



# TABLE TALK

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## TOP TABLE TALK - V/LINE TIMETABLES 21 JUNE

New public timetables for trains and buses on the entire V/Line network from Sunday 21 June were placed on the V/Line and Public Transport Victoria websites on 31 May.

By far the most important change is the opening of stage 2 of the Regional Rail Link from Deer Park Junction to Manor Junction (28 km) providing a new route into Melbourne for **Geelong** line trains, and opening of new stations at Tarneit and Wyndham Vale, in the fastest growing urban area of Australia. Off-peak running time to Geelong via the new line generally takes 58 minutes (down) or 62 (up) for all stations trains, compared with 54 minutes (down) or 59 minutes (up) via the old line. The new line is 8 km longer but means that V/Line trains now have runs in the suburban area free of Metro trains. All Geelong line trains are now DMUs.

Geelong trains have a completely new peak timetable, basically every ten minutes. In the morning peak four trains start at Wyndham Vale. In the morning peak one down train terminates at Wyndham Vale and in the afternoon peak two trains terminate there.

As expected, Monday to Friday off-peak Geelong line trains now run every 20 minutes (formerly hourly). Weekend Geelong trains basically remain at hourly intervals. There are two stopping patterns on weekdays for alternate trains but all off-peak trains stop at the new stations:

- Stopping pattern A is Footscray, Sunshine, Tarneit, Wyndham Vale, Lara, North Shore, then all stations to Waurin Ponds (trip time 73 mins), 8 minute turnaround for same stopping pattern on the up.

- Pattern B is Footscray, Sunshine, Deer Park, Tarneit, Wyndham Vale, Little River, Lara, Corio, Nth Geelong, Geelong, South Geelong (trip time 64 mins), turnaround time 27 mins for same stopping pattern on the up.

Bus networks in Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula and Wyndham have been redesigned.

**Warrnambool** trains (loco hauled) also travel via the new line and stop at the new stations.

There are two extra Metro **Werribee** peak trips.

On the **Ballarat** line there are now off-peak extra short services to Bacchus Marsh. Coupled with Ballarat trains this gives Bacchus Marsh a basically 30 minute service. Combined with Geelong schedule Deer Park ends up with train every 20 minutes between the peaks. There are also extra Ballarat peak services down at 1713 and up at 0739 ex Wendouree. There are other minor tweaks.

**Bendigo** line: Running times Sunshine – Southern Cross is tightened up to be nine minutes. There are other minor tweaks. It is believed there will be other Bendigo changes later this year with a Metro Northern timetable change.

There are minor tweaks on the **Seymour / Goulburn Valley** line and the **Eastern** line.

In summary (with the minor exception of Warrnambool trains making extra stops) this is an impressive timetable. It will stretch V/Line's rolling stock resources.

## RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

### Railway future

Mr Mike Mrdak, Secretary of the Federal Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, addressed a function of the Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics in Canberra on 27 April. His remarks relevant to the future of railways in Australia were:

- The damage to the north-south railway from recent flooding in the Hunter Valley region, resulting in its closure for weeks, strengthens the case for the proposed Inland Freight Railway;
- Private sector investment in the Australian Rail Track Corporation is unlikely, as returns from railway infrastructure are low. (This comment has been overtaken by the announcement in the Federal Budget of the sale of the ARTC);
- The Commonwealth is seeking to ensure that Sydney's new Badgery's Creek Airport has high quality railway access from the beginning by extension of the railway from Leppington and on to the Western line;
- Any future High Speed Railway is more likely to have its Sydney terminal at Badgery's Creek or Liverpool than in central Sydney.

### Australian Infrastructure Audit

The Federal government's infrastructure advisory body, Infrastructure Australia, released a national Infrastructure Audit on 21 May. It predicts that demand for public transport will increase by 89% by 2031, indicating governments will have to focus on expanding the capacity of existing services, and provide new infrastructure to growth areas on the outskirts of cities. It noted that public transport use has been increasing since 2004, but only one in six Australians now travel to work by public transport - something predicted to change. The report says that if the nation's public transport is to cope with the predicted increase in use, people will either have to pay more or operators become more efficient. Transport operators get back 25-30% of what they spend on services. The report says, "With services to outer urban areas recovering less than 10% of costs, governments and service providers will need to improve efficiencies in terms of delivery and administration."

Findings in relation to public transport were:

- Gaps in service quality already exist and will grow. These gaps are particularly evident in urban transport.

