



# TABLE TALK

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## TOP TABLE TALK – V/LINE CRISIS



Cartoon from *Herald Sun*

While there have been extensive repairs to both rolling stock and track, as far as the travelling public is concerned, the inconvenience of a large number of cancelled trains on V/Line services continues, and will do so for the foreseeable future.

Every night from 9 to 11 February and 23 to 25 February a VLocity DMU made four test runs in each direction between Sunshine and Little River. From 2200 on 14 February until 0400 on 15 February an N class locomotive made test runs over the North Melbourne flyover.

From 4 February until at least 13 March the trains listed below will be replaced by buses. There seems to be about 85 cancelled trains per weekday. Trains still running are sometimes run by smaller VLocity sets than usual. Travel on replacement buses is free. The cost of these buses is estimated at about \$2 million a

week. On 4 February the Minister said that she expects disruptions to continue until mid-June.

Geelong line: 91 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Buses are:

- 0432 Waurin Ponds to Southern Cross
- 0651 Waurin Ponds to SC
- 0716 Wyndham Vale to SC
- 0804 South Geelong to SC
- 0840 South Geelong to SC
- 0855 Waurin Ponds to SC
- 1201 South Geelong to SC
- 1612 Waurin Ponds to SC
- 1730 Waurin Ponds to SC

- 0625 SC to Wyndham Vale
- 0649 SC to Waurm Ponds
- 0710 SC to South Geelong
- 1030 SC to South Geelong
- 1450 SC to Waurm Ponds
- 1610 SC to Waurm Ponds
- 1740 SC to South Geelong
- 2315 SC to Waurm Ponds

Ballarat line: 59 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Buses are:

- 0513 Wendouree to SC
- 0638 Wendouree to SC
- 0914 Wendouree to SC
- 1414 Wendouree to SC
- 1552 Ballarat to SC
- 2110 Wendouree to SC
- 0613 SC to Ballarat
- 1117 SC to Wendouree
- 1537 SC to Melton
- 1602 SC to Wendouree
- 1654 SC to Wendouree
- 1753 SC to Wendouree
- 1915 SC to Wendouree
- 2225 SC to Wendouree (this will be a train on Fridays)

Bendigo line: 34 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Buses are:

- 0507 Bendigo to SC
- 0622 Eaglehawk to SC
- 0721 Kyneton to SC
- 0617 SC to Bendigo
- 1625 SC to Eaglehawk
- 1704 SC to Kyneton
- 1731 SC to Epsom

Seymour line: Normal services scheduled (40 trains per day).

Gippsland line: Due to a safety investigation involving metropolitan level crossings, V/Line's VLocity fleet is not currently able to operate into the metropolitan network.

Ten Traralgon and Bairnsdale trains are scheduled to operate as normal. Buses are:

- 0436 Traralgon to SC
- 0557 Traralgon to SC
- 0720 Traralgon to SC
- 0803 Traralgon to SC
- 0920 Traralgon to SC
- 1020 Traralgon to SC
- 1120 Traralgon to SC
- 1220 Traralgon to SC
- 1316 Traralgon to SC
- 1516 Traralgon to SC
- 1615 Traralgon to SC
- 1715 Traralgon to SC
- 1750 Traralgon to SC
- 0614 SC to Traralgon
- 0746 Flinders St to Traralgon (bus from Pakenham)
- 0813 SC to Traralgon
- 0915 SC to Traralgon
- 1020 SC to Traralgon
- 1120 SC to Traralgon
- 1220 SC to Traralgon

- 1420 SC to Traralgon
- 1520 SC to Traralgon
- 1616 SC to Traralgon
- 1938 SC to Traralgon
- 2044 SC to Traralgon
- 2144 SC to Traralgon
- 2330 SC to Traralgon (Friday only service)

**Saturday:** Geelong line: All 39 services are scheduled to operate as trains.

Ballarat line: 28 services are scheduled to operate as trains. 2215 SC to Wendouree is a bus.

Bendigo line: All 28 services are scheduled to operate as trains.

Gippsland line: 12 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Buses are:

- 0601 Traralgon to SC
- 0721 Traralgon to SC
- 1140 Traralgon to SC
- 1258 Traralgon to SC
- 1454 Traralgon to SC
- 1629 Traralgon to SC
- 0645 SC to Traralgon
- 0805 SC to Traralgon
- 1025 SC to Traralgon
- 1336 SC to Traralgon
- 1456 SC to Traralgon
- 1935 SC to Traralgon
- 2135 SC to Traralgon

**Sunday:** Geelong line: 30 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Buses are:

- 2237 Waurm Ponds to SC
- 2110 SC to Waurm Ponds

Ballarat line: 22 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Buses are:

- 2055 SC to Wendouree
- 2215 SC to Wendouree

Bendigo line: All 24 services are scheduled to operate as trains.

Gippsland line: 10 services are scheduled to operate as trains. Buses are:

- 0601 Traralgon to SC
- 1140 Traralgon to SC
- 1258 Traralgon to SC
- 1415 Sale to SC
- 1629 Traralgon to SC
- 1025 SC to Sale
- 1156 SC to Traralgon
- 1336 SC to Traralgon
- 1456 SC to Traralgon
- 1935 SC to Traralgon.

The number of weekday cancellations increased from 85 to 87. For the public, these cancellations were noted on V/Line's website. For V/Line personnel, these were detailed in notices S16/7055 Weekdays, S16/7053 Saturdays, S16/7054 Sundays. These also detailed the associated cancellations of empty trains and reductions in the size of some trains.

On 19 February, V/Line issued an S Circular detailing altered network carriage working, routings and platform working for Mon-Fri. and on 25 Feb issued S-Circulars for Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. These

are 8000-series circulars- thus WTT amendments i.e. semi-permanent. It is, in fact, the first WTT amendment for 2016. The major change is the alteration of platform working, where 103 services (Mon-Thu). have had altered platform working. It seems that VLocities that formerly came and went via the Flyover have been re-routed to the Regional Rail Link platforms (15 & 16) and non-VLocity services that came and went via the RRL platforms have been re-routed at Spion Kop to run via the flyover to and from

platforms 1-8. These seems to indicate that the flyover is the main problem and that the RRL lines in other places are innocent. 108 trains now altered in some way on Saturdays, compared to "only" 43 formerly. As with 8001, the big jump is largely caused by platform changes – 66 of them on Sats, compared with 103 on Mon-Thu. The circular introduced a new Fleet Plan, version 44-I.

