.

Geelong area upgrades

Platforms at Marshall and South Geelong will be lengthened to allow V/Line to run longer trains from the end of this year. Peak Geelong trains at present are a maximum six-carriages, and this will be increased to seven-carriages for semi-express peak services. The bigger trains are in response to a 23% growth in patronage in the past year on the Geelong line. V/Line is now receiving one new carriage every month and will do so until 2012. By that time, more than 3800 extra seats will be added to the network. A \$700,000 upgrade to Lara station was completed in September.

Port of Melbourne access

The Federal and State Governments and the Australian Rail Track Corporation are spending \$50 million to improve rail access to the Port of Melbourne by constructing a direct dual gauge track line from the Dynon rail terminals to the port, and the duplication of an existing dual gauge line connecting into the port from Dock Link Road. Facilities will also be constructed to house and maintain VLine's refurbished standard gauge passenger trains (part of the North-East Rail revitalisation project). The project will eliminate complex shunting manoeuvres or delays for other trains to pass, while other trains must go via Tottenham for access to the port. Work will begin in early 2009 and be completed in late 2010.

Connex Melbourne Hitachi trains

The remaining Hitachi trains in Melbourne have been withdrawn from service due to rust in the underframes.

Services to Wendouree

The new Wendouree Station will be served by 11 V Line trains per weekday from mid-2009 when works are complete.

- Three Ballarat morning peak trains will originate at Wendouree;
- Two evening Ballarat peak trains will be extended to Wendouree; and
- The six Ararat trains (three in each direction) will also stop.

What is a V Line bus?

Recent contributions to this debate have highlighted the Warrnambool-Hamilton-Grampians-Ararat bus as an example of the ambiguity of trying to define what is and what isn't a V Line bus (See especially August *Table Talk*, p. 5 and Lachlan Richardson's letter, September *Table Talk*, p. 5). The timetable for this route has now been added to the V Line website and it is in the normal V Line format, including with the V Line logo. But on the other hand, the website also explicitly states for this route "This is a Department of Transport coach service".

Trains from Portland resume

El Zorro has secured a contract with Iluka Resources to haul 3000 tonnes of mineral sands from Portland each week. This follows transfer of the Maroona-Portland line to the Australian Rail Track Corporation (see August *Table Talk*, page 5). There will be three trains a week to Melbourne, with 40-container, 1000-tonne loads. The first departed Portland on 15 September.

Victorian Grain trains

Agribusiness ABB Grain Ltd is close to signing a five-year deal with rail operator Genesee & Wyoming Australia to move up to 300,000 tonnes of Victorian grain annually from 1 November. ABB says the deal will provide transport certainty for Victorian grain growers, rail capacity for ABB's exports from Victoria and service the company's Port of Melbourne grain terminal and Australian Bulk Alliance grain receivals sites. The agreement provides for one grain train of up to 40 wagons and capacity to move up to 300,000 tonnes of grain for export, complementing rail freight capacity provided by other grain companies in Victoria. This is in addition to grain trains operated by Pacific National and El Zorro (see June *Table Talk*, page 8).

Narrow Gauge lunch

The Puffing Billy lunch train service was relaunched in September 2008. The main feature is the introduction of a "Steam and Cuisine" lunch train running the whole way to Gembrook and a return Devonshire Tea train from Gembrook to Belgrave. This happens even on days of the total fire ban using a diesel hauled service. There is a balancing bus transfer to/from Belgrave (loaded both ways) to transfer first class customers. Details at <http://www.puffingbilly.com.au/info/times/index.htm>

Tasmania Rail network future

The end-September deadline for the sale of Pacific National's Tasmanian rail business has passed without a decision. Five bidders are believed to be in contention. A handover is now unlikely before 1 January.