- Current arrangements for the funding of land transport represent the most significant opportunity for public policy reform in Australia's infrastructure sectors.
- Government funding alone is unlikely to be sufficient to provide the infrastructure that Australia requires. Maintaining or strengthening conditions to facilitate private sector investment in, and operation of, Australia's infrastructure networks is fundamentally important.
- The country needs to consider a broader system of transport pricing, both for road and public transport.
- Underinvestment in the maintenance of some parts of Australia's infrastructure networks, notably in regional Australia, could reduce the ability of those networks to provide reasonable levels of service in the future. Significant risks are in regional rail infrastructure carrying low volumes of grain and/or general freight, especially those with ageing timber bridges and timber sleepers.
- Demand for freight rail infrastructure is projected to grow, in particular for resource bulk commodity haulage in WA, Queensland and NSW.
- Freight rail will need to play a growing role in the movement of goods between ports and inland freight terminals, and in the movement of containerised and general freight over longer distances.
- \$16.5 million this year for Tasmanian Freight Rail Revitalisation to upgrade the network (total Federal cost \$59.8 million previously announced) *The Tasmanian government provided matching funding of \$59.8 million in its Budget of 28 May.*
- \$100.9 million this year towards the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor (total cost \$691.6 million previously announced by the former government);
- \$102 million this year towards the Moreton Bay Rail Link (total cost \$518.4 million previously announced by the former government);
- \$110.9 million this year for St Albans (western Melbourne) Level Crossing replacement (previously announced);
- \$500,000 this year for a Fremantle Port Link Freight Corridor Concept Plan.

## Inland Freight Railway

The Chair of the Inland Rail Implementation Group, Former Deputy PM John Anderson, welcomed the Federal government's budget commitment to Inland Rail. The Implementation Group's report will be ready to go to government in mid-2015. He said the report will provide government with the advice it needs to release further funds for construction in next year's budget. Inland Rail is a bigger project than expected. It has required significant additional work to develop the business case and delivery plan, and to ensure that it is robust. There have also been delays in the work undertaken due to the change in government in Queensland.

## Brisbane: Storm 1 May

Exceptionally heavy rainfall – the most ever on one day - hit Brisbane on Friday 1 May. During the afternoon services had to be suspended on almost the entire suburban network – all except the south of the river lines and Ferny Grove line. There was significant damage to the Caboolture, Sunshine Coast and Shorncliffe lines, involving damage to overhead and track washaways.

## Queensland: Sunshine Coast line timetable

The Queensland government plans to introduce a new timetable providing hourly services on the Sunshine Coast line from the end of 2016. This will require four extra trains from Nambour and five from Brisbane. Presumably this will coincide with the opening of the Petrie to Kippa-Ring line, currently under construction. On 5 May the government announced that an assessment of the viability of duplication of those parts of the Nambour line that are still single was underway.

## Queensland Rail: Cattle trains

The Queensland government has confirmed a commitment to the operation of cattle trains. It states they will operate even if there are not full bookings. This follows criticism because there have been only three cattle trains from Quilpie in the last three years. Queensland is the only remaining state where stock trains operate. The Queensland Department of Transport's Livestock Transport Services Contract provides for a minimum of 325 cattle train services per annum in regional Queensland. These transport cattle from regional hubs in the north-west, central-west and south-west regions to processing plants. The current contract is with Aurizon, with a term of 1 July 2010 to 31 December 2015. Following a recent Expression of Interest process, the Department is currently working through future options for commencement after the expiry of the current contract.

More details are at

[www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/Australian-Infrastructure-Audit.aspx](http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/Australian-Infrastructure-Audit.aspx)

The use of public transport in **Melbourne** – heavy rail in particular – will soar over the next two decades, according to the audit. Crush loads will be worst on the Craigieburn, Sunshine, Werribee and Dandenong lines. The audit showed most lines are coping with peak travel times now, but many already busy rail lines will come under extreme pressure from growing population and user numbers by 2031.

Most of the media coverage and reaction to the audit report was to claim that it boosted the need for more roads. However, Ministers of the ACT government claimed that it demonstrated the need for construction of the Light Rail line in **Canberra**.

## ARTC Privatisation

In the Federal Budget presented on 12 May the government announced that the Department of Finance will undertake a scoping study into the privatisation of the Australian Rail Track Corporation. This had been recommended by the government's Commission of Audit last year.

David Irwin, a director of freight-operator Pacific National has stated that the privatisation of ARTC could increase the cost of access for users and run counter to a push to shift freight from roads to trains. He also claims that the NSW government's multi-billion-dollar infrastructure investment program is at odds with the aim of shifting freight onto rail because it would make road transport faster and even more appealing to stevedores. He said the recent experience of Port of Melbourne proposing rent increases of 800% for a new stevedore ahead of a planned \$6bn sale to the private sector suggested costs could go up. While much of the freight industry would like to see more freight moved off the roads and on to rail "commercial ownership of the ARTC may not go hand-in-hand with that objective," Mr Irwin told a Committee for the Economic Development of Australia forum in Sydney.

## Federal Budget

Among massive funding (\$5.25 billion in 2015-16) for road projects, the following items relevant to railways were in the Federal Budget:

- \$300 million from 2013-14 to 2017-18 for preconstruction works for the Melbourne-Brisbane inland freight railway (previously announced);

## **ARTC and Transport for NSW Freight WTTs: 6-8 June 2015**

A new ARTC Working Timetable comes into operation from 7 June. It can be accessed, as usual, at <http://www.artc.com.au/Content.aspx?p=160>

A new Working Timetable of Freight trains in the Sydney area also comes into operation from 6 June for Weekends (Book 5) and 8 June for Weekdays (Book 4). (These match the Sydney Trains and John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network new Working Timetables from 6/7 June noted in the May *Table Talk*, page 1).