### SUMMARY OF VLINE CANCELLATIONS AND BUS REPLACEMENTS SINCE 18 JAN

| <i>S.Notice</i> | <i>Start Day</i> | <i>Finish Day</i> | <i>Weekdays</i> | <i>Total Trains Affected</i> | <i>Cancelled</i> | <i>Altered</i> | <i>Platform change</i> | <i>Additional Trains</i> | <i>Coach Replacements</i> | <i>Other</i> | <i>Not replaced (All)</i> | <i>Not replaced (Pass)</i> | <i>Not replaced (EC)</i> | <i>Passenger</i> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 7018            | 18-Jan           | 30-Jan            | Mon-Sat(2)      | 108                          | 85               | 13             |                        | 37                       | 10                        | 48           | 18                        | 30                         | 78                       |                  |
| 7026            | 23-Jan           | na                | Sat             | 50                           | 7                | 44             |                        | 3                        | 0                         | 4            | 0                         | 14                         | 36                       |                  |
| 7028            | 24-Jan           | na                | Sun             | 31                           | 7                | 24             |                        | 6                        | 0                         | 1            | 0                         | 9                          | 22                       |                  |
| 7030            | 25-Jan           | na                | Mon             | 112                          | 85               | 23             |                        | 41                       | 4                         | 44           | 11                        | 33                         | 79                       |                  |
| 7031            | 27-Jan           | 29-Jan            | Wed-Fri         | 122                          | 85               | 30             |                        | 39                       | 7                         | 46           | 13                        | 33                         | 89                       |                  |
| 7033            | 26-Jan           | na                | Tue             | 53                           | 8                | 3              |                        | 3                        | 42                        | 5            | 0                         | 15                         | 38                       |                  |
| 7038            | 30-Jan           | na                | Sat             | 40                           | 7                | 36             |                        | 1                        | 0                         | 6            | 0                         | 10                         | 30                       |                  |
| 7039            | 31-Jan           | na                | Sun             | 28                           | 7                | 19             |                        | 4                        | 2                         | 3            | 0                         | 11                         | 17                       |                  |
| 7040            | 1-Feb            | 5-Feb             | Mon-Fri         | 119                          | 85               | 30             |                        | 43                       | 4                         | 42           | 11                        | 31                         | 88                       |                  |
| 7046            | 6-Feb            | na                | Sat             | 44                           | 7                | 39             |                        | 1                        | 0                         | 6            | 0                         | 10                         | 34                       |                  |
| 7048            | 7-Feb            | na                | Sun             | 30                           | 7                | 21             |                        | 4                        | 2                         | 3            | 0                         | 12                         | 107                      |                  |
| 7051            | 8-Feb            | 12-Feb            | Mon-Fri         | 119                          | 85               | 30             |                        | 43                       | 4                         | 42           | 11                        | 31                         | 88                       |                  |
| 7050            | 8-Feb            | Indefinite        | Full week       | 74                           | 51               | 18             |                        | 50                       | 5                         | 1            | 1                         | 0                          | 119                      |                  |
| 7053            | 13-Feb           | Indefinite        | All Sats        | 43                           | 6                | 39             |                        | 1                        | 0                         | 5            | 0                         | 9                          | 35                       |                  |
| 7054            | 14-Feb           | Indefinite        | All Suns        | 74                           | 51               | 18             |                        | 50                       | 5                         | 1            | 1                         | 0                          | 119                      |                  |
| 7055            | 15-Feb           | Indefinite        | All M-F         | 122                          | 87               | 31             | 0                      | 43                       | 4                         | 44           | 12                        | 32                         | 87                       |                  |
| 7053_7050       | 13-Feb           | Indefinite        | All Sats        | 43                           | 6                | 39             |                        | 1                        | 0                         | 5            | 0                         | 9                          | 35                       |                  |
| 7054_7050       | 14-Feb           | Indefinite        | All Suns        | 30                           | 7                | 21             |                        | 4                        | 2                         | 3            | 0                         | 12                         | 32                       |                  |
| 7055_7050       | 15-Feb           | Indefinite        | All M-F         | 157                          | 115              | 35             | 0                      | 70                       | 7                         | 45           | 13                        | 32                         | 125                      |                  |
| 8001            | 22-Feb           | Indefinite        | All M-Thu       | 239                          | 109              | 137            | 103                    | 69                       | 0                         | 40           | 9                         | 31                         | 208                      |                  |
| 8002            | 26-Feb           | Indefinite        | Fridays Only    | 247                          | 110              | 143            | 109                    | 8                        | 69                        | 0            | 41                        | 10                         | 31                       | 216              |
| 8003            | 27-Feb           | Indefinite        | Sats            | 108                          | 25               | 91             | 66                     | 14                       | 0                         | 11           | 3                         | 8                          | 100                      |                  |
| 8004            | 27-Feb           | Indefinite        | Suns            | 87                           | 21               | 73             | 45                     | 3                        | 14                        | 0            | 7                         | 0                          | 12                       | 75               |

Table compiled by Geoff Lambert. (EC = Empty Carriages)

On 5 February it was revealed that Metro Trains, also, has found some "thin" flanges on wheels.

On 9 February interim V/Line chief executive Gary Liddle told a State Parliamentary inquiry that V/Line was spending up to \$300,000 a day hiring 200 coaches to replace trains. The total cost of the crisis was then claimed to be about \$33 million. Metro Trains chief executive Andrew Lezala told the hearing that they had stepped up the greasing of tracks around Melbourne to avoid the risk of wheel damage that might force it to pull trains from service. The accelerated rate of wheel wear afflicting V/Line's VLocity fleet has an abrasive effect on tracks, causing yet more damage to train wheels, Mr Lezala said. "You can get a cascading effect once you've got this kind of wheel damage and you've got high friction between wheel and rail, until you restore your lubrication regime. What we did find is we had got some drying of grease around the network and so we stepped up our lubrication regime to try and avoid any cascade and so far that has kept everything under control."

