



TABLE TALK

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TOP TABLE TALK –

A CORNUCOPIA OF NEW WORKING TIMETABLES

Australian Rail Track Corporation 12 January 2014

A new ARTC Working Timetable (aka Master Train Plan) came into operation from 12 January 2014. It is available on their website. Click on "Operations" or go directly to <http://www.artc.com.au/Content.aspx?p=161> It now includes a section for the Sydney Metropolitan Freight Network including Marrickville Junction to Botany Gate taken over by ARTC from Transport for NSW on 18 December 2013.

Electronic copies of this WTT are available from the ATA's January Distribution List.

NSW Country Regional Network 12 January 2014

A new John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network Working Timetable came into operation from 12 January 2014. It is available on their website. Click on "Network Operations and Access" or go directly to <http://www.jhrcrn.com.au/Documents.asp?ID=67&Title=Standard+Working+Timetable+%28SWTT%29&pg=1&start=1>

Sydney Trains 11 January 2014

A new Sydney Trains Working Timetable came into operation from 11 January 2014. Book 1 (Weekdays) and Book 2 (Weekends) are designated as version 3.01, and replace version 2.05 dated 20 October 2013 and all subsequent amendments. A number of changes to the content and format of the Working Timetable have been incorporated.

- Commissioning of Liverpool turnback with altered train working. Down through trains now operate via the new platform 4 (except empty trains performing rail cleans). The majority of down services terminating at Liverpool to form up services will terminate / commence from platform 3. Up services will continue to operate via platform 1.
- Altered run numbering.
- Changes to stabling arrangements and maintenance cycles.
- Increased deployment of Waratah trains (A sets).
- Revised Standby train arrangements.
- Commissioning of Auburn Junction Stage 9, at kilometrage 17.78, (Auburn East control area)
- Changes resulting from altered speed boards, the introduction of additional route codes, and revised performance modelling around North Strathfield Junction and Homebush. All references to Homebush Loop will be removed and merged with the Homebush timing point.

- Down services travelling towards Unanderra North Junction now display an I route code after Coniston.

Electronic copies of this WTT are available from the ATA's January Distribution List.

Special Train Notice 0010-2014 provides a summary of changes.

Transport for NSW 21 December 2013 and 1 February 2014

A new Transport for NSW Freight Working Timetable for the Sydney area came into operation from 21 December 2013.

A further new Freight Working Timetable for the Sydney area will come into operation from 1 February 2014. Book 4 (Weekdays) and Book 5 (Weekends) have been published for both dates.

Electronic copies of the 21 Dec WTT are available from the ATA's January Distribution List.

V/Line 22 December 2013

A new V/Line Working Timetable came into operation from 22 December 2013 for the opening of the first section of the Regional Rail Link from Southern Cross to South Kensington (see item below). The new Working Timetables have not been sighted yet. Public timetables are on their website at <http://www.vline.com.au/timetables/timetables/train.html>

Maryborough line trains will now serve the re-opened station at Talbot. A connecting bus will operate from Talbot to Lexton for a trial period of six months.

A major feature of the new schedules is that trains on the North East Standard Gauge line to Albury (controlled by ARTC) have all been slowed down by fifteen minutes. However these slowdowns do not appear in the Public timetables. In a great Victorian Railways tradition, dating back more than 100 years, trains may depart earlier from locations if circumstances permit; and it is these earlier times that appear in the Public timetables. In the Down direction the Public times are the same as in the former timetable. They are five minutes earlier than the Working timetable at all stations from Seymour to Wodonga, then fifteen minutes earlier at Albury. In the Up direction, the Working Timetable schedules are five minutes later at stations, crossing loops and junctions from Seymour to Sims St Junction (just before Dynon), then fifteen minutes later at Southern Cross, but again these are not reflected in the Public timetables and again trains may depart at the earlier Public times if circumstances permit. However, it is unclear whether this change is permanent, or merely for the period of the Summer timetables from 22 December 2013 until 24 January 2014 and whether they are regular timetables or

special hot weather schedules (WOLO in railway talk – originally the railway telegram code word for hot weather conditions).

Metro Trains Melbourne 22 December 2013

A new Metro Trains Melbourne Working Timetable came into operation from 22 December 2013. The main alterations are: **Clifton Hill group:** Layovers at single-line crossing stations that were only required for Staff working have been removed; The City Circle Loop direction has been reversed.

Northern group: Takes account of opening of Southern Cross platforms 15 and 16 and new Regional Rail Link tracks to South Kensington; Some Newport line trains have altered schedules to accommodate altered V/Line trains. **Caulfield group:** From the first down departure until 0725, as well as several other trains in the inter-peak, departures are one minute earlier and journey times increased.

As of early January, this WTT has not been placed on Metro's website.

TRANSPERTH TRAINS: 2013 THROUGH TRAVELEASY

by David Whiteford

TravelEasy is Transperth's email / sms alert system for service disruptions, changes, and arrangements for special events. Anyone can register to receive notices suited to their requirements, choosing from specific train, bus or ferry routes, and options for special event types. Your profile can be as small as one bus route or include all options.

February 2013 *Table Talk* carried a summary of the 2012 railway Travel Easy reports for rail disruptions (planned and unplanned), special event services, and other notices. This report is compiled from all of the notices I have filed for 2013.

EVENTS

Not all events require extra services. Some notices only advise attendees of regular services that they can use, but the majority do involve extra trains. Many events have inclusive transport and event ticketing. Special event services were provided for events at:

- NIB Stadium (Perth, rail passengers use Claisebrook station) – total of 17 soccer / rugby games and 1 concert (24 total in 2012). An "other notice" I received was to advise attendees of Perth Glory soccer matches at NIB Stadium that the club had withdrawn from the inclusive ticket service so there will have been no notices for any of the 2013/14 season matches played there.
- Perth Arena (Perth CBD) 18 sports events (largely Wildcats' basketball games) and 28 other events (the Arena was opened in the latter half of 2012 so only recorded 4 sport and 8 events that year).
- Paterson's Stadium (Subiaco Oval – passengers encouraged to use West Leederville station) – 25 Australian Rules football events and 3 others (30 total 2012).
- Arena Joondalup – nil in 2013 (2 in 2012)
- Showgrounds (Claremont, but has own station) – 4 events plus the Royal Show Sept/Oct.
- Other events 14 (such as Carols by Candlelight; City to Surf fun run; Skyshow; West Coast Blues & Rock festival (18 in 2012).

Easter & Anzac holidays had traveleasy notices but surprisingly there were no Christmas or New Year's Eve notices.

SERVICE DISRUPTIONS – PLANNED

Most Perth cancellations are evening services after 7pm. Unlike the 2012 summary this time I have not provided dates or indicated whether the closure was for the full or only part of the line. Any one notice could refer to just one evening closure, or closures over a number of days.

All lines

Two major disruptions from 12-17 July and 31 July – 4 August for the Fremantle tunnel commissioning. There had been 1 major closure in 2012 affecting Fremantle, Midland and Armadale lines.

Armadale / Thornlie line

12 notices (8 in 2012)

Fremantle line

13 notices (2 in 2012). The increase is due to the major tunnel project for the Fremantle line as it leaves Perth station.

Midland line

7 notices (7 in 2012).

Joondalup line

27 notices (14 in 2012). Many are linked to the connections to the Fremantle line.

Mandurah line

21 notices (6 in 2012). The increase is due to new crossovers between Cockburn Central and Kwinana and also additional Joondalup line work.

SERVICE DISRUPTIONS – UNPLANNED

Service cancellations or delays occur due to "technical issues" or "incidents" according to the notices. Notices can be for "delayed" services with some giving an idea of frequency but most notices for delays just providing a warning; or for part or all line closures. Because of through working of most Perth trains an issue on one line will usually affect another but when both lines are mentioned in the one notice the line where the incident occurred is rarely specified. Through running occurs for Mandurah and Joondalup line trains and Midland and Fremantle trains. I have only noted where the notices specifically mention delays on one line caused by an issue on another.

Armadale / Thornlie line

7 "technical issue" notices, 5 "incidents", and 1 medical emergency – a total of 13 with an additional 6 notices where ALL lines were affected (2012 also had 13, with 3 'all line' notices). There were also 2 'technical issue' notices for the Thornlie line only (0 in 2012).

Fremantle line

12 'technical issue' notices plus the 6 all lines notices (10 in 2012 with 1 incident & 3 all lines).

Midland line

13 'technical issue' notices, 1 'incident', 1 not specified, and the 6 all lines notices (15 total in 2012 plus 3 all lines).

Joondalup line

13 'technical issue' notices, 1 'incident', 1 not specified, 1 for trains not stopping at Glendalough station due to an incident there, and 6 all line notices (14 in 2012 plus 3 all lines).

Mandurah line

10 'technical issue' notices, 1 'incident' and 3 all line notices (11 notices in 2012 plus 3 all lines).

OTHER NOTICES

Platform changes were announced for both planned and unplanned events, the Midland line having 13 platform change notices during the year (both Perth and Mclver stations), Joondalup 5 (when trains would run into the main Perth station), Thornlie line 2 (Thornlie line's platform 3

underwent a major upgrade during 2013) and Armadale/Thornlie 2.

Work at stations resulted in a further 8 notices – car park work at Murdoch (twice), Warnbro and Maddington; general access work at Queens Park, City West, Esplanade, and

Perth. Closure of Belmont Park station in October also was announced through *traveleasy*

There was also the obligatory 1/7 fare increase notice. I recorded 11 total 'other notices' in 2012.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Rail Knowledge Bank website

A new website entitled Rail Knowledge Bank, by the Cooperative Research Centre for Rail Innovation, in co-operation with other Australian railway research bodies, contains news and many useful links. It is at http://railknowledgebank.com/Presto/home/Default_v2.aspx

QR Citytrain: New Year's Eve

Free public transport was provided on all rail, bus, and ferry services in SE Queensland between 2100 on New Year's Eve and 0530 on New Year's Day. Approximately 80 additional trains operated, however details were not posted on the SE Queensland Translink website.