Brighton, Tasmania transport hub

The Tasmanian government has given the go-ahead for construction of a transport hub at Brighton, north of Hobart, on the northern side of the Derwent River. It will have provision for interchange between rail and road on a 50 ha site. The hub will allow for the relocation of the Hobart railyards freeing up space on the waterfront for the new Royal Hobart Hospital.

TransAdelaide

The South Australian government has ordered an additional four Flexity trams from Bombardier for \$26 million. They will be built in Germany with delivery beginning in the final quarter of 2010.

Service reliability details for tram and train services are available on the Transadelaide website, www.transadelaide.com.au This gives an overall view of on-time performance within six minutes, as well as service reliability, i.e. % of trips actually operated, with some reasons for the problems encountered. The rail division has never been better than just under 90% for the last 13 months for on-time performance.

For the 2008 City-Bay Fun run on the 21 September additional tram services were run, resulting in a 10 minute frequency from Brighton Road between 620-900 and 1030-1350. The service was truncated at stop 17 Brighton Road until the 1405 from Moseley Square following which the normal Sunday timetable resumed.

The tram service was truncated at Victoria Square on 18 September during a lunch time parade for returning Olympians.

The heritage H tram service on weekends and public holidays has not operated since July. The Minister for Transport, Pat Conlon, has ruled out reinstatement into regular traffic.

New Zealand

From 1 October, ONTRACK and KiwiRail are a single entity – under a New Zealand Railways Corporation (NZRC) Board. This follows the NZ Government's July purchase of Toll NZ's rail and ferry businesses (see June *Table Talk*, page 10). The decision to bring all parts of the business together was made after lengthy discussion with customers and suppliers. An establishment unit has been created which will work on the integration of the operational and infrastructure businesses. KiwiRail and ONTRACK will be separate operating units reporting to the NZRC Board chaired by Jim Bolger. The government will soon announce the first tranche of new capital for the integrated rail business's next phase of upgrades and expansion.

Low level flying

Air France-KLM, in conjunction with Veolia, will commence its own operation of high-speed trains from Paris, commencing in 2010. Services will compete with SNCF on routes within France and also operate internationally to Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Britain.

Eurostar success

During the first quarter of 2008 Eurostar carried 2.17 million passengers, an increase of 21% compared to 2007. Reasons include the opening of the high-speed line from Kent to London, reducing journey times, and the opening of the new London terminus at St Pancras, improving accessibility for travellers from the Midlands and the North. Recent figures, however, will be adversely affected by a fire aboard a truck-carrying freight service on 11 September. The tunnel was closed for a few days, then operated on a restricted timetable until 28 September.

Chinese high speed

China's new 120 km high-speed line from Beijing to Tianjin opened on 1 August just in time for the Olympics. It carried 514,000 passengers in its first ten days. The line, which operates

at 350 km/h, cut travel time from 70 to 27 minutes. It will be extended 261 km from Tainjin to Qinhuangdao.

Swedish high speed

The Swedish government is examining plans for high-speed lines from Stockholm to Gothenburg and Malmo.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Ian Cooper, Scott Ferris, Geoff Lambert, Lourie Smit, Roger Wheaton, ARTC, *Sydney Morning Herald* and Victor Isaacs for Rail & Tram News.

BUS

New South Wales – Sydney

Sydney Buses:

STA has introduced further Prepay routes from Monday 15 September:

L24 Watsons Bay to City

X39 Clovelly to City

X84 North Bondi to Bondi Jn

X89 North Bondi to Bondi Jn

410 Rockdale to Bondi Jn

Routes changing to Prepay on 29th September are:

Route X92 - Little Bay - Eastgardens - City

Route X94 - La Perouse - City

Route X96 - Maroubra Beach - City

Route X97 - South Maroubra - City

Route X99 - Little Bay - Maroubra – City.

The Sydney Buses website advises that a new Route 10 Metrobus Service between Leichhardt and Kingsford via the City will commence early October but no specific date is mentioned. However the *Mx* newspaper has mentioned 12 October as the starting date. The 12-month trial will involve a number of different 'Metrobuses' with varying seat arrangements and standing room capacity.