Eight hundred metres of track on the North Melbourne flyover were ripped up and replaced on the weekend of 13-14 February. The track replacement work required the shutdown of part of the \$3.65 billion Regional Rail Link, which has been in full service for less than seven months. The cause of the VLocity wheel damage is still being investigated by Monash University rail experts, who are due to report in March, but the decision to replace the tracks on the flyover effectively confirms it is one of the chief causes of accelerated wheel wear. Albury line trains were replaced by buses between Southern Cross and Broadmeadows, and Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat line trains used Metro tracks through the city. Damaged track on the Geelong and Ballarat lines will

be replaced in coming weeks. The North Melbourne rail flyover was not part of the original design of the Regional Rail Link, but was included after it was judged that building a new flyover would be too expensive and disruptive.

The present State Labor Government has pointed out that the former Coalition Government imposed cost savings of \$70 million on V/Line, implying that this led to the present crisis.

To add to the woes, on the morning of 12 February a person was struck by a train near North Shore, and all Geelong line trains were then suspended for a few hours.

V/Line passengers who have been forced onto replacement buses complained of being left in the dark, with no information about when buses will depart from towns along the line.

There appears to be no temporary WTT – at least not one that is publicly available. V/Line has printed temporary timetables for the Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon services dated 15 February 2016 and will be included the March 2016 ATA Distribution List. The link for web versions is <https://www.vline.com.au/Timetables/Additional-pages/Timetable-list#train%20timetables> They have an end date of "at least March 13". The GTFS (General Transit Feed System) feeds since late January are much shrunken and only contain V/Line TTs for Sats and Suns. At the moment, the weekday schedules in the GTFS are full week only on and after 14 March.

## RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

### Infrastructure Australia recommendations

Infrastructure Australia released a 15 year **Australian Infrastructure Plan** on 18 February. It recommended fundamental changes to the way infrastructure is planned, funded, delivered and used.

The Chairman Mark Birrell said Australia can get the infrastructure it needs and improve living standards and productivity, if it acts now to introduce nation-shaping reforms. "Our Plan sets out 78 recommendations for reform and provides a vision and roadmap to address today's infrastructure gaps, and set us up to meet the challenges of tomorrow. In developing the Plan, we have prioritised the user—the commuter waiting for a train, the family paying their electricity bill and the business looking to capitalise on overseas markets." He said if the Plan is delivered, Australians can expect more affordable, innovative and competitive energy, telecommunications, water and transport services. The Plan recommends reforming the funding and operation of transport infrastructure, completing the national electricity market, improving the quality and competitiveness of the water sector and delivering a telecommunications market that responds to user demand. "By completing the major reforms to infrastructure markets the

average Australian household will be almost \$3000 better off every year." Mr Birrell said.

Alongside the Plan is IA's reinvigorated Infrastructure Priority List which identifies 93 projects and initiatives. "The Priority List is ultimately a platform for better infrastructure decisions—it provides rigorous, independent advice to governments and the public on the infrastructure investments Australia needs." Mr Birrell said.

Key investments recommended include:

- New metro rail systems in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane;
- Road and rail initiatives to bust urban congestion in Perth;
- Public transport improvements in Adelaide and Canberra;
- Urban renewal in Hobart;
- Metropolitan water supply upgrades to support Darwin's growing population, and
- Protection of the corridors for High Speed Rail and new ring roads around Melbourne and Sydney.

IA will update the Plan at least every five years, and the Priority List regularly throughout each year. For more information and to download the Plan and the

Priority List go to  
[www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au](http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au)

### **Pacific National: Future**

The board of Asciano, parent company of Pacific National, has recommended investors accept a \$9.05 billion takeover bid from the Qube consortium. Asciano has signed binding transaction documentation with the Qube consortium, the company said in a statement to the stock exchange on 16 February.

Qube said that the combination of its logistics business with Asciano's Patrick container ports businesses would be "transformational. The combination creates significant opportunities for productivity improvement and innovation across the Australian logistics and transportation sector."

Qube plans to take Patrick ports while its consortium partners will buy Asciano's Pacific National Rail businesses.

On 23 February Qube, Brookfield and Asciano advised that they were in talks on developing "an improved proposal" to be put to shareholders.

### **Aurizon: Townsville intermodal terminal**

Aurizon began construction in mid February of a \$40 million intermodal facility at Stuart near Townsville. The project includes construction of a freight distribution centre, a modern container terminal and three new rail tracks specifically designed for Intermodal operations.

### **Queensland Rail Travel: Inlander altered**

The Inlander passenger train from Townsville to Mt Isa and v.v. will be changed from 6 April. It will depart Townsville on Wednesdays and Saturdays (presently Thursdays and Saturdays) at 1240, arriving Mt Isa next morning at 0935. It will depart Mt Isa on Sundays and Thursdays (presently Mondays and Fridays) at 1330, arriving Townsville next day at 1010. The timetable itself is not changed, only the days of running. The change will provide good connections (by Queensland standards) with northbound and southbound Spirit of Queensland trains at Townsville. Until April, southbound passengers have to stay overnight in Townsville. There will be a trial of a tablet device provided for each passenger

### **Queensland Rail Citytrain: Gold Coast extension**

The Queensland Government is purchasing land for the extension of the Gold Coast line south from the present Varsity Lakes terminus. It has purchased for \$9 million most of a large, prominent wrecker yard.

### **Queensland Rail Citytrain: Rail Management Centre**

On 10 February a \$40 million Rail Management Centre at Bowen Hills was opened by Queensland Minister for Public Transport Stuart Hinchliffe. It co-locates all rail management functions.