## **New South Wales: Storm aftermath**

In the aftermath of the ferocious storm of 21 April (see May *Table Talk* page 2), as flood waters continued to drop a test train was operated by Pacific National for ARTC between Kooragang and Maitland on 27 April. Limited local passenger trains between Hamilton and Maitland resumed on 27 April. The Maitland flood gates, which go across the railway tracks, were opened on 29 April and the Hunter valley coal network and the line to Telarah returned to service on the afternoon of that day. As of 1 May with a big effort by work crews, consistent supply of materials and good weather, ARTC re-opened the line from Saturday 9 May, albeit with delays to trains of about 15 minutes.

There were 49 sites that required repair work of some kind, varying from minor track repairs to large washaways. As of 30 April, 47 of the 49 sites had been completely scoped by ARTC engineers and track experts, 41 had works commence and a large number completed at that date. Three major sites at Tocal (near Dungog on the North coast line) were a key focus for the team. These sites included completely establishing new rail track from the ground up and filling-in sizeable track washaways, some greater than 10m deep and 70m wide. Geotechnical assessments were completed at these locations and the engineering task to recover the track around Tocal was underway.

Kempsey Railway yard was used from 1 May as a temporary terminus for trucks to unload containers on to a daily train heading north and pick up freight to take south, while Taree was used to transfer steel and wagon load freight.

## **Moorebank freight terminal**

Aurizon and Qube Logistics have agreed to the joint development of the Moorebank freight terminal in south west Sydney. The NSW government plans to shift up to 250,000 shipping containers from Botany port to the site by rail by 2017. The Moorebank site would be able to take up to one million containers a year at full capacity by 2030, against about two million containers that pass through Port Botany. The chief executive of the federal government-supported body overseeing the project, Moorebank Intermodal Company's Ian Hunt, said it needed much more capacity than was mooted. "We're very keen to ensure with the planning approvals is that there is no cap on the capacity of the terminal," he said. Mr Hunt confirmed the federal government would contribute to the development of Moorebank, but added it would do so in the form of a capital investment, not an operating subsidy.

The Moorebank proposal will step up competition with existing intermodal facilities, including the NSW Ports-owned site at Enfield and stevedore Patrick's Chullora facility — both west of Sydney — which are handicapped by inefficient rail links.

## **New South Wales: Special trains**

Transport Heritage NSW has introduced a consolidated guide to forthcoming heritage and steam train events in NSW (but not including those originating in the ACT) – see

<http://www.transportheritagenewsw.com.au/#/upcoming-events/c2oh>

On Sunday 26 July steam train shuttles will operate on the new South West Sydney line (which opened on 8 February). 3642 will haul five trains from Leppington to East Hills and return.

## **New South Wales: Cowra lines tender process fails**

NSW Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Duncan Gay, has stated that the Cowra lines tender process did not find a suitable private sector operator. He said, "The tender process revealed there was too much uncertainty in the ability of the tenderers to return the lines to full service and run a commercially sustainable business without significant taxpayer support, but the government remained open to future proposals to make the lines operational again. I've asked Transport for NSW to maintain a close watching brief over how the Cowra lines and other non-operational rail lines in regional NSW can be brought back into operation where sustainable freight demand exists. Further options for bringing the Cowra lines back into service may be explored in the future as part of the NSW government's Fixing Country Rail program. As part of our Rebuilding NSW Plan, the government has committed \$400 million to the Fixing Country Rail program, while \$153 million will be invested over the next three years to continue fast tracking repairs and upgrades to the 996 km of grain lines across NSW.

"An extensive evaluation including advice from independent experts concluded neither of the two proposals received for the recent Cowra Lines Request for Tender had adequately addressed the tender criteria. Transport for NSW received two tenders to restore, maintain and operate the Cowra lines but neither was found to sufficiently demonstrate they could manage the lines on a commercially sustainable basis. The tenders were thoroughly assessed against criteria such as a strong business case, technical ability, financial backing and the ability to manage operational risks. While the tender process did not result in the Cowra lines being leased to a private sector operator, it has generated market interest and provided valuable information that may assist in bringing the lines back into operation at some point in the future," Mr Gay said. The initial evaluation identified a preferred tenderer. A detailed review by the tender panel and independent experts has shown the level of risk associated with the preferred tenderers' proposal was too great to be acceptable.

The Cowra lines comprise 200 kms of non-operational rail lines between Blayney and Harden, and Koorawatha and Greenethorpe. They were progressively closed between 2007 and 2009 due to safety concerns and low freight volumes. Prior to any rail operations being able to commence on the Cowra lines, an estimated investment of more than \$30 million would be required to restore the infrastructure, with further ongoing maintenance costs estimated at more than \$2 million each year. Transport for NSW launched an open tender offering a fixed term licence to restore, operate and maintain the Cowra lines in March 2014. Tenders closed in late July 2014, followed by a comprehensive evaluation process which was finalised in April 2015.