QR Citytrain: Apps

The following Apps cover QR Citytrain services: Airtrain, Go Brisbane, Service Status, Transit Times, Trip Go. For details see

<http://www.queenslandrail.com.au/RailServices/City/Pages/Thirdpartyrailapps.aspx>

Queensland: Wandoan-Banana line shelved

Surat Basin Rail Joint Venture says construction of the 'missing link' in Queensland's rail network has been put on hold for the time being. It has shelved plans to build the 214 km line between Wandoan and Banana because the coal mines it was going to service are not going ahead. Chairman Everald Compton says it is waiting for the industry to recover. "It is forecast that the thermal coal price will stay as it is for five years, so that probably is some indication - but markets can change. It depends on the prosperity of customers around the world and their demands. Maybe it will be cut short. Effectively it has been shelved until a coal mine opens. It may well open in partnership with agricultural industries that decide to use the Port of Gladstone and that's a possibility in the future but agriculture by itself would never pay for the railway."

Queensland freight strategy

The Queensland government released on 12 December a "Moving Freight Strategy". It outlines six key areas to move freight efficiently. A key component will see greater investment and expansion of the state's rail network. Transport Minister Scott Emerson said, "Actions identified to get more freight on to rail and reduce road congestion include preserving train paths on regional rail lines for agricultural freight and undertaking a pre-feasibility study for a new rail freight terminal on the north side of Brisbane." He said freight volumes in Queensland are expected to increase from 871 million tonnes currently to about 1741 million tonnes by 2026. The document can be accessed at www.tmr.qld.gov.au/business-industry/Transport-sectors/Freight/Moving-Freight.aspx

Queensland: Galilee Basin Railway approved

On 20 December the Federal Minister for the Environment approved the Galilee Basin Coal and Railway project. In the next step, it is unclear at present whether the Queensland government will approve the proposed 300 km narrow gauge line to be owned and operated by jointly by Aurizon, Indian mining company GVK and Gina Rinehart's Hancock Mining and connecting to the existing Newlands line or the

proposed standard gauge 500 km railway of Clive Palmer's China First mining company direct to the Abbot Point port. (For a map see December *Table Talk*, page 2).

Pacific National: Freight in Queensland

Logistics company Toll has agreed to provide Pacific National with 90% of its Queensland freight volume from 2014 until 2027 and to sell its five Queensland rail terminals to PN for \$71 million.

Aurizon: Downsizing

On 16 December Aurizon said it was cutting its locomotive fleet from 829 to 598, a 28% decrease, and its wagon numbers by 12% from 18,546 to 16,292 by 2016. This is a write-down of \$197 million. CEO Lance Hockridge said this was part of a program designed to use existing rail corridors more efficiently. It would end duplication of maintenance facilities and services as well as reducing corporate costs. It will also see another 248 voluntary redundancies, taking total job losses since privatisation in 2010 to 2000, or 20% of the workforce.

The group said it remained confident about achieving a 75% operating ratio for fiscal year 2015.

Aurizon said it has a surplus of 308 locomotives and 5185 wagons for its planned operations over the next five years. The company operates 59 different classes of locomotives and 297 classes of wagons around the country, although the bulk are concentrated in the Queensland coalfields.

Mr Hockridge said Aurizon expected to make a final decision on the GVK/Hancock project in the second half of next year. The company announced last month it had decided to pursue a hybrid model of building 300km of narrow-gauge track feeding into its existing network, rather than 500km of standard-gauge rail in a greenfield project, to haul the ore to the port at Abbot Point. Mr Hockridge said he was confident coal would remain an important commodity in the energy market until 2030 and was cautiously optimistic about the outlook for the Galilee Basin.

Gold Coast Tramway

The final section of track for the Gold Coast Tramway was laid in Surfers Paradise Boulevard around midday on 20 December 2013. Over the past 18 months crews have laid 2800 tonnes of track on the 13km line. The last six trams are on their way from Europe, while the ones already at Southport depot will start testing over the bridge and into Surfers Paradise by March. From April, the trams will run along the route to schedule, for crew familiarization and final testing. Public operation will commence on 1 June.

ARTC: North Star line

The line from Camurra (north of Moree) to North Star in NW NSW was booked out of service from 1 November 2013 due to infrequent train service. Trains can now only operate on the line after seven days notice.

NSW Train Link: Diversions, alterations and cancellations

Regional Rail Link work in western Melbourne again disrupted passenger trains between Melbourne and Albury from 28 December 2013 until 19 January 2014 (*see the Regional Rail Link item below*). **NSW Train Link** XPTs were replaced by buses between Albury and Melbourne and v.v. In addition, on the weekend of 4 and 5 January the day

Sydney-Melbourne and v.v. XPTs were diverted via Wollongong – passengers might have regarded this all as a trying experience. Then on the weekends of 11 and 12 January and 18 and 19 January a more interesting diversion will apply. The XPTs will be diverted via the new South Sydney Freight Line. This has not happened before, and provides an opportunity for travel over a rare line. The down trains have a good run through the goods lines and are only a few minutes later than normal at Moss Vale. Not so the up trains, which are about 30 minutes later than normal into Sydney.

During all three of these weekends, all Sydney-Canberra passenger trains will be replaced by buses.

Alterations on V/Line and Great Southern Railway caused by Regional Rail Link work are covered in the RRL item below.

During this period **Great Southern Railway's** Overland train Adelaide-Melbourne and v.v. only conveyed passengers to/from Ararat or North Shore (Geelong). Buses were substituted between there and Melbourne. One Overland journey was cancelled completely, as follows:

Eastbound:

Friday 27 December 2013 Bus Ararat-Melbourne
Monday 30 December 2013 Service did not operate
Friday 3 Jan, Monday, 6 Jan, Friday 10 Jan, Monday 13 Jan
and Friday, 17 Jan 2014 Bus North Shore-Melbourne.

Westbound:

Saturday 28 December 2013 Bus Melbourne-Ararat
Tuesday 31 December 2013 Service did not operate
Saturday 4 Jan, Tuesday, 7 Jan, Saturday, 11 Jan, Tuesday,
14 Jan and Saturday 18 Jan 2014 Bus Melbourne-North Shore.

NSW Train Link: Remorse?

In early December NSW Train Link promulgated the offer of a free afternoon tea (including a bottle of wine) for First class passengers on the Sydney to Brisbane overnight XPT. The offer was "postponed" after only a few days.

***Comment:** Perhaps this proposal was made because of Train Link's guilty conscience caused by their atrocious timetable introduced from 20 October for this train, with an arrival in Brisbane at 3.53 am. Or perhaps it was considered because as a result of the change, there are so few passengers that something needs to be attempted to try to get them back.*

NSW Train Link: Discovery Pass

NSW Train Link has introduced a Discovery Pass providing travel in Economy class over its entire rail and bus network, and available to overseas visitors and Australian residents alike. The Pass costs \$232 for 14 days, \$275 for a month, \$298 for three months, and \$420 for six months. The East Coast Discovery Pass (Melbourne-Canberra-Sydney-Gold Coast-Brisbane-Cairns) and the Backpackers' Pass have been abolished.

NSW Train Link: Elvis

The latest iteration of the annual Elvis train was an XPT set which departed Sydney Central at 0935 on Thursday 9 January, picking up at Strathfield, Parramatta, Penrith, Lithgow and Bathurst, arriving Parkes at 1552. The return on Monday 13 January was scheduled to depart Parkes at 0830, with the same stops, plus Polona 1036 to 1100 to cross the down Dubbo passenger train, and arriving Sydney at 1530. To provide for the Elvis special, the Dubbo train - usually an XPT - from 9 until 13 January was instead a 3-car Xplorer set.

NSW Train Link and collapse of Brindabella Airlines

Commencing 13 December Train Link has been operating two daily return buses between Moree, Narrabri and Tamworth to connect with flights in and out of Tamworth and two extra buses between Cobar and Dubbo and v.v.

NSW Train Link: Newcastle line severed 20 December 2013

Trains between Morisset and Fassifern on the Newcastle line were replaced by buses on Friday 20 December. Urgent overhead wiring repairs were required at Dora Creek. Trains ran between Sydney and Morisset, and between Fassifern and Newcastle. However, the 1545, 1615 and 1645 Central to Newcastle operated as timetabled to Morisset and then all stations to Newcastle.

Newcastle Light Rail route

On 23 December the NSW government released options for the route of the Newcastle light rail line. The paper confirmed the interchange with heavy rail is to be at Wickham. The route from Wickham to the CBD would either be along the existing rail corridor and Scott St or along Hunter St and Hunter St Mall. Both options would terminate near Newcastle Beach at Pacific Park. Community consultation on these options will occur in 2014.

Sydney: Second Harbour rail crossing *From the Daily Telegraph, 6 December 2013:*

The man in charge of the \$8.3 billion North West Rail Link said he is building the line on the assumption a Second Harbour rail crossing will follow and that Tube-like single-deck trains will then travel all through Sydney. Transport for NSW's North West Rail Link project director Rodd Staples said his department was working on the concept of a second Harbour rail crossing - a tunnel from Chatswood through St Leonards and involving the creation of a new station at North Sydney. The director's comments show the dilemma facing Premier Barry O'Farrell because, although Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian has stated she wants a second Harbour rail crossing, it is completely unfunded, would cost \$10 billion to \$15 billion and would likely require the sale of the \$30 billion electricity poles and wires.

But Mr O'Farrell has said he would not sell the electricity networks without seeking a mandate at the 2015 election - and he is yet to decide whether to do so.The North West Rail Line [was] originally intended to go into the city but the government announced last year it will run from west of Rouse Hill to Chatswood. All passengers will then change from a single deck metro-style train to double-deck north shore line trains - that is unless the second Harbour rail crossing is built.

Mr Staples said the intention was to run the metro trains through the city and out to Hurstville, Bankstown and Liverpool eventually. "Importantly for all of us working on the project it's part of something more significant when the project extends across the Harbour and rapid transit becomes (the norm)," Mr Staples said. "There is a lot of work going on thinking through the details of how it would ultimately function but it would be a new underground line from somewhere between Chatswood and St Leonards extending through North Sydney, potentially a new station at North Sydney and then under the Harbour and through the CBD. It means new stations around Martin Place and Town Hall." "It would give a huge amount of relief to those existing stations in terms of crowding. The rail network needs the Harbour crossing. For western Sydney and the southwest you need to do something significant to lift the capacity. "The (government's) rail futures plan proposes those rapid transit services would go to Bankstown and Liverpool and down to Hurstville."