The buses will travel along Parramatta Road and Anzac Parade corridors, via the new Mid-City Transport Interchange precinct in Park Street. The route will service major shopping areas, transport hubs, sporting venues, entertainment precincts and four universities. The frequency of 10 minutes peak hour and 15 minutes off peak is considered frequent enough for no timetable to be issued for this route.

Sydney Private Buses

A **new report** prepared by David Hensher and Zheng Li at the Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, University of Sydney has predicted greatly increased future bus patronage trends assuming various petrol price increases. The report focuses on routes serviced by Forest Coach Lines. "These kind of patronage figures are a problem because I don't believe we have a long-term strategy for meeting this demand," said Forest Coach Lines' chief executive, David Royle. Demand on every Forest service has soared over recent years. Mature, 20-year-old routes are growing 10 per cent a year, and Mr Royle says this will continue. Mr Royle said the State Government needed a long-term strategy to cope with the challenges confronting the transport industry. "We need more priority for buses and we need a strategy put in place that says if the current growth continues on this corridor at this rate we will get to a point where buses are not a solution and then heavy rail or metro rail becomes a solution."

From 29 August, **Parramatta City Council** has provided a free bus service around Parramatta called 'the Loop'. There is an undated DL timetable available from the Parramatta Tourist Information Service and a website: <http://www.parramattaloop.com.au/> The bus departs every 10 minutes between 7.00 am and 6.30 pm Monday to Friday; 8.00 am and 4.00

pm Saturday. The buses are owned by Parramatta Council and serviced by Veolia Transport at Villawood whose accreditation they carry and who also provide the female drivers. A new Route 2 timetable effective 16 August 2008 has appeared on the Greens Northern Coaches website. (effective 18/8/2008).

A new timetable dated June 2008 for the **Manly Hop, Skip and Jump** routes has been issued. The service has been extended to cover the Bower St area of Manly from which the STA's 135 was recently withdrawn.

New South Wales – Regional

Hannafords, Tamworth, Route 437 to Westdale and Coledale. New timetable dated 28/5/2008, deleting a couple of trips and some changes to others. but generally much the same as the previous timetable.

Queensland – Brisbane

Brisbane Transport

Two in five bus users say they were left behind at a bus stop because the buses were too full last year, a Brisbane City Council passenger survey has revealed. Of those, almost three-quarters had to wait longer than 15 minutes for the next bus.

The 2007 Bus Satisfaction Final Report also found that just over half of more than 1000 respondents were very happy with the council's bus service, and most of those were older passengers.

Key issues identified in the report included frequency of service, reliability, security, bus standards, information availability and driver relations.

"Bus users have experienced consistently delayed buses on routes they travel on frequently, causing inconvenience and long waiting periods," the report said. "The timetable is thus often considered not useful and a better information system is needed to let the user know if the bus is late or has already been."

Passengers perceived one of the major concerns was lack of security personnel and cameras at bus stops, followed by the lack of adequate lighting at stops, particularly interchanges which are quite isolated. "With regard to the issue of personal safety, it appears that safety concerns centre principally on safety at bus stops and interchanges, rather than on the bus itself, and this should be kept in mind when looking at areas for possible improvement," the report said.

The council recently announced it would install CCTV security cameras on buses.

Queensland – Regional

Townsville City Council is embroiled in a bitter row over whether it has properly planned for a major bus terminal at the proposed redevelopment of Flinders Mall.

The city's major bus company claims the Flinders Mall revamp will not include an upgraded bus terminal.

Deputy Mayor David Crisafulli said last night the mall redevelopment would include a new bus terminal, and there would be no delay of five years, as suggested by critics.

The multi-million-dollar mall upgrade as well as the \$200 million Flinders Plaza development are expected to bring thousands of extra people into the city.

