



TABLE TALK

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NEW RAIL TIMETABLES

ARTC WTT 19 April 2015

A new nation-wide ARTC Working Timetable has been published to come into effect from 19 April. It is on ARTC's website at <http://www.artc.com.au/Content.aspx?p=161>

As well as the usual crop of alterations to freight trains, this WTT includes the new schedules of Great Southern Rail's Indian Pacific and Ghan transcontinental passenger trains (reported in September 2014 *Table Talk*, pages 6-7). However, altered times for the Indian Pacific are only applied for the Adelaide-Kalgoorlie sector. The times for the Adelaide-Parkes sector are unaltered. This means that these times differ from the very sketchy times provided to the public on GSR's website. (Thursday westbound arrival at Broken Hill GSR says 0600, ARTC says 0630 as formerly; Sunday westbound arrival, GSR says 0640, ARTC says 0709; Tuesday eastbound departure from Broken Hill, GSR says 1855, ARTC says 1925; Fridays eastbound departure from BH, GSR says 1830, ARTC says 1900).

Geoff Lambert comments: These are not Working Timetables for the operators, they are marketing tools (Master Train Plans) for potential customers (aka Access-Seekers). They are required by the Access Agreement – but they are not required to be accurate. Truth in advertising is not part of the Access Agreement. Only the graphical

timetables can be trusted – the plotting program will not draw a string line if two trains are scheduled to meet head-on in the section. ARTC tabular boys and girls should study the graphics more closely.

Transport for NSW WTT 18 April 2015

A new Freight Working Timetable for the Sydney area has been published by Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains to come into effect from 18 April (Weekends, Book 5) and 20 April (Weekdays, Book 4), version 4.1.

John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network WTT 19 April 2015

A new JHR NSW CRN Working Timetable has been published to come into effect from 19 April. It is on JHR CRN's website at www.jhrcrn.com.au/Documents.aspx?ID=67

As with the ARTC WTT in NSW, this WTT also does not change the schedules of Great Southern Rail's Indian Pacific between Parkes and Hermitage (near Lithgow). The new weekly freight train operated by Espee Rail from Canberra to Botany and return (see February *Table Talk*, page 2) is not included. Curiously, the date of 25 October 2014 has not been updated on most pages of the new WTT.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Brisbane Cross-river tunnel

The new Queensland government is reviewing the proposed Brisbane Bus and Train (BaT) cross-river tunnel. The new Deputy Premier and Infrastructure Minister Jackie Trad says that they will progress a second rail crossing for Brisbane, but do so with the Federal government. She said she had discussed the project with Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss and would again approach Infrastructure Australia. In 2013 Infrastructure Australia rated the project as "ready to proceed", with the then Queensland government seeking \$3.4 billion for the \$4 billion plus project. Ms Trad said, "We know that this was the number one public infrastructure project that Infrastructure Australia said needed to be built in order for Brisbane to grow into the future...Labor is committed to continuing to lobby the Federal government to make sure that we can build a second rail crossing to stop the rail crisis that will hit the southeast corner in 2016." Infrastructure Partnerships Australia chief executive Brendan Lyon said the question would always come back to the money, despite the well-recognised need for the project. "The Cross River Rail is going from important to urgent given the growth in patronage on Brisbane's rail network and the fact that every train will be full to bursting point in just a few short years," he said.

QR CityTrain: Brisbane disruption

A downed power line supplying trains in the city area caused lengthy delays throughout the CityTrain network on 17 March. The morning peak was severely affected and delays continued until the afternoon.

Extension of the Gold Coast tramway

The new Queensland government supports the next stage of the light rail project, hoping it will be built in time for the Commonwealth Games in April 2018. Transport Minister Trad said on 3 March that the project is critical and that the government supports the extension of the system to connect with heavy rail at the northern end of the Gold Coast. The government and Gold Coast City Council have exchanged letters about funding.

Aurizon: Cyclone Marcia damage

Tropical cyclone Marcia on 20 February caused extensive damage to Aurizon's Gladstone-Moura line, with 20 major washaways. Coal trains are expected to be suspended for about a month while the line is repaired. This line carries about 12 million tonnes of coal a year. Aurizon expects a cost of \$28 million.

Aurizon: Record coal train

In mid-March (the date, strangely, not included in the press release), Aurizon tested a record length coal train on their Central Queensland network. The train had 136 wagons, was 2.3 km long, and carried 11,000 tonnes of coal from the Blackwater area to Wiggins Island export terminal. The average Aurizon train on the network is around 100 wagons with a payload of about 8,500 tonnes of coal.

ARTC: Inland Freight Railway

On 7 March the ARTC called tenders for engineering design and environmental consultancy for the first two sections of the Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Freight Railway. These are from Parkes to Narromine (106 km) and from Narrabri to North Star (183 km). The tender seeks development of reference designs for track alignment, hydrology, replacement structures, environmental assessments and approvals documentation. The Federal government is keen for work to commence on these two sections as they are relatively easy upgrades of existing lines which would provide immediate improved transport for agricultural products. There will be about 3 km of new construction at Camurra (near Moree) to eliminate a dogleg in the existing alignment. The ARTC expects these upgrades to be completed by the end of 2016.

The next priority segment of the Inland Rail route is a line from Rosewood to Kagaru (on the existing line south of Brisbane). This will enable freight trains - especially coal trains which are unpopular in the suburbs - to bypass the Brisbane suburban lines on their way to port. This will involve 54 km of new dual-gauge construction. Property acquisition is currently underway. The ARTC expects this bypass line to be completed by the end of 2019.

