



TABLE TALK

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RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

QR CityTrain timetable disarray

The Acting CEO of Queensland Rail provided a report to the Queensland Minister of Transport on 3 January about the failure of CityTrain to provide an adequate service on Christmas Day, with the cancellation of 235 of the scheduled 730 services, plus the failure to provide adequate notice of the cancellations. The report found the failure occurred because of:

- Constrained driver availability due to Christmas Day falling on the last Sunday of the year, meaning that many drivers had no Sunday availability left under the Enterprise Agreement;
- Higher than anticipated leisure day unavailability;
- Timing of notification of unplanned absences; and
- Limited rostering system flexibility to respond.

The Acting CEO said the main lessons were:

- To improve timeliness of notification to customers
- Earlier publication of public holiday and major event rosters;
- More timely communication with train crew about availability.

And, of most interest to readers of this magazine:

- That patronage on Christmas Day is generally about 60% lower than for a normal Sunday. Hence a review will be undertaken of data for the past five years with a view to assessing whether QR should reduce Christmas Day services from the usual Sunday/Public Holiday half hourly frequency to hourly.

Meanwhile, emails released under Freedom of Information legislation reveal that TransLink apparently considered QR was so unprepared for the extra services for the new Redcliffe line's opening in October that there was no way the timetable could be achieved. TransLink's passenger transport services general manager Simon Cook wrote to a colleague that QR "never had a chance of resourcing" adequately ahead of its 3 October timetable. It would have needed about

100 extra drivers "on top of the old timetable" to make it work. As early as February TransLink was querying QR plans to hire extra drivers.

On 23 January, the QR timetable changed again to reflect the end of the school holidays and increased patronage. These timetables are online at <https://translink.com.au/service-updates/112836>

However, a QR spokeswoman confirmed the new timetable was in fact, a reversion to the 7 November timetable. It will remain for the remainder of 2017. QR Acting CEO Mr Scales said the 7 November timetable delivered certainty for commuters, with an average of 94% of trains running on time. He said the 2017 timetable would also allow QR to focus on teaching new driver recruits. The 7 November timetable featured 333 fewer services on weekdays compared with the 4 October timetable. It will deliver 7883 services each week. Transport Minister Stirling Hinchliffe told ABC Radio this week he was "seeing gradual improvements but this isn't an easy thing to turn around."

The *Courier-Mail's* analysis of the 23 January timetable claims that it has "wound the clock back seven years on the number of services in some of the southeast's growth corridors." The analysis centres on 12 stations identified by public transport advocates as problem zones. Worst is Toombul, where train services are lower than 2010, with 159 daily weekday services compared with 170 then. That is just 23 extra services a day on 1981 levels; two years after electrification of the network. One of the State Government's own backbenchers, Member for Nudgee Leanne Linard, last week weighed in by launching a petition calling on QR to fix the inner-north mess.

Train services stopping at Redbank in the fast-growing Ipswich region have also shrunk below 2010 service levels, dropping from 108 daily weekday services then to 95 services a day. That is just one extra service on QR's 1998 train timetable in force almost two decades ago.

Ferny Grove station was the only station to show a major improvement, with 48 more services under the

2017 timetable compared to 2009. But Rail Back on Track advocate Robert Dow said overcrowding was still a problem.

Weekday services per day (Monday-Thursday):

Sandgate:

1998: 78
2001: 78
2009: 78
2017: 106

Toombul:

1998: 92
2001: 89
2009: 170
2017: 159

Strathpine:

1998: 91
2001: 94
2010: 101
2017: 101

Burpengary:

1998: 83
2001: 83
2010: 90
2017: 100

Kuraby:

1998: 89
2001: 82
2009: 93
2017: 97

Lota:

1998: 85
2001: 85
2009: 93
2017: 100

Doomben:

1998: unavailable
2001: 41
2009: 53
2017: 59

Ferny Grove:

1998: 80
2001: 81
2009: 94
2017: 142

Helensvale:

1998: unavailable
2001: 60
2010: 76
2017: 92

Redbank:

1998: 94
2001: 97
2010: 108
2017: 95

Richlands: (opened 2011)

2011: 86
2017: 90

Landsborough:

1998: unavailable
2001: 49
2010: 52
2017: 54

QR CityTrain projects

The Queensland Infrastructure Plan was released on 16 January. The Beerburrum-to-Nambour rail duplication is listed as ready for consideration in the state budget, at an estimated cost of \$780 million. The project will be needed in just six years with the line expected to reach capacity by 2023. The recommendation is likely to mean the project will attract funding in this year's budget. But the state may need funding help from the Commonwealth to build the project. The duplication of the line has been on the agenda of successive governments.

Brisbane Cross River Rail is described as "having progressed out of the pipeline" because it has already received a funding commitment, and it will instead form part of the State Infrastructure Plan. The state government has so far committed \$850 million to the \$5.4 billion project, with the Commonwealth agreeing to provide \$10 million.

ARTC timetable amendments

The following amendments to freight schedules have been made to ARTC's WTT of 22 January (ARTC TAA 0170-2017 refers):

6BM7 Fridays runs as tabled to arrive Culcairn North 2253 depart 2344 (Sat), pass Albury 0020, Seymour Loop 0241, arrive Kilmore East 0310, depart 0337, thence as tabled.