## **Sydney Trains: Chatswood-Epping line long-term disruption**

In late 2018 and early 2019, the NSW government plans to shut the Chatswood to Epping line - which opened only in 2009 - for seven months to make the line compatible with the trains that will run on the north west rail link. But before then, the plan is to run shuttle trains between Epping and Chatswood for four months.

Transport for NSW says "survey work and inspections" in the existing Epping to Chatswood tunnels have already started

as part of a project to convert the train line to what it calls "rapid transit" - single deck trains that will operate without drivers. The department recently granted itself planning approval to undertake this conversion. Transport for NSW says it will run five bus routes, and more than 300 services, every weekday to replace the train line. But the department estimates public transport users travelling to stations on the Epping to Chatswood line should allow an extra 10 to 45 minutes for their journeys when the line is closed.

Transport for NSW says it needs to close the Epping to Chatswood line to modify overhead wiring, change power supply, signalling, communications and fire systems, and undertake a number of building works to make it compatible with the new rail link.

## **New South Wales: Wheat lines re-openings**

ARTC's branchline from Camurra (near Moree) to North Star was re-opened from 5 March until 9 March and again from 11 May until 13 May. In the same area of NW NSW, John Holland Rail's branchline from Camurra to Weemelah was re-opened from 26 May.

## **New South Wales: Grain sidings**

NSW Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Duncan Gay, announced on 21 May a series of upgrades at key sites on grain lines that will reduce loading times for trains moving grain to NSW ports and mills. He said: "A total of \$21 million is being spent on upgrading rail sidings on the Country Regional Network over the next three years. The broad acre grain crop is worth \$4.2 billion each year to the NSW economy and is reliant on an efficient rail and road network including strong connections to silos and intermodal terminals." The first two projects due for completion in September this year are:

- Ardlethan – \$3.44 million to extend the existing rail siding by 750 metres to 1,170 metres. Together with new over-rail loading equipment (i.e. a loading gantry connected to silos) to be installed by GrainCorp and Emerald Grain, this upgrade is expected to save seven hours in loading time by reducing train shunting.
- Nevertire – \$2.9 million to extend the current grain loop by 750 metres to 1,215 metres. This will allow a 600 metre train to load in a single pass at the existing GrainCorp site. Together with the new over-rail loading equipment to be installed by GrainCorp these improvements will save between five and seven hours in loading time by reducing train shunting.

It is expected upgrades will be carried out at up to five more sites across NSW in the next three years.

## **ARTC Hunter Valley network**

A scheduled closedown of the ARTC Hunter Valley network for engineering works occurred from 19 to 21 May.

On 22 May the Kooragang Island Coal Loader flyover was commissioned. (ARTC SAFE Notice 2-2313 of 2015 refers).

## **Byron Bay rail?**

Elements of Byron Resort plans to reinstate a train along 3km of track between Sunrise Beach and Byron Bay town. The company intends to commence work in June and have the train running before Christmas, in time for the opening of their resort. Byron Shire Council supports the proposal. Elements said they are currently restoring a two-car 660/760 series 100 seater diesel rail motor in its heritage colours in Lithgow. It was formerly operated by Cityrail on the Hunter Valley line for most of its life. The train will be available for use by the general public at a fare of around \$3 for a one-

way journey. The developers are yet to determine a timetable for services. There will be two stations - one near Baysshore Bungalows and another at the top end of town. The track will continue to be owned by the State government, with an access licence allowing Elements to use it, however not exclusively.

## **NSW Train Link: More services to Orange**

Commencing 15 June and for a trial period of six months, NSW Train Link will run a bus on Mondays to Fridays to connect with the Bathurst-Sydney day train. The new bus service will depart Orange at 0450 and run direct via Lucknow to arrive Bathurst at 0535 to connect with the train departing at 0549. The return service will connect with the train arriving Bathurst at 2135. It will depart Bathurst at 2140 and run via Blayney, Millthorpe and Spring Hill to arrive Orange at 2255.

## **Transport for NSW: North Strathfield underpass opened**

The North Strathfield underpass will be commissioned on Tuesday 9 June. The underpass enables up freight trains from the Northern line to access the Sydney Freight network without having to cross the path of other trains.

A new platform 1 will also be commissioned at Concord West, although at present, the track only leads to the new freight underpass. Existing platforms 1, 2 and 3 were renamed 2, 3 and 4.

The remaining segment of the Northern Sydney Freight access program, the third track from Epping to Thornleigh, is expected to be completed about the middle of 2016.

## **Sydney: Weekend closures**

The NSW Tourism and Transport Forum in a statement on 21 May said that track work on the Sydney rail system should not occur during major events such as the Vivid festival. Former Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian had said weekend track closures could be reduced, when she announced a major overhaul of Sydney's rail maintenance structures. But lines continue to close most weekends. "Public transport is vital to major events. Transport for NSW should co-ordinate its rail maintenance work with Destination NSW to ensure rail maintenance work is not scheduled when a major event is planned. Developing an easier-to-use and integrated public transport network will make Sydney a better place to live, work and, crucially, visit," TFF chief executive Margy Osmond said.

## **Sydney Light Rail**

Construction of the tramway to Sydney eastern (Randwick) and south-eastern (Kingsford) suburbs will commence on 23 October.