Then the next segments are planned to be a new dual gauge line from Grandchester to Gowrie (87.5 km), including a new 5 km tunnel under the Toowoomba Range, and upgrading of the existing line from Gowrie to Oakey (16 km). The target date for completion of these is the end of 2021.

There is now a dedicated website for the Inland Rail project at <https://inlandrail.artc.com.au/>

ARTC: Hunter Valley closedown

The next scheduled closure of the Hunter Valley network for civil engineering works, will be from 19 to 22 May. As usual, coal trains will be cancelled and NSW Train Link trains to NW NSW replaced by buses

NSW Train Link & Sydney Trains: Promises, promises

The biggest campaign promise in the NSW election was the Coalition's proposal to build a second Harbour rail crossing fancied by the long-term lease of the NSW electricity network. The new rail line would be an extension of the NW rail line currently under construction. South of the City the line would take over the existing Bankstown line.

The biggest new initiative in the campaign is a proposal by the Deputy Premier and National Party Leader, Troy Grant, on 15 March, for the purchase of new trains to replace NSW Train Link's ageing XPT fleet. The XPTs were introduced in 1982. New trains, costed at \$1 billion, are likely to be tilt trains. Claimed savings in travel times were up to 1 hour 15 minutes to Dubbo, 1 hour 45 to Grafton and 1 hour 10 minutes to Wagga Wagga. Claimed time savings to interstate destinations would be 1 hour 40 minutes to Melbourne and 2 hours 30 minutes to Brisbane.

No timing for the acquisition of new trains was included in the announcement.

On 9 March, NSW Premier, Mike Baird, promised two additional express trains on weekdays from Parramatta to Central. However, these will not be introduced for two years

until the completion of new tracks at Parramatta, improvements to signalling between Westmead and Granville and improvements to power supply.

On 13 March, Opposition Leader Luke Foley promised a \$400 million link between a new Western Sydney Airport and the southwest and western rail lines as a condition of the Badgerys Creek lease. Mr Foley said it was important the rail links were built by the time the airport opened.

Secret rail plan for Sydney would create massive and costly upheaval to network by Jacob Saulwick, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 2015

Could this be the future of Sydney's train system? All rail lines would operate independently. The Airport Line would terminate at Central. And billions would need to be spent on new bridges and tunnels to offer more reliable trains for western Sydney. Bureaucrats and consultants have developed these proposals and others for Transport for NSW as part of an implementation plan for the government's "Sydney's Rail Future" strategy. The plans have not been made public. And there is a good chance the state government will opt for cheaper and less drastic policies to expand the capacity of Sydney's train system. But investigations by Fairfax Media can reveal at least a partial picture of the planning that lies beneath glossy government brochures on the future of Sydney public transport.

The thrust of the plan, adopted by senior executives in Transport for NSW in mid-2013, is for each of Sydney's rail lines to operate separately. This is so trains don't need to merge tracks, which limits how many can run on a line. It also increases the chance that problems on one train line will not cause delays on another.

But the proposals would be hugely controversial. There would be a vast cost to many of the elements, far exceeding what the government has so far promised for upgrades to the existing network. And they would be unpopular with many commuters, who would be forced to change trains where they didn't before.

The plans include running trains on the existing airport line in a shuttle between Revesby and Central. Dedicated trains would run on the line, with space for luggage. But the shuttle would draw critics because all passengers wanting to travel between the city and the airport by train would need to change at Central. To get around this, the plans seen by Fairfax Media envisage building a new platform at Central to allow commuters disembarking from Airport Line trains direct access to the new rail line the Baird government wants to build through the city, scheduled to be finished by 2024. The benefit of terminating Airport Line trains at Central is that it would create more space for other services to run around the City Circle. The government has already said it would remove Bankstown Line trains from the City Circle, which would create more room for trains from the Inner West and Campbelltown and East Hills to run around the inner circle.

But many of the biggest works in the plans involve major engineering projects on the Western Line, Sydney's busiest rail corridor. Last month Fairfax Media revealed the government's own dire predictions for the Western Line, including the expectation that trains would regularly be too full to board from further west than Parramatta. The unpublished plans seen by Fairfax Media offer an array of costly engineering solutions to run more trains on the Western Line, with a bill of more than 7.5 billion. By contrast, both the government and the opposition have promised about \$1 billion in funding for upgrades to the Western Line. The unfunded projects, which were included in the unpublished implementation plan for Sydney's Rail Future, include a tunnel for new tracks between Croydon and Granville and a \$600-million flyover or bridge to help

separate Northern Line trains at Strathfield. Another project is to buy new high-capacity trains for the Western Line, with a new electronic signalling system.

And another item listed on the internal government documents but not announced or funded is \$700 million in new tracks on the lower northern line between Epping and Strathfield. A spokesman for Transport for NSW said "extensive investigation" had shown that these tracks were not needed. "There is ample capacity - it has never been a confirmed project," he wrote in an email.

Under the plan drawn up in mid-2013, these projects were to have started this year, so they would be ready in time for the opening of the North West Rail Link in 2019. The North West Rail Link will put a strain on some parts of the existing rail system, requiring passengers disembarking at Chatswood to board North Shore line trains to the city. The project will also make it more difficult to run express services from the Central Coast down the existing North Shore or Northern Lines. But work on the projects listed in the unpublished plans have since been stalled, and Transport for NSW has started a new process of developing a timetable for the opening of the North West Rail Link in 2019 that would use existing rail infrastructure.

Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian and Transport for NSW did not deny the plans, but said they were not government policy. One of the implications of the proposals seen by Fairfax Media is that they would, in theory, make it easier for individual rail lines to be privatised, but it is understood this was not the motivation for developing the plans.

Asked this week about the potential for more lines to be privatised, Ms Berejiklian said: "We've always said that the North West Rail Line will be operated by the private sector and that line will obviously go all the way down to Bankstown eventually. And that's been in our plans and there's no further plans beyond that."

Separately, the Minister also said the Sydney's Rail Future document would stand the test of time. "That we now have a dedicated team focused wholly on future service and infrastructure requirements, from the opening of the North West Rail Link right through to the opening of Sydney Rapid Transit, shows how serious we are about getting it right."

But the plans seen by Fairfax Media focus on a number of issues that will eventually need to be confronted. Take what is planned for the Bankstown Line. Under the government's announced plan, the existing line as far as Bankstown Station will run automated single-deck trains connecting to the North West Rail Link through another harbour crossing. But the Bankstown Line runs further than Bankstown to the west - in two directions to Lidcombe and Liverpool via Cabramatta. The plans seen by Fairfax Media include running shuttle services, either as light or heavy rail, on the existing lines between Bankstown, Lidcombe and Cabramatta. This would mean that anyone travelling from the station on these lines, such as Berala, Chester Hill or Villawood, who currently gets a direct train to the city would need to change trains at least once. Neither Ms Berejiklian nor Transport for NSW have ever explained what will happen to stations west of Bankstown once the line east of Bankstown starts running automated services when the new harbour crossing is built in about 2024.

A spokesman for Transport for NSW said: "Transport for NSW is considering a number of options for customers between Bankstown and Lidcombe and Cabramatta after the introduction of Sydney Rapid Transit, including a higher frequency of train services."

The plans seen by Fairfax Media also include running light rail services between Parramatta and Epping, a corridor long earmarked for a heavy rail route. The idea included taking over the existing Carlingford train line.

A spokesman for Transport for NSW said: "Transport for NSW is considering a number of options - this will in part be informed by investigation work now under way as part of the Western Sydney light rail project." The vision of Sydney's rail future devised in mid-2013 - it involved work by numerous engineering and financial consultants such as Evans and Peck - may never eventuate. Many of the proposals have since been internally discredited, such as the idea of running light rail between Bankstown, Lidcombe and Campbelltown. Those tracks also need to be used for freight trains, which cannot run on the same tracks as trams. But whatever happens, and whoever is in power from April, someone will have to work out what happens to trains that run west of Bankstown.

Melbourne Metro project

The Victorian government has allocated \$300 million to the development of the Melbourne Metro Rail project. \$40 million in immediate funding has been released in order to fast-track planning, and \$260 million will be allocated in the May state budget. Premier Daniel Andrews expects major construction work to commence in 2018, and for the project to be up and running by 2026. He decried the lack of progress on the project under his government's predecessors while also the flagging the possibility of an earlier completion date. Andrews touted the project's status as Infrastructure Australia's number one infrastructure project for Victoria, and noted it will bring many benefits to Melbourne's inner-city commuters. The project will create 9 km of rail tunnels and five new underground stations, at Arden, Parkville, CBD North, CBD South and Domain.

Mr Andrews said the state government is willing to invest a third of the funds needed for the project, with another third likely to be provided by the private sector. Despite Prime Minister Tony Abbott's stated reluctance to providing funding to metropolitan rail, Andrews remains hopeful that the federal government would deliver the remaining third of funds.

According to Ian Dobbs, the head of Public Transport Victoria, the project will confer Melbourne with a world-class transport system on a par with those of leading cities. It will enable the system to accommodate an additional 20,000 peak period passengers. It will link the Sunbury line to the Cranbourne/Pakenham lines, and provide a direct connection to Melbourne's university and hospital precinct. The total cost is estimated at \$9 to \$11 billion.

Metro Trains and V/Line closedown

A Metro Trains track occupation between Albion and Watergardens on 21 and 22 March for grade separation work at Anderson Road, St Albans, affected their trains and V/Line trains. V/Line Bendigo and Echuca services were operated by buses between Melbourne Southern Cross and Sunbury and Swan Hill services were buses between Melbourne and Bendigo, then trains to Swan Hill and Echuca. More of these closedowns can be expected while this work progresses.

Metro pulls up short to meet performance targets

by Adam Carey, the Age, 25 March 2015

Metro is terminating trains part-way along the line hundreds of times a week, dumping passengers short of their destination in an effort to meet lucrative government-mandated performance targets. The extent of Metro's short running is revealed in leaked internal documents that show 400 services were altered in just one week this month as the company scrambled to satisfy a new, more accurate performance monitoring system introduced on 1 March. The new automated system, PRS, replaced a long-standing manual system in which Metro staff recorded the company's on-time and cancellation figures and supplied the data to the

state. Public Transport Victoria then cross-checked the information against its own sample surveys. PRS uses track sensors that automatically record train arrival and departure times at stations, reducing the government's reliance on data provided by Metro to inspect whether it has met targets that can secure it million of dollars in quarterly bonuses.

