



# TABLE TALK

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## RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

### East Coast High Speed Rail

From the *Australian* 19 August 2014:

The push for an east coast, high-speed, rail link has received a boost, with the Abbott government holding a series of high-level meetings with Japanese, Chinese, Spanish and French rail companies in Australia and abroad. Trade Minister Andrew Robb said the talks had included discussions on financial models to make the project viable, despite its hefty estimated price tag of \$110 billion and the government's fiscal constraints. Renewed interest in the project comes as Central Japan Railway Company declared Japanese tunnelling methods could strip 20-30% off the projected cost. The company, Japan's most profitable high-speed rail operator, has also revealed that Japanese government lender JBIC is prepared to bankroll construction if Australia shares the risk.

Albury-Wodonga and other regional cities and shires along the planned route have thrown their support behind the project as a way to boost their populations and encourage development. The Melbourne-Sydney leg, the likely first stage of any east coast, high-speed, rail venture, is the fifth busiest air route in the world, underscoring the potential for fast rail to attract enough customers to defray the cost.

The Rudd-Gillard government pushed the rail project, which would connect Melbourne and Brisbane via Sydney and Canberra in its full form, and opposition infrastructure spokesman Anthony Albanese remains a strong supporter. After the Coalition won power, the advisory group charged with planning the route was wound up as part of budget cuts, and it was assumed the idea was dead in the short term. With public support for the venture running at 82%, and interest from a range of Asian and European players deepening, it has floated back into the political consciousness.

Mr Robb's comments reveal the Coalition is continuing to explore options to build the project, provided it can be predominantly privately funded, and the government has committed to trying to purchase the identified land corridor for the route. "High-speed rail is certainly one of those things that could deliver huge efficiency gains to Australia, if it could be financed in a viable way," Mr Robb said. "Historically, it has never been seen as something that could deliver the type of return on investment to warrant support. If it is to materialise it will require some innovative financing mechanisms that don't rely on substantial debt funding and such innovative approaches are being examined."

Travel times for Melbourne-Sydney and Sydney-Brisbane would be less than three hours. For the project to be viable without subsidy, the highest ticket prices would need to be about equal to a business-class flight, about \$300-\$400 for the Melbourne-Sydney sector, proponents say.

Australasian Railway Association chief executive Bryan Nye, who has been lobbying for the project, said he wanted the government to call for expressions of interest as soon as possible.

Central Japan Railway Company's Gen Okajima confirmed the company's strong interest in the project but said it was waiting for an invitation from the Australian government before detailing its plans as a matter of protocol and courtesy. Mr Okajima, the company's Sydney representative, said the feasibility study was conservative and the cost of \$110bn could be brought down by 20 to 30 per cent by using tunnels cut to suit Japan's Shinkansen bullet trains. He confirmed that the Japan Bank for International Co-operation was willing to fund the project if the Australian government was prepared to underwrite a certain minimum level of patronage.

### Queensland: Carmichael coal mine and railway approved

The Queensland Coordinator-General has approved the railway from Adani's proposed \$16.5 billion Carmichael mine about 160 kms north-west of Clermont in the Galilee Basin to Abbot Point, near Bowen. The company will now have to negotiate land access agreements with affected landholders and must supply the State government with revised flood-modelling before construction can start.

The mine portion of the project has been given federal approval. Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt said the project proposed by Indian company Adani could go ahead, subject to 36 "strict" conditions focused on conserving groundwater. The project will be Australia's biggest coal mine and one of the biggest in the world. It will cover 200 square kms and produce about 60 million tonnes of coal annually. The colossal proposal consists of six open-cut pits and up to five underground mines, to supply Indian power plants with enough coal to generate electricity for up to 100 million people.

### Queensland Rail General Appendix

Queensland Rail has re-introduced a General Appendix to its documentation. The GA, effective from 30 January 2014, describes the system, and replaces 300 former documents.

### Colin Rees Transport

It is believed that Aurizon will sell its subsidiary Colin Rees Transport to Qube Logistics. CRT Group was founded in 1954 and is an intermodal transport operator. It was acquired by QR National (now Aurizon). It specialized in transport of food products, polymers and plastics. In June 2011 it ceased operation as a separate brand, and became part of QR National. CRT Group operated a number of terminals, including some with their own sidings at Yennora in Sydney and Altona in Melbourne.

## Sydney Trains printed timetables

A Transport for NSW spokeswoman on 31 July advised that printed timetables would soon be available again at stations on the South Coast line. Commuters had reported that printed timetables were not available from some stations. She said, "Printed timetables are updated periodically to make sure they're accurate and incorporate minor changes to service times. Recent changes have been made to the South Coast timetable due to improvements to signalling between Bomaderry and Kiama."

## Sydney Trains minor timetable amendments

From 23 August 2014, STN 1441-2014 removed references to Guardian Trains on Friday and Saturday nights and STN 1116-2014 made minor adjustments to Weekend trains in Sector 1 and on Weekdays adjustments to Start/Stable positions, removal of trains from Blacktown Loop, fine tuning at Penrith, Campbelltown and Sydney Yard, and minor changes to Intercities using Lawson and Katoomba Turnbacks.

## Sydney area Passenger Working Timetable 25 August 2014

Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains have published a new Working Timetable for Passenger trains in the Sydney area valid from 25 August.

## Sydney area Freight Working Timetable 23 August 2014

Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains have published a new Working Timetable for Freight trains in the Sydney area. Book 5 Weekends is valid from 23 August and Book 4 Weekdays is valid from 25 August. Copies will be available from the Australian Timetable Association Distribution List.

## John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network Working Timetable 24 August 2014

John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network has published a new Working Timetable valid from 24 August 2014. It contains changes to western NSW freight services. As usual, it is on their website under "Network Operations and Access" or go direct to: <http://www.jhrcrn.com.au/Documents.asp?ID=67&Title=Standard+Working+Timetable+%28SWTT%29&pg=1&start=1>

## NSW Country Regional Network: Weemelah line closed

The Camurra (near Moree) – Weemelah line in NW NSW has been "booked out of service" since 14 April.

## NSW: Significant track closures

The latest in the regular scheduled closures of the ARTC **Hunter Valley coal line** network occurred from **Tuesday 19 to Thursday 21 August**. NSW Train Link passenger trains to/from NW NSW were replaced by buses for the entire journey.

Sydney Trains' line from **Liverpool to Macarthur** and ARTC's line from **Macarthur to Goulburn** were closed for trackwork on the weekend of **16 and 17 August**. As usual on these occasions NSW Train Link's regular Canberra and Griffith trains were replaced by buses throughout and the Melbourne trains were replaced by buses between Sydney and Goulburn. Schedules were issued for NSW Train Link to take advantage of the closure in an unusual way on Saturday 16 August. From Canberra to Goulburn they planned to run four trains in each direction during the day and evening for "Route Knowledge Crew Training. (John

Holland Rail Country Rail Notice 0173-2014 and ARTC Train Alteration Advice 0746-2014) but the plan was cancelled.

On the weekend of **13 and 14 September** almost every railway line in **NSW west** of Blacktown will be closed for trackwork. Sydney Trains beyond Blacktown will be replaced by buses, as will NSW Train Link trains to/from Dubbo and Bathurst. The Indian Pacific into and out of Sydney will presumably be traveling via Cootamundra, but this is not yet confirmed. Then from **Monday 15 to Friday 19 September** local trains between Mt Victoria and Lithgow will be replaced by buses, although long distance passenger trains will continue to run.

## Grain exports

International grain company Bunge will build a bulk grain export terminal at Geelong. It plans to ship up to 450,000 tonnes a year from Corio Quay North terminal.