## **NSW: Griffith fiesta**

On Saturday 6 June (Queen's Birthday long weekend) there was the unusual occurrence of two passenger trains overnight together at Griffith. These were the regular once-a-week NSW Train Link Xplorer DMU, and a 620/720 class DMU of the Rail Motor Society running a tour for the Australian Railway Historical Society, NSW Division (Sydney-Juneee-Griffith-Temora-Ungarie-Temora-Griffith-Temora-Parkes-Bathurst-Sydney). (ARTC Train Alteration Advice 459-2015 and John Holland Rail Country Train Notice 146-2015 refer).

## **V/Line: Shepparton replacements**

Further to the Shepparton line passenger train replacements already noted (May *Table Talk* page 3), V/Line trains – except the morning up and evening down – were also replaced by buses on 19-28 May, 2-11 June and 16-25 June for engineering work. The works include the replacement of more than 17,000 timber sleepers along 60 kms between

Nagambie and Shepparton and resurfacing of 17 level crossings.

## V/Line: NE line woes

All V/Line trains on the Albury line, except the morning up and evening down, were again replaced by buses from 2 until 6 May because of a shortage of carriages and/or locomotives.

On 28 May, the Premier of Victoria, no less, announced that a fourth V/Line locomotive would be converted to standard gauge "to improve the reliability of train services on the Albury line." He said the introduction of overnight maintenance had made possible the transfer of the additional locomotive from the end of July.

## Metro Trains: Stony Point line woes

The Stony Point line will remain closed until at least late June as Metro Trains fixes faulty level crossings. It says the solution is the installation of axle counters on the track, but they are still trying to get them. Services on the line were suspended after two safety incidents in March. After each incident, Metro Trains deployed workers to monitor or operate the crossings manually. This follows another three faults at level crossings along the line last year. Metro spokeswoman Larisa Tait said the fault was due to track contamination where debris such as sand, leaves or rust interfered with the detection of a train. "The solution ... is the installation of axle counters on the track, which do not rely on the wheel-to-rail interface to detect a train in section. We are in the process of procuring axle counters specific for the Stony Point line." In the meantime, the replacement bus service adds about 15 minutes to a one-way journey on the route.

## Victorian Budget

The new Victorian government claims that spending on public transport in the State Budget presented on 5 May is a record: New appropriations relating to rail and tram were:

- \$25 million for the first year of all night train services on weekends from 1 January;
- \$1.5 billion for preliminary works and land acquisition for the Melbourne Metro north-south rail tunnel;
- \$55.6 million for Stage 1 of a trial of high-capacity signalling, on the Sandringham line;
- \$2.4 billion to start the removal of 50 of Victoria's most dangerous and congested level crossings (to be funded by the sale of the Port of Melbourne);
- \$50.5 million to upgrade 52 level crossings in regional Victoria;
- Up to \$220 million for the Murray Basin Rail Project once the business case is finalised (expected to occur in coming months - \$30 million was fast-tracked in February to get work started);
- \$13.1 million to upgrade the Frankston Station precinct, with \$50 million to be made available in subsequent Budgets once the business case is finalised;
- \$9 million for planning and preparation of the business case for the South Morang-Mernda railway, with the remaining funds being made available in future Budgets;
- \$2 million for the Bendigo Metro Rail Project;
- \$1.3 billion for 37 new, high-capacity metropolitan trains with a 50% local content requirement;
- \$274 million for 20 new E-Class trams to be built in Dandenong and associated network upgrades;
- \$257 million for 21 new VLocity regional carriages also to be built in Dandenong;
- \$90 million for the five new X'Trapolis trains to be built in Ballarat;
- \$75 million to extend the life of more than 70 Comeng trains in the existing metropolitan fleet;
- \$21 million to commence the refurbishment of the B-Class Tram fleet;

- \$25m for Ballarat station precinct redevelopment.

## Yarra Trams: Changes deferred

The Victorian government has delayed the changes to Yarra Trams routes 1, 6, 8 35 and 55 that were scheduled for 21 June (see April *Table Talk*, page 4). This follows criticism regarding the diversion of route 8 from Swanston St to William St as many riders did not want it re-routed, and the reduction to the City Circle route 35.

## Victoria: Timetable App

On 28 May Public Transport Victoria released a new version of their timetable app. It now includes real time tram and bus timetable and disruption information. The app can be downloaded via the PTV website at [www.ptv.vic.gov.au/getting-around/mobile-apps/](http://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/getting-around/mobile-apps/)

## SA: Mallee wheat lines to close

Grain handling company Viterra has announced that from August it will no longer use rail freight in the SA Mallee region. The decision has been pending for over 12 months, after it extended its existing agreement with freight operator Genesee & Wyoming Australia. Viterra will instead use road transport on the Mallee and Karoonda Highways, roads locals and the South Australian Opposition describe as in a state of disrepair. Viterra group commercial manager Andrew Hannon said the change would not affect prices at the farm gate and would not increase waiting times for transport during harvest. It estimated that this will mean approximately 3,000 additional trucks annually on the roads. Much of this road transport will terminate at Taillem Bend and from there Viterra says that rail will continue to be used.