Mr Staples described the establishment of a "rapid transit service" with the single-deck trains as a "massive change". The double-deck trains were needed from places like Campbelltown to bring people into the city, while rapid transit worked more on lines such as the North West where people were hopping on and off at places like Norwest Business Park and Macquarie University.

Mr Staples said of the prospect of people initially having to change at Chatswood: "We've done the work at Chatswood to work out how passengers will move between trains ... people jump off the North West train and go straight across the platform to the Sydney train service to take them to St Leonards and the City in the interim years until such a time as the Harbour crossing is built."

The North West Rail Line will include bus interchanges and 4000 car parking spaces. The train line will be like the Jubilee underground line in London, where there are "platform screen doors" to stop people falling on the tracks. This in turn allows the trains to travel at quicker speeds into and out of stations, resulting in more services.

Mr Staples said Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian deserved credit for driving the project hard and had "never taken her foot off the pedal".

Mr Staples said it was estimated that 30 million people a year would use the line five years after it opens at the end of 2019, including short trips to centres like Castle Hill and Norwest business park.

He says the government is determined to learn from past mistakes and keep "corridors" that would enable the link to be extended to Marsden Park and also for an Epping to Parramatta line to be built. Mr Staples blamed poor planning "20 to 30 years ago" for the construction of houses that prevented the North West line going above ground - and leading to its \$8.3 billion cost.

Boring will begin next year on the two 15km tunnels from Epping through Cherrybrook, Castle Hill, Showground and Norwest stations to Bella Vista. "It's purely an outcome of the planning - there wasn't enough forethought given around the possibility of (a rain line) ... there was always going to be a need for some tunnel because of the topography of the land but potentially there could have been some surface corridor set aside which would have reduced the length of the tunnel," Mr Staples said.

From Bella Vista to Cudgegong Road through the stations of Rouse Hill and Kellyville, a 4km skytrain and accompanying above-ground rail line will be built. "We've learned some lessons out of that in terms of what we're doing at the end of this line to set aside more corridor, an expansion of this into western Sydney as it grows," Mr Staples said.

Sydney Trains: Villawood & Fairfield to Glenfield bustitution

Sydney Trains service from Villawood and Fairfield to Glenfield were replaced by buses from 2 until 12 January for rack maintenance and upgrades.

Sydney: NW railway.

On 18 December the NSW government awarded a \$340 million contract to build the 4 km skytrain section of the North West Rail Link to the Impregilo-Salini joint venture. This is the second of three major contracts awarded on Australia's biggest public transport project. This contract includes a 270 metre cable-stayed bridge over Windsor Road at Rouse Hill - a major structure set to become a distinctive local landmark. The 4km section is from the end of the rail tunnels at Bella Vista to Rouse Hill. The skytrain contract will also see the delivery of other surface construction work like railway embankments and cuttings. The skytrain and new bridge are the most visible elements of the 36km long North

West Rail Link project and a key priority has been to ensure final designs are integrated with their surroundings.

The third and final major contract - a Public Private Partnership to build the stations, operate the rail link and deliver Sydney's new generation of single deck trains - will be awarded by the end of next year.

More details are at the website: www.northwestrail.com.au

Sydney: Moorebank Intermodal terminal

The Moorebank Intermodal Company was established by the Federal government in mid 2013 to manage the establishment of an intermodal terminal to handle container traffic from interstate rail freight and Port Botany. The site is Commonwealth-owned land currently occupied by the School of Military Engineering and other Australian Defence Force units. The site was identified for the following reasons:

- Its size (approximately 220 hectares), topography and length (over 2 km);
- Its proximity to key transport corridors including the Southern Sydney Freight Line, main interstate rail line, and the M5 and M7 motorways; and
- Its proximity to the industrial centres in Sydney west and south west including Moorebank, Bankstown, Prestons and Ingleburn.

On 17 December Expressions of Interest, closing on 26 February, were sought to develop and operate the terminal. It is anticipated that construction would begin in early 2015 with the first port shuttles in mid 2017 and interstate operations from early 2020. Qube Holdings and Aurizon are speculated as likely joint operators.

Details of the project, including conceptual drawings, are at http://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/summary_dbc.pdf

ARTC & V/Line: NE line

On 16 and 17 December senior officials from ARTC and V/Line faced public meetings at Benalla and Albury-Wodonga about the state of the troubled Albury to Melbourne train service. ARTC CEO John Fullerton stated that remediation of the line will not be completed until the end of 2016. He said ARTC was half way through its ballast program - including sleeper replacement - that started in 2011. "In the last 12 months we've substantially reduced those delays, but we know we've got more work to do. I can't give an absolute commitment to when that program will deliver certain outcomes. It is a complex project and there will be setbacks along the way. I am heartened that the average delay had been reduced from an average 100 minutes to 20 between Melbourne and Albury in the year to August. The reductions vindicated the work," he said.

During the latest period of restriction of train services, 28 December 2013 to 19 January 2014, key works to be carried out are:

- Construction of *Passing Lane Number 1* between Keilor East and Donnybrook, which will see heavy cranes lift signal gantries into place over the track in three separate locations;
- Works to upgrade the pedestrian subway crossing at Seymour; and,
- Upgrades to the ballast and track condition at railway level crossings and rail bridges throughout the rail corridor.

Heavy track machinery, including ARTC's new \$10 million Shoulder Ballast Cleaner will also be in operation.

Grain Corp: Closures

Grain Corp, the dominant transporter and marketer of wheat in NSW, Victoria and Queensland, has stated that it will close more than 100 of its 280 wheat collection centres

before the next harvest. This follows its failure to receive a capital injection following the Federal government's decision to veto a takeover by US company Archer Daniels Midland. The rationalisation is likely to lead to fewer but bigger collection sites.

Victoria: Wimmera wheat transport

Wimmera Grain Co, Wimmera Container Line and SCT Logistics have made an agreement to export grain by rail from Dooen near Horsham. Wimmera Grain Co manager Chris O'Bryan said the deal would increase the company's freight capacity. He said using rail was a more cost-effective way to move freight than road. He said the agreement would remove about 3000 round-trip road movements each year between Horsham and Melbourne.

V/Line & GSR: Regional Rail Link initial opening 22 December and ongoing work

Contrary to the news in December *Table Talk*, the first stage of the Regional Rail Link between Southern Cross and South Kensington opened on 22 December. Most Geelong trains now operate from the new platforms 15 and 16 at Southern Cross station and no longer stop at North Melbourne. Passengers for the City Loop must now transfer at Footscray or Southern Cross.

Construction work on the RRL is forging ahead at a very rapid rate. The following works were carried out between 28 December 2013 and 19 January 2014:

- Track reconfiguration between La Trobe St and the North Melbourne flyover, and structural work on the flyover,
- Construction of new Sunbury line tracks and commissioning of new signalling at Footscray,
- Ongoing work at Footscray to complete new platforms 1 and 2, on the northern side of the station,
- Installation of new bridge deck panels over the ARTC line near Footscray station,
- Significant bridge works at Nicholson St Footscray,
- Completion of bridgeworks between Nicholson St and Victoria St Footscray,
- Construction of new RRL track between West Footscray and Sunshine,
- Major works to upgrade Sunshine station,
- Demolition of footbridge at Sunshine and installation of new bridge,
- Ongoing work to remove two level crossings at Anderson Road Sunshine,
- Improvements to pedestrian crossing between Sunshine and Deer Park, and
- Testing and commissioning of signalling and train control systems between Footscray and Deer Park.
- A new pedestrian concourse, ticket office, platform canopies, handicapped access, car parks and bicycle parking at Sunshine.

V/Line RRL alterations in this period were:

- Albury line: From 28 December until 2 January all trains were replaced by buses. From 3 January until 19 January V/Line moderated their usual practice of complete cancellation of NE line trains during work periods. The midday passenger trains on the NE Standard Gauge line were replaced by buses throughout. However, the morning and evening trains ran from Albury to Broadmeadows and v.v., and empty between Broadmeadows and South Dynon depot. There were replacement buses only between Melbourne Southern Cross and Broadmeadows.
- Seymour line: Trains replaced by buses.

- Warrnambool line: Loco-hauled trains beyond Geelong. Connections Melbourne-Geelong by DMUs
- Ballarat line: Trains replaced by buses. Trains beyond Ballarat to Ararat and Maryborough.
- Bendigo line: Trains replaced by buses. Trains beyond Bendigo to Swan hill and Echuca.

During this period **Great Southern Railway's** Overland train Adelaide-Melbourne and v.v. only conveyed passengers to/from Ararat or North Shore (Geelong). Buses were substituted between there and Melbourne. One Overland journey was cancelled completely, as follows:

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 Friday 3 Jan, Monday, 6 Jan, Friday 10 Jan, Monday 13 Jan
 and Friday, 17 Jan 2014 Bus North Shore-Melbourne.

Westbound:

Saturday 28 December 2013 Bus Melbourne-Ararat
 Tuesday 31 December 2013 Service did not operate
 Saturday 4 Jan, Tuesday, 7 Jan, Saturday, 11 Jan, Tuesday,
 14 Jan and Saturday 18 Jan 2014 Bus Melbourne-North Shore.

The **next closures** for RRL work will be:

- Ballarat line from 28 February until 3 March for signal and communications commissioning, and
- Ballarat and Sunbury/Bendigo lines from 18 April to 28 April (the Easter and ANZAC Day period) also for signal and communications commissioning.

Metro's views about Regional Rail Link

Metro is reported to have warned the Victorian government almost two years ago that the Regional Rail Link will bring only short-term relief to the Werribee line before congestion begins to bite again in 2017. In a five-year strategic operations plan from 2012, Metro said a mix of longer nine-car and seven-car trains would be needed within five years to handle passenger growth on the Werribee line, and that would involve lengthening railway station platforms to 200 metres. Nine-car trains have previously been proposed along the Pakenham and Sunbury lines as part of the stalled Melbourne Metro rail project, which has failed to attract funding from the Federal government. Metro also proposed investing in new signalling that would enable trains to run closer together so more trains could service Melbourne's south-western growth areas. "We believe this strategy to be a viable option to cater for demand given the loading profile in the corridor," Metro wrote.