Quattro, a joint initiative between Qube Holdings, Emerald Grain, Cargill Australia and Noble Resources, has started construction of its \$75 million grain export facility in Port Kembla.

## Victoria: Public transport co-ordination (or lack of it)

On 5 August the Victorian Auditor-General released a report of his findings that public transport services are poorly coordinated. Progress on improving public transport coordination has been slow, despite related initiatives featuring prominently in statewide strategic land use and transport plans over the past decade. Over this time, public transport has been managed as a collection of separate modes rather than as an integrated system because institutional deficiencies have not supported effective planning for, and governance of, coordination initiatives. While 61% of bus arrivals connect with a train, only 21% of train arrivals connect with a bus.

Recommendations are:

That Public Transport Victoria:

- expedites efforts to finalise its multi-modal coordination policy, and strategy and plans for buses, trams and rural and regional services
- develops incentives in future bus contracts focused on achieving defined system-wide coordination objectives
- requires the operators of all new bus contracts to undertake a full timetable rebuild to support achievement of defined system-wide coordination targets
- collects and analyses data on the directness of bus routes to assist in service planning
- provides real-time bus service information to public transport users to better support the connectivity of buses with other public transport modes
- develops and reports on indicators that reliably convey the level of intended and actual coordination across different public transport modes
- strengthens its monitoring of the on time running of train and buses and coordination outcomes.

That the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure:

- develops, in consultation with transport agencies, statewide and agency performance measures for transport system coordination
- reviews its governance arrangements and establishes mechanisms for systematically monitoring the progress and outcome of statewide coordination initiatives
- develops its proposed performance monitoring and reporting framework to evaluate achievement of defined statewide coordination goals.

The Report can be accessed at [www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports\\_and\\_publications/latest\\_reports/2014-15/20140806-public-transport.aspx](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports_and_publications/latest_reports/2014-15/20140806-public-transport.aspx)

## V/Line: & NSW Train Link: Albury line resumes normal operations (well, partially normal)

Following repairs after the derailment on the North Melbourne flyover (August *Table Talk* page 2), V/Line services between Melbourne and Albury returned to normal from the evening of Thursday 29 July. However, although 27 July was the first day of operation of the new V/Line timetable, all V/Line Albury line trains were slowed down by 15 minutes from what had been set down. (The departure times are the same as formerly, but arrival times are later). The additional time has been added in the Melbourne-Seymour and v.v. section. Also, **NSW Train Link's XPTs** will continue to terminate/start at Broadmedowns until further notice. The engineering of the new trackwork at Flyover Junction is such that only V/Line owned passenger rolling stock is allowed across. **GSR's Overland** is also affected and is currently replaced by buses between Melbourne and North Shore (with the train operating empty to/from Dynon).

New mudholes have developed between Avenel and Violet Town. These are so bumpy that it was reported that conductors were forced to sit down and the train's buffet service briefly closed. Up to four conductors are understood to have been injured after carriages began "jumping" on the track, including one who suffered a knee injury. V/Line blamed the rough track on recent wet weather, which it said had caused the mudholes to appear. An 80km/h restriction was imposed since the Australian Rail Track Corporation carried out repairs in early August. The works had involved spot tamping, track compacting and resurfacing, as well as some ballast repairs. The restricted speed was expected to apply for a few days, but V/Line said it had added only a few minutes to travel times. Punctuality rates for V/Line trains on the Albury-Wodonga service had soared in recent months in the wake of the Corporation making progress on its ongoing program to complete major ballast works on the track. Drainage works will be carried out later this year on the section of track that caused problems. The ARTC undertook some track undercutting in the area.

Also from 27 July, **Bairnsdale** line trains were all slowed down by five minutes from what was set out in V/Line's new WTT "due to long-term speed restrictions". Arrivals at Bairnsdale are five minutes later and departures are five minutes earlier. The Bairnsdale public timetable on V/Line's website was replaced with one headed "Temporary timetable".

## V/Line: Working Timetables 27 July 2014

Good news and bad news. V/Line passenger and freight Working Timetables of 27 July are now available on their website at <http://www.vline.com.au/about/networkaccess/infopack.html> These WTTs will also be available via the ATA's September December List.

However Metro Trains Melbourne Working Timetables have been removed from their website.

## Victoria: Freight services

There are currently few intrastate freight trains in Victoria. Those in the V/Line Freight WTT of 27 June 2014 (ie, lines controlled by V/Line) are:

Operat or & Train no.	Days	Dep	Notes	Arr
Pacific National 9245	Tue-Fri	0300 Somerton Cement Siding	0450-1035 North Geelong Yard	1105 Waurm Ponds
PN 9210	Mon	1010 Gheringap Sdg	1025-2205 North Geelong Yard	2240 Waurm Ponds
PN 0243	Tue-Thur	2205 North Geelong Yard		2240 Waurm Ponds
PN 9203	Mon-Fri	0240 Appleton Dock		0750 Westvic Sdg, Warrnambool
PN 0246	Tue-Thur	1200 Waurm Ponds		1222 North Geelong Yard
PN 9120	Fri	1200 Waurm Ponds	1222 Fri – 0925 Mon North Geelong Yard	0949 Gheringap Loop
PN 9248	Mon-Thur	2340 Waurm Ponds		0145 Somerton
PN 9204	Mon-Fri	1820 Westvic Sdg, Warrnambool		2335 Appleton Dock
PN 9141	Mon, Wed, Fri as required	2030 Tottenham Yard	Via Bacchus Marsh	2330 Maryborough
PN 9101	Mon	1900 Appleton Dock	Via North Geelong	0725 Merbein
PN 9101	Wed & Fri	2310 Appleton Dock	Via Bacchus Marsh	0950 Merbein
PN 9102	Tue & Thur	2040 Merbein	Via North Geelong	1010 Appleton Dock
PN 9102	Sun	1730 Merbein	Via North Geelong	0505 Westgate Port Siding
PN 9142	Tue & Thur as required	2200 Maryborough	Via Bacchus Marsh	0105 Tottenham Yard
PN 9142	Sun as required	2140 Maryborough	Via Bacchus Marsh	0050 Tottenham Yard

PN 9741	Mon-Fri	0350 Murtoa Ex Chrome Loop on ARTC's Portland line at 0005 on Mon, Wed, Fri, at 2345 on Mon, at 2335 on Wed.	Standard Gauge	0700 Hopetoun
PN 9742	Mon-Fri	1130 Hopetoun	Standard Gauge	1440 Murtoa Continues to Iluka Siding on ARTC's Portland line, then to Chrome Loop.
QUBE 9371	Mon	0510 Dynon	Via Toolamba. Deniliquin is, and always has been, part of the Victorian (not NSW) network.	1230 Deniliquin Rice Growers Sdg
QUBE 9371	Tue-Fri	0505 Westgate Port Sdg	Via Toolamba	1230 Deniliquin Rice Growers Sdg
QUBE 9072	Mon-Fri	1700 Deniliquin Rice Growers Sdg	Via Bendigo	0040 Westgate Port Sdg
PN 9305	Tue & Thur	1850 Appleton Dock		0050 Tocumwal
PN 9305	Sun	1950 Appleton Dock		0135 Tocumwal
PN 9319	Mon-Fri	1950 Brooklyn Hanson Sdg		2120 Apex Quarry Sdg
PN 9317	Mon	0940 Tottenham Yard		1100 Apex Quarry Sdg
PN 9315	Tue-Fri as required	0930 Brooklyn Hanson Sdg		1100 Apex Quarry Sdg
PN	Tue-Fri	0955 Westall	Via	1200 Apex