Metro has consistently met its targets in recent years. In the 18 months to September, it received \$16.7 million in incentive bonuses. But the good results have been achieved in part by a readiness to alter services to stick to the timetable. In the week PRS was launched, Metro hit its 88% punctuality target and its 98% reliability target but did so while running hundreds of incomplete services, documents obtained by Fairfax Media reveal. Between March 1 and 7, the company truncated 399 scheduled services - or 2.7% of trains that ran that week. It also bypassed the City Loop or Altona Loop 71 times. It is not known how many paying passengers were delayed by the practice, but 95 of the altered services were peak-hour trains heading in the busy direction.

Metro receives quarterly performance bonuses and penalties from the government based on a complex formula of "passenger-weighted minutes". The operator is penalised more for a late-running peak-hour train than a tardy off-peak train, for example, and more for a cancelled train than a short-running train, which is counted as a partial cancellation. In the first week of March, Metro stopped 196 trains short of the scheduled destination, a practice it calls "short arrivals". A further 132 trains started part-way along the line - a practice Metro calls "short departures". Reasons listed for the short services include train and signal faults, delays, police operations, vandalism and trespassers. In all, 550 services were altered or did not run in the first week of March, although just 151 services were officially recorded as cancelled, putting Metro narrowly inside the 98 per cent reliability threshold that triggers customer compensation.

Metro spokeswoman Larisa Tait said there were valid reasons for running a short service, and that Metro was not necessarily penalised less heavily for doing so than if it had allowed a late-running train to continue to the end of the line. "Ultimately, we resort to short arrivals and departures to assist with disruption management, to avoid knock-on effects and to return the network to on-time running (i.e. we alter some services when required to avoid trains running late all day)," Ms Tait said. "We may also consider short arriving or departing a late-running service on single sections of track, which compounds delays."

Metro Trains: Southland station

Construction of the long-promised station at Southland on the Frankston line, between Highett and Cheltenham, is expected to commence in the second half of this year. It is expected to open in 2017. The cost will be \$21 million.

Level crossing city: Burke Road Gardiner

Preliminary works to remove the level crossing at Burke Road, Gardiner (Glen Waverley line and Yarra Trams route 72) will cause weekend closures on 14–15 March (buses to replace trains Burnley to Darling), 27–29 March (buses to replace trains Burnley to Darling), and 3–6 April (buses to replace trains Richmond to Darling). More extensive closures are likely later in 2015.

Yarra Trams: Route changes

Certain Swanston St routes of Yarra Trams will be altered from 21 June in an effort to match patronage levels on both sides of the City:

- Route 8 from Toorak to Melbourne University via Swanston St will instead be through routed with route 55 from Domain Interchange via William St to West Coburg.

- Route 1 from South Melbourne Beach, instead of being through-routed to East Coburg, will be through-routed to Moreland.
- Route 6 from Glen Iris, instead of terminating at Melbourne University, will be through-routed to East Coburg.

The *Age* also reports that a plan is being considered to run the City Circle trams in one direction only. There is also a report that under the new timetable there will be 10 minute headways on all routes through the CBD from 0700-1900 on weekdays.

Wodonga rail hub

SCT Logistics is to establish a rail freight hub at Wodonga at a cost of \$39 million.

TransPerth: Early morning trains rerieved

On 3 March WA Transport Minister Nalder announced that the State government had reversed the decision to cancel late night Friday and Saturday trains.

WA Weekly Notices

Weekly Notices of the Public Transport Authority of WA relating to operating and safety issues for the Perth metropolitan railway system can be accessed on the internet at

www.pta.wa.gov.au/PublicationsandPolicies/SafetyResources/tabid/107/Default.aspx

Weekly Notices relating to the rural WA railway system are no longer published by the lessee Brookfield Rail. Information formerly in Weekly Notices is now in Special Train Notices and the Rail Access Management System (RAMS), neither of which are accessible on the public Brookfield website. The Weekly Notice was first published by the Western Australian Government Railways in 1896, and Brookfield's last issue was dated 3 January 2015.

Perth Tram plan to be cancelled?

The WA government's \$2.5 billion light rail election promise would be dumped and replaced with a rapid bus transit system, under a plan set to go before State Cabinet next year. The Perth *Sunday Times* reported that WA Transport Minister Dean Nalder is now considering using buses to ease congestion along a 22km route through the Perth metropolitan area. Mr Nalder said a preliminary investigation, commissioned by the Department of Transport and undertaken by an "external party" last year, had shown the light rail route could be mirrored by using fast buses. He said initial costings showed that this could be done for about \$1.25 billion – half the cost of the stalled light rail project, which was first promised in 2012 and a major component of the 2013 re-election strategy. The light rail route included a 13km northern corridor extension from Wellington St to Mirrabooka and a further 9km split to Victoria Park and the QEII hospital.

Auckland Transport: Patronage

Patronage at Britomart station (central Auckland) at the end of February was 35,000 daily. When planned it was not expected to reach 20,000 until 2021. Auckland's rail patronage is now 10 times higher than in the early 1990s, having risen to 13m annually. That compares with just 1.123m trips in 1993, before Britomart opened ten years later, meaning passengers now arrive a kilometre closer to the City compared with the old Strand station to Queen St. Auckland Transport says an average of 51,000 passenger trips were taken each week-day in February, about 10,000 more than at that time last year. The figure includes 12,500 trips during the morning peak. But the growing patronage threatens to overwhelm Britomart as a terminal station by the middle of this year, when it will reach capacity. But the EMUs

have a 40% greater capacity than the older trains, together with the ability to operate as six car sets.