7SM5 Saturdays runs as tabled to arrive Culcairn North 0845 (Sun) depart 0857, arrive Ettamogah 0935, depart 1005, pass Albury 1014, Seymour Loop 1258, arrive Tallarook 1310, depart 1323, pass Somerton Loop 1416, Tottenham 1437, arrive Melbourne Operations Terminal 1500 terminate.

7WM2 Saturdays runs as tabled to arrive Junee 1017, depart 1042, arrive Culcairn North 1212, depart 1248, thence as tabled.

1MW2 Sundays departs Canal Siding 0200, pass Tottenham 0217, Somerton Loop 0238, arrive Kilmore East 0311, depart 0316, pass Seymour Loop 0343, arrive Albury 0627, depart 0715, arrive Ettamogah 0728, depart 0813, pass Henty 0902, Wagga Wagga 0951, Bomen South 0958, arrive Junee 1029, depart 1034, pass Cootamundra 1132, Wallendbeen 1156, Harden 1216, Joppa Junction 1445, Goulburn 1450, Medway Junction 1518, Wingello 1530, Exeter 1549, arrive Moss Vale 1559, depart 1607, pass Picton 1659, Macarthur South Junction 1721, Glenfield Loop 1738, Leightonfield (ARTC) 1750, arrive SOY 1800, depart 1850, pass Marrickville Junction 1916, thence as tabled by TfNSW.

6NY3 Fridays runs as tabled to arrive Yarrabandai 0219, depart 0255 (Sat), pass Ivanhoe 0707, arrive Broken Hill 1136, depart 1815, thence as tabled.

6AB6 Fridays runs as tabled to arrive Broken Hill 0425, depart 0630 (Sat), pass Kinalung 0712, arrive Kaleentha 0829, depart 0910, pass Darnick 0948, arrive Ivanhoe 1026, depart 1106, arrive Trida 1149, depart 1247, pass Roto 1314, Matakana 1339, Euabalong West 1406, Kiacatoo 1430, Condobolin

1449, Yarrabandai 1518, arrive Goobang Junction 1559, depart 1730, thence as tabled.

High Speed Rail

by Sarah Martin, Weekend Australian, 14 January

Malcolm Turnbull will be asked to consider giving the green light to developers who want to forge ahead with a project for high-speed rail on Australia's east coast. Consolidated Land and Rail Australia, an Australian-based consortium that has already secured almost 20,000ha for new development sites along the rail corridor, will present an unsolicited bid to the Prime Minister within the first half of this year.

CLARA wants the first stage of the rail development to run from Melbourne to Shepparton, with a new regional city site near the line to underpin the financial viability of the project. Its 30-year plan would be followed by links between Sydney and Goulburn and Goulburn and Canberra before being finally linked to the Shepparton-Melbourne line by the 2040s. Using Japanese Maglev technology, rail travel time between Sydney and Melbourne would be just under two hours.

Nick Cleary, chairman of CLARA, said the company was preparing a "detailed bid" for government and said the one ingredient required for it to progress plans for an environmental impact statement was "political will". "We have had great discussions with government at all levels — they all have showed initial interest in the project but have all requested a more detailed proposal," Mr Cleary said. "We are very excited to now be at a point to deliver this required information within the first half of 2017. This is the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Snowy Hydro Scheme, of this generation. This is the time to show we can still do nation-building projects. The engagement with the private sector will

demonstrate the government's role as an enabler for large scale projects."

Mr Cleary said the CLARA plan did not just have a single focus but would "solve many problems and provide a tremendous boost to the nation in all ways". CLARA has signed up Hitachi Consulting Australia as lead consultants to prepare the bid for government. "We are the only company that has the land under our legal control to be able to implement this nation-building project, and solve so many of the states' and national issues — including congestion, housing affordability, overcrowding, and how to house the additional 14 million people by 2050," Mr Cleary said. "And in solving these we are also able to deliver the long-awaited, often-sought, achievable high speed rail at no cost to government."

While Mr Turnbull has previously expressed support for the \$200 billion proposal, Urban Infrastructure Minister Paul Fletcher is understood to be highly sceptical of the plan. However, after a recent visit to China and South Korea, Industry Minister Greg Hunt said that cabinet wanted to advance the project, saying "now is the time" for Australia to develop high speed rail on Australia's east coast.

Even if the federal government rebuffs its call for support, CLARA is expected to continue to negotiate with the Victorian and NSW governments and at council level. John Alexander, chairman of a parliamentary committee examining better transport connectivity, has argued that there exists a "perfect storm" of opportunity for the project to be financially viable.

Also see Recommended Reading below.



The map published by CLARA's appears to show Canberra served by a branch line, and Wagga Wagga and Albury served by some sort of undefined connection. The eight proposed new cities are marked.

Sydney Metro

Construction will start this year on Sydney Metro tunnels under Sydney Harbour and the CBD. NSW Ministers for Planning, Rob Stokes, and Transport, Andrew Constance, announced on 10 January the approval of the Chatswood to Sydenham section of the project. Mr Constance said, "The scale of this project will rival any megaproject across the globe, and today marks the start of even more grunt work. This is an unprecedented boost to rail capacity for our great city."