### **Queensland Railways Citytrain: EMU depot**

On 13 February the Queensland Government and Bombardier opened the depot to maintain the New Generation Rollingstock electric multiple-units at

Wulkuraka near Ipswich. The depot, which cost \$190 million, contains ten roads, a wheel lathe, lifting jacks, and cleaning and decanting facilities. There is an automated visual inspection system that scans trains to assess their condition. It will maintain the 75 six-car EMUs that Bombardier is supplying as part of the \$4.4bn NGR programme. The Queensland Government signed an availability-based PPP contract in January 2014 with the Bombardier NGR Consortium of Bombardier Transportation, John Laing, Itochu Corp and the Uberior investment division of Lloyds Bank. The EMUs are being assembled at Bombardier's Savli plant in India. The first cars were shipped from Mumbai at the end of January, and unveiled in Brisbane in early February. Deliveries are scheduled to run for 2½ years. The first EMU is due to enter service in mid-2016, and Bombardier is contracted to provide 30 years of maintenance.

### **Gold Coast monorail**

A major rebuild of the Gold Coast Casino will result in the closure of the monorail in the very near future.

### **Brisbane Tram? Central Coast Tram?**

The Labor candidate in the Brisbane Lord Mayoral election has promised a light rail line from Brisbane CBD via Newstead and West End to the University of Queensland, 9 km, with construction starting by 2020. A second stage would be from the CBD to Princess Alexandra Hospital.

The Wyong Mayor has proposed a tram from Gosford to Terrigal and The Entrance on the NSW Central Coast.

### **NW NSW wheat lines**

The line from Camurra to North Star was re-opened from 29 December 2015 (ARTC SAFE Notice 2-2483 refers). The line from Camurra West to Weemelah was re-opened from 26 January 2016 (John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network SAFE Notice 55-15 refers). These re-openings are usual in the wheat season.

From 1 January appropriate licensed parties will be permitted to undertake mobile grain loading mid-section at Old Burren, 667 km, and Rowena, 683 km, on the Merrywinebone line. Trains loading at these locations must be in push-pull configuration. (John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network SAFE Notice 54-15 refers).

### **ARTC: Hunter Valley 2016 closedowns**

Regular scheduled closedowns of the Hunter Valley network for civil engineering works this year are expected to be 23-26 February, 27-29 April, 31 May-3 June, 23-25 August, 11-13 October and 21-25 November.

### **ARTC: Working Timetable 3 March**

A new ARTC WTT will be introduced on 3 March. It can be accessed at

[www.artc.com.au/customers/operations/mtp](http://www.artc.com.au/customers/operations/mtp)

### **Sydney Trains: Public timetables and displays**

Although the Leppington shuttles were replaced by through-running trains on the T2 City Circle – Liverpool service in December, a booklet timetable (Version 5.0)

for this did not appear until mid-February and even then only a few stations had them. All other timetables have had a sticker pasted onto the covers announcing that the only “paper” tickets now issued are singles and returns.

Plasma screen timetable displays with their white on blue graphics are now gradually being changed over to new software with black on white displays, identical in colour scheme to the big new screens at Central station. These are much easier to read.

### **Rail line to Badgerys Creek**

Plans for a high-speed metro rail line from Sydney CBD to Badgerys Creek airport will be considered by the NSW and Federal Governments as part of long-term rail options for western Sydney. The \$8 billion project, would be funded largely by a private consortium. Proponents claim it would take just 34 minutes from the CBD to Badgerys Creek, 18 minutes between the City and Parramatta, and 16 minutes from Parramatta to Badgerys Creek. It would link the major economic zones of Sydney. Beginning at a new Metro station at Central, the Metro West Link would link the CBD with Barangaroo, Darling Harbour, the Bays precinct and Strathfield and Olympic Park with Strathfield, Camellia, Parramatta and Westmead.

Stage two of the project would then extend to the western Sydney employment precinct, Badgerys Creek and the southwest growth centre.

The plan envisages only \$2 billion of state and federal funding — and would take over the role and funding planned for the Parramatta light rail — with the rest funded by private sector.

More than 90 million passenger trips per year have been forecast on the proposed system, with the NSW Government spared the expense of having to spend \$11 billion over the next 20 years on the existing heavy rail system.

Centurion China Rail Corp is in discussion with the joint-venture engineering proponents, BG & E and Conybeare Morrison, which have submitted the project to the NSW long-term transport strategy. Federal Minister for Major Projects Paul Fletcher said the Federal Government was seeking high-speed rail options for the second airport which also acted as commuter services.

“The Commonwealth is working with the NSW Government on a joint study to consider rail options which not only service the airport but which address commuter needs in Western Sydney too,” he said.

A spokesman for NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance said that all proposals would be considered for long-term rail options for western Sydney. “All serious proposals will be given consideration in the future. We’re a little more than three years away from completing Sydney Metro North West and before that we’ll have construction under way on the next phase of the project through the CBD. There’ll also be an opportunity to consider projects further down the pipeline.”

### **Sydney Trains: Southern Highlands line**

Sydney Trains has had standby buses at Campbelltown and Moss Vale for some time now to cover breakdowns. It appears Premier/Pioneer Coaches of Nowra is contracted for this work on Mondays-Fridays. No spare rolling stock is kept at Moss Vale on weekdays so these buses are stationed to cover any delays. For example, on 17 February, the 0753 Campbelltown-Moss Vale was delayed by a slow-moving freight train, so the return service from Moss Vale at 1001 was bus worked.

### **V/Line: Albury trains**

A public forum to urge increased train services between Albury and Seymour was held in Wodonga on 29 February. The Border Rail Action Group proposes the use of a standard gauge VLocity DMU between Albury and Seymour, connecting there with broad gauge trains to Southern Cross. It claims this would take 20 minutes off present Seymour to Southern Cross times and provide improved comfort and reliability compared to the present “breakdown plagued” 35-year old carriages and locomotives.

(The Group requested copies of past timetables from the Australian Timetable Association, which we provided).

### **Metro Trains: Death of the wallsheet timetable**

With the introduction of the Night Network in January, Metro has done away with issuing wallsheet timetables for display on station platforms. Station specific departure posters are still issued, which include stopping pattern details and timetabled connections to shuttle services. Factors contributing to their demise would include the ten minute daytime headways, the lack of space to include the Night Network timetables and the fact an ever-increasing number of customers use smartphone apps or online timetables to plan their journey.