## WA Budget

In the Western Australian Budget presented on 14 May new appropriations relating to railways were:

- \$1.2 billion over the next ten years on 300 rail cars (the first cars won't be bought until 2019);
- \$45.5 million on planning, procurement activities and land acquisitions for the Forrestfield-Airport Link;
- \$53 million over four years for a new \$120 million road system for rail services; and
- \$25 million to improve access to the new \$57 million Aubin Grove station.

## TransWA

A new TransWA MerredinLink / AvonLink timetable was issued effective 25 April. The only change is to the Saturday service which now offers a day return from Midland to Northam rather than Northam to Midland. It now departs Midland 0900 – Northam arrive 1020 depart 1620 – Midland arrive 1728.

## WA radio communications network

A radio communications network covering the Kalgoorlie – Esperance line (385 km) has been completed by Brookfield Rail (manager of WA's 5,500 km open access, rural network) at a cost of \$16.5 million, replacing fixed landline telephones and mobile or satellite phones.

## WA grain

A new agreement between Brookfield Rail, the WA rural rail infrastructure operator, and CBH, WA grain handlers, was signed on 2 May. CBH has made its unhappiness apparent, saying that Brookfield wanted an "excessive" increase in access costs of up to 25%, but Brookfield argues that the change is reasonable. CBH chief executive Andy Crane said it was under intense pressure because its trains were off the track, grain was not being moved to port and it needed to meet its customers' demand. "CBH is extremely disappointed that the situation escalated to the point where trains were stopped," he said. "We were backed into a corner by multinational Brookfield Rail. The deal gives

growers certainty”, Brookfield Rail chief executive Paul Larsen said. He was pleased the parties had reached an interim agreement. “This will provide supply chain security and certainty for WA grain growers well into their next harvest, and also allows us to concentrate on reaching a sustainable longer term deal with CBH,” he said.

## Auckland developments

Auckland Transport announced on 24 April that it has shortlisted three bidders for a contract to operate the commuter rail network from July 2016. The bidders include Serco NZ, the network’s current operator Transdev Auckland, and national railway KiwiRail.

Electric trains were introduced on all weekend services, with the exception of the Pukekohe – Papakura shuttle, from 16 May. The next stage of the electric train roll-out will see some additional electric trains in weekday service on the Southern and Western Lines. Additional services on the Southern Line will be introduced in June. Additional electric train services will be introduced on the Western line in July. At that time, as foreshadowed, passenger train services will be withdrawn on the non-electrified portion of the Western line, between the last two stations, Swanson and Waitakere.

Southern, Onehunga and Manukau lines will be closed for works and replaced by buses during the NZ Queen’s Birthday Weekend, 30 May-1 June.

Earthworks have begun at the site of the new Parnell station between Britomart and Newmarket. It is forecast to be used by up to 2000 passengers during the morning peak with many of them heading to the nearby universities. It will also be used by people attending events in the Domain and at the ASB Tennis Stadium, and the Parnell community.

Since 2003 the number of services operating on the network has increased from around 40,000 per year to 140,000 and ridership has surpassed 13 million. Passenger numbers in March this year were 33% higher than the same period in 2013.

## Wellington chaos

On Thursday 14 May very heavy rain caused chaos in Wellington, including the closure of the entire railway network. Services returned from Friday afternoon or Saturday morning.

## New Zealand Budget

The NZ Budget presented on 21 May included:

- \$NZ210 million transferred from the National Investment Fund to Kiwirail; and
- \$NZ6.5 million for resignalling the Wellington station area.

## New overseas timetable links

Overseas timetable links will be made available on the Australian Timetable Association’s website [www.austta.org.au](http://www.austta.org.au). This is an example of the sort of information that will be made available:

UK South West Trains new timetables from 17 May – 12 Dec  
<http://www.southwesttrains.co.uk/Pocket-timetables1505.aspx>

Current timetables to 16 May  
<http://www.southwesttrains.co.uk/Pocket-timetables1412.aspx>

## Preview: Australia

Public Transport statistics for Metropolitan Australia and all of Victoria:

No. of Agencies	78
No. of Routes	4,616
No. of Stops	108,592
No. of Trips	355,895
No. of timetabled times	28,000,000

In July *Table Talk* – an exposition of how these numbers were derived and what they mean.

## Swiss 2016 timetable

This year’s Swiss timetable change on 13 December will be ‘the most ambitious since the introduction of Bahn 2000 in 2004’, Swiss Federal Railways has announced. Long-distance services will expand by 660,000 train-km, or about 1%, while regional services will increase by 2.3 million train-km, or 4%. The major changes are on the east–west routes. Long-distance trains will start to use the Zürich *Durchmesserline* cross-city link in December, avoiding reversal at Zürich HB. This will allow many Basel – Aarau – Zürich InterRegio trains to be extended to Zürich airport and St Gallen.