Construction sites will be established in the Sydney CBD this year. By the end of 2018, the first of five tunnel boring machines will be carving out new twin tunnels. Two consortia are competing to build the new twin tunnels, with the contract expected to be awarded around the middle of 2017. Planning approval includes:

- 16.5km of new metro rail between Chatswood and Sydenham, including 15.5km of new twin railway tunnels under Sydney Harbour and the Sydney CBD;
- Seven new metro railway stations at Crows Nest, Victoria Cross (North Sydney), Barangaroo, Martin Place, Pitt St, Central (new underground platforms), and Waterloo.

The planning process for conversion of the Bankstown line to Metro standards will start this year.

NSW Train Link: Significant incidents

On 17 and 18 January, due to bush fires between Tarago and Bungendore, the railway was closed and trains replaced by buses between Goulburn and Canberra and v.v.

On 24 January the 0455 Brisbane to Sydney XPT was replaced by a bus for the entire journey due to a points failure at Acacia Ridge, south of Brisbane. A delay of more than 180 minutes for buses departing Brisbane was expected. Replacement buses also operated from Casino, where delays of up to 30 minutes were expected. Although NSW Train Link cited the reason of "points failure", another factor must have been Queensland Rail's prohibition of this train departing Brisbane any later than 0600. After that time, its southbound passage would disrupt northbound express trains from the Gold Coast. On the following day, the 0455 XPT from Brisbane was replaced by a bus as far as Casino.

Sydney Trains WTT 21 January 2017

Version 6.01 of Sydney Trains Working Timetable has been issued dated 21 January 2017.

Victorian rail projects assessment

Infrastructure Australia has positively assessed business cases for both the Melbourne Metro Tunnel project, and the Murray Basin rail network upgrade. The January release of IA's latest Infrastructure Priority List has added the Metro Tunnel as a High Priority Project, the highest level of assessment. The cross-CBD rail tunnel project joins the Western Sydney Airport and M4 and WestConnex motorway projects in NSW, the M80 Ring Road upgrade in Victoria, the Ipswich Motorway Rocklea-Darra Stage 1c project in

Queensland, and the Perth Freight Link in Western Australia on the High Priority Projects list.

"The Australian Infrastructure Plan is very clear on the need for investment in high-capacity, high-frequency public transport services to support projected population growth in our major cities," IA chief executive Philip Davies said. "Rail services into and around central Melbourne are already reaching capacity in peak periods, and in some cases passengers are unable to board trains. The number of people travelling by rail into the Melbourne CBD during the morning peak is forecast to grow by 65% between 2015 and 2031, with patronage on lines servicing growth corridors in the city's north, west and south-east growing most quickly. The proposed Melbourne Metro would address network capacity constraints by enabling 20,000 more passengers to use Melbourne's rail network during each peak hour."

Meanwhile, the ongoing upgrade of the Murray Basin rail network was added to the Infrastructure Priority List as a Priority Project, the second-highest level of assessment.

"Capacity on the Murray Basin rail network is constrained by the mixture of broad and standard gauge lines and a 19-tonne axle load limit, which means trains cannot operate at full capacity," Davies explained. "The Murray Basin Rail Project has been identified as a Priority Project as it addresses the fragmentation of the regional rail network and will alleviate current capacity constraints. This will ultimately reduce rail freight costs to businesses and improve the competitiveness of Murray Basin exports."

Melbourne Metro Tunnel

Franklin St and A'Beckett St in Melbourne's CBD were closed on 16 January for construction to begin on the \$10.9 billion Metro Tunnel. Acting Transport Minister Jaala Pulford said they will not re-open "for many years," and that "This is the start of major disruption for this massive project, which will bring decades of benefits for Melbourne. I thank people for their patience. I know these closures will be disruptive but they will enable us to build the turn-up-and-go train system we need to stay the most liveable city in the world."

Construction crews will use the newly-closed roads to dig 11 storeys below ground level to build the new CBD North station below Swanston St. Work is also underway on St Kilda Road at what will be Domain station, with a section of Domain Road to close later this year as construction ramps up.

V/Line: Opening of Caroline Springs

On Saturday 28 January a VLocity DMU set was timetabled to run from Melbourne to the new station at Caroline Springs, 19.6 km from Southern Cross between Deer Park and Rockbank. The train was open for inspection in platform 1 from 0900 until 1400 during a Community Day. Caroline Springs station opened for traffic with V/Line's new timetable of 29 January.

V/Line: 29 January timetable

With the introduction of the V/Line timetable of 29 January the following train describer numbering were introduced:

8000-8099 Northern Region services operating on the Bendigo line and associated branches.

8100-8249 Western Region services operating on the Ballarat line and associated branches.

8250-8299 South Western Region services operating on the Geelong line via Werribee.

8300-8399 North Eastern Region Broad Gauge services operating on the Seymour line and associated branches.

8400-8499 Eastern Region services operating on the Traralgon / Bairnsdale line.