But Sunbus manager John Graham and Cr Jenny Hill said yesterday there was no plan for a new bus terminal. Mr Graham said the city terminal was well past its use by date and struggling to cope with 18 buses an hour and 1200 people a day.

Consultants Maunsell, who are drawing up a master plan to revamp Flinders St, are conducting a study into public transport that will take at least 18 months to complete. The mall is scheduled to be completed in 2010.

Mr Graham said he was disappointed by the lack of planning. "Over the last few years we have talked about the mall redevelopment and the bus terminal and we would have thought we would have been included right here right now," he said. "In 1992 this was a great facility and most of the 90s it was good but we have outgrown this with the size of our buses, the number of buses. "The council has indicated they will look at the bigger picture in two or three years but right now we need something to allow more buses through here and this would have been the ideal time."

Council's Planning and Economic Development Committee chair David Crisafulli said a bus terminal upgrade was always part of the plan.

"Public transport must feature heavily in the plans for the CBD," Cr Crisafulli said. "The Townsville Inner City Modelling Study is looking at public transport, pedestrian access, cycling connectivity and the best option for people driving their cars. That study is absolutely important before a single sod is turned on the mall."

Cr Hill said redeveloping the mall would be futile if shoppers and office workers didn't have easy public transport access. She said the CBD's public transport facilities needed to be upgraded in conjunction with the mall redevelopment.

South Australia – Adelaide

O-Bahn services: Rising fuel prices have increased pressure on Adelaide's main bus service, with more complaints about overcrowding and late services, prompting calls from bus drivers and commuters for extra services to meet growing demand.

Demand is growing so quickly, five new services have been introduced in morning and afternoon peak times. The number of passengers using the service has grown from 7.4 million a year in 2004-05, to 8.2 million in 2007-08. Many commuters using the O-Bahn are complaining about delays and lack of seats.

Some are using Park'n'Ride stations at Golden Grove and St Agnes, instead of the main Park'n'Ride centre at Tea Tree Plaza, to ensure they get seats. This time last year, only one or two commuters were boarding each early morning bus at St Agnes parking station. Now up to 10 or 12 people at a time are catching buses there. Queues of up to 40 people are waiting at the main O-Bahn station at Tea Tree Plaza to catch peak-hour buses.

One of the main reasons for delays on the line is traffic congestion in the city. A Transport Department spokesman said delays in Grenfell St – used by most O-Bahn services – were "at their highest in the afternoon peak". Preliminary estimates suggested delays of about five minutes, he said. Bus drivers told The Advertiser the delays are often up to 15 minutes.

The Transport Department spokesman said testing of replacement buses for the O-Bahn was complete and approval was being sought to buy replacements.

Tasmania - Hobart

Extensive changes to **Metro's Inner Hobart and Southern Suburbs** services were introduced from 7 September 2008.

University and Sandy Bay

A new route 888, marketed as Unibus, commenced operation on 8 September between Franklin Square in the City and the University via Regent Street. This new high frequency service (average headway of 8 minutes) will operate during University semesters only. At all other times the University is serviced by routes 54 and 55 but on a reduced frequency.

Mount Nelson, Tolmans Hill and Dynnyrne

A few extra trips have been added to the Saturday timetable but the number of off-peak journeys via "the Bends" (the mountainous zig zag Nelson Road route) has been reduced from every 30 minutes on old routes 57 and 58 to every 60 minutes on route 58 only. Most trips on routes 156 and 158 will operate on the major diversion to the mountain peak suburb of Tolmans Hill upon request only.

Battery Point, Casino Front Door, St Canice Avenue

The service to Battery Point has been reduced to just four off-peak trips on weekdays. Route 154 services Battery Point, Casino Front Door and St Canice Avenue.

Kingston, Blackmans Bay and Taroon

Considerable changes have been made to services with some changes to route numbers. There are additional weekday services to Hobart between 7.30am and 10.30am and additional services from Hobart between 2.00pm and 5.00pm.