A Metro graph forecasting passenger loading for 2017 on a city-bound Werribee train indicates all available seating would be filled after two stops, leaving many passengers to stand for more than half an hour. The Werribee line regularly experiences the highest level of overcrowding on the network in Public Transport Victoria's twice-yearly passenger load surveys. The last published survey, from May 2013, counted 12 peak services that breached the load standard, with 40% of peak-hour passengers travelling on overloaded trains. There are currently six peak-hour Werribee trains and three from Laverton via the Altona Loop, but Metro cannot add more because it shares the corridor with V/Line's Geelong trains. This situation will change in 2015 when the Regional Rail Link opens and the paths of the four peak-hour Geelong trains will be freed up.

Wyndham City Council's acting chief executive, Bill Forrest, said about 10,000 people a year were moving into the municipality around Werribee, which was due to grow from 187,000 to 230,000 by 2017, and ultimately to 400,000. A recent VicHealth survey found Wyndham had the highest percentage of residents in the state who commute more than

two hours a day - 26.2%, more than double the state average of 11.6%. "One in four are spending more than two hours a day commuting," Mr Forrest said. He said the state government should press the federal government harder for funding for the multibillion-dollar Melbourne Metro rail tunnel.

Capacity problems are expected on other lines, including Dandenong, Sunbury and Craigieburn.

Ringwood station upgrade

The Victorian government has announced a \$66 million upgrade of the Ringwood station precinct. Existing station buildings will be upgraded with more comfortable facilities, new ramps and escalators will be installed between the platforms and a new concourse and forecourt created. The bus interchange will be reconstructed and expanded. The project includes:

- a major upgrade of Ringwood station to provide full accessibility and improve amenity and shelter
- a new pedestrian concourse
- an upgrade of the heritage-listed brick station building
- reconstruction and expansion of the bus interchange
- new toilets, and
- creation of a new, high-quality, landscaped station forecourt.

Metro Trains Melbourne & V/Line: When the heat is on, the trains are off

On 19 and 20 December many **Metro Melbourne** trains were cancelled in advance to cope with extreme hot weather. Metro announced it would be forced to cancel 50 services. The Bureau of Meteorology had forecast temperatures of 40 and 34 degrees on these days.

The Alamein, Craigieburn, Frankston, Glen Waverley, South Morang, Hurstbridge, Belgrave, Lilydale, Pakenham and Cranbourne lines were affected. Metro said, "We have planned this in advance as a safety precaution due to the impact of high temperatures on our steel railway tracks. The tracks can expand in high heat and we need to run trains at slower speeds to ensure your safety. By cancelling trains in advance we are able to manage this and continue to run the smoothest possible service despite the limitations. While this Friday isn't expected to reach 38 degrees, we have nonetheless had to plan cancellations on this day, as many of our trains will be out of their normal positions and some are likely to require additional maintenance due to the heat." Once Metro had made these planned cancellations, it was not possible to reverse the decision if temperatures fell short of the forecast, Metro said. It apologised to commuters for inconvenience, but stressed passenger safety was the main priority.

The *Age* newspaper made a point of comparing the Melbourne and Perth networks. It said in Perth not a single train was cancelled due to heat, despite a string of days above 40 degrees. Transperth spokesman David Hynes said "Perth is less affected than other states because the bottom line is we have a better rail network, although it's smaller. We have concrete sleepers throughout our entire network, whereas Sydney and Melbourne are still mostly wooden sleepers which are more prey to heat."

Peter Newman, Professor of Sustainability at Curtin University, said extremely hot days would become more frequent in Melbourne due to climate change, and the city needed to modernise its rail network to cope. Doing so was not complex, it just required investment, he said. "Perth had no cancellations because the rail has been built to cope with these extremes. It's just a simple engineering task."

V/Line trains operated on a "heat timetable" from 18 until 21 December from 26 to 28 December and on 1 January with

slower speeds, and the replacement of some trains with buses. Bendigo, Swan Hill, Echuca, Seymour and Shepparton services were affected. For this summer, V/Line is promulgating "heat timetables" in advance, on a few days' notice, according to weather forecasts. Sometimes this means that the "heat timetable" operates although temperatures in fact do not reach predicted heights. However, it considers this preferable to imposing slow running unexpectedly when hot days occur. The "heat timetables" were posted in advance on their website. The "heat timetables" reflect the fact that much of V/Line's network uses wooden sleepers, rather than concrete sleepers which provide more stability. The following list of bus substitutions is believed to be complete:

- 0742 Melbourne-Swan Hill terminated at Bendigo with buses beyond.
- 1250 from Swan Hill
- 1336 and 1725 ex Bendigo originated at Kyneton with buses from Bendigo to Kyneton
- 1545 ex Eaglehawk
- 1250 ex Shepparton originated at Seymour with a bus from Shepparton to Seymour
- 1129 to Warrnambool originated at Marshall but a replacement bus provided from Melbourne
- 0804 and 1208 Melbourne-Ararat replaced by buses from Ballarat
- 1308 and 1408 Melbourne-Ballarat
- 1540 to Melton
- 1330 Melbourne-Bairnsdale
- Up equivalent trains were also replaced by buses.

Trains that were scheduled to run slower are far too numerous to mention.

Adelaide Metro trains were also delayed by slowdowns in extreme heat on these days.

Metro Trains Melbourne & V/Line: Christmas-January alterations

From 23 December 2013 until 27 January 2014 train services were reduced across the entire **Metro Trains Melbourne** network. The reductions were mainly on working weekdays where frequencies of five to ten minutes usually operate. In addition there were substitutions on two heavily patronised lines. The reductions not only reflected reduced patronage at this time of year, but, with the bus replacements, were for work on the Regional Rail Link (Sunbury line), Mitcham Road level crossing abolition (Ringwood line) and Springvale Road level crossing abolition (Pakenham/Cranbourne line). Major closedowns will be:

- From 28 December until 19 January train services on the Sunbury line were replaced completely by buses due to Regional Rail Link works. On Weekdays trains will run to/from Flemington Racecourse, with connecting buses from there, providing another chance to travel on this rare line.
- From 6 until 27 January trains between Blackburn and Ringwood trains were replaced completely by buses.

Metro Trains published timetable booklets for all the affected lines, that is: Hurstbridge line – 22 Dec 13, Pakenham & Cranbourne lines – 22 Dec 13, South Morang line – 22 Dec 13, Sunbury line 22 Dec 13, Werribee & Williamstown lines – 22 Dec 13. Note that the Sunbury, Werribee and Williamstown lines timetable was split into two booklets. These are available in both hard copy and on their website (under "Service Updates"). *Printed copies are available via the Australian Timetable Association's January Distribution List.*

However, the online timetables for Christmas Day 2013 on the Met, the Public Transport Victoria "Timetables" page

appeared to be quite a mess. For trams, the Christmas Day timetables were the normal weekday version. The early morning 30 minute service was not shown - this applied to both the screen version (eg <http://ptv.vic.gov.au/timetables/line/2515>) and to the downloadable version (eg http://tt.ptv.vic.gov.au/tt/TTB/20131220-194146/vic/03005B_ttb_TP.pdf). Both forms of suburban rail timetables were in a section marked "23rd December 2013 to 26th December 2013" (<http://ptv.vic.gov.au/timetables/linemain/3>). The differences between the different days' schedules were not shown. The only piece of good news was that there were separate Christmas Day timetables for both suburban buses (<http://ptv.vic.gov.au/timetables/linemain/7520>) and for V/Line (http://tt.ptv.vic.gov.au/tt/TTB/20131220-194146/vic/01V01B_ttb_TP.pdf). Apart from the obvious confusion caused to potential tram and suburban train passengers, one has to wonder why there are different forms of TT for the various modes and to query whether PTV is really an integrated body.

V/Line also introduced modified timetables for the summer period. These applied from 22 December, the date the first section of the Regional Rail Link from Southern Cross to South Kensington came into use, until 26 January. In the case of the Ballarat and Bendigo lines, these timetables were overridden by the bus replacement (for Regional Rail Link works) timetables from 28 December until 19 January. Copies are available on V/Line's website.

As usual in summer, an augmented bus service is operating along the Great Ocean Road, Geelong-Lorne-Apollo Bay, especially at weekends.

Great Southern Rail: Ghan & Southern Spirit

No journeys by the Southern Spirit, GSR's luxury touring train, are scheduled in 2014.

The reduction in frequency of the Ghan (Adelaide-Darwin) to only once a fortnight in December 2013-January 2014 (the tropical wet season), will apply again in December 2014-January 2015.

The Ghan departing Adelaide on Sunday 2 February will be altered to commemorate the tenth anniversary of operation through to Darwin. It will operate normally to Pimba. Then it will stop there from 1922 until 2250 for a concert.

Adelaide Metro: Seasonal alterations

Free travel was provided on all Adelaide Metro train, tram and bus services on New Year's Eve. A special timetable applied (which was posted on its website) with trains on all lines running hourly throughout the night. Trams ran every ten minutes until 0400 (from the Entertainment Centre) or 0300 (from Glenelg), then every 20 minutes until 0700, whereupon normal Sunday frequencies applied.

To accelerate rail revitalisation works the Belair and Noarlunga lines were closed from 2100 on Friday 27 December to 0400 on Tuesday 31 December 2013 and from 2100 on Thursday 2 January to 1700 on Tuesday 7 January 2014. Substitute buses ran.

The online Adelaide Metro network map has been updated as at 1 Dec 2013.

Perth Light Rail: Uncertain future

On 18 December the WA government announced it was abandoning making a decision to build the MAX light rail project until after the next State election, breaking an election promise that the project would be up and running by 2018. The government will not now commit to the project before mid-2017. This came as part of a mid-year economic review that cut \$1.9 billion of infrastructure spending over the

next four years. The state government will still proceed with its other big-ticket public transport project, the airport-Forrestfield rail link, but it will not be completed until 2020, two years after what was promised during the election (see next item).