8500-8599 Central Region services operating on the Metro Trains Network.

8600-8649 North Eastern and Central Region Standard Gauge Services.

8650-8699 Not utilised, reserved for future use.

8700-8899 South Western Region services operating on the Geelong / Warrnambool line via Wyndham Vale.

8900-8999 Central Region services operating on the V/Line Network.

Off-peak fares will apply to:

- The new 1713 weekday train Melbourne to Warrnambool,
- The 0515 Shepparton to Melbourne train (due 0759), and
- The new 1631 train Melbourne to Shepparton.

V/Line in the heat

V/Line has eased speed restrictions on its freight network in north-west Victoria. From 9 January, freight trains which were unable to run between Dunolly and Birchip (Mildura line), and Echuca and Deniliquin between midday and 2000 or 2200 when temperatures reach 33 degrees, can now operate at 30 kms per hour. The change follows site inspections and track works. Works and inspections are also progressing between Tocumwal and Shepparton to upgrade the line to enable an easing of heat speed restrictions. In normal conditions, trains on the V/Line freight network run at a maximum of 80km/h, with some sections restricted to 50km/h.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Station closedowns

As part of the **Dandenong line** Sky Rail project, **Carnegie** station is closed for seven weeks from Monday 23 January. Replacement buses are running.

Ross Morrison *analyses the replacement bus timetable*: Given the opposition (rightly or wrongly) to the project, you would think the replacement bus service would be fast and frequent – similar to what was provided between Caulfield and Moorabbin last year. Some of the “highlights” of the timetable (from Carnegie to Caulfield) I’ve found include:

In the morning peak between 0700 and 0900, 11 replacement services are operating. In the same two-hour period, 27 trains stop at Murrumbeena. Fair enough you can’t run that many buses, but you would

think there would be some consistency in the timetable, but no, the buses are operating anywhere between eight and 13 minute intervals. Between the morning and evening peaks, Dandenong line trains operate every 10 minutes. However, before 1530, again the buses are operating at intervals of anywhere between eight and 15 minutes. Then from 1530 until after 2000, the buses are operating every 10 minutes. Which begs the question, if it is possible to run every 10 minutes at this time of the day, why can’t a similar standard frequency be provided in the morning peak and before 1530?

On Saturdays/Sundays the replacement buses operate every 20 minutes – even when the train frequency is 10 minutes from 1000 until 1900(ish). Some of the connections at Murrumbeena and Caulfield defy description. For example, on the weekends, if you catch Dandenong line trains arriving at Caulfield at 1538 and 1548, the replacement bus doesn’t depart until 1556 – two minutes before the next Dandenong line train arrives!

Finally, the replacement buses are scheduled to take 14 minutes to travel from Carnegie to Caulfield. The route 900 buses from Carnegie to Caulfield are timetabled for a six minute journey from the same bus stop in Carnegie!

The substitute timetables are on the PTV and Metro Trains websites. The Metro Trains website is better to see the train/bus connecting” services.

Buses replaced trains between **Box Hill/Blackburn and Ringwood** from 27 December 2016 until 5 February 2017. Journey times increased by up to 40 minutes.

Albert Isaacs *recounts his experiences*: The fact that rail services would be replaced by buses Box Hill-Ringwood from 27 December to 29 January on account of level crossing removal and major alterations to stations at both Blackburn and Heatherdale, had been surprisingly well publicised for some months prior to the changes. However, the fact that these replacement buses were extended to run until 5 February did not get much publicity!

Further, major changes to arrangements from 11 January 2017 also received very little promotion. Prior to 11 January, as is usually the case with bus replacements, there was a mix of express and stopping buses Box Hill-Ringwood. However, the street layout at Laburnum is such that it would be difficult for buses to come from the Maroondah Highway, visit the station, and then do a loop to return to the highway. Therefore, the Laburnum bus stop was sighted on the highway, about 150 m from the station and, presumably, this encouraged a number of complaints. By 11 January, work on the level crossing at Blackburn Road were such that City trains could terminate/depart from Blackburn station but not travel on the Down side of the station. Therefore, the alternative arrangements from that date were that express buses to Ringwood would continue to operate to/from Box Hill but most trains (but not quite all) that had previously terminated/departed from Box Hill now

continued to/from Blackburn where they connected to/from buses stopping at Nunawading, Mitcham, Heatherdale and Ringwood.

There was some information about these changes online, but not much other promotion of the modifications to arrangements. Even Metro Trains' advertisements in the daily papers were incorrect. The VDUs at stations on the Up side of Box Hill were erratic, sometimes showing trains terminating at Box Hill, and at other times correctly showing them as Blackburn services. Nevertheless, there were a half-a-dozen or so Metro Trains' officers on the platform at Box Hill advising people for stations Laburnum to Heatherdale to stay on the train, whilst those for Ringwood or beyond were directed to change to express buses at Box Hill. (Between Box Hill and Ringwood it was a direct bus trip straight along the Maroondah Highway.)