(Sydney Trains still produces them, but only for stations that do not have rolling display screens – which is not very many these days.)

### **Metro Trains: Additional Pakenham trains**

From Monday 15 February, two additional morning and evening peak train services have operated between Pakenham and Flinders St, providing Gippsland V/Line passengers with the option of using a train for part of their journey. The extra services, capable of carrying up to 800 passengers each, will depart from Pakenham at 0549 (0643 arrival at Flinders St) and 0710 (0817 arrival at Flinders St), and from Flinders St at 1526 (1625 arrival at Pakenham) and 1622 (1725 arrival at Pakenham) on weekdays. The trains will operate to the normal V/Line service pattern, stopping at Berwick (for the 1526 ex Flinders St only), Dandenong, Clayton, Caulfield and Richmond. V/Line replacement coaches will be timetabled to connect with Metro services at Pakenham. Passengers who catch a free V/Line replacement coach will be provided with a paper ticket that allows them to continue their journey on the Metro network.

### Metro Trains: Altona line

The Altona loop line will be closed for up to three months to remove the quiet Kororoit Creek Road level crossing. The crossing, in an industrial part of Williamstown, closes for just 11 minutes in the two-hour morning peak but has been fast-tracked for removal by 2019 as part of the Victorian Government's \$6 billion level crossing removal project. The railway will also be straightened as part of the works. Altona passengers were told that services would improve after the Regional Rail Link opens, but a timetable upgrade has been deferred until later this year.

### Metro Trains: Gardiner level crossing eliminated

The replacement Gardiner station in Melbourne has opened, and concurrently the first grade separation has been completed under a programme to eliminate 50 level crossings, announced as part of the 2014 election campaign. The Glen Waverley line has been rebuilt on a new sunken alignment. The platforms at the new station opened on 19 January and are accessed via lifts as well as stairs. The car park is being rebuilt on the old station site, and a new foot and cycle path provided. Three former tram stops have been consolidated into one, located adjacent to the new station, which has rail and tram passenger information displays.

Removal of the Burke Road level crossing enables traffic, including trams, to move unimpeded, where 150 train movements per day had caused the gates to be down for 40 minutes during the peak hour, disrupting an estimated 25,000 road vehicles and 180 trams. The project forms part of a package that includes removing crossings at Ormond, McKinnon and Bentleigh stations at a cost of \$524m. The contract was awarded to John Holland in alliance with Kellogg Brown & Root, VicRoads, MTM and PTV. Construction is underway at seven level crossings, with the Government expecting work on 30 of the 50 crossings to be underway or completed by 2018.

### Dandenong line level crossing removal

The Victorian Government proposes to rebuild three sections of the Pakenham/Cranbourne line on an elevated structure nine metres above the existing alignment. This is part of a \$1.6 billion project to remove level crossings along the busy line. Nine level

crossings will be removed, and five stations rebuilt at Carnegie, Murrumbeena, Hughesdale, Clayton and Noble Park. A consortium of CPB Contractors and Lend Lease have been awarded the contract to build the project, which is due to be completed by November 2018. Premier Daniel Andrews says the project will create a quieter rail line, and will commence later this year. He said, "every single level crossing between Caulfield and Dandenong will become history. This tired and ugly rail corridor will become one of Melbourne's largest community open spaces, with room for parks, playgrounds, netball courts and thousands of new car parks."

The longest section of elevated rail will be over 3.5 kms built between Grange Road in Carnegie and Poath Road in Hughesdale. A 2.7-km stretch of elevated railway will be built between Corrigan and Chandler Roads in Noble Park. A further two km elevated structure will run through Clayton between Clayton and Centre Roads. Barricades will also be put in place to ensure passengers on elevated trains cannot see into nearby houses! Stations will be longer to accommodate longer trains. Signalling will be upgraded for additional trains that will carry an extra 11,000 passengers during peak hour on the lines which currently carry more than 60,000 passengers daily.

As the elevated rail lines would be built above existing railway lines, the existing train services would not be disrupted by the construction. The elevated railway line will also free up an extra 225 square kms - equivalent to 11 MCGs - of public open space.

The Opposition has criticised the proposal as a cost-cutting measure to remove level crossings that would create vulgar "eyesores" several storeys high that would divide neighbourhoods.

### Melbourne Metro rail tunnel

On 23 February, Victorian Premier Dan Andrews released the business case for the Melbourne cross-city suburban rail tunnel. The case claims benefits of 1 to 1.1 to 1.5 depending upon how many side benefits are considered. He also asked the Federal Government for funding of \$4.5 billion towards the total cost of \$10.9 billion. A website has been established for this project. It is <http://mmrailproject.vic.gov.au/>

Anticipated patronage at the new stations is:

|                          | Daily passengers | Residents | Workers | Students |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|---------|----------|
| Arden                    | ?                | 7,000     | 12,000  |          |
| Parkville                | 60,000           | 14,000    | 45,000  | 70,000   |
| CBD North plus CBD South | 1,100,000        |           |         |          |
| Domain                   | 36,000           | 17,000    | 33,000  |          |

The business plan says that the service plan through the tunnel should establish the Sunshine – Dandenong line operation via the new tunnel alignment, including passenger services to the new stations at Arden,

Parkville, CBD North, CBD South and Domain; provide service increases appropriate to meet the demands forecast for the corridor; and operate all services on the line with high capacity rolling stock; re-establish a

consistent Frankston line routing through the inner core with all services operating via the City Loop and provide service increases appropriate to meet the demands forecast for the corridor; re-establish a consistent routing of Craigieburn and Upfield lines within the inner core with all services operating via the City Loop and, provide service increases appropriate to the demands for each corridor; establish a consistent through operation from the Sandringham line via Richmond, Flinders St and Southern Cross and North Melbourne as part of the Cross City group including provision of additional peak period services from South Yarra to Flinders St; modify operation on the Werribee, Williamstown and Laverton lines as part of changes to the Cross City group, to provide service increases appropriate for the corridor.