Canadian no-go

The iconic transcontinental train, the *Canadian* from Toronto to Vancouver, operated by Via, the Canadian Federal government passenger train operator, mainly operates on the tracks of Canadian National Railways. In the past few years, its timetable has been padded to give it a leisurely run plus very lengthy stops at some stations. Despite this, it has become a chronically late running train, often by many hours. This is mainly because Canadian National gives priority to its own freight trains. Recently, delays on CN's mainline has become even worse, as CN tries to recover from congestion and the effects of two tar oil train explosions. The situation is now so bad that on 11 March Via cancelled the operation of the *Canadian* completely on the eastern half of its journey from Toronto as far as Winnipeg. No substitute transport is being offered by Via. Via is reported to be examining re-routing the *Canadian* on this segment to the tracks of Canadian Pacific Railway. However, this would require Via's locomotive operators to become familiar with the CP track and procedures. This could take months.

Japanese high-speed and not so high-speed timetables

They do things differently in Japan. While we concern ourselves with the odd timetable change here and there, in Japan, even when a Shinkansen (high-speed railway) opens, a service continues on the superseded line, albeit reduced. On 14 March 2015, the Hokuriku Shinkansen opened from Toyama to Kanazawa in the west of the main island, Honshu. Meanwhile on the existing narrow gauge line, the thirteen express services in each direction were cancelled and replaced by a daily Cho-rapid service in each direction. The express service ran from 1997 with an average of 6,900 people per day by providing a convenient link for travellers from the Kanto region to Kanazawa. Now the services are:

- 14 local services each day,

Australia Capital Territory

TBX Belconnen Survey

During March TransBorder Express invited customers to complete an online survey on proposed changes to enhance links from Yass, Murrumbateman and Hall to Belconnen during peak periods. The changes would see the 0705 trip ex Yass and 1711 trip ex Russell on Route 981 deviate via Belconnen, improving access to the Belconnen Town Centre, University of Canberra, Calvary Hospital and Australian National University, in effect becoming Route 982 services. Stops along Northbourne Avenue would be bypassed by these trips, however alternative services would continue to operate through Dickson.

Currently adult commuters may catch school services, arriving at 0830 and departing at 1605, as listed in the printed timetable. Shoppers and university students can also catch TBX Route 982 arriving at 0935 and returning for Yass at 1417. At other times, passengers must travel via ACTION's Blue Rapid Intertown services to connect with TBX services at Civic.

Route 981 is also used on weekends by ACTION for the tourist route to Black Mountain, while Route 982 operates an occasional service to Bimberi Youth Justice Centre,

ACTION Route 982 returns

The limited 982 service for families, friends and social workers attending the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre in Kenny

- An early morning and evening rapid service from Naoetsu to Echigo-Yuzawa with a lunchtime service in the reverse direction,
- A single Cho-rapid service in the morning returning in the evening,
- Two additional or extended local services on the weekends and public holidays.

Elsewhere two of the few remaining sleeping car services in Japan have been withdrawn. The *Hokutosei* from Tokyo to Hokkaido and the *Twilight Express* from Osaka to Hokkaido were withdrawn with the timetable change of 14 March. The only remaining sleeper car services in Japan are:

- JR East's luxury *Cassiopeia* sleeper from Tokyo to Hokkaido, but this is expected to be withdrawn in 2016 when the shinkansen is extended from Shin-Aomori to Hokkaido, and
- JR Central's *Sunrise Seto* between Tokyo and Takamartsu on Shikoku island, and the *Sunrise Izumo* between Tokyo and Izumoshi. These operate coupled between Tokyo and Okayama.

Argentine Railways slight optimism

The Argentine government is issuing a new law to again create Ferrocarriles Argentinos, combining SOFSE (passenger services), ADIF (infrastructure) and Belgrano (freight operations).

Honduras Railways pessimism

Liquidation of National Railways FNH, has started. To pay pensions, some buildings have been sold and some rolling-stock sold as scrap

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BUS NEWS

had been reinstated by late January, after being suspended in mid October, after the following advice was posted on the ACTION website "*Weekend route 982 (to Bimberi Centre) will no longer be in service from Monday 20 October 2014*".

It is understood that roadworks along Morisset Road had necessitated the temporary service suspension. Passengers were forced to walk 1.4km to Flemington Rd to alternative options. Weekday afternoon Route 57 diversions to the centre were also cancelled during these works. The route remained on network maps during the suspension, including a map issued in December for long-term City detours.

ANZAC long weekend for some

While ACT public servants, teachers and government school students enjoy an extra day off on Monday 27 April, transport chaos is expected for the rest of Canberra. Despite no substitute public holiday being granted for to ANZAC day (which falls on a Saturday in 2015) the current EBA signed by ACT Government Employees, including ACTION drivers, will still see the holiday observed for those sectors. Government schools will also be closed. Those working in private businesses, some federal departments and attending Catholic and independent schools will be required to attend as usual. Bus drivers are only required to front up on a voluntary basis on weekends and public holidays, and only 200 of the required 670 drivers have agreed to work.

As a result, in late March ACTION announced that they would only be able to provide a Saturday timetable for the

day, and have decided to cancel all dedicated school buses. Additional services will operate on the Blue and Red Rapid corridors, however these will run on 'as needed' basis and trips will not be shown on NXTBus or Google Transit. Most routes only run every hour on Saturdays, with many also not starting until after 0800, so this will disrupt the vast majority of passengers. A separate weekend network serves many areas which may be unfamiliar to weekday commuters and many school students, and this will further exacerbate the issue. Others who rely on Xpresso express routes will be forced to make multiple transfers, and parts of Fyshwick and Mankua will be poorly served.