Bus stop sites at both Box Hill and Blackburn also created problems. Although there is a large bus station right above the Box Hill train station, it is fully used by regular services, with no room for any sporadic services. Therefore there was again a walk of about 100 m to the rail replacement bus stops on the Maroondah Highway (ironically right opposite the route 109 tram terminus). The bus stops at Blackburn were in Railway Road on the north side of the station but, because of continuing work on Blackburn, all trains arrived and departed from the island platform on the south side. This meant that people going from train to bus and vice versa had to take a longish walk along temporary paths across the works area and with rickety wooden bases.

I was heard to say: "Let's hope all this aggravation is worth it in the long run, or is this yet another case of rail commuters being inconvenienced for the sake of motorists?"

At **Alphington** (Hurstbridge line), the level crossing will be removed by lowering the Hurstbridge line to run under Grange Road, safely separating trains from traffic. The project is part of the transformation of the Hurstbridge line, which will remove the Lower Plenty Road level crossing, rebuild Rosanna station and duplicate the line from Heidelberg to Rosanna.

Bayswater station (Belgrave line) was re-opened on 12 December 2016, following a 37 day construction period. By 22 December 2016 the Mountain Highway crossing had been removed and the road reopened.

Near **Mernda Park** station (Cranbourne line), a road overbridge will replace the Thompsons Road level crossing and new paths and improved lighting for pedestrians and cyclists will be constructed.

Yarra Trams: CBD closedown

The criminal/security incident that occurred in Melbourne CBD on the afternoon of Friday 20 January caused the suspension of tram services on most major City centre routes. Swanston, Elizabeth, William, Flinders, Collins and Bourke Streets were closed. A limited service operated along Latrobe St.

Also see Victorian bus news below.

A new way to Bunbury?

The WA National Party want to use funds from their proposed state mining tax to resurrect a long-touted plan to extend the suburban electrified Mandurah line 100 kms to Bunbury. The project has been previously estimated by the party to cost \$1 billion. Nationals leader Brendon Grylls said he wanted to bring better public transport to the bush, and he would use his mooted controversial increase to the mining rental lease fee to fund the plan. The proposal was first mooted in 2008 by the then Labor government, which commissioned a feasibility study into laying 140 kms of track down Kwinana Freeway and Forrest Highway. However, transport officials poured cold water on the idea in 2015, saying progress on the rail link "was not going anywhere".

KiwiRail reopening

Following the November earthquake centred on Kaikoura, the South Island Main Trunk line was re-opened for freight trains between Blenheim and the salt works at Lake Grassmere on 16 January. Repair work continues on the remainder of the line.

Belgian timetable book

The NMBS/SNCB, Belgian Railways, timetable book was not published for the 2017 European timetable year. It used to be a very well-produced volume, fully in both languages of the country, Dutch and French (partially in German and English).

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BUS NEWS

New Zealand

Dunedin Buses, operated by Otago Regional Council, did not operate on Christmas Day. However, a limited bus service did operate. It was provided by the Dunedin Heritage Bus Association. Members drove their restored buses. Fares were not charged but donations accepted. A similar service is provided at Easter.

South Australia

Due to low patronage numbers, the T2TX express services between Arndale Centre Interchange and the City were cancelled from 29 January and the Arndale Centre Park 'n' Ride removed. The T2T was introduced as a trial in July 2016.

Victoria

SkyBus, operators of Melbourne's express CBD to Tullamarine Airport service, will also run an Avalon Express service meeting all flights from 1 February. This seems to indicate that Skybus is replacing the Sita service.

Earlier bedtimes in Ballarat

As reported in January's *Table Talk*, a new network was implemented in Ballarat on 29 January. Further investigation has highlighted a significant reduction of overall span in comparison to the preceding timetables, although some routes do enjoy some later trips or little change on some days. Below are some examples. The removal of Friday night services on trunk routes is a particular loss, as it will limit options to enjoy late night shopping, after work drinks, dinners out, school fetes etc.

Route 1 to Wendouree replaced by Route 11

- Last Mon – Thurs bus now 1908, was 2043
- Last Fri bus now 1908, was 2105
- Last Saturday bus now 1729, was 1920
- Last Sunday bus now 1710, was 1745

Route 2 to Wendouree replaced by Route 12

- Last Mon – Thurs bus now 1949, was 1908
- Last Fri bus now 1949, was 2115
- Last Saturday bus now 1933, was 1815
- Last Sunday bus now 1604, was 1645

Route 4 to Invermay replaced by Route 13

- Last Mon – Thurs bus now 1902, was 1804
- Last Fri bus now 1902 was 1950
- Last Saturday bus now 1645, was 1750
- Last Sunday bus now 1615, was nil

Route 10 to Buninyong replaced by Route 21

- Last Mon – Thurs bus now 1938, was 2023
- Last Fri bus now 1938, was 2106
- Last Saturday bus now 1720, was 1753
- Last Sunday bus now 1650, was 1836

Route 12 to Sebastopol replaced by Route 22

- Last Mon – Thurs bus now 1948, was 1953
- Last Fri bus now 1948, was 2125
- Last Saturday bus now 1848, was 1830

- Last Sunday bus now 1718, was 1835

Route 13 to Delacombe replaced by Route 24

- Last Mon – Thurs bus now 1902, was 1903
- Last Fri bus now 1902, was 2105
- Last Saturday bus now 1751, was 1750
- Last Sunday bus now 1651, was 1700

Koo Wee Rup – Pakenham update

Further to the list of outer metropolitan and regional bus routes with updated timetables from 29 January coinciding with the new V/Line timetable, Kingstons updated the timetable for their Koo Wee Rup – Pakenham link to maintain connections with V/Line's South Gippsland coach services.