9340		Apex Sdg	Essendon	Quarry Sdg
PN 9306	Mon, Wed, Fri	1625 Tocumwal		2140 Appleton Dock
PN 9318	Mon-Fri	1345 Apex Quarry Sdg		1530 Brooklyn Hanson Sdg
PN 9430	Mon-Thur	2240 Apex Quarry Sdg	Via Regional Rail Link	0530 Westall Apex Sdg
PN9316	Mon-Thur as required	2240 Apex Quarry Sdg		0020 Brooklyn Hanson Sdg
PN9316	Fri	2240 Apex Quarry Sdg		0540 Brooklyn Hanson Sdg
QUBE 9471	Mon-Fri	0035 Westgate Port Sdg		0610 Maryvale Paper Mill
QUBE 9471	Sat	0035 Westgate Port Sdg		0600 Maryvale Paper Mill
QUBE 9473	Sat	2320 Westgate Port Sdg		0415 Maryvale Paper Mill
QUBE 9472	Mon-Fri	1735 Maryvale Paper Mill		2200 Westgate Port Sdg
QUBE 9472	Sat	1535 Maryvale Paper Mill		1925 Westgate Port Sdg
QUBE 9472	Sun	1535 Maryvale Paper Mill		1925 Westgate Port Sdg
PN 9544	Mon, Wed, Fri	0255 Tottenham Yard		0600 Kensington GF Sdg
PN 0102	Mon	0605 Westgate Port Sdg		0630 South Dynon Loco
PN 0102	Wed & Fri	1125 Westgate Port Sdg		1150 South Dynon Loco
PN 9542	Mon, Wed, Fri as required	1225 Sunshine Graincorp		1300 Tottenham Yard
PN 9543	Mon, Wed, Fri	1350 Kensington GF Sdg		1540 Tottenham Yard
QUBE 9571	Sat	0515 Westgate Port Sdg		0530 Dynon
PN 9508	Sat	0900 Brooklyn Hanson Sdg		0930 Tottenham Yard

PN 0508	Sat	1000 Tottenham Yard		1030 South Dynon Loco
PN 9541	Mon, Wed, Fri as required	0605 Tottenham Yard		0640 Sunshine Graincorp
PN 0509	Mon	0600 South Dynon Loco		0630 Tottenham Yard
PN 0101	Mon	0930 South Dynon Loco		0950 Appleton Dock
PN 0101	Wed & Fri	1800 South Dynon Loco		1820 Appleton Dock

Bulk Rail 7922V		Wimmera Intermodal (near Horsham)		Laverton
SBR 7922V	Tue	2350 Wimmera Intermodal		0615 Laverton
SBR 7922V	Thur	0610 Wimmera Intermodal		1203 Laverton
SBR 7922V	Fri	1425 Wimmera Intermodal		2013 Laverton
SBR 7922V	Sat	1425 Wimmera Intermodal		2013 Laverton
SBR 9721V	Tue	0607 Laverton		1135 Wimmera Intermodal
SBR 9721V	Wed	1417 Laverton		1915 Wimmera Intermodal
SBR 9721V	Thur	2247 Laverton		0425 Wimmera Intermodal
SBR 9721V	Sat	0302 Laverton		0840 Wimmera Intermodal
SBR 9721V	Sun	2312 Laverton		0500 Wimmera Intermodal
PN 9603V	Mon, Fri	0845 Canal Sdg	Steel	0924 Somerton
PN 9603V	Tue	0845 Canal Sdg	Steel	0943 Somerton
PN 6906V	Mon, Fri	1125 Somerton	Steel	1206 Canal Sdg
PN 6906V	Tue	1140 Somerton	Steel	1221 Canal Sdg

The principal Victorian intrastate freight trains in the ARTC WTT of 22 June 2014 (ie, lines controlled by ARTC) are:

Operator & Train no.	Days	Dep	Notes	Arr
PN 7769V	Mon	1445 Murtoa	Hopeoun-Murtoa on V/Line. 1800-2300 Iluka Sdg	2316 Chrome Loop
PN 7769V	Tue	1445 Murtoa	Hopetoun-Murtoa on V/Line. 1800-2315 Iluka Sdg	2331 Chrome Loop
PN 7769V	Wed	Murtoa	Hopetoun-Murtoa on V/Line. 1800-2250 Iluka Sdg	2306 Chrome Loop
PN 7769V	Thur	Murtoa	Hopetoun-Murtoa on V/Line. 1825-2324 Iluka Sdg	2340 Chrome Loop
PN 7769V	Fri	Murtoa	Hopetoun-Murtoa on V/Line.	1937 Iluka Sdg
PN 7769V	Sun	2315 Iluka Sdg		2331 Chrome Loop
PN 7768V	Mon, Wed, Fri	0005 Chrome Loop	Murtoa-Hopetoun on V/Line.	Murtoa
PN 7770V	Mon	2345 Chrome Loop	Murtoa-Hopetoun on V/Line.	Murtoa
PN 7768V	Wed	2335 Chrome Loop	Murtoa-Hopetoun on V/Line.	Murtoa
Specialised	Mon	1525		2033

In addition, there are a number of short distance freight trains on ARTC tracks in the Melbourne area.

## V/Line: South West Victoria news section: 1. Geelong line: Regional Rail Link completion

V/Line trains between Melbourne and Geelong were replaced by buses from the late evening of Thursday 28 August until end of service on Sunday 31 August for Regional Rail Link works on the down side of Werribee.

It is expected that the final section of the Regional Rail Link from Deer Park West to West Werribee Junction via new stations at Tarneit and Wyndham Vale will open around April 2015, at which time new timetables for the Geelong line will be introduced. Both the Victorian Government and Opposition have promised 20 minute off peak weekday frequencies to/from Geelong when the Regional Rail Link opens.

## 2. Grovedale is now Waurn Ponds

The new station under construction, approximately 5 km beyond Marshall will not be called Grovedale. It will now be called Waurn Ponds, which is more in accord with local usage.

### 3. Laverton: A smashing time

On Friday evening 22 August an up empty V/Line DMU smashed into a stopped Metro EMU on the up side of Laverton on the direct line. Consequently on Saturday 23 and on the morning of Sunday 24 August V/Line trains to/from Geelong/Marshall only ran to Werribee with buses between there and Melbourne. Warrnambool trains ran only on the down side of Geelong. (Metro trains to/from Werribee ran via the Altona loop line as is always the case on weekends.)

### 4. Warrnambool line services

Demand for the Warrnambool train service is not strong enough for extra services, according to Victorian Transport Minister Terry Mulder. A concerted push by south-west mayors to have more frequent services was launched in early August but Mr Mulder said the state government did not want to operate "costly empty passenger trains". He indicated the state government was open to discussions but there needed to be further passenger demand for extra services.

Figures released by V/Line show the early morning service from Warrnambool to Melbourne had the strongest patronage of the six weekday services, with carriages 69% full on average. However, two weekday services operate at less than half-full. The Monday to Friday 1715 Warrnambool-Melbourne and the 0720 Melbourne-Warrnambool have 35% average patronage. The 1140 Saturday Warrnambool-Melbourne service was the line's most popular with a 101% patronage. The 0710 Sunday Warrnambool-Melbourne connection was also close to capacity at a 96%, meaning only 15 seats were usually spare. Warrnambool line services generally have 330 seats depending on the number of carriages and the data showed services on average had at least 100 seats available.