Perth Airport railway plans

A plan to build an 8km underground rail line beneath the Swan River and the airport is being seriously considered by the WA government.

On 19 December, Treasurer Troy Buswell said another near \$2 billion plan, a proposed rail link to the city's airport, was not only going ahead, but could become an underground project. That is despite the state government's desperate bid to rein in rampant spending, and after earlier this year criticising the opposition's rival airport rail plan, saying the high water table in the area would create a major engineering headache. "If it is a value proposition to tunnel the whole way, I think we'd be mad not to do that," Mr Buswell told reporters. If it is more expensive than other options, of course we're not going to do it because at the end of the day, we can't deliver gold-plated infrastructure, we have to deliver value for money. However, there is a suggestion - and we're considering it seriously - that given we have to do half of the 8km length as a tunnel, it may well be a value proposition to leave that machine under the ground and keep going to the east, go under the river and link in with the Midland line." Mr Buswell, who is also WA's transport minister, said engineers had advised the costly part of tunnelling was obtaining and commissioning the equipment.

TransWA: Avonlink extended

As reported in November *Table Talk* the Avonlink, Northam to Midland and v.v, and Merredin Link trains were due to end and be replaced by buses from 30 December 2013. The WA government has now decided to defer these changes until the end of the financial year on 30 June 2014. They may be retained further. The reversal follows local protests at the decision to discontinue the trains.

TransWA: Christmas shutdown

No TransWA services, train or bus, operated on Christmas Day.

Veolia Auckland: Seasonal shutdowns

Holiday period alterations to facilitate the final stages of electrification work were:

Wednesday 25 December 2013

No trains or bus replacements.

Thursday 26 December 2013 – Sunday 5 January 2014

Full network closure. Buses replaced all trains on all lines.

Monday 6 to Sunday 12 January

Western Line: Buses replaced all trains between Newmarket and Britomart.

Eastern line: Buses replaced trains between Otahuhu and Britomart.

Southern and Onehunga lines: Trains started at Newmarket.

Monday 13 to Friday 17 January

Western line: Reduced holiday timetable.

Eastern line: Buses replaced trains between Otahuhu and Britomart.

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 January

Western Line: Normal timetable resume.

Southern, Eastern and Manukau Lines: Buses replace trains between Otahuhu and Britomart.

Monday 20 January

Normal timetables resume for all lines.

Metlink & TranzScenic: Wellington seasonal cancellations

No trains ran in Wellington on Christmas Day. The Capital Connection from Palmerston North to Wellington and v.v.

was cancelled from 26 December until Friday 3 January. Buses replaced trains on the Hutt Valley / Wairarapa line from 26 December until Sunday 5 January, although the limited daytime Melling line train service still ran.

Christchurch tramway re-opens

The Christchurch city-centre tourist tramway re-opened on 27 November 2013. It had been closed since the earthquake of 22 February 2011. Although the tramway was not extensively damaged, restoration of more vital infrastructure took priority. At present, the line is only operating as a single

line. The loop will be fully restored from mid 2014. The second stage of the tramway (construction of which was almost completed when the earthquake struck) will open in late 2014.

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BUS NEWS

Australian Capital Territory

Holiday timetables

On weekdays from 23 December until 3 January, ACTION operated a reduced timetable across the network, with a special timetable booklet available detailing timetables. As in past years, on Christmas Day buses operated to a special network of loop services with limited services finishing by around 1600. Passengers travelling on Saturday 28 December were faced with an early than normal finish with ACTION operating as per a Sunday timetable.

Bonus days for Centenary Loop

The special Route 100 Centenary Loop provided by ACTION, due to finish on 31 December was extended until 5 January to accommodate festive season visitors.

Summernats shuttles

In addition to regular services, revheads attending Summernats could catch special buses departing Exhibition Park from 2200 until midnight on 3 January or the return loop between City Bus Station & EPIC from 1000 to midnight on 4 January.

New South Wales

Sydney's Bus Future

In mid December the NSW state government released their long-term plan for the metropolitan bus network, *Sydney's Bus Future*. The plan envisions a streamlined three-tier network of 'Rapid', 'Suburban' & 'Local' services. The plan aims to deliver Rapid or Suburban buses within 10 mins walk of 1.5 million residents.

'Rapid' services build on the current Metrobus 'turn up & go' model, following direct cross-suburban corridors, although with fewer stops spaced every 800m to 1km, aiming to speed up journey times along with targeted bus priority measures. Rapid routes would run every 10 mins or better during weekday daytime periods and every 15 mins on weekends. Proposed rapid route corridors in the short term include:

- Mona Vale – CBD
- North Bondi – CBD
- Castle Hill – Liverpool via Parramatta & T-way
- Parramatta – CBD via Victoria Rd
- Burwood – CBD via Parramatta Rd
- Maroubra Junction – CBD
- Parramatta – Macquarie Park via Carlingford & Epping
- Hurstville – Macquarie Park via Burwood
- Rouse Hill – Hurstville via T-Way, Parramatta & Bankstown
- Castle Hill – CBD
- Hornsby – Blacktown via Castle Hill & T-way
- Rouse Hill – Blacktown via Marsden Park & Richmond Rd (new medium-term corridor)
- Liverpool – Campbelltown via Leppington & Oran Park (new medium-term corridor).

The plan lacks detail as to the extent that existing routes (Metrobus or otherwise) will be replaced and/or downgraded

to make way for these new corridors. There will also be potential contractual issues, given many of the plans see existing corridors from multiple operators joined together across multiple regions – for instance, one assumes the T65 (Hillsbus) & M91 (Transdev) would form the 'Rapid' route connecting Rouse Hill with Hurstville, while joining the northern half of M60 (Hillsbus) to a streamlined T70 (Busways) would logically form the Hornsby – Castle Hill – Blacktown corridor.

'Suburban' routes will operate at least every 10 mins during peak periods, and in the medium term offer services at least every 15 mins during the day on both weekdays and weekends. They will link key suburban centres, with eleven new suburban routes proposed in the short term including:

- Penrith – Rouse Hill via Schofields & Marsden Park
- Marsden Park – Prairiewood via Western Sydney Employment Area & Mount Druitt
- Liverpool – Camden via Oran Park & Leppington
- Miranda – Bankstown via Sutherland & Menai
- Chatswood – Airport via CBD & Botany Rd
- Lane Cove – Eastgardens via Surry Hills & Botany Rd
- Hurstville – CBD via Earlwood & Newtown
- Burwood – Chatswood via Drummoyne & Lane Cove
- Bankstown – Blacktown via Fairfield & Wetherill Park
- Penrith – Mount Druitt via Werrington & Great Western Highway
- Bondi Junction – Miranda via Airport & Eastgardens

A further nine existing routes are also earmarked to be upgraded to suburban route status.

'Local' routes complete the picture by providing coverage to fill network gaps, with the aim to provide a daytime bus with 400m of 90% of Sydneysiders' homes. These services also include existing peak express routes, limited stop services, shopping & CBD shuttles, special event routes & late night buses.

Other features of the plan include:

- improvements to bus interchanges
- future roll-out of real-time bus information along with the new signage currently being trailed in the CBD
- roll-out of Opal Smartcard to simplify fares
- continued introduction of low floor & air-conditioned buses, along with high capacity articulated or double-decker buses on rapid corridors
- long term plans for BRT services along Victoria Rd, Parramatta Rd and to the northern beaches along with upgrading key routes to light rail.

The full plan is available from the Transport for NSW website - www.transport.nsw.gov.au.

Kings Cross changes

Sydney Buses introduced a new 300 service on 14 December linking Kings Cross & Railway Square via Town Hall running every 10 to 20 minutes between 0110 & 0510 on Saturday, Sunday & Public Holiday mornings. The service is marketed as "The Plan B Bus" in conjunction with

the broader “*What’s your plan B?*” anti-drink driving campaign. The service replaces the free 999 service that was withdrawn on 24 November, along with N100X Nightride shortworkings. N100 continues to operate half-hourly between Bondi Junction & the City. Passengers must pay a special \$2 fare, although this cheaper than the \$3.70 fare for the Nightride service.

Additional Night Owl & Shopper Buses

To cater for anticipated heavy loadings on Sydney Buses services on Friday & Saturday evenings throughout summer, additional evening trips are being provided on Routes 207, 273, 292, 373, 380, 394, 423, 428, 431, 433 436, 438, 500, 501 & 510. These include 380 shortworkings from Bondi Beach terminating at Oxford St Darlinghurst, which otherwise isn’t used a termination point. The additional trips on Routes 373, 380 & 394 will continue until March, while on other routes cease in January.

Sydney Buses also added extra weekend buses on Routes 155, 246, 415, 440, 464 & 466 in December to cater for Christmas Shoppers, while Transit Systems boosted Saturday services on 7, 14 & 21 December along the T80.

Christmas Day services

Most Sydney bus operators provided a standard Sunday timetable on Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Years Day. This included former Shorelink services in Turramurra & Hornsby, with Transdev operating a Sunday timetable for the first time, matching their operations in southern Sydney.

Punchbowl however operated a reduced timetable on both Christmas Day & Boxing Day, while Premier Illawarra provided reduced services on Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Years Day, although the ‘Gong Shuttle ran to the normal weekend timetable. Both operators produced timetables outlining the reduced services.

Reduced peak services over festive break

Owing to reduced demand from CBD travel over the peak periods during the festive break, reduced peak services operated on Hillsbus & Sydney Buses services from 23 December until 3 January. Most express bus services provided by Sydney Buses were suspended during this period.

Forest operated to a Saturday timetable on 27, 30 & 31 December with the exception of Routes 194 (St Ives Chase – City) & 260 (Terry Hills – North Sydney), which ran as normal. A number of additional services were provided in peak times, as documented in a special timetable. On New Years Eve, Forest’s City services were diverted to Chatswood Station after 21:00. Additional services ran overnight on Route 196 (Gordon – Terrey Hills) & 282 (Chatswood – Terrey Hills).