Koo Wee Rup – Fountain Gate 'Xpress' proposal

Westernport Coachlines, part of the Dineen Group, have floated a proposal with the local community and PTV to run a privately funded 'Xpress' route between Koo Wee Rup and Fountain Gate Shopping Centre, stopping at Casey Hospital in Berwick (also providing access to the local TAFE and university). Currently those wishing to travel to Fountain Gate from South Gippsland have access to a weekly Thursday shoppers bus provided by Cleeland Bus Lines originating from Phillip Island, otherwise they must travel via Cranbourne to connect with Route 841 or travel via Pakenham and change again to the hourly Route 926.

The route would operate for an initial three-month trial, with the proposed timetable as follows:

- Weekdays ex Koo Wee Rup: 0920, 1145 and 1345
- Weekdays ex Fountain Gate: 1045, 1245 and 1715
- School Holiday Weekdays ex Koo Wee Rup: 0920, 1145, 1345 and 1615
- School Holiday Weekdays ex Koo Wee Rup: 1045, 1245, 1500 and 1715
- Weekends ex Koo Wee Rup: 0920 and 1500
- Weekends ex Fountain Gate: 1100 and 1600

Journey times appeared to be about 45 minutes each way. The timetable is designed to allow transfers to the South Gippsland V/Line services at Koo Wee Rup.

They had hoped to commence the service on 19 December but objections from other local operators (Ventura and Kingston's) have delayed the proposal – Kingston's operating the Pakenham route while Ventura operates Routes 841 and 926, the Cowes V/Line trips and a school bus from Koo Wee Rup to various schools in Berwick and Beaconsfield.

Caroline Springs and Hurstbridge consultation results

PTV have recently released the results of the consultation for the new Route 343 service proposed to be introduced between Greensborough and Hurstbridge in coming months, supplementing the single track train service.

840 people took part in the consultation, 45% Diamond Creek residents. 59% of respondents were regular users of public transport (at least 3 - 4 times a week).

No consensus was reached on which option is favoured - 428 preferred option 2 operating through St Helena over the faster option along Diamond Creek Road. Feedback suggests people would appreciate better access to facilities in St Helena (the existing 580 bus only passes within 750m of the shopping centre). As to be expected, the feedback also attracted comments that a St Andrews link would be welcomed, no doubt due to the drop-in session being held in the PM peak at Hurstbridge.

Feedback results were also released for various changes to bus services in coming months for Caroline Springs. 62.9% of respondents preferred option A for the south-west part of the suburb, which would see 462 extended onto Deer Park Station, versus 37.1% who would rather 456 divert into the area (providing an Albion connection instead) and a separate 464 service between Caroline Springs and Deer Park.

In terms of interchange for the new Ballarat Road turn-up-and-go corridor, 38% of people preferred Albion (faster trip) compared to 29% who would rather interchange at Sunshine (with more facilities). A third of respondents had no preference.

The first stage of the Caroline Springs network changes took place on 29 January, with Route 460 extended to Caroline Springs Station with a more frequent timetable, while Route 461 now travels via City Vista Ct in Plumpton South.

January detours

A moment of carnage in Melbourne's CBD around 1330 on Friday 20 January saw several pedestrians run down (five sadly killed) after a reckless driver mounted the footpath on Swanston St and Bourke St at high speed in an attempt to evade police, ending a crime spree of more than 24 hours across Melbourne. The aftermath saw many CBD streets blocked as emergency crews assisted victims and to allow police investigations to take place, with some street closures continuing until the following morning.

Detours to bus services included:

- Bus services along Lonsdale St were terminated on Victoria Parade near Parliament station during the afternoon peak and in some cases into the evening
- Routes 200 and 207 commenced on the CBD fringe at Lygon St and Queensberry St
- Similarly, Routes 250 and 251 commenced on the CBD fringe at the southern end of Rathdowne St
- Crosstown Routes 216, 219 and 220 diverted along Spencer St and in some cases Wurundjeri Way
- Routes 232 from North Altona and 235 and 237 from Fishermans Bend terminated at Southern Cross
- Routes 234 and 236 from Garden City terminated at Flinders St, using Market St to turnaround
- Route 605 did not enter the CBD, instead commencing return trips to Gardenvale near Melbourne Park on Olympic Boulevard.

Due to the Australia Day Parade in Melbourne CBD,

the 1015 and 1140 trips ex Gardenvale on CDC Melbourne Route 605 diverted via Exhibition, Latrobe, Queen and Lonsdale Streets. Passengers wanting to board at Flinders St station were directed to the stop at Flinders Lane and Queen St but this stop was also being bypassed.