There are earlier morning and later evening services on Southern connector routes 61, 67 and 68 (via Taroon) seven days a week

A new route 85 travels via Auburn Road, Kingston to Suncoast on weekdays

Diversion of services into Redwood Village, off Redwood Road, has been discontinued.

New full colour timetables and route maps:

In a commendable move Metro has introduced full colour timetables and maps to the Hobart area, following a successful launch of the new presentation in Launceston last year. Four new consolidated timetables have been produced for the areas in metropolitan Hobart affected by the latest changes. Unfortunately there are so many separate routes on some maps (for example 12 routes on the Tarooma – Kingston – Blackmans Bay timetable) that the subtle tonings of similar colours, especially the darker colours, make it difficult to quickly match the appropriate route and timetable. The new Sandy Bay- University timetable covers six routes, five of which are complex loop routes. Regrettably the size of the arrows on the coloured lines on the map require the map to be read under a very good light source. Even under a good light a black arrow on a deep purple line is not the easiest symbol to identify.

While the Kingston and Blackmans Bay timetable includes cross references to the regional services continuing south of the area on the map (to Howden, Margate, Snug and Woodbridge) there is also a cautionary note to advise that those seven routes are not shown on the map. However, on the separate Sandy Bay timetable map there is no cross reference to the six routes operating along Sandy Bay Road to Tarooma and Kingston/Blackmans Bay. These routes obviously cover the gaps in service on Sandy Bay Road which become evident from an examination of the separate Sandy Bay timetable. A serious omission.

Hobart Coaches abolished and changes to New Norfolk and Channel services:

Metro's regional operation which traded under the name of Hobart Coaches has now been fully "metrofied" as from 7 September. The two remaining operations, to New Norfolk and to the Channel ports and Cygnet are now branded as Metro and the remaining HC buses and coaches received Metro decals in lieu of Hobart Coaches signage from late August in the lead up to the introduction of the new timetables. However, the former Hobart Coaches vehicles have retained their "private" registrations and their Hobart Coaches fleet numbers.

An extra morning peak period trip has been added to the weekday New Norfolk to Hobart service and an extra return service has been added to the Saturday timetable. All Margate, Kettering, Woodbridge and Channel services now operate via Incana, Bundalla and Beach Roads in Margate. While the new regional timetables carry the Metro name they are not printed in colour.

Launch of marketing the new Metro Smart Card:

Marketing for Metro's new smart card ticketing system has commenced. On 14 August Metro launched five new all over advertising buses promoting the \$4.5 million German INIT system. The new ticketing system will become operational in Burnie in November, followed by Hobart in January 2009 and Launceston in February 2009. The AOA buses are five of the new Custom Coaches bodied Scania's numbered in the 300 series. (Ian G. Cooper)

Hobart Service Changes effective 7 September 2008 (Hilaire Fraser)

Metro Tasmania has issued the following timetables effective 7 September, 2008:-

University & Sandy Bay (now designated Unibus)

51 Hobart-Regent St-Churchill Av-Lower Sandy Bay-Sandy Bay Shops-Hobart (omits university inbound)

52 Hobart-Sandy Bay Shops-Lower Sandy Bay-Churchill Av-Sandy Bay Shops-Hobart

53 Hobart-Sandy Bay Shops-Churchill Av-Lower Sandy Bay-Sandy Bay Shops-Hobart

54 Hobart-Sandy Bay Shops-Lower Sandy Bay-Churchill Av-Regent St-Hobart

55 Hobart-Regent St-Churchill Av-Lower Sandy Bay-Sandy Bay Shops-Hobart

888 Hobart-University (new, uni-semesters only)

54 & 55 now operate every 30 mins weekdays, instead of every 20 mins, however, in conjunction with the new 888 15 minute service, Hobart to University has a combined frequency of every 8 mins, instead of every 10 minutes. Diversions of 54/55 via Battery Pt as 154/155 have been discontinued. 154 is used for the new St Candice Av service (see below).