Over 28,000 students are likely to be impacted by the changes, with some private schools already deciding to close due to the limited travel options available. ACTION has promised to provide schools and parents with a summary of weekend routes past each affected schools. However this is a poor substitute. ACTION is encouraging passengers to consider using Park & Ride or Bike & Ride to avoid long waits for hourly routes but avoiding traffic congestion. One could foresee some routes will struggle to cope with loadings if customers fail to take alternate options.

Qcity Transit and TBX have confirmed that a normal service will be provided for commuters and students from Queanbeyan and Yass, with their drivers not affected.

Canberra Hospital detour

ACTION, Qcity and TBX services are operating to an alternative route at Canberra Hospital from 11 March as construction works prevent access along Hospital Road. Buses detour via Bateson Road and Yamba Drive with temporary stops in place. The detour is likely to last around 12 months.

ACTION at March events

The Cricket World Cup continued in March, with Manuka Oval hosting a game between South Africa and Ireland on Tuesday 3 March. Free Travel across the ACTION network was available all day for game ticket holders, who could reach the match on Routes 4 or 5 or by half-hourly chartered buses departing City and Woden.

Canberra's premier race day, the Seppelt Black Opal Stakes was held at Thoroughbred Park on Sunday 8 March. Routes 956 and 958 detoured via Randwick Rd, with free shuttle services to City Bus Station after the meet from 1700 to 1930.

On Canberra Day, Monday 9 March, ACTION operated to a Sunday timetable. The Patrick White Lawns at National Library hosted an afternoon of celebrations. Blue Rapid 900, 932, 934 & 935 stopped nearby. Free return charter buses operated to Tuggeranong, Woden, Gungahlin, Belconnen and Civic from 1845 until 2100, largely after the conclusion of the ACTION network.

Qcity Transit operated to a reduced weekday timetable across their Queanbeyan network on Canberra Day, as the public holiday was not observed in NSW. TBX services were cancelled.

Lake Burley Griffin hosted Skyfire 2015 event on the evening of Saturday 14 March. Passengers could arrive via Blue Rapid 900 intertown services, or one of the additional services which were provided (regular fares), each operating half-hourly:

- 990 ex Belconnen from 1600 to 1930 also picking up at City Bus Station
- 991 ex City Bus Station from 1600 to 2000 (in addition to Routes 900, 990 or 994)

- 992 ex Tuggeranong from 1600 to 1930, stopping en route at Erindale Shopping Centre, Mawson Park & Ride and Woden (in addition to Route 900)
- 993 ex Woden from 1600 to 1945 (in addition to Routes 900 & 992)
- 994 ex Gungahlin from 1600 to 1930, also collecting passengers at EPIC Park & Ride. (Passengers could also catch Routes 950, 956 or 958 to Civic and connect to Routes 900, 990 or 991).

Free return buses departed regularly from 2045, sponsored by FM 104.7.

Older Canberrans enjoyed free travel on ACTION from 14 to 22 March as part of the Seniors' Week. Routes 56, 57 and 58 diverted via Thoroughbred Park on Tuesday 17 March for the Seniors' Week Expo held by Council of The Ageing ACT (COTA). The Flexible Bus Service also provided a free half-hourly link from Woden from 0900 to 1500, as a way of promotion for this recently introduced service.

On Saturday 21 March, a march and memorial service was held at Australian War Memorial to mark the conclusion of Operation SLIPPER, the Australian military's mission to Afghanistan following the infamous 11 September terrorist attacks in America. Free ACTION shuttles departed from carparks on Kings Ave, Russell between 0800 and 0900, returning from 1230 until 1330. It was also suggested attendees consider catching regular services on 909 & 910.

The Greater Western Sydney Giants played the Sydney Swans on Sunday 22 March as part of AFL pre-season NAB challenge. Spectators holding game tickets could travel free on any ACTION bus. Services to Manuka Oval included charter buses, leaving City Bus Station and Woden from 1100 until 1300, along with regular Routes 935 and 938.

The Connect and Participate Expo, "celebrating Canberra's diverse and vibrant social groups and clubs" was held at the Old Bus Depot Markets in Kingston on Saturday 28 March. Those attending could catch the free continuous loop from City Bus Station between 1100 and 1600 or a regular Route 935, 938 or 980 bus.

Raiders Buses

Rugby fans going to watch the Canberra Raiders NRL games in 2015 can catch free return buses to GIO Stadium departing from Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, Woden, City and Belconnen throughout the 2015 season. Special buses also travel from Ginninderra Labour Club and Belconnen Labour Club, organised directly by the venues. The first games were held on Sunday 15 and 21 March. Timetables can be found on the ACTION website before each match.

New South Wales

Route 381 extras

Sydney Buses added additional weekend and public holiday services on Route 381 on 14 March for a 12-month trial to cater for high passenger loadings. An extra two trips depart Fletcher St / Dudley Street towards Bondi Junction each hour from 1500 until 1900, increasing trips along Bondi Rd to Bondi Junction from 16 to 18 per hour. The extra trips should provide more opportunities for passengers along Bondi Rd to board a bus during the summer months as these trips do not serve the main Bondi Beach stops, but commence about 500m away from the coast.