Busways & Transit Systems NYE extras

In addition to the weekday timetable, Busways provided extra buses on New Years Eve. Departures included:

- ex Blacktown at 22:50 (725), 23:48 (722/4), 23:50 (725), 00:11 (T72), 00:18 (722/4) & 00:30 (754)
- ex Mt Drutt at 23:10 (754), 23:41 (750), 00:11 (750)
- ex Rouse Hill at 23:40 (752)

It assumed these services were primarily aimed at those returning home from the Sydney Harbour family fireworks display at 2100 given most trips were operating around the stroke of midnight.

Transit Systems operated an hourly overnight service along T80 along the Liverpool – Parramatta T-Way.

Hills ‘Beach Bus’ returns

Hillsbus is providing special beach bus services from the Hills district to Manly on weekdays from 30 December until

24 January. One service departs Rouse Hill at 08:30, while another departs Knightbridge Shops at 0820. Buses return at 1600. A flat \$15 fare applies.

Opal Card to Bondi Beach

As of 6 December, Opal smartcards have been accepted on Sydney Buses pre-paid route 333 between Circular Quay & Bondi Beach. This is the second bus route to be included in the trial following the introduction of Opal on Route 594/594H to St Ives & Hornsby in late September.

Passengers travelling to Bondi can currently use their smartcards on train services between the City and Bondi Junction.

Cooma – Canberra bus

A \$90,000 State government grant will see the establishment of the Monaro Transconnect Bus, which will provide a daily link to Canberra for residents living in isolated villages in the Cooma-Monaro, Bombala and the Snowy River Shires. The service is proposed to operate for 48 weeks a year and is due to commence in March.

Northern Territory

Darwin Bus Service to be privatised

In early December the Territory government announced plans to privatise government operator, Darwin Bus Services. A new operator is due to be appointed by June following a competitive tender process. The government has assured drivers the new operator will be required to maintain conditions of recently signed EBA, which had resulted in industrial action during negotiations. Darwin Bus Service currently jointly operate the cities bus service with private operator Buslink, with both operators running selected trips on most routes. It is understood that Buslink will retain their existing contract to operate approximately half of the urban service, along with the majority of school services and rural feeder routes around Humpty Doo along with town services in Alice Springs. The government would retain regulatory power over routes and fares.

Queensland

Translink joins Google Transit

Since mid-December public transport users in south east Queensland have been able to use the Google Transit journey planner for Translink services. They join a number of other Australian operators already using the service, including regional Queensland bus services managed under the QConnect banner, who have been available in Google Transit since 2011.

Information guides for upcoming changes

Translink have produced detailed summary guides for upcoming network and timetable changes on January 20 in the Logan, Moreton Bay, Redlands & Gold Coast, which can be downloaded from their website, along with lengthy audio versions. The guides provide details outlining frequency and span for each service along with route & network maps.

Victoria

January 2014 timetable upgrades

Public Transport Victoria has announced a number of bus route and timetable changes to be introduced on 27 & 28 January.

Sita’s popular Route 401 express shuttle between North Melbourne & Melbourne Uni will now commence 0630 instead of 0645, improving access for staff at Royal Melbourne, Royal Women’s & Royal Dental Hospitals in Parkville. The final bus will now depart Melbourne Uni at 1942 instead of 1930.

Owing to low patronage, the two return peak hour trips provided by Westrans between Sunshine Park & Footscray via Brooklyn will be discontinued. These special industrial trips (internally numbered 1252 & 1253, similar to school bus services) advertised as a deviation of 409 (Yarraville - Highpoint), have long been an oddity, and only listed in the notes section of the printed timetable, following little of the standard 409 route, although prior to network changes in 2008, 409 operated along nearby Roberts St in Footscray West. In the 1980s the trips were included in the 414 timetable. Workers can continue to access Routes 219 or 903 in Sunshine Park and Brooklyn, or 411, 412 and 414 along Geelong Rd. Dedicated industrial specials continue to operate in Geelong serving the endangered Ford factory.

Weekday run times on Westrans Route 410 (Footscray – Sunshine) will be extended to aid reliability, although in some cases this additional time appears excessive, with some trips extended from the current 25 min journey time to up to 39 mins, equalling an average speed of just 13km/h! Weeknight frequencies will be boosted to 30 minute headways, with westbound buses timed to meet outbound trains at Sunshine.

Revisions to the Point Cook timetables include adjusting the timetables for Westrans 496 and 497 to connect with alternate off-peak trains at Laverton (496) and Williams Landing (497) improving service for those within walking distance of both routes in Sanctuary Lakes, although resident requests for a bus in Sanctuary Lakes Resort have yet to be addressed. The weeknight last bus on 496 now departs Laverton at 2140 instead of 2123, while the last weekend departure on 497 ex Williams Landing is now 32 mins later at 2157. Late night buses running until after midnight on 495/494 loop serving Point Cook South no longer operate on public holidays, although they have been retained on Fridays & Saturday evenings.

Changes in Craigieburn will see Route 529, which was previously modified to serve Craigieburn Central Shopping Centre in late October, extended via developing estates in Craigieburn North to a new terminus at Highlands Shopping Centre, where it will return to Craigieburn Station via an extended Route 533. Both routes will incorporate parts of Route 535 (Craigieburn – Craigieburn North), which will be scrapped.

Broadmeadows Bus Service will also introduce a new 537 service linking Craigieburn & Vintage Boulevard Craigieburn West. It will provide improved coverage to the established residential area north of Craigieburn Rd and expanding housing in Craigieburn West, serving Craigieburn Central Shopping Centre en route.

Routes 529 & 533 will now run every 20 mins in peak periods, but downgraded from 30 to 40 mins inter-peak and on weekends, although this will improve co-ordination with trains. Route 537 will operate every 40 minutes at all times. Unfortunately, departures between the three routes haven't been off-set during off-peak times, a lost opportunity for the services to provide a combined higher frequency network. Timetables for Routes 528, 532 & 544 are unchanged, and will continue to operate at 30 min headways during off-peak periods.

Peninsula's 781 (Frankston – Mount Martha) will be modified to serve the new Mornington Bus Interchange on Barkly St, opened in August, providing a central point for passengers wishing to travel to Frankston. This will finally resolve the long-standing issue of Frankston buses departing from separate locations in Mornington since the introduction of Routes 784 & 785 in January 2006. It does not appear that Route 788 (Frankston – Porstea) buses will use the interchange, although the service has a stopping restriction

preventing passengers from boarding buses towards Frankston.

Cardinia Transit Routes 924 (Pakenham – Pakenham South) & Route 928 (Pakenham – Pakenham South) will be combined to form an extended 928 service to Cardinia Road Station. To reduce delays and improve safety, Route 926 (Pakenham - will no longer use the level crossings at Main St or McGregor Rd, instead departing Pakenham Station via John St. It will also run directly along Shearwater Dr in the Lakeside estate.

Regionally, the Tuesday & Friday Cobram Town Service provided by Thomsons will now incorporate stops at Green Palms Village & Willow's Caravan Park, while Christians Route 3 to Colac East will offer a return deviation via Colanda Residential Services on Tuesdays.

Sunshine Coaches have successfully retained the contract for the popular peak hour Gisbus demand responsive service in Gisborne, which carries around 6000 passengers each month. To make the service more efficient, a fixed route service (to be known as Route 473) will operate between Gisborne Station and Willowbank Rd, while fixed pick-up points will be added to the demand responsive zone (now numbered 474), similar to the operation of TeleBus in Melbourne's outer east. A limited service will continue to operate for residents living in nearby Bullengarook. The introduction of metropolitan route numbers for a regional town service is interesting, especially given paper ticketing is still used. (Of course, the regional service to Eildon has carried Route 684 for many years due to operating as a metropolitan service for Healesville residents).

Trotters will alter Hamilton Route 3 (Hamilton East) to accommodate a new stop at the relocated Centrelink office on Gray St. In Horsham, Route 4 (Horsham – Williams Rd) & 5 (Horsham – Natimuk Rd) will be modified to provide access to Wimmera Lodge aged care facility and the newly developed South Bank housing estate.

The Wednesday & Thursday coach service between Donald & Horsham operated by Swan Hill Bus Lines will now run to the existing Thursday timetable on both days, with the Wednesday coach now leaving Donald 40 minutes later at 0845 and returning at 1350 instead of 1630.

In Gippsland, Kingstons will adjust their Pakenham – Koo Wee Rup service to continue to provide seamless connections with South Gippsland V/line coach services that operate to updated timetables from 22 December. Route 44 (Traralgon – Ellavale) provided by La Trobe Valley Bus Lines will have a minor route change along Allen Cres to improve access to both Traralgon Primary School & Traralgon Secondary College.

Dysons Wodonga Town Routes E (East Wodonga) & S (South Wodonga) will now operate along Victoria Cross Parade to provide access the White Box Rise Shopping Centre, White Box Rise housing estate and WAVES (Wodonga Aquatic Venue and Exercise Space).

Warrnambool's new bus network begins on 28 January with over 400 extra trips added each week. Services on urban routes will be provided during the morning peak for the first time, with peak services running up to every 30 minutes. This will allow school students to use the urban network to reach school and provide a public transport option for workers wishing to travel by bus. Inter-peak and weekend services will run at clockface hourly headways, a vast improvement on existing limited weekend services that generally only operate every 2 to 3 hours. The existing Friday night services between 1900 & 2100 have been discontinued.

Within Warrnambool the existing nine loop services have been replaced by eight bi-directional routes, providing a more legible route structure, providing faster overall journeys to/from the City centre along with improving access to local facilities, including access from East Warrnambool to Gateway Plaza.

Services to nearby Port Fairy have been renumbered from route 10 to route 8, with a revised route operating within Point Fairy. Additional weekend trips have been added, complementing V/line services, although the 0200 trip on Sunday mornings will no longer operate. The 2140 on Fridays has also been dropped, but residents can continue to travel home on the 2235 Mt Gambier V/Line coach.

Following feedback from parents and schools over concerns for students having to use urban buses and the potential need to interchange buses in the city centre, five town school routes will be retained, providing a second option for many students. The new network will ensure that students who miss their regular bus can still find a way to school, rather than simply missing class for the day as currently happens.