Mt Nelson & Tolmans Hill

57 Hobart-Dynnyrne-Mt Nelson

58 Hobart-Dynnyrne-Hobart College-Mt Nelson

156 Hobart-Tolmans Hill-Mt Nelson-Dynnyrne-Hobart

158 Hobart-Dynnyrne-Mt Nelson-Hobart College-Tolmans Hill (on request Hobart)

Routes 157 Hobart-Tolmans Hill-Mt Nelson & 159 have been discontinued

On weekdays route 58 operates every 60 mins instead of every 30 mins, and the diversion via Sandy Bay Shops has been discontinued. On Saturdays route 57 operates every 90 mins instead of every 120 mins.

Hobart College

Extra services are provided on route 451 Hobart-Hobart College via Southern Outlet. The Hobart College timetable also details the 456 8.02 am journey from Tarooona and 58, 74, 84, 156, 158 serving Hobart College.

St Candice Av

154 Hobart-Battery Pt-St Candice Av operates every 120 mins weekdays instead of every 60 mins as was the case for the previous 154/155 services via Battery Pt. St Candice Av was served as a diversion of the former 154 Lower Sandy Bay/Churchill Av loop service.

Tarooona, Kingston & Blackman's Bay

Services via Tarooona

56 Hobart-Tarooona

61 Hobart-Kingston

62 Hobart-Summerleas

63 Hobart-Antarctic Division

67 Hobart-Maranoa Heights-Blackman's Bay-Kingston Beach

68 Hobart-Kingston Beach-Blackman's Bay-Maranoa Heights

Services via Southern Outlet

74 Hobart-Maranoa Heights-Blackman's Bay-Kingston Beach

75 Hobart-Maranoa Heights-Blackman's Bay-Kunama Dr

84 Hobart-Kingston Beach-Blackman's Bay-Maranoa Heights

85 Hobart-Kunama Dr-Blackman's Bay-Maranoa Heights

86 Hobart-Kingston Beach-Blackman's Bay (new)

On Saturdays Blackman's Bay is now served by hourly 74 & 84 services via Outlet replacing hourly 67 & 68 services via Tarooona, Tarooona is now served by hourly 61 & 62 services.

Previously there was an hourly service to Kingston via Outlet provided by some Blackman's Bay services (74 & 84) and an occasional 72 service to Summerleas via Outlet.

Discontinued routes are:-

72 Hobart-Outlet-Summerleas

162 Hobart-Tarooona-Summerleas-Outlet-Hobart

167 Hobart-Tarooona-Maranoa Heights-Blackman's Bay-Kingston Beach-Outlet-Hobart

168 Hobart-Tarooona-Kingston Beach-Blackman's Bay-Maranoa Heights-Outlet-Hobart

174 Hobart-Outlet- Maranoa Heights-Blackman's Bay-Kingston Beach-Tarooona-Hobart

184 Hobart-Outlet-Kingston Beach-Blackman's Bay-Maranoa Heights-Tarooona-Hobart

185 Hobart-Outlet-Kunama Dr-Blackman's Bay-Maranoa Heights-Tarooona-Hobart

The single timetable leaflet replaces leaflets for Tarooona, Kingston Central, Summerleas, Maranoa Heights, Kingston Beach & Blackman's Bay

Channel

64 Hobart-Tarooona-Woodbridge

Services via Southern Outlet

89 Hobart-Kingston Beach-Howden

92 Hobart-Maranoa Heights-Margate

93 Hobart-Snug

94 Hobart-Woodbridge

95 Hobart-Middleton

96 Hobart-Cygnnet

Routes 88 Howden-Maranoa Heights-Outlet-Hobart & 90 Dru Pt-Hobart have been discontinued.