Victoria's Gay and Lesbian community gathered for the annual Midsumma Pride March in St Kilda on 29 January, which resulted in buses on CDC Melbourne 606 from Port Melbourne terminating at Mary and Park Streets, St Kilda from 1330 until 1700, with no service to Elwood or Elsternwick, with passengers told to walk to Barkly St to access Routes 246, 600 or 922. Meanwhile, Transdev Routes 600 and 922 terminated on Barkly St at Carlisle St and did not proceed to St Kilda station.

FAPAS retains Rosebud extension

The previously reported announcement on the SkyBus website regarding stop changes to their Frankston and Peninsula Airport Shuttle service from 6 February was revised in mid January, removing reference to plans for delete the once daily return service to the peninsula towns of Dromana and Rosebud. Stops within St Kilda are still to be removed however, to push people onto their St Kilda express route.

Thomastown Depot opening ahead

The planned opening date for Transdev's new depot on High St, Thomastown is likely to be Monday 6 March, the third new facility to be constructed in the last year as part of their contract with the Victorian Government. The new depot will end the current lease of space at Tullamarine Bus Lines' Airport West depot (an arrangement dating back to the formation of the Green and Yellow Orbitals in 2010) while selected North Fitzroy depot shifts will also be located. A final list of routes is not yet available, but a number of trips on Routes 250, 251 and 350 are expected to be operated by Thomastown Depot in addition to routes 901 and 902.

Code Red Fire Days in the Dandenongs

Ventura have published a list of routes in the Dandenong Ranges that will not operate on days where a Code Red Fire Day is declared by the Country Fire Authority. Services from five depots (Croydon, Knoxfield, Lilydale, Monbulk and Pakenham) would be affected. The following routes won't run at all:

- Route 663 (Belgrave – Lilydale)
- Route 694 (Belgrave – SkyHigh Mt Dandenong)
- Route 695 (Belgrave – Gembrook)
- Route 695F (Gembrook – Fountain Gate)
- Route 696 (Olinda – Monbulk)
- Route 697 (Belgrave – Belgrave South)
- Route 699 (Belgrave – Upwey)
- Route 840 (Gembrook – Pakenham).

The following would be partially suspended:

- Route 679 (Ringwood – Chirnside Park)
- Route 688 (Croydon – Upper Ferntree Gully)
- Route 693 (Belgrave – Oakleigh)
- Route 755 (Knox City – The Basin – Bayswater)
- Route 838 (Emerald – Fountain Gate).

In late 2015 Metro Trains advised that Belgrave Line trains would terminate at Bayswater on such days, with a shuttle bus for Boronia and Ferntree Gully, but no service to the four stations beyond.

Western Australia

From Sunday 29 January:

- Time changes for routes 25, 27, 310, 344, 346, 347, 371, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 480, 490, 491, 508, 509, 527, 567, 568, 598, 998 and 999;
- Routes 24, 463, 518, 519, 593, 594 and 990 had time changes and additional services;
- Route 518 had a minor route change now servicing Cockburn Gateways Shopping Centre;

- Route 519 had some services extend to Riva Ent during peak periods;
- Routes 103 (short services) and 481 had time changes and operate with less services due to poor patronage;
- Route 23 had minor time changes and additional services not listed on the timetable departing Claremont station at 0813 and 0837, and Elizabeth Quay Bus Station at 1550 and 1755.

Thanks to Jason Blackman, Craig Halsall, Victor Isaacs, Matthew Jennings, Peter Parker, Michael Smith, Hayden Ramsdale and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*. for Bus news.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Craig Halsall writes about V/Line timetables:

I wish to highlight some ongoing issues with timetable information for V/Line coaches that may interest readers.

Orbost and Lakes Entrance corridor

Regular *Table Talk* readers might recall my previous review of the V/Line coach timetable for Marlo, Orbost and Lakes Entrance that failed to show the full timetable offering and was inconsistent between the V/Line and PTV websites. The V/Line timetable from 29 January now lists the inbound coaches from Batemans Bay and Narooma for Orbost passengers – but the twice-weekly Capital Link coach into Bairnsdale is still not shown, nor is the twice-weekly intertown service from Gelantipy via Lakes Entrance. The numerous issues with the timetable on the PTV websites for intertown routes sadly remain outstanding and I plan to follow these up again shortly.

Apollo Bay Summer Timetable

Apollo Bay passengers looking for the timetable showing the additional trips over the peak summer holiday season needed to be savvy, with the PTV website's Apollo Bay intertown timetable failing to be updated to show the extra services. Passengers were required to reference the separate Warrnambool - Melbourne via Apollo Bay and Geelong V/Line timetable elsewhere, which comes up second in search results. The V/Line and McHarry's websites both featured a downloadable PDF showing the complete summer timetable. This issue was highlighted to V/Line via Twitter but never resolved.

Cowes and Wonthaggi Connections

In November 2009 a comprehensive network of connecting buses were introduced across South Gippsland, timed to meet V/Line coaches to Melbourne and Dandenong. These upgrades were funded in lieu of the broken ALP state government promise to reopen the Leongatha line. One feature of the network was an intertown route from Cowes to Wonthaggi timed to meet V/Line coaches at Anderson to/from the opposite town – e.g. the intertown bus leaving Cowes meets the Dandenong-bound coach that originated at Inverloch and Wonthaggi. At times this bus then meets the outbound Cowes coach, picking up transfers for

Wonthaggi. V/Line tickets are both sold and accepted the intertown route, which is operated by the Moreland Group's South Coast Bus.