Timetable adjustments are also being introduced on the following services to coordinate with train timetable changes and the opening of the new bus interchange at Mitcham following grade separation works:

- 418 (St Albans – Caroline Springs) – peak hour express services between Keilor Plains / Centro Keilor & St Albans also discontinued
- 453 (Melton Station – Melton)
- 455 (Melton Station – Micasa Rise)
- 457 (Melton Station – Melton)
- 458 (Melton Station – Kurunjang)
- 459 (Melton Station – Arnolds Creek)
- 461 (Watergardens – Caroline Springs)
- 577 (Epping Plaza – South Morang)
- 736 (Mitcham - Blackburn)
- 738 (Mitcham – Knox City)
- 740 (Mitcham – Vermont East)
- 765 (Mitcham – Box Hill)
- Ballarat 1 (Ballarat - Wendouree West)
- Ballarat 2 (Ballarat – Wendouree)
- Ballarat 4 (Ballarat – Invermay)
- Ballarat 5 (Ballarat – Black Hill)
- Ballarat 7 (Ballarat – Brown Hill)
- Ballarat 8 (Ballarat – Eureka)
- Ballarat 10 (Ballarat – Buninyong)
- Ballarat 12 (Ballarat – Sebastopol)
- Ballarat 14 (Ballarat – Delacombe)
- Ballarat 15 (Ballarat – Sturt St West)
- Geelong 10 (Geelong – Rosewall)
- Geelong 14 (Geelong – Deakin Uni)
- Geelong 15 (Geelong – Waurin Ponds)
- Geelong 16 (Geelong – Deakin Uni)
- Geelong 17 (Geelong – Waurin Ponds)
- Geelong 19 (Geelong – Deakin Uni)
- Geelong 20 (Geelong – Deakin Uni)
- Geelong 30 (Geelong – Corio)
- Geelong 45 (St Albans Park – Corio)
- Geelong 61 (Geelong – Breakwater)
- Geelong 62 (Geelong – St Albans Park)
- Geelong 71 (Geelong – Bannockburn)
- Bellarine Peninsula 72 (Marshall – Jan Juc)
- Bellarine Peninsula 74 (Geelong – Jan Juc)
- Bellarine Peninsula 76 (Geelong – Queenscliff)
- Bellarine Peninsula 77 (Geelong – Leopold)
- Bellarine Peninsula 78 (Drysdale – Clifford Springs)

- Bellarine Peninsula 79 (Geelong – St Leonards) – this route also no longer serves Brown St or Fenwick St Portarlington as of 2 December
- Bellarine Peninsula 80 (Geelong – Ocean Grove)
- Kilmore Town Service
- Seymour 3 (Seymour – Puckapunyal)
- Wallan Town Service

The timetable for Ventura's Route 732 (Box Hill – Upper Ferntree Gully) will also be adjusted to maintain connections with Route 75's new timetable. Route 732 provides connections at Vermont South with almost all tram services for those travelling to Knox City Shopping Centre, in lieu of the previously promised tram extension.

Summer changes

Reduced summer weekday timetables between 23 December – 17 January largely affected those travelling in the inner north, including on Kastoria Routes 475 (Moonee Ponds – Keilor East), 476 (Moonee Ponds – Hillside) & 501 (Moonee Ponds – Niddrie); Moonee Valley Routes 503 (Essendon – East Brunswick) & 506 (Moonee Ponds – Westgarth).

Peak cancellations also applied on Eastrans 605 (City – Gardenvale) during this period, while their 601 shuttle between Huntingdale & Monash was suspended from 23 to 27 December.

Ventura's Route 733 (Box Hill – Oakleigh) ran a reduced peak timetable from 30 December until 24 January, while 788 (Frankston – Porstea) ran to an enhanced weekend and public holiday timetable between Boxing Day & Australia Day to cater for summer crowds along the Mornington Peninsula.

Transdev services ran as normal across the summer break, unlike predecessors National & Melbourne Bus Link, who operated reduced timetables on most routes in previous years, including Saturdays in some cases. The former holiday timetables on National routes also saw the halving of inter-peak services to hourly, reduced operating span and in the case of Route 271, removal of the usual weekend service altogether. This continues the ongoing trend to eliminate summer holiday bus timetables across Melbourne – as recently as 2005-2006 a third of metropolitan bus routes operated to reduced summer timetables, mainly across the inner, northern & north-eastern suburbs.

In regional Victoria, additional V/line buses operated between Geelong, Lorne & Apollo Bay from 15 December until 27 January. Hutchinson Bus Lines provided 5 daily return trips between Colac & Lorne daily from 20 December until 26 January, along with 3 return trips Friday to Sunday on their Colac – Apollo Bay - Marengo service, which normally only operates on Wednesdays.

Public Holiday Boost

As part of the new bus contracts introduced in August, Routes 216, 216, 219, 220, 223, 600, 922 & 923 now operate to a Saturday timetable on most public holidays, bringing them into line with other Transdev services, as well as other metropolitan routes upgraded to minimum standards since 2006. A Sunday timetable continues to be provided on Christmas Day & Good Friday. Former operator Melbourne Bus Link previously only operated a Saturday service levels on these routes on Labour Day & Melbourne Cup Day.

Chadstone Christmas Shuttle Bus

In addition to the usual free daily shuttle from Federation Square direct to the popular Chadstone Shopping Centre, a second free shuttle service from Caulfield was provided between 2 & 26 December. A special liveried bus was

provided by Eastrans to operate the service, which operated hourly across the centre's extended trading hours. Two versions of the timetable were available on the Chadstone website, one advertising a longer span in later weeks than previously planned. It was unclear the intended market for the service, given those arriving by train already had tickets to connect with the frequent buses from Oakleigh or 900 from Caulfield, and the hourly frequency was unlikely to encourage car users to park several kilometres away.

Eastrans also provided buses on the frequent carpark shuttle bus to off-site staff parking at nearby Holmesglen TAFE for employees over the busy Christmas and end of year sales period. In previous years, Ventura and Grendas have provided the staff shuttle.

Regional Rail Link closure extras

In conjunction with the closure of the Sunbury line for Regional Rail Link construction works from 28 December until 19 January, additional unadvertised extras were provided again provided on Transdev Routes 216 & 220 between Sunshine & City on weekdays.

Mitcham grade separation works update

In addition to previous alternations previously reported in *Table Talk*, services on Route 273 (Nunawading – The Pines) departed from a temporary location in Silver Grove from 2 to 25 January while grade separation works took place on the Rooks Rd level crossing in Mitcham. Bus stops at Mitcham were relocated to Station St to allow works at Mitcham Station and Mitcham Rd, while some buses at Ringwood moved to Olive Grove to allow the interchange to be used for rail replacement services.

Transdev reprints

Further PTV timetable reprints showing Transdev as the operator include:

- 200/203 (City – Bulleen), 205 (Melbourne Uni – Doncaster Shoppingtown), 313 (City – Doncaster Park+Ride) & 315 (City – Box Hill) dated 4 October 2010
 - 216 (Caroline Springs – Brighton Beach) & 219 (Sunshine Park – Gardenvale) dated 18 November 2012
 - 250 (Garden City – La Trobe Uni), 251 (Garden City – Northland) & 253 (Garden City – North Carlton) dated 1 December 2013
 - 600/922/923 (St Kilda – Southland) dated 22 April 2012
 - 905 (City – The Pines) dated 4 October 2010
 - 906 (City – Warrandyte Bridge) dated 31 May 2012
- The reprints carry a reprint date of 08/13 on the rear cover.

Lexton – Talbot feeder

In conjunction with the re-opening of the Talbot Station on the Maryborough line on 22 December, the state government is funding a six-month trial of a daily feeder shuttle bus to/from Lexton, approximately 23km west of Talbot. Gold Bus is providing the service to the township of 150 residents. During the trial, no fares are charged. A return Maryborough – Ballarat shopper bus provided by Little's Coaches serves Lexton on Tuesdays & Fridays.

Popes changes

The Thursday to Sunday Camperdown – Timboon service provided by Popes Coaches has operated to a revised timetable since 22 December. The last bus from Timboon on Thursday and Friday now runs 30 mins later at 2010, also returning from Camperdown 30 mins later at 2150, accommodating the change to the evening Warrnambool train to depart Melbourne at 1900 instead of 1839.

Western Australia

City Link route changes

As work progresses on Perth's City Link project, a number of route alternations will take place in January. The City Link project includes the construction of a new underground busport, replacing the existing Wellington St Bus Station, with the new facility due for completion in 2016. This follows the sinking of the Fremantle line in the CBD, which aims to revitalise access between the CBD and Northbridge.

Whilst construction takes place on a new temporary bus station at Wellington St until April, Routes 30, 31, 34, 213, 220, 881 & 940 have been temporarily relocated to depart from the Esplanade Busport from 5 January. Additionally, 213 & 220 will operate via St Georges Terrace in lieu of Plain St & Wellington St. Yellow CAT services will not be serving Stop 15 at Raine Square until April.

City road closures from 5 to 26 January resulted in routes 16, 21, 22, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 55, 60, 66, 67 & 68 terminating at Wellington Busport with service to Esplanade Busport suspended. The Blue CAT is missing the stop at Perth Underground during this period, while Red CATs will skip five stops along William, Hay & Murray Streets.

On 12 January, Routes 15, 17, 19, 81, 82, 83, 85, 86, 92, 354, 370, 374, 386, 387, 388, 389, 400, 402, 403, 404, 870, 885, 886, 887, 888 & 889 were relocated from the existing Wellington St Bus Station to a new facility on Roe St. The East Perth extensions on 81, 82, 83 & 92 were also discontinued.

Updated timetables have been issued for:

- Western 43 (Routes 81, 82, 83, 85, 86 & 92)
- Northern 56 (Route 15)
- Northern 71 (Routes 17, 19 & 20)
- Northern 72 (Routes 354, 370 & 870)
- Northern 76 (Routes 885, 886, 887, 888 & 889)
- Northern 77 (Routes 400 & 408)
- Northern 81 (Routes 387, 388, 449)

From 27 January, Routes 16, 41, 42, 43, 48, 55, 60, 66 & 67 will now serve stops on William St instead of travelling along Barrack St. Additionally, Routes 30, 31, 34, 41, 42, 43, 48, 55, 104, 105, 106 & 940 will be adjusted to depart revised stands at Esplanade Busport in conjunction with the introduction of new high-frequency Route 950 (see below).