### 5. Apollo Bay bus service alterations

Here is an unusual temporary timetable alteration – alterations and delays not because of railway line closures but because of a road closure. From Sunday 24 August until Thursday 28 August V/Line buses did not serve Wye River and Kennett River and were diverted and subject to delays of 60 minutes, due to works on the Great Ocean Road.

### V/Line: North East woes

The 1801 Melbourne-Albury train was cancelled on three nights in a row: Sunday 17 August, Monday 18 August (locomotive failure) and Tuesday 19 August (power van failure).

The Premier of Victoria, Denis Napthine, has blamed Albury line problems on the former Labor federal government and the Australian Rail Track Corporation. He said, "We will not rest until we get a much better service for the people of Wodonga and the North East. Under this government there have been significant steps forward, but more needs to be done. There is a fundamental ongoing problem with the ARTC's track,." He said his government had returned a full rail service to the line and pointed out increases in punctuality and reliability measures.

### V/Line: Bacchus Marsh woes

Due to a shortage of VLocity carriages, the 0611 Bacchus Marsh to Southern Cross and 1748 Southern Cross to Bacchus Marsh have been replaced by buses since 28 August until further notice:

### Metro Trains: Stony Point line woes

Malfunctioning boom gates on the Stony Point line have caused Metro to cancel trains and substitute buses. It has banned single-car trains on the line until further notice. It has also blamed train drivers for sprinkling too much sand onto the tracks from the train's "sander". Three Stony Point trains per day have been cancelled until further notice, because its

ban on single-car trains means it no longer has enough trains to meet the timetable. Metro operates the Stony Point line using diesel Sprinter trains provided by V/Line.

It is not the first time single-car trains have been barred from running in Victoria because they failed to trigger boom gates. In 2012 V/Line stopped running them on the Geelong line because of an infestation of millipedes and overgrown fairy grass that were interfering with track circuits. V/Line no longer operates single-car Sprinters, due to increased patronage.

### Metro Trains: Mernda extension

The Melbourne *Age* reports that plans for a new rail line in Melbourne's booming outer north are quietly being drawn up by the Victorian government, just three months out from a state election in which transport issues are tipped to swing many votes. The plans, which are at a very early stage, involve extending the South Morang rail line eight kms north. Potential locations for three new stations are being assessed, as well as whether land owned by government corporation VicTrack could be sold to developers to offset the construction costs. The terminus for the new line would likely be built next to the planned Mernda town centre, a grassy paddock that will eventually become a commercial hub for tens of thousands of people.

A rail development plan released by Public Transport Victoria last year deferred the Mernda rail extension for another 20 years. The Labor opposition has said it believes the rail extension should be built earlier than that and that it will review PTV's timeline, but has not committed to building it. A Public Transport Victoria spokesman said the Mernda rail extension remained a long-term proposal, and the authority was simply doing proper planning.

### Great Southern Railway: Indian Pacific and Ghan slowed down

Some journeys of Great Southern Railway's Ghan from Darwin to Adelaide will be significantly slowed down for the 2015 tourist season. The southbound departure on Saturdays - which only operates during the May-August peak tourist season – will operate to a new three night, four day schedule.

The southbound schedule from 1 April 2015 being advertised by GSR is:

		ALL YEAR	23 MAY-22 AUG 2015
		Fortnightly in Dec/Jan	
DARWIN	dep	1000 WED	0900 SAT
KATHERINE	arr	1340 WED	1240 SAT
	dep	1820 WED	1645 SAT
ALICE SPRINGS	arr	0910 THUR	1100 SUN
	dep	1245 THUR	2200 SUN
MANGURLI	arr	2100 THUR	?
	dep	2300 THUR	?
COOBER PEDY	arr	-----	0900 MON
	dep	-----	1900 MON
ADELAIDE	Arr	1130 FRI	1310 TUES

This means the southbound Saturday train will be 26 hours slower than now. A tourist excursion to Coober Pedy is added. Coober Pedy is about 40 km from Mangurli on the north-south railway and will require bus connections. GSR states that the additional seven hours in Alice Springs will enable flights to be made to Uluru. GSR describe the changes as "exciting" developments for tourists.

The northbound Ghan will have a two hour stop inserted at Marla "for an unforgettable outback sunrise", but is otherwise mainly unchanged.

The westbound journeys of the Indian Pacific will also be significantly slowed down. This is what GSR is advertising from 1 April 2015:

		ALL YEAR	SEPT-NOV 2015
SYDNEY	dep	1500 WED	1500 SAT
BROKEN HILL	arr	0600 THUR	0640 SUN
	dep	0830 THUR	0820 SUN
ADELAIDE	arr	1515 THUR	1505 SUN
	dep	2125 THUR	2110 SUN
RAWLINNA	arr	1925 FRI	1740 MON
	dep	2200 FRI	2125 MON
KALGOORLIE	arr	?	?
	dep	?	?
PERTH	arr	1405 SAT	1500 TUES

The stop in Adelaide will be lengthened from three and a half hours to six hours. A lengthy stop at Rawlinna will replace the sightseeing stop at Kalgoorlie and arrival in Perth will be five to six hours later than now. GSR says that the lengthened Adelaide stop will provide time to travel to the Barossa Valley and for an “off-board dining experience”, and the stop in Rawlinna will be “an unforgettable outback sunset”. The eastbound IP timetable will be little changed.

### Great Southern Railway: Ghan disrupted

On 27 and 28 July a significant freight train derailment caused the northbound Ghan to be terminated at Marla from where passengers were bussed to Alice Springs. Meanwhile the southbound Ghan was terminated at Alice Springs and passengers bussed to Marla. Supermarkets chains trucked supplies from Adelaide to Alice Springs to substitute for freight trains.

### South Australia: Grain lines temporary reprieve

Genesee & Wyoming’s grain lines in the SA Mallee from Taillem Bend to Pinnaroo and Taillem Bend to Tookyerta (near Loxton) are now reported to be likely to remain in use for another 12 months, including the next grain harvest, but no longer. The SA government is preparing to spend \$2.3 million on improving roads in the area to take the grain traffic.

### TransPerth: Butler extension opens

The extension of the Northern Suburbs line from Clarkson to Butler, 7 km, is expected to open on 21 September, three months earlier than anticipated. Much of the extension is a now-duplicated portion of the line already built to access the depot.

WA Transport Minister Dean Nalder says the State government will not extend the Joondalup rail line north of Butler to Yanchep before it completes the Airport-Forrestfield link and the MAX light rail projects. This means that an extension will not happen before the middle of the next decade. The Yanchep extension - with stations at Alkimos,

Eglinton and Yanchep - was recommended as one of two “transformational projects” in the Government’s draft public transport master plan, released in 2011. The other was a light rail system linking Mirrabooka to the Perth central business district and the University of WA to Curtin. The master plan recommended that each project be completed before 2020 and said an airport rail link would not be needed before 2031. The Government has committed only to a \$2.2 billion tunnelled airport rail line, which is due to open in 2020. A decision on whether to proceed with the MAX light rail project has been deferred until after the 2017 election and it will not be completed until late 2022.

### TransPerth: Fremantle line disrupted

During a wild storm on the night of Sunday 17 August, a cargo ship broke loose from its moorings and smashed into the Fremantle rail bridge. Consequently rail services were cancelled between Fremantle and North Fremantle and replaced by buses. It was expected that the closure would be in effect until at least 1 September. A similar incident closed the Fremantle rail bridge in 2011.