New Norfolk

130 Hobart-Moonah-Fairview

135 Hobart-Brooker Hwy-Fairview

138 Glenorchy-Rex St-Circle St-Fairview

Routes 134 Hobart-Moonah-Rex St-Circle St-Fairview & 136 New Norfolk-Fairview-Circle St-Rex St-Moonah-Hobart have been discontinued.

University & Sandy Bay, Mt Nelson & Tolmans Hill, St Candice Av, Taroona, Kingston & Blackman's Bay timetables are in the new format recently used for Launceston timetables, whereby a route map is provided and individual trips are colour-coded to the route map.

Victoria – Melbourne

Least patronised bus routes: A report in the Sunday Herald Sun states that State Government documents obtained by the Sunday Herald Sun reveal five bus routes on the Melbourne network have less than 10 passengers a day. The 10 least-popular services had less than 24 people using them for the whole day.

Route / Number of passengers (Number of validations on February 5, 2008)

777 Karingal Hub Shopping Centre-McClelland Drive 1

745 Bayswater-Knox City-Wantirna Primary School 1

609 Kew-Fairfield (via Royal Talbot Hospital) 3

479 Moonee Ponds-Sunbury (via Melbourne Airport) 4

687 Healesville-Mt Lebanon-Healesville 8

796 Cranbourne-Devon Meadows-Clyde-Five Ways-Cranbourne 11

582 Eltham-Eltham via Eltham South and Eltham North (circular route) 17

797 Cranbourne-Cranbourne (town service) 18

838 Emerald-Fountain Gate Shopping Centre (via Beaconsfield) 22

842 Endeavour Hills Shopping Centre-Fountain Gate Shopping Centre 24

Source: Transport Minister Lynne Kosky

New editions of **Metlink Local Travel Guides** that are now available in print format:

Boroondara - July 2008

Frankston - March 2008

Knox - March 2008

Maroondah - March 2008

Melbourne - July 2008

Melton - July 2008

Moreland - July 2008

Port Phillip - July 2008

Upgraded Bus Routes: Routes 534 Merlynston to Glenroy and 536 Gowrie to Glenroy were upgraded from Monday 8 September.

Route 534 is extended to Coburg Principal Activity Centre and operates every day of the year, seven days a week. Weekday and Saturday services now run until around 9pm, rather than 7pm and 1pm respectively, and the new Sunday and public holiday services will finish around 9pm. The route will operate to a 30-minute frequency on weekdays (previously 20-25 minutes) and every 40 minutes on weekends (previously 35 minute frequency Saturday mornings).

Route 536 now operates to a 30-minute frequency on weekdays and every 40 minutes on Saturdays. Saturday services run until after 5pm. Previous frequencies were similar to Route 534.

Changes to Route 431: Route 431 has been altered to run along High Street in Yarraville rather than continuing along Anderson Street.

Victoria – Regional

New coach services operating in North-Western Victoria from Tuesday, 16 September 2008

Ballarat – Rokewood: The Ballarat - Rokewood coach service operates twice a day on Tuesdays and Thursdays only excluding public holidays. Departing Rokewood at 9.15am, the service runs via Dereel, Enfield, Napoleons and Ross Creek, arriving Ballarat Station at 10.35am and Wendouree Shopping Centre 10.45am. The return journey commences Wendouree 1.35pm, Ballarat Station 1.45pm and arrives Rokewood 3.05pm.

Bacchus Marsh – Blackwood: This service operates twice a day on Fridays only excluding public holidays. Departs Blackwood General Store at 9.05am thence via Greendale, Myrning and Bacchus Marsh Town Centre to Bacchus Marsh Station arriving 9.40am. Departure is 2.15pm with arrival back at Blackwood at 2.50pm.

Bendigo – Heathcote operates twice a day on Thursdays only. Departure from Heathcote is at 9.50am via Axedale and Bendigo to Bendigo Station arriving 10.50am. The return journey commences at 3.15pm arriving Heathcote 4.15pm.