The latest stage of the expansion of the Zürich S-Bahn will see the start of a number of new services, while some journey times are to be slightly lengthened in an effort to ‘significantly improve’ reliability and punctuality and ‘ensure that connections can be made even during peak hours’. The launch of major works for the SFr3bn Léman 2030 project to increase capacity between Lausanne and Genève by 2025 will bring significant alterations in western Switzerland, with changes to the routes of long-distance east–west journeys. There will not be significant changes to north – south services. However, international trains from Zürich to Stuttgart will be retimed to improve connections, and there will be new ICE services from Chur to Basel, Frankfurt and Hamburg.

## Transport for London expands

From 31 May a number of train services in the suburbs of east London were transferred from the oversight of the national government to that of the London local government. London Overground was extended to routes between Liverpool St and Enfield Town, Cheshunt (via Seven Sisters) and Chingford (formerly operated by Abellio Greater Anglia), along with services between Romford and Upminster

**Thanks** to Tony Bailey, Paul Brown, Scott Ferris, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Paul Nicholson, Len Regan, Roger Wheaton, David Whiteford, [www.railpage.com.au](http://www.railpage.com.au), *Age*, *Australian*, *Northern Star* (Lismore), *Railway Digest*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Transit Australia* for Rail news.

# LETTER TO THE EDITORS

**Albert Isaacs writes about Yarra Trams:** This is an update on the article in *Table Talk* (May 2015, page 4) under the heading “Yarra Trams electronic Timetables”. It is now over two months since I sent off this item and I have to report that the only place on the system that I have seen the printed timetables replaced, in the same box, by electronic timetables, is, ironically, at my own local stop on Route 75 (Vermont South), in Burwood Rd, Hawthorn, at St James Park.

This seems to be an experiment which may or may not be replicated across the system. It probably fits into the same pattern as the poles of about 1.5 metres high, which appeared at some stops, such as Bridge Road at Church St Richmond, a year or so ago. However, where the poles appear the printed timetable remains in situ. This is not the case at St James Park, where the only timetable now at the stop is the electronic one, which gives information on the next three trams. One can also press a button and get an

electronic lady who gives you exactly the same information as one can get by reading.

I use both sides of the stop frequently and can therefore report that the information is usually accurate and helpful. I have only observed one problem – some weeks go, when I arrived at the Down stop the electronic lady was switched on (so to speak) and the information kept going around in a loop. That is, I kept hearing about the next three trams, continuously for the next three or four minutes, before it

eventually stopped. The problem was that the cycle probably took about 15 seconds, but every time it went around, a minute dropped off all the times, meaning they were quite out of sequence by the time that the electronic lady eventually stopped talking to me. Despite that one hiccup, my experience suggests that, overall, the experiment is a success, and I look forward to meeting the electronic lady at all stops, right across the Melbourne tram system.

## FERRY NEWS

### Manly Fast Ferry

The number of commuters using the fast ferry service to the city has increased more than was expected by the sole operator of the service, Manly Fast Ferry (MFF), which has chartered two vessels, *Dreamer* and *Eye-Spy*. But the big boost for the company is expected before the end of the year in the form of four new boats that will be built at the Incat shipyard in Hobart.

**Geoff Lambert** comments: This service is quite astounding. The ferries run all day now instead of just the peak periods. In the morning and evening peak hours, a boat runs every ten minutes. This requires five boats to be in service. They are always full and the old slow ferries can be next to empty. This is despite MFF not being part of Opal and that the fares are significantly higher. Fares for the MFF peak hours services have been reduced to match those of Sydney Harbour Ferries – this is one of the main reasons why they have robbed SHF of most of its peak hours traffic. MFF also run 15 services per day between Darling Harbour and Manly. The nine services in the peaks are essentially commuter services and operate out of the Manly Hotel Jetty instead of Manly Wharf. The other six services are branded as “Eco-Hopper”, use the normal Manly Wharf, and call at intermediate points such as the Quarantine Station, Watsons Bay, Taronga Zoo and North Sydney, among other places. Another new player in the Manly ferry service game is Captain Cook, who offer seven services per day, very similar in concept to MFF’s Eco-hopper. Thus Manly is currently served by 99 round-trip ferries per day. Some people see this as a forerunner to the abandonment of the Sydney Harbour Ferries service run by the 30-year old Freshwater class vessels. None of this stops the E70 Express bus

service from Manly to Wynyard being overloaded in all of its 17 trips.

The advantages of MFF’s travel time (18 versus 33 minutes) and higher frequency (10 minutes versus 30 minutes), plus the beer, outweigh all other considerations for commuters. I, like many others don’t hesitate to jump on a MFF if I have just missed a Sydney Harbour ferry. Who wouldn’t? Nobody actually. We will be home an hour earlier compared with waiting for the *slow boat to China*. The ferries are very popular with working mothers and fathers, whose children accompany them to day-care at their place of work.

The shift from slow to fast ferries for commuters really began a couple of years ago, when both Sydney Fast Ferries (SFF) and MFF were operating. It was not unusual for each of these services to be carrying more passengers than the slow ferry even then. Now it is more so. The slow ferries now mainly cater to pleasure seekers, beach goers and Sydney CBD shoppers.