### Perth airport line

The proposed railway from Bayswater to Perth Airport is now to be built entirely underground. Originally only four kms was to be underground but it is understood the tunnel will now be from the airport under the Swan River to the existing network at Bayswater. This will result in far less impact on surrounding communities and traffic. When first announcing the project in December 2013, the then Transport Minister Troy Buswell, said the \$1.9 billion line would have three stations, 3,000 parking bays and would be built by 2018. The project includes new stations at Forrestfield, the Airport Consolidated Terminal and Airport West - the domestic airport precinct.

The cost will be \$2.4 billion, an increase on estimates of \$300 million. WA Premier, Colin Barnett confirmed on 9 August that the project would start in 2016 and be finished in 2020. He said the government would turn to government asset sales to help pay for the airport line.

### TransDev Auckland: New timetable

A new timetable has been issued for the Onehunga line – the first Auckland line to be served by electric trains (since 28 April). But it is undated. There seems to be little change, with schedules still not speeded up to take advantage of electric traction. There has been a 37% increase in patronage on the Onehunga line since electric operation commenced.

On 24 July a mysterious electrical fault disabled four electric trainsets. Diesel operation to Onehunga had to be temporarily re-instated.

Electric operation in off-peak hours commenced to Manukau from 17 August. Full electric operation to Manukau will be introduced gradually.

**Thanks** to Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, David Langley, Len Regan, Lourie Smit, David Whiteford, Roger Wheaton, *www.railpage.com.au*, *Age*, *Herald Sun*, *Railway Digest*, *Rail Express*, *Sunshine Express*, *Sunday Times* (Perth), *Transit Australia*, *Warrnambool Standard* and the *West Australian* for Rail news.

## BUS NEWS

### Australia Capital Territory

#### Bus book is back – but late night buses are gone

Further details on the 1 September ACTION timetable changes across Canberra emerged in late August. Some observations:

- Other than the Red & Blue rapid corridors linking major town centres, evening services have been slashed across the board in order to fund more frequent options in peak periods or during the day. ACTION cites data collected by the new MyWay smartcard ticket system indicated they were not viable. Final weeknight services on most routes now end between 2100 and 2200, 90

mins to 2 hours earlier than previously. In a couple of cases services continue slightly later, such as a 2235 departure on route 1 from City towards Dickson. Saturday services generally finish around 2130-2200 instead of 2230-2300m. Sunday span is largely kept intact with finishes between 1800-1900, although oddly Lanyon residents will enjoy buses past 2000! The cuts have already seen suggestions for the return of the unsuccessful Flexibus model for evening travel from town centres, rather than nothing at all.

- In many cases, Xpresso peak routes have been moved to the early part of the morning peak, with several areas only served by direct options leaving prior to 0730, hardly attractive for those with 0900 starts. It would appear this is to allow the fleet to focus on school student travel and more frequent local travel after reaching the CBD. The rules of the early bird fare would need to be reviewed should it make a return, as in many cases the only direct commuter buses would depart in the free travel window!
- Weekend routes now are more closely aligned with weekday options although in all cases retain numbering in the 900-series
- Kippax joins the Blue Rapid corridor on weekdays, with through services on 314 and 315 right off-set at 15 min intervals from 6am to 10pm
- Daytime Blue Rapid services between Belconnen and Tuggeranong have been cut from 12 trips per hour to 8, although the old timetable featured some gaps of 9 minutes. On Saturdays, a 7.5 min headway now operates between Belconnen & Woden, rather than alternating gaps of 7.5 mins followed by 15 mins
- New 250 service offering a direct link from Belconnen to Gungahlin operates a 15 min peak headway and every 20 mins off-peak. Sadly, there is no weekend equivalent.
- Peak hour services operating from suburbs north and west of Gungahlin into the City are numbered in the 250-series, complimenting the 200-red rapid, which now runs until last bus (replacing the 50 at night). An express option known as 202 operates during the morning peak every 15 mins, reaching the City in 20 mins compared to a 30 min trip on the limited-stops Red Rapid

Collectors and the travelling public alike will rejoice at the return of the weekday bus booklet after almost 15 years, complimenting the separate weekend bus booklet. The booklet, which has no cover price, contains individual route maps for each service along with a schematic network map. The Xpresso routes are now shown on the same network map as the weekday routes, making it easier for passengers to decipher the array of ever-changing options in their area. A suburb guide also details routes available, however only lists either weekday or weekend options, depending on the book.

Clever formatting of the booklet timetable pages sees regular all day services grouped with Xpresso options serving common suburbs on the same table – previously the Xpresso routes were shown on separate pocket timetables, which meant passengers had to obtain and refer to two separate timetables to work out peak travel options.

#### **NXTBUS rolls out**

On August 7, the NXTBUS real-time interactive website was launched, allowing passengers to find departure times from their computer or smartphone. Passengers can alternatively access the service via SMS by sending a stop ID to 0432 13 17 10, at standard rates. The real time information includes details on low floor buses and bike-rack equipped services. At the completion of the roll-out, real time screens will be located at the major bus stations, plus ANU, Barton, City West and Kippax, while touch screen kiosks have been now been installed at Westfield Belconnen, City, Tuggeranong

and Woden allowing passengers to plan their journey. The kiosk at the City Interchange has been installed in the former MyWay centre, although is unstaffed. Third parties can apply for access to the NXTBUS data feed to enhance their smartphone apps. A list of apps that cover Canberra can be found on the ACTION website, although it's unclear if any have incorporated real time information as yet.

#### **New Park & Ride for Gungahlin**

A new Park & Ride officially opened on 8 August in Gungahlin, located near bus stops on Valley Ave and Hibberston St. The 345 space facility is served by the Red Rapid corridor.

#### **Canberra Tertiary Open Day**

To help prospective students on Canberra's annual Tertiary Open Day on 30 August, ACTION operated two free hourly loop services from the City interchange between 0900 and 1500. The eastern loop served the ADFA & Canberra Airport, while the northern loop travelled past ANU, CIT, University of Canberra and Australian Catholic University.

## **New South Wales**

#### **Minor Red changes**

On July 1, Red Bus Service implemented minor changes across:

- 15, 16, 24, 25, 26 and 27 (The Entrance – Wynong), 19 (Gosford – Wynong) and 30 (Tacoma South – Wynong loop)
- 20, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 (Gosford City routes)
- 18, 19, 23 and 28 (The Entrance – Gosford), 29 (Bateau Bay Square – Wynong Hospital), 45 (Bateau Bay Square – Mingara Recreation Club), 47 (Bateau Bay Square – Wynong) and 48 (Tumbi Umbi loop)
- 17, 18, 19, 21, 22 and 23 (The Entrance – Gosford) & 28 (The Entrance – Gosford)

#### **New PBC Goulburn timetable**

Punchbowl Goulburn commenced a new timetable on 7 July. A new 824 service operates thrice daily to St Aubyn Road (off Marys Mount Road), while the 821A/B through Crestwood has been adjusted to improve coverage. Timetables have also been adjusted to run every 80 to 90 mins all day, rather than hourly services with a long break at lunchtime. Saturday services on 825 to Eastgrove have been cut from 3 to 2, and provide just an hour in town! (previously a more reasonable 2 hours for shopping was provided). The new timetable continues to be issued in the PBC format, however trip times are now displayed vertically.