Omeo to Bright Alps Bus Link Project announced: Tourists and residents of Victoria's mountain country will be linked with an innovative new bus service connecting Bairnsdale to Wangaratta following an \$11,500 Brumby Government grant. Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky said the new bus service would start in late October and run through until May 2009 and will operate on Mondays and Fridays.

"The Brumby Government is taking action to boost regional public transport and I am absolutely delighted to announce this summer bus service which I am sure will prove popular with locals and tourists," Ms Kosky said. "The Alps Bus Link service will link the regional towns of Wangaratta, Bright, Omeo and Bairnsdale along the Great Alpine Road.

"Importantly, it will also link local Alpine shire communities that are currently not connected to any public transport service, such as Dinner Plain, Harrietville, Freeburgh and the Alpine resort of Mt Hotham."

The innovative Alps Bus Link project is the result of several successful cross government partnerships. It involves two local Transport Connections projects (the Let's GET Connected Transport Project and the North East Transport Connections Project).

Both projects are funded through the Department of Planning and Community Development through the Brumby Government's Transport Connections Program, a successful state cross government initiative, to help communities work together to improve local transport.

"I am also delighted to say there was a real community push for this service and several councils and tourist organisations jumped on board raising a total of \$14,500 to help finance the running of the service," Ms Kosky said.

"The East Gippsland and Alpine Shire Councils, Mount Hotham Resort Management Board, the East Gippsland and NorthEast Transport Connections Projects, Omeo Region & Business Tourism Association and the Mount Hotham Ski Company all contributed to the establishment of the service."

The service will connect the local residents of the Omeo area, Dinner Plain, Mt Hotham, Harrietville and Bright to a wider range of work, education, training, shopping and recreational opportunities as well as medical and business services.

"The Great Alpine Road is now considered one of Australia's greatest visitor touring routes as well as an everyday road link for local communities and through this project public transport will now open the region to all travellers," Ms Kosky said.

For more information – see the local websites www.alpineshire.vic.gov.au; www.egipps.vic.gov.au, www.mthotham.com.au or contact the local East Gippsland Shire Council on 5153 9500; the Alpine Shire Council on 5755 0555; or the North East Transport Connections Project on 57313506 or tcpovens@ovensandking.org.au

Thanks to Adelaide *Advertiser*, Australian Transport Discussion Board, Barry Blair, Brisbane *Courier Mail*, Geoffrey Clifton, Ian Cooper, Adrian Dessanti, Hilaire Fraser, Craig Halsall, Robert Henderson, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Michael Marshall, Ministry for Public Transport, Peter Murphy and Lourie Smit for Bus news.

AIR

Domestic

Virgin Blue will launch a seasonal daily service between Brisbane and Launceston from 15 December until 4 April. Commencing 26 October it will introduce extra weekly flights from Sydney and Melbourne to the Gold Coast, Ballina/Byron and Hobart.

International

Qantas' first A380, a fully double-deck long-distance airliner, the first of eight, arrived in Sydney on 21 September. It was two years late from the manufacturer, Airbus. Late this year, it will commence operation from Melbourne to Los Angeles, followed by Sydney to LA.

Qantas has introduced codeshare with Alaska Airlines Honolulu-Seattle and Anchorage, and with Horizon Air LA-Flagstaff, Boise, and Reno. Qantas now has codeshare flights to 25 cities in North America.

United Airlines will operate a daily non-stop flight from Melbourne to Los Angeles to cater for increased demand over the holiday period from 17 December 2008 to 1 February 2009. This service will be in addition to the current daily services from Sydney to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Jetstar will introduce a daily Brisbane-Darwin-Denpasar service from 3 December.

Pacific Blue will commence 11 direct flights per week between Australia and Bali from 1 December - two from Adelaide, five from Brisbane and four from Perth.

Air Pacific will introduce a twice-weekly service between the Gold Coast and Nadi, Fiji from 1 December.

Thanks to Tony Bailey and Victor Isaacs for Air News.