### **Metro Trains: Services dogged**

A new reason for service delays: On Monday 15 February trains on the Sandringham line were delayed in the middle of the day by up to an hour after a dog was hit by a train between Balaclava and Windsor. The dog survived.

### **Hobart light rail**

The Tasmanian Government announced on 30 January that it will preserve the rail corridor from Hobart to Granton, in the city's northern suburbs, for the long-term consideration of a light rail line. It said it will look into value capture methods which could make a light rail line economically feasible.

The move is the result of a study by Infrastructure Tasmania, which found that a light rail line was not economically feasible under current economic conditions, but that there was potential for it to become a viable source of transport in the future. The review found that apart from the capital costs, which have been previously estimated at \$100 million, the major impediment to the operation of the light rail service is projected significant operation losses. The Government will work with both Glenorchy and Hobart City Councils to develop a comprehensive understanding of land use planning and rezoning issues for commercial and residential opportunities adjacent to the rail corridor. Increased land utilisation along the corridor, particularly residential, will contribute to making the light rail more sustainable.

### **European Rail Timetable App**

The European Rail Timetable will soon introduce an App. In addition to the existing printed timetable there will be a digital edition available to download to smart-phones, tablets, e-book readers or computers. (The European Rail Timetable, which is published monthly, is the successor to the Thomas Cook Rail Timetable. Despite its name, it is in fact a worldwide railway timetable).

### **European sleeper trains: an update**

An update to the news about withdrawal of sleeper trains by DB German Railways (January *Table Talk*, page 7):

Neighbouring ÖBB Austrian Railways remains committed to overnight trains with sleepers. Indeed, it is ordering new sleeping carriages. ÖBB is currently in discussion with DB about it operating internal overnight trains within Germany. There is even a possibility of RZD Russian Railways operating some sleeper trains within Germany.

France's Secretary of State for Transport has announced plans to stop funding all but two of the overnight train services operated by French National Railways (SNCF) and to put their operation out to tender. The Government will issue a call for expressions of interest in the next few weeks in conjunction with the regional governments in areas served by the trains which will otherwise be withdrawn. However, the government will not provide any subsidy to new operators. The result of the tender will be announced on 1 July.

### **Plane or train?**

Swedish airline ticket retailer Flygstolen now provides comparisons on its site of air and rail journey times and fares – see [www.flygstoken.se](http://www.flygstoken.se)

**Thanks** to Craig Halsall, Geoff Hassall, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Dennis McLean, Len Regan, Tris Tottenham, Roger Wheaton, [www.railexpress.com.au](http://www.railexpress.com.au), [www.railpage.com.au](http://www.railpage.com.au), *Age*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun*, *Railway Digest*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Today's Railways Europe* for Rail news.

# BUS NEWS

## Australian Capital Territory

The annual Canberra Multicultural Food Festival has become huge event – so much so that for the past two years it has taken over the City Bus Interchange. From Friday 12 to Sunday 14 February this vital Interchange was closed and buses diverted to stops on Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit. This year - unlike in 2015 - London Circuit remained open for buses only, and temporary bus stops placed there, lessening the disruption compared to last year. On the nights of 12/13 and 13/14 February ACTION operated all-night Nightrider services to take people home from the Festival.

## New South Wales

### Sydney Buses

There were changes to bus services on the northern beaches from Sunday 14 February:

- E32 and E35 to Manly Wharf - services will be discontinued due to low patronage.

E50 - Manly to Milsons Point - one additional service at 0636 to Milsons Point.

E65 South Curl Curl to the City - two additional AM peak services to the City at 0600 and 0845

Route 132 North Balgowlah to Manly - one additional service to connect with 0635 ferry.

Route 139 Warringah Mall to Manly - two additional services connecting with the 0610 and 0635 ferries.

Route 142 Skyline Shops to Manly - three additional services connecting with the 0610, 0635 and 0820 ferries and two additional services connecting with 1830 and 1920 ferries at Manly.

E36 North Curl Curl to Manly - an additional stop at Pitt and Griffin Roads, North Curl Curl.

E41 North Balgowlah to Manly - an additional stop at Balgowlah Shops.

L88 Avalon to the City - additional services to and from the City.

L90 Avalon to the City - three additional early morning services from Avalon to the City.

Despite the route alteration in the Haymarket area for routes 423/L23/426/428/L28 last year, the State Transit map still shows these services running inward via Hay and Elizabeth Streets whereas the route is via Pitt and Goulburn Streets to Elizabeth St. Outward journeys are via Goulburn and Pitt Streets rather than via Hay St.

### Griffith Buslines

A complete set of new timetables and a network map, produced by Transit Graphics, was introduced in January. See

[www.buslinesgroup.com.au/images/pdf/griffith/BU\\_SLINES\\_Griffith\\_A4.pdf](http://www.buslinesgroup.com.au/images/pdf/griffith/BU_SLINES_Griffith_A4.pdf)

## Queensland

### Brisbane Buses

From Monday 22 February, route P332 Chermerside to City will be extended to begin at St. Flannan's primary school at Zillmere, instead of Chermerside, and will end

at UQ Lakes instead of the CBD. Two morning peak trips will also be added, with the final morning inbound service leaving later at 0851 (instead of 0751). Route P332 will be renamed from this time due to the route change and will become route P332 Zillmere to University of Queensland (UQ). The changes to route P332 are being made to reduce overcrowding on routes 330 Bracken Ridge to City BUZ and route 66 University of Queensland to Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. They will be introduced as a 12-month trial and may be made permanent if it proves popular. The changes are a Brisbane Transport initiative and are funded by Brisbane City Council.

A new peak bus service, Route 238 'The Riverlink' was introduced from 22 February. It starts at Hawthorne ferry terminal, connects with services at Riverside at Eagle St and also serves Morningside station and the Cannon Hill Bus Interchange. The initial service has five trips between 0700 and 0810 and six between 1700 and 1820. It should improve access from the eastern part of Park Hill Village at Murarrie to the CBD and will also increase access to the Lytton Road industrial area.