#### **Rover Revisions**

Revised timetables were issued on 14 July for Rover Coaches routes:

- 160 (Cessnock – Newcastle) and 163 (Cessnock – Morrisset)
- 162, 165, 167 and 168 (Cessnock local services)
- 164 (Cessnock – Maitland), 166 (Kurr Kurri – Maitland), 171 (Kurri Kurri and Weston Hoppa) and 172 (North Kurri Kurri Hoppa)

#### **Afternoon Hillsbus to Berowra Waters**

Further to last month's Hillsbus timetable changes, a new timetable booklet has also surfaced online for Dural District Routes 637, 638, 639, 640, 641 and 644 effective 1 August. The main change see the extension of an afternoon school peak trip on 638 from the Berrilee terminus to Berowra Waters, allowing a connection with the ferry. Previously, the only services advertised to the public operated during the AM peak.

#### **Blue Mountains timing changes**

Blue Mountains Bus Co issued new timetables effective 18 August. Selected services have been retimed to aid

punctuality, with changes of up to 25 mins. A PDF file is available on their website showing the old and new times. Routes affected include 688 (Emu Plains - Penrith), 689 (Leonay - Penrith), 690C (Springwood - Faulconbridge), 690K (Springwood - Katoomba) and 690P (Springwood - Penrith).

### **Blue Mountains ownership changes**

On August 6, ComfortDelgro Cabcharge announced they had purchased family owned Blue Mountains Bus Company for \$26.5 million, subject to regulatory approval. The current operation consists of approximately 100 buses. It is noteworthy to compare the purchase price to that of Driver Bus Lines' route service operation last year for \$22 million, despite only acquiring 42 buses and no depot land.

The origins of the Blue Mountains Bus Company under the Pearce family go back to 1951 when Horrie and Vera Pearce bought routes on the lower (Penrith-Leonay-Emu Heights) and mid (Springwood area) Blue Mountains from Springwood & Penrith Bus Co, run by the renowned Jack Spellacy, who also traded as Blue Mountains Transport Pty Ltd in the Katoomba area. The Pearces then traded as Pearce Omnibus Pty Ltd. Their son, Alan, joined the company in 1963. Horrie Pearce died in 1998, by which time Alan had full control of the business. Many other family members joined the company throughout the years of operation. In the 1950s the area was sparsely populated and Emu Plains consisted mainly of fruit orchards. As the population of the area grew, so did bus services. The first depot was in Springwood, but it later moved to the adjacent suburb of Valley Heights, with another depot established at Emu Plains.

Two bus operators existed in the Katoomba area until the 1990s: Katoomba-Leura Bus Co, which was trading as Mountainlink by 1996; and Katoomba-Woodford Bus Service, which changed its name to Blue Mountains Bus Co around 1997. Pearces took over Katoomba-Leura Bus Service (Mountainlink) in 1999 and then the (old) Blue Mountains Bus Co in about 2002. They then traded as Pearce Mountainlink in the Katoomba area, operating from a depot in Leura. The issue of new timetables in May 2005 saw the name Blue Mountains Bus Co adopted for all services in the lower, mid and upper Mountains.

*(with thanks to Robert Henderson for his comprehensive notes.)*

### **City2Surf extras**

To cater for the tens of thousands of participants, officials and spectators attending the annual City2Surf fun run on 10 August, an additional 350 Sydney Buses services ran. Hillsbus also added 13 extra 607X trips from Rouse Hill and further 19 trips on 610 ex Castle Hill (some trips originating from Rouse Hill), while Forest provided two extra 270 services from Terrey Hills. Special shuttles from Bondi Beach included X81 to Bondi Junction regularly between 0930 & 16:00, and X82 every 5 minutes to St James from 0500 to 0846. Free travel was provided to both runners and volunteers across the metropolitan network.

### **US Secretaries of State and Defence visit**

Due to police security measures at the Intercontinental Hotel during a visit by the US Secretary of State and US Secretary of Defence, buses were diverted away from Circular Quay for 72 hours from midday on 10 August. Buses departed from temporary stands on Elizabeth St between Hunter St & Martin Pl, while passengers could also board Routes 311, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327 and 389 from Spring and Pitt Sts. Routes 339 and 344 operated as per normal.

### **August Opal rollout**

In another busy month for the roll-out of Opal ticketing, the smartcards become valid onboard Blue Mountain Bus Company from 4 August and Busways services across Penrith and Blacktown on 11 August. Sydney Buses services on the Northern Beaches operated from Brookvale Depot went live on 7 August, but Mona Vale depot routes were delayed until almost two weeks later. Transdev services in southern Sydney suburbs including Sutherland, Bankstown & Auburn came online on 26 August.

In addition to the online sales, customers can now purchase the cards at special 'pop-up' kiosks at major suburban train stations during peak periods from 28 July until the end of the September, while roving 'pop-up' kiosks have been visiting selected NSW Trainlink stations during August and September. Westfield Shopping Centres at Eastgardens, Hornsby, Parramatta, Penrith and Warringah are also hosting the stands between early August and early October. Controversially, there are no plans for station staff to be able to sell or top-up the cards at station ticket windows. Retail sales officially began on 10 August at over 1000 outlets across Sydney, although there were reports some retailers began sales over a week beforehand. Fifty Woolworths supermarkets will be part of the network, in addition to 7-11, corner stores and newsagents.

To further encourage the move to Opal, 1 September saw the withdrawal of adult MyTrain tickets for off-peak, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly & yearly travel, concession MyTrain tickets for monthly, quarterly and yearly travel, along with the end of the adult monthly, quarterly and yearly MyMulti tickets, adult MyFerry TravelTens and annual light rail passes. A number of shorter term periodical tickets remain for now, along with single and return fare options. Tickets previously issued remain valid until expiry or all trips have been used. The removal of these tickets has been controversial as Opal is yet to cover the light rail services and parts of the bus network, ticket sales aren't available at stations, in many cases the weekly travel cap is higher than the average weekly rate on equivalent longer term periodicals.

### **TXTBus to end**

At the same time Canberra rolls out its real time information system, NXTBUS, which includes a text messaging service, Transport for NSW have announced they will discontinue their Sydney Buses TXTBus real time information system on 17 September. Customers will continue to have access to live departure times via one of six third party smartphone apps. A change on 1 July saw the free service restricted to six requests a day.

The technology evolution in Melbourne's real-time passenger information saw the scrapping the SMS feature of TramTracker 12 months ago, and the winding-up of Metro's cancellation and delay text message subscription service, with customers similarly encouraged to use smartphone apps in both cases.

## **Queensland**

### **P216 now calls at Morningside**

Since 2 June limited stops pre-paid peak hour P216 (Tingalpa – City) has called at Morningside Station to allow the option to transfer to train services.

### **193 closed, 196 extended**

Brisbane Transport extended BUZ route 199 from Oxlade Drive to Mountfield Road in Merthyr on August 25. Inter-peak 193 service, primarily providing a shoppers link from parts of Teneriffe and Merthyr to Merthyr Village Shopping closed on 22 August. The service only operated every 90 mins, after being reduced from hourly in the Brisbane City Council's service rationalisation last October. Affected passengers can access routes 196, 199, 470 or Blue CityGlider, although must change buses to reach Merthyr Village.

## **Victoria**

### **Operator rebranding plus PTV livery roll-out**

ComfortDelgro Cabcharge rebranded their Benders operations in Geelong and Davis operations Ballarat on 14 July, now trading as CDC Geelong and CDC Ballarat respectively. A new orange and blue logo has been introduced, reflecting the international colours of ComfortDelgro. As part of the makeover, a refreshed website has been launched for CDC Victoria, similar in design to the sister Qcity Transit operation.

The former brands reflected the original family owners, although Davis was previously sold to Kefford in 1981, who later purchased Benders in 1999. Kefford then sold the bus businesses to CDC in February 2009. The Westrans and Easttrans names remain in use for the Melbourne businesses, although the Western Coach Lines charter brand would appear to have been dropped for a new CDC Melbourne brand.