(It is noted that the Intertown bus will only wait up to 10 minutes for late arrivals, otherwise cabs are arranged for passengers, also operated by the Moreland Group under the 'South Coast Taxi' banner.)

When the upgrades began, a comprehensive South Gippsland booklet timetable was produced, including However, the intertown bus connection is not well communicated to those travelling to the towns from Melbourne, in particular those holidaying in Phillip Island, nor new local residents. The journey planner on the PTV website currently is not programmed to show these guaranteed connections for the outbound direction, while they are simply omitted from the V/Line journey planner, which only shows those services as part of the V/Line network. Additionally, both the online and printed V/Line timetables previously failed to show these connections. With the timetable changes from 29 January V/Line has made a very weak attempt to rectify the situation, however one wonders if they were not sure what they were seeking to document. The weekday timetable towards Melbourne now shows the intertown trips between Cowes and Anderson with a hard to spot footnotes stating the connections are a "Private Coach" and to change vehicles at Anderson. The midi bus used on the route is wheelchair accessible but the timetable fails to show this. The connecting times for the coach through to Dandenong are shown, but not the faster Melbourne connection (ex Leongatha and Yarram) from Koo Wee Rup. Lacking however is the equivalent intertown bus connections from Inverloch. Furthermore the weekend timetables do not show these connections, nor do any of the timetables departing Melbourne or Dandenong. Effectively only one eighth of the potential connections are listed!

One hopes that future timetables can incorporate all relevant connections and the journey planner issues can be resolved.

Cowes tracking

On a separate note, Ventura has just introduced online tracking for their Cowes V/Line services on their

website via interactive maps for each service. These are the first V/Line coaches to offer GPS tracking, so Ventura should be commended for the innovative. Oddly though, like most V/Line sub-contractors, there

is no link from the Ventura website to the online timetable – one would hope there are onboard posters promoting the live tracking.

AIR NEWS

International

Qantas news:

- The seasonal Sydney-Denpasar, Bali route will become year-round from March, operating four times a week.
- Daily Melbourne-Tokyo Narita flights commenced 16 December 2016.

- The second daily Melbourne-Los Angeles route will become the first Qantas service to be operated by Boeing Dreamliners from 15 December 2017.

Thanks to Victor Isaacs for Air news.

RECOMMENDED READING

Green Fields and Blue Sky: On Nick Cleary's fast-rail dream, CLARA, by Paddy Manning, in the *Monthly* magazine, December 2016-January 2017 issue, pages 56-63.

<http://theconversation.com/high-speed-rail-at-200-billion-wed-better-get-it-right-62541>

<http://the-riotact.com/high-speed-rail-we-need-to-talk-about-clara/187644>

These three articles provide critical appraisals of the proposal by the CLARA (Consolidated Land and Rail Australia) consortium to build a high-speed railway Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne, financed by large-scale land development along the route (eight new cities).

We Are All Travelers: Celebrating 100 Years of Travellers' Aid Australia, by Alicia Cerreto with Sarah Reed, published by Travellers' Aid Australia, Melbourne, www.travellersaid.org.au 2016, paperback, 96 pages, \$29.95. This little book gives a history of an unusual aspect of travel in Australia. The Travellers'

Aid organisation is currently very active and prominent at both Southern Cross and Flinders St stations in Melbourne and at Seymour. It was once nation-wide, but strangely has disappeared elsewhere in Australia.

We're loco if we accept these standards on trains, by Hugh Lunn, *Australian*, Wednesday 25 January, page 12. A very critical, but realistic, description of travel from Brisbane to Sydney on NSW Train Link's XPT.

Railway Gazette International, January 2017, contains two insightful articles about developments in European passenger train services:

- *Open access gains ground*, about the mixed results of open access passenger train operators;
- *A brighter future at night*, about ÖBB Austrian Railways expansion of its overnight passenger train operations.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITE

Passenger Train Services over Unusual Lines is a long-established British publication giving details of workings over unusual and rare trackage. Its website is <http://www.psul4all.free-online.co.uk/intro.htm> The site also includes links to unusual passenger workings in the rest of the world. The World beyond Europe

section commences with details of Australian services. The direct web link to this is <http://www.psul4all.free-online.co.uk/wbe.htm> However it is advisable to read the general introduction first to understand how and why services are included. NZ unusual services also appear in the World beyond Europe section.

ODD SPOT

Passengers travelling on Virgin Trains East Coast's 1430 train from London King's Cross to Edinburgh on New Year's Day were given a fright when a scorpion was spotted. The pet, which is thought to have come from Guatemala, crawled out of an ice cream container belonging to a passenger. It meant passengers were

held up for around eight minutes at Peterborough while the affected carriage was sealed off and checked. British Transport Police quickly recaptured the creature and took it to an exotic pet rescue centre in Lincolnshire, where it now has a new home and has given birth

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 second last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

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

Table Talk Newswire is an advance monthly email of Rail news.