Further CAT changes from 27 & 28 January see the Blue CAT removed along Riverside Dr, Mounts Bay Rd & St Georges Terrace, while the Green CAT will be modified to serve an additional stop at Cloisters on St George Terrace.

27 January timetable changes

On 27 January Transperth will introduce their new high-frequency Route 950 service between Morley Bus Station & QEII Medical Centre via Beaufort St, Esplanade Busport, Mounts Bay Rd & University of Western Australia. Service frequencies of the 950 are:

Weekdays ex Morley Bus Station

- 0500 – 0600: every 15 mins
- 0600 – 0700: every 5 mins
- 0800 – 1600: every 7.5 mins, with additional shortworkings Esplanade Busport – Uni of WA, with buses every 1 – 5 mins in this section between 0730 & 1100
- 1600 – 2200: Every 15 mins
- 2200 – 2345: Every 30 mins

Weekdays ex QEII Medical Centre

- 0530 – 0900: Every 15 mins, with a 7.5 min frequency

from Esplanade Busport to Morley between 0800 & 0900

- 0900 – 1500: Every 7.5 mins, with some additional afternoon shortworkings between Uni of WA & Esplanade Busport
- 1500 – 1600: Every 5 mins
- 1600 – 1800: Every 4 mins, with additional shortworkings between Uni of WA & Esplanade Busport offering 2 min headways
- 1800 – 1900: Every 8 mins
- 1900 – 2200: Every 15 mins
- 2200 – 0000: Every 30 mins

Saturdays

- 0600 – 0930: Every 15 mins
- 0930 – 1830: Every 10 mins
- 1830 – 2130: Every 15 mins
- 2130 – 0000: Every 30 mins

Sundays

- 0700 – 1000: Every 15 mins
- 1000 – 1800: Every 10 mins
- 1800 – 1930: Every 15 mins
- 1930 – 2200: Every 30 mins

In conjunction with new service, the following changes will take place on neighbouring routes:

- 21 & 22 (Morely – Esplanade Busport) replaced entirely by new routes 348 & 950
- Cancellation of a number of Route 23 (Claremont - Perth) trips due to low patronage between University of WA & Claremont, along with a route change to reduce delays exiting Claremont Town Centre.
- 47 (Bayswater - Perth) cancelled and replaced with additional 48 services between Morley & Perth via Bayswater Station. 48 will work in conjunction with the new 348 (Morley - Bayswater) to enable Embelton residents to connect with other services at Morley Bus Station or Bayswater Station
- 68 (Mirrabooka – Esplanade) will no longer deviate via St David's Retirement Centre
- 78 (Perth – University of WA) & 79 (Perth – QEII Medical Centre via University of WA) replaced entirely by 950
- A special industrial route, 723, will be introduced offering a return trip from Morley at 0813 & ACTIV Industries in Embelton at 1538 on weekdays, replacing existing Route 21 deviations.

Other timetable changes to be introduced on 27 January will affect the following services:

- 24, 25, 27 & 28 (Claremont – East Perth) including a route change for 24 & 25 reduce delays exiting Claremont Town Centre
- 41 & 43 (Bayswater – Perth)
- 42 (Maylands – Perth)
- 55 (Bassendean – Perth)
- 102 & 107 (Perth – University of WA)
- 103 (East Perth – Fremantle)
- 170 & 179 (Perth – Bull Creek)
- 176 (Perth – Wilson)
- 177 (Perth – Bentley)
- 3 poorly used trips on 200 (Cannington - Booragoon) cancelled. Service now limited to 3 return inter-peak services in each direction
- 213 (Cannington - Perth) replaced by additional

shortworkings on 220 (Armadale - Perth), which will also have an additional timed stop at East Victoria Park

- 229 (Carousel Shopping Centre – Maddington)
- 231 & 232 (Gosnells Station circular routes)
- 249 (Armadale – Kelmscott)
- An existing 253 (Armadale - Jarrahdale) trip from Jarrahdale will deviate via Byford Secondary College, while an additional trip will originate at Armadale Senior High School at 1500 on school days, prior to Armadale Station, and deviate via Byford Secondary College & Serpentine-Jarrahdale Grammar School
- 254 (Armadale - Byford) will have an additional trip added departing Byford Town Centre at 1510 on school days deviating via Byford Secondary College
- 517 (Murdoch – Thornlie)
- 518 (Murdoch – Cockburn)
- 519 (Murdoch – Armadale), including the introduction of a deviation via Carey Baptist College to/from Armadale each day

New timetable booklets dated 27 January include:

- South Eastern 3 (Routes 220 & 249)
- South Eastern 4 (Routes 210, 211 & 212)
- South Eastern 5 (Routes 228 & 229)
- South Eastern 6 (Routes 206, 207, 517, 518, 850 & 851)
- South Eastern 9 (Routes 170, 176, 177 & 179)
- South Eastern 11 (Routes 210, 211, 231 & 232)
- South Eastern 12 (Route 30 & 31)
- South Eastern 13 (Routes 179, 508 & 509)
- South Eastern 17 (Routes 517, 518 & 519)
- South Eastern 19 (Routes 34 & 35)
- South Eastern 21 (Routes 251, 252, 253 & 254)
- Western 31 (Routes 102 & 107)
- Western 33 (Routes 27 & 28)
- Western 36 (Routes 104, 105, 106 & 111)
- Western 44 (Routes 23, 24 & 25)
- Western 45 (Routes 23, 102, 107 & 950)
- Western 46 (Route 940)
- Northern 56 (Route 15)
- Eastern 102 (Routes 16 & 60)
- Eastern 103 (Routes 41, 42, 43, 48 & 55)
- Eastern 106 (Routes 66, 67 & 68)
- Eastern 107 (Routes 48 & 348)
- Southern 118 (Route 881)
- High Frequency 202 (Route 950)

New format Perth timetables

With the 2014 timetables, Transperth has introduced an updated format, with timetables now identified by a reference number rather than region and number. Thus Western 43 has become timetable 43 and Northern 56 has become timetable 56, although colour coding for regions continues (Eastern maroon; Northern green; South Eastern yellow; Southern brown, Western blue & High Frequency aqua), The new High Frequency 202 timetable for new route 950 is aqua, the same as the Circle Route 200 timetable. The new timetables have a "let's connect" banner and the route number printed on a white background for contrast. Inside, a green header is used for Monday to Friday trips, blue for Saturdays and red for Sunday and Public Holidays.

Thanks to: Jason Blackman, Hilaire Fraser, Ben Knight, Jason Lipszyc, Victor Isaacs, Michael Marshall, Len Regan, Lourie Smit & various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*.

AIR NEWS

International

Qantas will introduce a new summer seasonal route from Perth to Auckland. It will operate twice a week (from Perth on Fridays and Sundays) from 6 Dec 2013 until 1 Feb 2014.

Qantas and **China Southern** entered into a code share and alliance from the beginning of December. A high degree of co-operation is anticipated.

From 15 July 2014 **Etihad** will operate daily from Perth to Abu Dhabi.

Domestic

Jetstar is reducing services from Darwin and closing its Darwin base. Darwin-Manila-Tokyo flights are suspended. Darwin-Singapore flights will go from nine a week to daily and be transferred to Jetstar Asia. Darwin-Brisbane flights will be reduced from eight a week to daily. Darwin-Denpasar (Bali) will go from eight a week to daily. However, Darwin-Cairns flights will be increased from thrice weekly to daily. These moves are part of cost-saving by Jetstar's parent company, Qantas.

Other Jetstar changes are a new service Melbourne-Tokyo (Narita) from 29 April. However, the thrice weekly Gold Coast-Osaka service will be discontinued from 8 May.

Tigerair will introduce new routes Brisbane-Darwin, Brisbane-Cairns, Brisbane-Adelaide and Sydney-Adelaide.

On 13 December the Civil Aviation Safety Authority grounded six planes belonging to Canberra-based **Brindabella Airlines** due to lax maintenance. This followed CASA's decision to ground four planes in November after it discovered the airline had overrun engine inspections. CASA examined the fleet and said it has identified additional inspection and maintenance overruns. Then on 15 December, Brindabella suspended all operations, went into administration and sought a buyer. The airline operated flights to regional centres in NSW including Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, Cobar, Orange, Moree, Mudgee, Narrabri and Tamworth, plus Cooma in the ski season. **Qantaslink** has introduced a daily replacement service from Narrabri to Sydney and return.

Thanks to Victor Isaacs, Tris Tottenham, the *Australian*, *Canberra Times* and ABC news for Air news.

FERRY NEWS

The Summer **Manly Ferry** timetables started on 21 December 2013. Perhaps in association with this, or perhaps unrelated, all timetable racks were removed from Manly and Circular Quay wharves. The Summer Timetables were

available from a wheel-barrow on Wharf 3 at Circular Quay - except that there were no timetables in the wheel-barrow!

Thanks to Geoff Lambert for Ferry news.

ODD SPOT

Fiordland Monorail

A proponent is attempting to win approval for a 43 km monorail through wilderness country in Fiordland in the South Island of New Zealand. The idea is to have an "experience" that will commence in Queenstown with a catamaran crossing Lake Wakatipu (20 km), then on an all-terrain vehicle on tracks through wilderness country (45 km), then on a 160 passenger monorail on the longest non-urban monorail route in the world through the Snowdon forest to Te Anau Downs (43 km). Think the editor had too much Christmas liquor and is making all this up? See <http://fiordlandmonorail.com/>

From Heaven to NSW Train Link

A wayward parachute (without parachutist) delayed trains for about 25 minutes on the afternoon of 10 December north of Fairy Meadow (4 km north of Wollongong). Police and emergency crews had to remove the empty parachute after it landed on electrical catenary.

Things are different in North Queensland

Cane trains could be converted into solar trams as a new form of public transport for Townsville under a radical proposal by James Cook University sustainable planning researcher Dr Douglas Goudie. He will investigate whether retro-fitting cane trains with solar panels to turn them into affordable public transport is possible. He says using former cane trains and existing rail corridors would reduce costs and it could also help lure tourists to the region.

About *Table Talk*

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