Meanwhile, the former operating names of various companies owned by Ventura have all but disappeared after a progressive roll-out of the parent companies name on depot buildings, buses and stop signage over the past two years. PDF timetables on the PTV website were updated in July, and along with new printed timetables, now feature the Ventura logo in place of the Ivanhoe, U.S., Grenda's, Moorabbin Transit, Peninsula, Portsea & Cardinia Transit brands. It was noted in late August that the route information pages were yet to be updated. The rebranding comes as both operators embark on an aggressive and ambitious rebrand of both new and existing buses into the orange and white PTV livery, including CDC's regional networks. Launched in April 2013, the uniform livery originally featured on new deliveries for CDC's Westrans Altona depot before Transdev began rolling out the livery 12 months ago.

Recent deliveries for the Dineen group's Panorama operation have also gained the new colours, but a timeline for a complete roll-out for all operators is unknown. It is also unclear if the colour scheme remains optional until new contracts take affect over the next few years.

### **Wyndham network changes**

Public Transport Victoria are currently seeking community feedback on bus network changes across Wyndham, in outer-western Melbourne. The changes, due for implementation in April, will coincide with the opening of stations at Wyndham Vale and Tarneit as part of the Regional Rail Link for Geelong corridor trains. The bus changes take advantage of the ability to operate between two rail corridors for the first time, and sees a shift away from the existing U-shaped routes from Werribee to Hoppers Crossing via Werribee Plaza that generally traverse numerous local streets.

Key to the plans are five main road routes operating every 20 mins in peak periods (and inter-peak in some cases), a major boost over current 40 – 45 min frequencies prevalent in the region, which will continue to be standard on local neighbourhood routes. Unlike recent changes in Brimbank,

proposed frequencies do not suggest any 20 min headways on Saturdays.

New 150 links Williams Landing and Tarneit via Sayers Rd with 160 covering Morris Road between Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing. The Werribee to Tarneit corridor is served by 170 on Derrimut Road plus 180 on Tarneit Road. The 190, operating directly between Werribee and Wyndham Vale via Ballan Road, will provide the best link to Geelong trains, which will now bypass Werribee. Point Cook routes 494, 495 and 497 will continue to run at approx. 20 min intervals during peak periods.

Complimenting the main road routes, other proposed changes in the region include:

- 151 between Williams Landing and Werribee Plaza, incorporating 446 in Truganina and 444 in Tarneit and providing new coverage on Forsyth Road in Truganina South
- 153 between Williams Landing and Werribee operates along Old Geelong Road and Princes Highway, replacing sections of the 493 and 446
- Local segments of 436 and 437 largely replaced by 161
- 166 provides a more direct link from Wyndham Vale to Werribee Plaza and Hoppers Crossing than the existing 448, no longer diverting via Werribee
- 442 modified to expand coverage to estates in western Tarneit plus the new station, as 167
- 445 renumbered 181 and now incorporates pockets of existing 436 and 444
- 191 & 192 largely replace 447 and 449 between Werribee and Wyndham Vale, with 192 operating along connector roads instead of local streets
- The northern half of Tarneit Road loses access to Werribee Plaza, currently served by the 444 loop
- 439, 441 or 443 largely retain status quo.

There remains a reluctance to serve the area west of Folsyth Road in Truganina South, with many residents remaining over a kilometre walk from their nearest option. Folsyth Road, which will be served for the first time by 151, is largely inaccessible for these residents, with few local streets providing a thoroughfare.

Point Cook's network will also be revised, just two years since major changes took place in conjunction with the opening of the station at Williams Landing. The modifications acknowledge the current network's major shortcoming, routes focused on providing direct links to stations for peak hour commuters at the expense of local travel needs, especially disadvantaging Seabrook residents. Changes being considered include:

- A new east-west route 498 linking Hoppers Crossing and Laverton via Hoppers Lane, Point Cook Town Centre, Dunnings Road, Seabrook and Central Square shops in Altona Meadows. This service, similar to the former 416, will offer local links to several schools plus reinstate a one-seat ride from Seabrook to Point Cook Town Centre & Hoppers Crossing – currently residents must catch three buses (or bus, train, bus) to complete a trip of less than five kilometres, after previously having two routes (413 & 416) offering seamless connections
- 496 to loop the expansive and exclusive Sanctuary Lakes estate after resident requests. The partly gated community features a large man-made lake along with a golf club, reducing catchment opportunities
- Off-peak extension of 496 trips to Aircraft, reinstating a direct bus to neighbourhood shops and medical centres for Seabrook residents
- Deletion of 493 (replaced in part by 153 on Old Geelong Road), with 495 modified, reinstating service along The Strand. Currently the 493 largely duplicates the 495 in Point Cook, so this is a welcome revision

Online feedback on the changes closes on 15 September, following a series of community drop-in sessions during the first week of September.

The move to using route numbers in the 150-199 series is interesting, but increasing necessary as the 400-series covering western & north-western Melbourne rapidly becomes full with continual growth in Wyndham and Melton. The 150 series route numbers are however currently used by Kew Schools routes, may require renumbering, possibly into a four digit series as per all other myki school services in Melbourne, although Melbourne could follow Sydney's lead, with school runs in one part of the city sharing numbers with mainstream routes dozens of kilometers away.

### July Improvements – observations

As comprehensively reported in the previous two editions *Table Talk*, Public Transport Victoria undertook timetable changes on 130 bus services across the state on 27 July. By late August, new timetable leaflets have been sighted in the new "print-on-demand" format on either A3 or A4 paper for almost all affected services, which sees the end of booklet timetables, although significantly, no timetables had been made available for the orbital routes (901, 902, 903) all which had considerable retiming.

Combined timetables have been sighted for the following corridors: 200/7, 216/9, 235/7, 250/1, 270/370, 302/4, 423/4, 427/8, 478/9, 767/8, 770/1/7, 782/3, 789/90/1, 795/6, 802/4/62, 834/5, 836/46, 838/42, 843/5/9/61, 894/5, 896/7/8, 925/7/9. All other timetables cover a single service.

Some sister routes are no longer produced in one timetable, including 447/8/9 between Wyndham Vale & Werribee, 892/3 between Hampton Park & Dandenong, along with the discontinuation of the useful Berwick & Pakenham booklets, a poor marketing decision as combined timetables help highlight the array of options in the same area to a new or irregular passenger.

In many cases where combined timetables remain, times are no longer presented in the same panel, making it more time consuming to determine the next trip on common corridors. Combined timetables have also disappeared from the PTV website. Online local area maps have been updated for the 26 of the 31 metropolitan municipalities, although continue to have minor errors – for instance the 409 is missing from the Maribyrnong map, and the Glen Eira map still has the 79 on Chapel St.

Stop information continues to be an issue a month after the changes took place, with some flags and totems not yet updated, or old timetables remaining in timetable cases. Reports have also continued of bus destos displaying former services or incorrect numbers on side or rear panels.

Following a number of complaints regarding the Transdev changes in Doncaster and surrounding areas, implemented without community consultation unlike those in Brimbank, PTV held a series of drop-in sessions in mid August to allow passengers to raise concerns and ask questions. Initial sessions in Manningham and Whitehorse were only open by invite, presumably to those who had previously registered feedback. The following sessions in Boroondara and Maroondah were more widely publicised, after earlier events were leaked on social media. Local paper reports suggest the forums failed to address residents concerns.