The proposed bus network on the Redcliffe Peninsula following opening of the Kippa-Ring railway in mid 2016 is:

- An upgraded network with an additional 261 services a week and a range of new options, including additional early morning and night-time services and an increased operating hours on six routes every weekday;
- More buses on the weekend, with increased operating hours on eight routes;
- Better access to weekend buses, with 98% of residents within a 400 m walk of a Sunday service;
- More daily bus trips, with an extra 157 trips each weekday and an additional 104 trips every weekend; and
- Higher frequency services during peak hour so that 31% of residents will be within a 400m walking distance of a high frequency service in the morning peak. This is nearly four times the number of residents who have close access to these types of services now.

## Victoria by Craig Halsall

### New University shuttles for 2016

On 15 February PTV announced details of the new weekday only university express shuttles that commenced as soon as the following day, along with improvements to two other services serving tertiary institutions for the start of the 2016 academic year. The first three services were promised in the \$100M Labor Bus Plan announced prior to the state election at the end of 2014.

Some publicity suggests the routes will only run during university semesters/trimesters, however there are no notes on the actual timetables that indicate this. Routes 201, 301 and 403 will operate on Labour Day as classes are held on this day, but at this stage 887 is not shown to be running. It is also interesting to note

the 201 commenced three weeks before the 768 service to Deakin Uni resumes for Trimester 1.

The shuttles are:

- 201 (Ventura Knoxfield depot) between Deakin Uni and Box Hill - operating every 20 minutes from 0700 until 2200, commenced 22 February. This is in addition to the existing 281, 732, 767 and 768 services along this corridor, providing a combined 12 services an hour during peak periods from Box Hill. Services skip the stop outside the Elgar Road sub-campus, however the 281, 767 and 768 stop here – Ventura cited concerns about potential overcrowding.
- 301 (East-West (Dysons subsidiary)) between La Trobe Uni and Reservoir - every 10 mins from 0700 to 1900, in addition to existing 561 which operates every 20 minutes during the day and until after 2200. Counter-peak trains between the City and Reservoir operate every 10 minutes (better in some cases). Although the service is designed to provide a 'best option' for students coming from the inner area (compared to the slow 86 tram, 350 bus or myriad of train-bus options, including those from Ivanhoe, Heidelberg and Macleod Stations on the Hurstbridge lines), however generous runtimes mean in many cases the journey planner continues to recommend alternative options. On the first afternoon, buses were arriving at Reservoir up to seven minutes ahead of schedule. 301 commenced 16 February to coincide with the enrolment day for international students. A new access point and improved bus facilities have been provided at the Thomas Cherry building on campus, with the service not serving the eastern stop near David Myers building or the Plenty Road bus interchange.
- 403 (Sita) interpeak shuttle between Melbourne Uni and Footscray between 0900 and 1500, eliminating the need for students coming from regional area having to change from at V/Line service at Footscray to a Metro train and then change again at North Melbourne for the 401 shuttle bus. Commencing 22 February, roughly three trips per hour operate, timed to meet V/Line services. The service supplements the 402 service from Footscray, which was upgraded last June to run at 10 minute headways interpeak., Like the 401 shuttles, buses make an intermediate stop at Royal Melbourne Hospital.
- 505 (Dysons Bundoora depot) – a new timetable from 21 February sees a small number of additional peak services between Moonee Ponds and Melbourne Uni, improving access for students living in Parkville Gardens, the former Commonwealth Games village, however the former hourly clockface headway has been lost and the second bus only operate a handful of additional trips. Runtimes have also been speeded up. Buses continue to be timed to meet trains at Royal Park, providing an alternative to the connecting 19 and 55 trams for CBD access.
- 670 (Ventura Lilydale depot) – services from Ringwood to Lilydale via Maroondah Hwy have been extended to Box Hill Institute of TAFE's new Lilydale Lakeside campus from 22 February,

although classes resumed the week before. The timetable remains unchanged from when services previously operated into the Swinburne Uni campus at the same location in July 2013, after Liberal government funding cuts saw campuses consolidated (Labor has since provided funding to reopen the site). In the interim, services terminated at Lilydale Marketplace, with a turning loop near the gate to the former campus. Readers may recall PTV only updated the online timetable and signage along the route nine months after the campus shut, after *Nine News* aired a story about the bus to a closed university.

- 887 (Ventura Rosebud depot) – a new limited stops service began on 22 February between Rosebud, Mornington, Frankston and Monash Uni's Peninsula Campus. A campaign had been run on the Peninsula for several months to retain a service after funding for the former free PenBus service, introduced in May 2013 by the Federal Government under Labor, ran out. Last semester the council ran the service with \$3 fares while a permanent solution could be found. One bus operates back and forth, resulting in an approximately 125 minute headway from 0645 until 1830, which is coincidentally timed to suit CBD commuters changing to the train at Frankston. The service, which saves about 15 minutes on the regular 788 option, plus the need to change buses, is timed to meet the intercampus bus to Monash Uni's Clayton Campus, which now operates on a slightly revised timetable. PenBus previously continued to the Clayton Campus, providing an hourly headway between campuses in conjunction with the university funded intercampus option; along with a better span catering for 8am classes and 6pm finishes at the Clayton campus.

Buses on 201 & 301 wear a modified PTV livery, with large route numbers on the side similar to that worn by vehicles operating 401 and 601, while two Sita buses have also gained PTV colours for the 403. Most buses on the 887 should be in PTV colours, replacing the coaches in a special PenBus livery.

In addition to the changes to the intercampus bus between the Clayton and Peninsula campuses, Monash Uni has also removed the footnote that selected trips on the intercampus bus between the Clayton and Caulfield campuses are limited to 57 seated passengers. Qunices have recently purchased a third low floor bus to operate on the service, accommodating a further 20 students or staff members. Since the start of last year this route runs at a 17-18 min headway.