There has been a great deal of controversy over the awarding of the contract to MFF. MFF had the original contract after the Jetcats were sold, but lost out to SFF when the contract was due for renewal. MFF continued to run in competition with SFF for several years until the recent renewal - which was awarded to them. SFF threatened to go to ICAC, but nothing seemed to come of this. This *Manly Daily* story drew a lot of negative comments from former customers of SFF– the beer was no good, the staff weren’t as professional, the boats were poorly designed (sometimes they were the same boats!). I suspect that some comments were generated at the behest of SFF.

**Thanks** to Geoff Lambert and the *Manly Daily* for Ferry news.

## BUS NEWS

### Tasmania

**Tasmanian Redline** introduced a new timetable on its student-dominated Mole Creek/Deloraine/Westbury to Launceston route service in February. But this timetable has a difference. Two new BLK 77 seat articulated buses were introduced on the 75 km run, replacing three standard-sized rigid buses. Although a small number of second hand artics are in use in Tasmania on school only services, these Redline vehicles are the first new artics introduced to a rural route service.

One artic stops at Deloraine while the other continues through to Mole Creek. This corridor has an interesting history in that on 4 December 1950 Green Coach Lines, the new State government bus service, replaced the TGR rail motor between Mole Creek and Deloraine and a loco hauled passenger train between Deloraine with a 33 seat Ansair Transett coach. This was the first service to be operated under the Green Coach Lines name by the Transport Commission and was soon to highlight a change in the mix of passenger categories from commuter/shopper to student. By January 1965 a 43 seat bus was introduced to augment 33 seat Commers, following a significant increase in the

travel demands of students. Adult commuters were disappearing from the passenger list. After Green Coach was sold by the Government, Tasmanian Coach Lines replaced GCL on 8 December 1968 and Tasmanian Redline took over on 1 May 1980. Further timetable augmentation is likely as the population of the area between Launceston and Deloraine continues to increase.

**Tassielink Transit** on 18 May introduced new timetables on the Campania/Richmond to Hobart service which saw a considerable reduction in the level of service. Although not indicated on the Company’s website, recent observations by the *Table Talk* correspondent suggest that the introduction of a weekend service in the Coal River Valley and an augmented service to Cambridge Park failed to attract sufficient passengers to remain viable.

The small village of Campania, north of Richmond, has lost its Saturday service of two return trips. The one peak period commuter run has also been cut and now terminates at Richmond. The only Saturday service now provided by Tassielink in the Valley is the Swansea to Hobart run. Several other departures to and from Richmond have been deleted. A new timetable on Tassielink’s Huon Valley service

was also introduced on 18 May with relatively small variations.

Thanks to Ian Cooper for Bus news.

## AIR NEWS

### International

**Air New Zealand** will operate three additional flights per week to Perth from 11 December until 1 May. Air NZ will operate up to three weekly services between Auckland and Maroochydhore in the peak summer months from December to February.

### Domestic

A new Bass Strait airline, **Free Spirit Air**, commenced operations between Melbourne (Essendon) and Burnie (Wynyard) on 8 May. Up to three flights a day are provided by a Beechcraft 1900 seating 19 passengers.

On 30 March **Regional Express (Rex)** inaugurated a service between Cairns and Bamaga (Cape York Peninsula). There is a morning return service on Monday and Tuesday,

and afternoon returns on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. From 25 May Rex has provided a return Cairns – Mt Isa service, out in the morning, returning in the evening, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Rex will introduce three return flights each weekday between Cairns and Townsville from 6 July. (It commenced weekend services between these cities on 3 January 2015 and from 6 July will increase the number of services from two to 34 flights per week.)

Thanks to Ian Cooper, the *Australian* and the *Mercury* for Air news.

## ODD SPOT

Are you worried about the size of your timetable collection? Do family members complain about the space it takes up? Respond by telling them about Mr Gwillim Law of upstate New York State. He collects telephone books. At one point he estimates he had three and a half thousand volumes from cities across the United States. He amassed his treasures by badgering Telephone Companies, Post Offices and Libraries as he, his father and brother traveled around – sometimes on trips specifically to collect old phone books. At one point he ran a club called the Organization of Universal Telephone Book Collectors. Unfortunately, his collection was damaged by floods and mildew and has now been down-sized.

Or what about Keith Sivyer of Twickenham, south west London? His tiny terrace house was crammed with every

new release vinyl record from the UK single charts since their inception in 1952 until his death in February aged 75. His younger brother Gerald had the task of disposing of the collection. He discovered approximately 27,000 7 inch vinyl singles and 8,000 12 inch singles neatly filed in alphabetical order on purpose built floor-to-ceiling shelves that covered the four walls of his brother's lounge. More than 10,000 CD singles from the 1980s to present day also filled up a spare bedroom. There were dozens if not hundreds of CDs still in their cellophane wrappers from where he hadn't had the time to open and listen to them. Auctioneers predict the 27,000 seven inch singles will go under the hammer for an estimated £6,000, the 8,000 12 inch records at £1,500 and 10,000 CDs and cassettes at £600.

## 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.

The **deadline for *Table Talk*** is the last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

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