Overcrowding on shoulder and weekend 907 services continues to be an issue, after 908 passengers were forced to change buses at Doncaster Park+Ride during off-peak periods, while the removal of 295 from Station St has exacerbated heavy loadings on 903 between Box Hill and

Doncaster. Route 906 from Warrandyte has also experienced issues with heavy loading in peak periods following the reduction in 318 trips and removal of near-by 303.

In late August, the ALP pledged a return of the peak period 303 service from North Ringwood, Park Orchards & Blackburn North if they gain power at the 29 November state election. This follows a failed social media campaign to save to the service by passengers, including photos on Twitter highlighting the four return services regularly carried standing loads.

### Skybus midnight changes

Skybus adjusted their timetable in December 2013, although a timetable leaflet issued in May has since been sighted. A 10 min service now operates to 2400 ex Melbourne Airport on weeknights (2330 weekends) instead of 2300, instead of every 15 mins. Leaving Southern Cross, services are now every 20 mins from midnight to 0100 then half hourly, instead of every 15 mins until 0130.

## Western Australia

### Rockingham Region July changes

Further to last month's report of school deviations, revised timetables also took effect on 20 July across several routes in Rockingham & Warnbro:

- 557 & 562 (Rockingham – Warnbro)
- 558 (Rockingham – Mandurah)
- 559 (Rockingham – Secret Harbour)
- 560 (Warnbro – Port Kennedy)
- 561 (Rockingham – Secret Harbour West)
- 562 (Rockingham – Warnbro)
- 563 (Warnbro – Secret Harbour East)
- 564, 567 & 568 (Warnbro – Baldivis)
- 825 & 920 (Rockingham - Fremantle)

Weekend timetables on 557, 558, 561 and 562 are now better co-ordinated between Warnbro & Rockingham Shopping Centre.

Timetables 125, 126, 130, 131, 135, 138, 139 have been reissued.

### September changes

On 7 September, new timetables take affect on the following routes. Significant changes noted were applicable.

- 16 (Dianella – Perth)
- 23, 24, 25, 27 & 28 (East Perth – Claremont)
- 43 (Bayswater – Perth) withdrawn, replaced by Sunday services on 41 (Bayswater – Perth) and 42 (Maylands – Perth) along with upgraded headways on 48 (Morley – Perth) & 55 (Bassendean – Perth), providing a 15 min service from Guildford Road / Peninsula Road & Perth. Due to upgraded 48 services, 348 (Morley – Midland) no longer runs on Sundays.
- 52 (Morley – Midland) renumbered 349
- 58 (Morley – Noranda) renumbered 346
- 60 (Morley – Perth)
- 65 (Morley – Noranda) renumbered 347 with reduced frequencies
- 66 (Morley – Perth) - reduced frequencies
- 67 & 68 (Mirrabooka – Perth)
- 103 (East Perth – Fremantle)
- 340 (Bassendean – Caversham)
- 341 (Morley – Beechboro) – new PM trip ex Hampton Senior School replaces 'School special 2'
- 342 & 343 (Morley – Beechboro)
- 344 (Morley – Warwick)
- 345 (Morley – Bennett Springs) – additional PM school peak trips, boosting frequency to 15 mins

- 950 (Morley – QEII Medical Centre) – later Sunday services ex Perth

Updated timetables include 32, 33, 44, 93, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107 and 202.

A large number of changes will take place in the northern suburbs on 21 Sept with the opening of Butler Station. These changes will be covered in the next issue of *Table Talk*.

## Long Distance

### Canberra – Adelaide connection canned

Greyhound discontinued their direct Adelaide – Mildura - Canberra service on 10 June, citing the route as no longer being commercially viable. The once daily service had

previously been cut to five weekly trips and later four in a bid to keep the route open. The service was timed to connect with Sydney coaches at Canberra.

In a partial substitution, Greyhound now operates a daily service from Adelaide at 0900 via Renmark arriving Mildura at 1430, returning ex Mildura at 1515 to Adelaide 2000.

**Thanks to:** Alex Smith, Jason Blackman, Damo Cooper, Hilarie Fraser, Matthew Gibbins, Peter Hobbs, Victor Isaacs, Matthew McCann, Geoff Mann, Mike Marshall, Paul Nicholson, Peter Parker, Lourie Smit, Alex Smith, Roger Wheaton and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*.

## AIR NEWS

### International

A shake-up is underway in flights from Australia to the West Coast of the US. **Virgin Australia** is to abandon its thrice weekly Melbourne-Los Angeles services, but increase its Brisbane-LA service to four times a week from 26 October. **United Airlines** is to introduce twice weekly Sydney-LA-San Francisco services and weekly Melbourne-LA flights. **Qantas** is to increase Sydney-Honolulu flights from three to four a week. It will increase Melbourne-Los Angeles services from

daily to ten a week with a new evening departure on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays from 21 January. The Sydney-Los Angeles service will change from an evening to a morning departure from 1 February to improve aircraft utilisation. The Brisbane-Los Angeles service will be extended to New York from 1 February. From 20 February Sydney-Santiago de Chile flights will be increased from three to four a week.

**Thanks to the *Australian* for Air news.**

## FERRY NEWS

**Sea SA** has ceased operating its Spencer Gulf ferry service from Wallaroo to Lucky Bay after 31 August. The Company says there has been a “disappointing past 12 months in tourism traffic as a direct result of the flattening economy in SA” and that the closure will apply until “economic growth

signals in both tourism and mining activities are evident”. On the other hand, the Company also says that it is “committed to developing the ferry service” and “a new purpose built vessel will be introduced in late 2015”.

**Thanks to Tony Bailey and Roger Wheaton for Ferry news.**

## REVIEWS

### Improving Regional Passenger Rail Services

This research report by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics published in May 2014, examines a wide range of passenger railway upgrading projects throughout the world, both implemented and proposed. It also looks at two passenger railway projects in Australia: the Sydney-Canberra Swedish Tilt Train trial in 1995 and the major Victorian Regional Fast Rail upgrading project in the 2000s. It considers the applicability of the railway upgrading projects in Australia and compares two rail passenger corridors of approximately equal length: Berlin to Hamburg and Sydney to Canberra. It concludes an upgrade to the Canberra line would see modest market gains. See [www.bitre.gov.au/publications/2014/report\\_137.aspx](http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/2014/report_137.aspx)

proceed than high-cost greenfields HSR proposals. Significant incremental improvements to existing rail corridors could provide rail infrastructure of sufficiently high standard earlier and at significantly lower cost than full HSR”. The article examines a number of corridors of sufficient population and appropriate length. It examines as a case study Sydney to Canberra and proposes the construction of new lines or alignments to replace the curvy existing lines Canberra/Gunning-Goulburn-Moss Vale as a first stage, Moss Vale to Campbelltown as a second stage and then a much more difficult Campbelltown to Sydney Central as a third stage. This would also benefit Sydney-Melbourne services.

### Real Time Rail Times

This article in the British *Railway Magazine*, June 2014 issue, pages 16 to 21, reviews the impressive new British real time train tracking website and app, [www.realtimetrains.co.uk](http://www.realtimetrains.co.uk) and discusses how it was developed and how to use it. The article also mentions other useful sources of British train-running information – these are another real time British train tracking website, [www.opentraintimes.com](http://www.opentraintimes.com) and the placement of current UK Working Timetables on the National Rail website.

### Medium Speed Rail: Bringing Australian High Speed Rail closer

Coincidentally an article with a similar theme appeared in the August edition of *Railway Digest*, by Max Michell, Scott Martin and Philip Laird on pages 30 to 33. It postulates that “a bankable HSR project, based on existing routes or corridors upgraded to MSR standard is more likely to

## About *Table Talk*

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