### **Dandenong City Loop to end**

Greater Dandenong Council have announced that their free City Loop bus around Dandenong, linking the station, civic centre, market, hospital, Chisholm TAFE and plaza will cease on 8 March. The service was initially introduced in December 1996, and in early years featured Grenda's B10Ms heavily decorated for Christmas and Easter. The service is operated by Ventura on behalf of the Council. Factors contributing

to its demise include the frequent 901 SmartBus serving Dandenong Hospital, relocation of about two-thirds of bus routes from Thomas St to Langhorne Place next to Dandenong Plaza, a decision to reroute trips past the Metro 3175 housing estate (and Ventura head office) and the decision to reduce the span to 1000 to 1500 last May.

### St Kilda festival changes

Service changes for the annual St Kilda Festival on Sunday 14 February largely focused on detours, with no extra services:

- 246 (Clifton Hill – Elsternwick) south of Alma Rd again operated as a connecting shuttle during most of the day to avoid traffic congestion around the festival impacting on-time running north of St Kilda Junction, with through passengers required to change buses.
- 600 and 922 (St Kilda – Southland and 623 (St Kilda – Glen Waverley) were truncated at Barkly St instead of St Kilda Light Rail Station and Luna Park respectively.
- 606 (Port Melbourne – Elsternwick) was truncated on the north side of St Kilda at Park St & Mary St. Any passengers travelling to Elwood or Elsternwick were advised to find their own way through the festival to connect to the 246.

Until 2013, 600, 922 and 923 operated to a Saturday timetable to/from Southland, while 623 traditionally ran an extended evening timetable, with the last bus to Glen Waverley an hour later at 2145 last year, and as late as 0045 for previous festivals.

### White Night festival changes

CBD bus services were disrupted from 1700 Saturday 20 February until 0730 Sunday 21 February due to numerous road closures across the CBD for the annual overnight White Night cultural and arts festival, which again attracted huge crowds, with reports suggesting as many 600,000 showed up over the 12 hour event.

- Passengers for 216, 219, 220, 232, 234, 235, 236, 250 and 251, along with Night Buses 941, 942, 944, 945, 951 and 952 were directed to board

buses at the “Western Transport Hub” on Queen St between Bourke St and Little Bourke St

- Passengers for 200, 207, 302, 304, 605, 905, 906 and 907, along with Night Buses were directed to board buses at the “Eastern Transport Hub” on Spring St outside Parliament Station
- Services on Sita’s 402 (Footscray – East Melbourne) diverted along Rathdowne St, Faraday St, Nicholson St & Victoria Parade
- A rare mention of a detour to McKenzies’ Elidon service was provided, with the 1810 service travelling via Dudley St, Peel St, Victoria St to St Vincent’s Hospital in lieu of LaTrobe St,. However no stops were missed

Unlike 2015’s event, there was no overnight service provided on the DART routes to the Doncaster area, with passengers having to catch the 961 and 966 Night Bus services instead. Online information implied Night Bus services would be extended by an hour to around 0630 but no timetable details were given.

### Antipodes Festival service changes

Melbourne’s annual street festival celebrating Greek culture on the weekend of 27/28 February saw Lonsdale St closed to traffic. Transdev detoured its services via Franklin St, with alternative stops available. CDCM’s 605 service to Gardenvale travelled along LaTrobe St with passengers required to board buses in either Queen St or Exhibition St.

**Thanks** to Jason Blackman, Craig Halsall, Matthew Gibbins, Peter Parker and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board* for Victorian Bus news.

### Western Australia

From Sunday 21 February TransPerth services changed as follows:

**Routes 24, 25, 27, 28 and 950** time changes only.  
**Routes 23, 102, 107 and 950** no longer serve stop 10389 Mounts Bay Road at UWA. Route 23 will also undergo time changes.

**Thanks** to Victor Isaacs, Tris Tottenham and *Transit Australia* for non-Victorian Bus news.

# AIR NEWS

## International

**Tigerair** will introduce daily Melbourne-Bali flights from 23 March.

**Hong Kong Airlines** will commence year-round flights from Hong Kong to the Gold Coast and Cairns from early April. This follows the success of their seasonal service which commenced in January. It will fly twice-weekly then thrice-weekly from July on the same direct route to the Gold Coast, returning via Cairns.

**All Nippon Airways** commenced daily flights from Tokyo Haneda to Sydney on 11 December: dp Tokyo 2210, arr Sydney 0935; dp Sydney 2130, arr Tokyo 0505.

**Air Asia X** will commence flights from the Gold Coast to Auckland and v.v. from 23 March. This removes the

need to lay up an aircraft at Coolangatta during the day.

**Philippine Air** is to fly Cairns-Auckland and v.v. four times weekly from December 2016.

## Domestic

From 9 February **Qantas** introduced an additional direct flight from the Sunshine Coast to Sydney departing at 0640.

On 28 February **Rex** commenced flights from Perth to Albany 23 times a week and to Esperance 18 times a week

**Thanks** to Tony Bailey, Tris Tottenham and the *Australian* for Air news.

# ODD SPOT

There used to be comprehensive Bus information available at Manly Wharf. There was a small dispatcher's office in the forecourt bus bay area where paper timetables could be obtained (we are talking 1970s here). This later shifted to the old tram sidings across the road. When the Information Centre opened timetables were stocked – at first inside, later outside. However, Council staff were driven nuts by people coming in to ask questions about buses. Having the timetables inside or outside did not stem the flow. So Council decided not to have anything to do with Sydney Buses. An infamous Sydney Buses sign ("*Sydney Buses Timetables are NOT stocked here*") arose from this. One night, coming home on route 135, Geoff Lambert, ATA President, overheard no fewer than five people having extended conversations with the driver at the wharf before deciding not to travel. These were probably non-locals.

Nothing beats the experience Geoff had with two German girls who wanted to get to Melbourne from Manly Wharf – on the ferry and the train! He told them it would take a minimum of 12 hours because it was a thousand kilometres. He thinks they didn't believe him. No paper timetable for that. He found it rather surprising that they were so ill-informed. It is something you might expect of Americans but not Germans. His experience of dealing with German tourists at Bandicoot Heaven on North Head is that they generally arrive there with a map they printed out before they left Germany!

## 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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