More morning buses for SAN and Fox Valley

Passengers travelling on Transdev Route 573 (Turrumurra – Fox Valley) benefit from two new morning peak trips added on 23 Marc. Extra trips now depart Turrumurra at 07:40 and 08:25 and complete the full loop. This plugs the previous 35 min and 42 min gaps for passengers travelling to Sydney Adventist Hospital (SAN), while buses now return to the

station at 08:18 and 09:03, plugging a previous 81-minute gap between the 07:55 and 09:16 arrivals, presumably allowing for school bus services in a tighter operation. The upgrade follows the previous introduction of additional trips on Route 589 between Hornsby, Thornleigh and SAN last June.

T80 upgrade

On Easter Tuesday, 7 April, an improved timetable will commence on T80 along the Liverpool and Parramatta T-way. Inter-peak services are increasing from quarter-hourly to 10 mins. Similar boosts will occur at the Liverpool end at times when peak services currently run at 15 min intervals.

New afternoon peak hour shorts leaving Parramatta are being introduced, operating to Canal or Bonnyrigg. This will increase frequencies from the 6 or 7 min headways to 5 minutes, however services into Liverpool will be rationalised to 10 minutes. The existing morning peak shortworkings towards Parramatta no longer commence at Warren, but now commence from Bonnyrigg, Prairewood or Canal. The weekend timetable has also received minor changes. Timing points will be rationalised, with the following T-Way stations now longer show: Memorial, Brown Wetherill, Smithfield, Woodpark or Mays Hill. The Woodpark timepoint has been replaced by one at Canal.

Nowra Coaches update

Nowra Coaches issued an updated timetable for Routes 732 (Tomerong Shops – Bomaderry) and 733 (Hyams Beach – Nowra) in March. The Tuesday and Friday bus Route 733 bus now departs Nowra around 2 hours later at 1525 and now operates via Bomaderry Station after departing the Stewart Place stop. Among revisions on 732, the 1607 732 ex Basin View Shops now commences 13 mins later.

Wentworth Falls roadworks

6 March also saw shuttle buses replace BMT Route 685 along Henderson Road in Wentworth Falls, in addition to 25 February, 10 March & 17 March, as reported in last month's *Table Talk*. The shuttle bus transferred passengers on Blaxland Road to continue on their journey.

Northern Territory

March revisions

DarwinBus timetable updates in March:

- Routes 1 & 1h (Casuarina – Hospital Precinct – Palmerston): As of 2 March, the 2130 Route 1a service on weeknights now operates as 1h providing a later bus into Tiwi.
- Route 10 (Casuarina – Darwin): As of 29 March, the Sunday morning trip ex Casuarina at 0920 leaves 5 mins earlier
- Route 74 (Palmerston – Zucolli – Farrar – Palmerston): As of 2 March, the 1530 M-F trip operates via Kokoda Industries as 74a in lieu of the 1230 trip. The 1715 trip, the final trip of the night to the growth areas of Zucolli and Farrar, now departs at 1730 to ensure the connection with the Orbital Link services arriving at 1715. Ideally, it would also wait for the 28 Humpty Doo Express departing Darwin at 1700 as well.
- Route 447 (Humpty Doo Park & Ride – Palmerston via McMinns Lagoon and Howard Springs): As of 23 March, the school term 1600 trip departs 10 mins later to improve connections

New PDF timetables are available online, however it is not known if a new booklet has been issued.

South Australia

Southern Vales update

Adelaide Metro issued a new timetable on 16 February for Route 741 (Maslin Beach – Colonnades Centre), 750 (Sellicks Beach – Colonnades Centre), 751 (Aldinga – Colonnades Centre), 752 (McLaren Flat – McLaren Vale),

755 (Aldinga Beach – Seaford Centre) & 756 (Port Willunga – Noarlunga Centre) with minor updates.

O-bahn trackworks

O-bahn services between Paradise and Tea Tree Plaza were diverted away from the guided busway from 0545 until 1600 on Sunday 29 March due to trackworks.

Victoria

Dysons inner north adjustments

On 22 February, Dysons introduced a revised timetable for 508 (Moonee Ponds – Alphington). Interpeak trips towards Alphington are now timed at 39 mins rather than 45 mins, but trips towards Moonee Ponds are unchanged at 45 mins.

Minor adjustments have been made to intermediate times during other periods, while some timepoints have also moved. The Lygon St and St Georges Road timepoints have been consolidated with a new timepoint at Nicholson St, while the High St timepoint has moved east one stop to Northcote Plaza and Library. Buses no longer pause for time at Rubie Thomson Reserve.

A previously unreported 504 timetable has surfaced dated 27 July 2014. Interpeak trips are now timed at 35 minutes between Moonee Ponds and Clifton Hill in each direction, a reduction of 5 mins, matching the weekend journey times. This however means there is now a long 15 minutes layover at Clifton Hill between trips.

Highpoint Boxing Day Shuttle

In an attempt to encourage shoppers to avoid the annual Boxing Day parking nightmares, Highpoint Shopping Centre in Melbourne's west provided free charter buses from Essendon and West Footscray. Buses run once an hour, provided by Sita. Observations suggested light loadings.

There is currently no bus option from West Footscray, although this has been suggested in the past as part of the metropolitan bus reviews. Ryans Route 468 from Essendon doesn't run on public holidays, however a trial of Boxing Day services was previously conducted in 2010 & 2011.

Freeway stops close

Effective 9 February, Donric Group's 483 service between Moonee Ponds and Sunbury has operated via new stops on Kings Road off-ramps and on-ramps in both directions, with near-by stops along the Calder Freeway in Keilor carriageway closed. The interchange originally opened in January 2012, but it is believed the operator was not keen on the extra travel time for a stop that is only really used by the odd school student.

Meanwhile, *Melton & Moorabool Star Weekly* reports that Sita's Route 456 (Sunshine – Melton) will be diverted via Rockbank from June, with the existing unsafe stops on Western Freeway closed. Only occasional Ballarat line trains call at Rockbank, compared to buses every 25 to 30 mins on weekdays. The proposed changes follow a continual campaign by Melton councillor Nola Dunn since 2012 to have the stops closed. In one incident she witnessed, a family lost a bag of shopping as it fell apart in front of speeding vehicles as they crossed the road, and another time she came across an elderly lady using a walking frame to cross the freeway.

In both cases, bus stops are located on the side of a 100km/h freeway, with inbound stops accessed by dashing across the busy roads. Other stops remain on 100km/h roads in Melbourne, including other sections of the Calder Freeway and Western Freeway (including opposite Calder Park Raceway), and on Route 901 along Frankston-Dandenong Rd in Bangholme.

Grand Prix 2015

For the first time since the Formula 1 Grand Prix race was moved to Melbourne in 1996, all bus routes near the Albert Park Track Grand Prix followed a standard Sunday service.

For the initial race in 1996, and from 1998 until 2004, Met Bus, and later, Melbourne Bus Link, routes 216, 219, 220, 232 & 600 operated to a standard Saturday timetable on Grand Prix Sunday. The 1997 race saw no buses, after industrial action regarding privatisation of public transport assets. National Bus Company also operated additional services to the Grand Prix during early years of the event.

Western suburbs routes 215 and 223 operated Saturday timetables on Raceday Sunday between 1999 and 2002. Neither route ran near the track, but this allowed Melbourne Bus Link to standardised shifts for both days. This is particularly notable for 215, as the route did not operate on Sundays until July 2004. Routes 922 and 923 joined the routes operating a Saturday timetable from 2003 following their introduction in August 2002. Service levels were rationalised in 2005, with Sandringham Depot Routes 600, 922 & 923 the only services retaining a Saturday timetable on Grand Prix Sunday. 220 was boosted from 30 minutes to 15 minutes with daytime extras, however a core Sunday timetable operated. The extras on 220 have not run since

the 2012 Grand Prix, however the boosted Sunday services on the Sandringham depot routes continued until last year.

Western Australia

Route 527 extension

From Sunday 22 March 2015, Route 527 (Cockburn Central – Aubin Grove) was extended further south into Honeywood Estate to a terminus on Honeywood Ave near Darling Chase. Unfortunately, the service will not travel the route displayed in the timetable until the Honeywood Ave / Lyon Road intersection is complete in mid-May. Services travelling to Cockburn are commencing from the terminus on Honeywood Ave and travel via Honeywood Ave, U-turn at the Honeywood Ave Darling Chase roundabout, turn right onto Morwell Ent, left Lyon Rd to resume normal route. Services from Cockburn travel the normal route to the Honeywood Ave / Lyon Rd intersection, then deviate south on Lyon Rd, right into Morwell Ent, left into Honeywood Ave to terminate before Darling Chase.

Thanks to: Jason Blackman, Damon Cooper, Geoff Foster, Matthew Jennings, Victor Isaacs, Ted Macdonald, Peter Parker, Lourie Smit, *Canberra Times*, *Melton & Moorabool Star Weekly*, & various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*

BUS NEWS CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Are you interested in bus timetable news? The Bus Editor of Table Talk, Craig Halsall, is seeking correspondents to help with the supply of Bus news in each state. How about you? Help record our Bus timetable history and help keep members informed. Please indicate your interest in these new positions to Victor Isaacs at abvi@iinet.net.au or Craig at craig.halsall@gmail.com,

FERRY NEWS

Spirit of Tasmania

The Tasmanian government will expend \$31.5 million revamping the two Spirit of Tasmania vessels. This will include new restaurants, bars and deluxe cabins. The Premier, Will Hodgman, said on 10 March that the refurbishment was a “much better way of investing public funds than replacing the two ageing ships. It’s a significant investment, we recognise that, The Spirits still have a lot of life left in them but they need to be more attractive and more comfortable. The refurbishment would buy eight more years for the ships.”

Thanks to the *Examiner* for Ferry news.

REVIEW

Train Statistics 2014: Everything you need to know about Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink was published in March 2015 on the internet by the NSW Bureau of Transport Statistics. It includes a mass of patronage data about travel on the Sydney and NSW passenger train networks for recent years (although one table goes back to 1855) generally until 2013. It can be accessed at www.bts.nsw.gov.au/Publications/Latest-publications/default.aspx

ODD SPOT

Here is a novel reason to stop selling paper timetable books: The Hungarian tax authority ordered the national railway, MAV, to stop selling everything except tickets, as their sale machines were not connected to the tax authority’s servers. After a couple of weeks, following modifications, sale of the national timetable book was resumed.

About Table Talk

Table Talk is published monthly by the Australian Timetable Association Inc. (Registration No. A0043673H) as a journal of record covering recent timetable news items. The ATA also publishes the **Times** covering timetable history and analysis. Contributions are invited and are very welcome. Please send these to the appropriate Editor. ABN 74248483468.

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

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

Production and Mailout: Geoff and Judy Lambert.

Proofreaders: Agnes Boskovitz, David Cranney and Geoff Hassall.

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

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