



TABLE TALK

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TOP TABLE TALK – QR CITYTRAIN TIMETABLE DISARRAY

The report of the Commission of Inquiry chaired by Phillip Strachan, former President and CEO of Rio Tinto Bauxite and Alumina, into the driver shortages following opening of the Kippa-Ring line on 4 October 2016, was provided to the Queensland government on 3 February 2017. Notwithstanding that the report found he was not responsible for the failings, on the following weekday, 6 February, the Minister for Transport Stirling Hinchliffe, resigned. **This is believed to be the first resignation of a government minister in Australia because of a railway timetabling issue.**

The Deputy Premier, Jackie Trad, is the new Minister for Transport. Mr Hinchliffe's resignation followed the earlier resignations of Queensland Rail's Chairman, QR's Chief Executive and QR's Chief Operating Officer, over this issue.

The author of the report, Phillip Strachan, was appointed the new Chairman of Queensland Rail. The Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, said he had "undertaken a comprehensive review of Queensland Rail, interviewing senior staff of the organisation and gaining a thorough understanding of its culture and practices. He has made wide-ranging recommendations to ensure QR has sufficient drivers and a reliable pipeline of training to deliver the services that Queenslanders will need into the future. "Phillip Strachan is uniquely placed to lead the organisation through what will be a significant transition to focus on its customers – the travelling public."

The Premier said that State Cabinet had endorsed all 36 recommendations of the 300 page report. She said, "The people of Queensland have been badly let down by Queensland Rail's inability to maintain an effective timetable, and my Government is very sorry and I apologise for that. The problems that led to driver shortages from October 2016 were many years in the making, but my government takes the responsibility, and is firmly resolved to fix them." She said the Strachan Inquiry report reveals a culture of "relying on intuition, complacency and being reluctant to share bad news" within QR's Operations team. It recommends better and shorter lines of communication within Queensland Rail, so that problems can be identified and addressed much more

quickly. "The Citytrain Response Unit will in effect be a watchdog for QR, ensuring it stays on track and on time in delivering these vital reforms. We will also be meeting rail unions to determine what additional measures can be taken to accelerate driver recruitment and training even further. That means talking about external recruitment and allowing drivers to qualify more quickly on a single sector of track."

The Strachan Report found demand for train crews was rising as supply fell, and was first identified by Queensland Rail in 2013. The Inquiry identified a range of factors responsible for the driver shortage including:

- A QR preference to operate with a 5-10% undersupply of train crews and consequent over-reliance on overtime;
- Restrictions on the external recruitment of crew;
- A 12 month halt of driver training from February 2014; and
- Driver training taking 18 months on average.

The Report found that passengers can expect ongoing train cancellations until at least the end of 2018, with no new drivers out of the 200 promised fully trained. This could put at risk services to the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and cause further issues during school holiday periods.

The recommendations to address these issues include:

- Developing a five-year rolling monthly forecast of crew demand and supply;
- Moving from intermittent recruitment campaigns to ongoing recruitment;
- Assessing the sustainability of the current 23 January timetable to ensure stable services can be provided;
- Opening driver and guard positions to external applicants, including those with no previous experience; and
- Implementing 'sectorised' train crew deployment and accelerating average crew training from 18 months to 9.

- Cabinet has also directed Queensland Rail to provide a high-level response plan within 30 days.

The Premier said the Citytrain Response Unit will be established for an initial period of 12 months, and will monitor, audit and report on the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations and Queensland Rail's response and recovery plan. "This will include a rigorous assessment of service levels under the current timetable to enable stable, reliable services and sufficient training capacity to facilitate the long-term return to full service levels," she said.

The Commission had found that neither the board of Queensland Rail, nor the Chief Executive Officer nor responsible Ministers - the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer – were appropriately informed of the risk of a train crew shortfall prior to the opening of the Redcliffe Peninsula Line on 4 October, nor of the magnitude and longevity of the issues faced from October 2016.

The Premier said other recommendations were designed to:

- implement regular reporting on train crew demand, supply and shortfall initiatives to Queensland Rail's Executive Leadership Team and the responsible Ministers.
- implement transparent and timely reporting to TransLink and the public regarding operational issues that are affecting, or may affect, service delivery, to enable customers to plan alternative travel arrangements. This information is to be available in real time at stations, online and through call centres.
- ensure that negotiations with train crew unions focus on best practice rules regarding continuous working time and other crewing practices to alleviate overtime pressure on train crews.
- work with the train crew unions regarding introducing modern competency-based training arrangements. The new training regime will shorten the average training time for new recruits without compromising safety.

On 7 February it was announced that a Brisbane-based change management specialist with extensive international experience, Jacqui Walters, would lead the CityTrain Response Unit. Its immediate priorities include:

- Overseeing the implementation of a closely integrated public transport service;
- Advising on the composition of the Queensland Rail Board;
- Defining Queensland Rail's long-term industrial relations strategy to improve workplace flexibility and culture; and
- Addressing systemic organisational issues identified in the Strachan Inquiry.

The Commission of Inquiry reports that Queensland Rail calculates that it will have train crew to deliver full timetables services by:

- **Late 2018, assuming 10% overtime,**
- **Mid to late 2019, assuming no overtime.**

Until such time, QR will continue to operate with reduced services and high levels of overtime (page 22 or Report).

It is claimed by the *Courier-Mail* that outdated and clunky IT systems used to set rosters for Queensland Rail drivers made it impossible to respond swiftly to the timetable meltdown. QR staff faced with unplanned train driver absences had to key in roster changes manually, but the time involved and complexity of union-agreed work rules meant alterations took "days, not hours". It left staff ill-equipped to warn commuters of problems, including the horror Christmas Day collapse when more than 200 services were cancelled without notice.

The Commission of Inquiry Report recommended speeding up a long-planned software solution to QR's rostering problems. Initiated in 2009, the project has a completion date of 2017-18.

It is understood QR outsourced its systems in 2012. Until then, it had rostered crews on an Excel spreadsheet. The inquiry found QR may have accepted "overly restrictive crewing rules" imposed by unions because it outsourced modelling and "could not readily determine" the rules' impact. "Significant manual intervention is required to remove and reallocate train crew job cards when train crew unavailability arises," the report found. "This is not conducive to being able to identify affected services in a short time frame, which inhibits the provision of timely notice to customers in relation to service cancellations."

A briefing from QR on its Christmas Day fiasco described its rostering system as "aged and heavily dependent on manual intervention". Understaffing had made it more difficult to change rosters. "The integration between the various train scheduling and rostering systems is sub-optimal and where changes are required to roster arrangements or timetable services, a high degree of manual intervention is required," acting QR chief executive Jim Benstead wrote in the brief. It took clerks six months to write job cards for train crews, which were then subject to two months union consultation before settling on a master roster.

On 11 February QR finally advertised for new drivers – but did not follow the Commission's recommendation to accept applicants who did not have prior experience.

The Report and its Annexes contain a huge amount of data about Queensland Rail's operating practices and management practices. The Report can be accessed at <https://www.strachaninquiry.qld.gov.au/>

In a forthcoming edition of our sister magazine, the Times, Gordon Dudman will offer an insight into driver rostering from a UK perspective.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Infrastructure Australia assessment

On 25 February Infrastructure Australia (IA) released a revised Infrastructure Priorities list.

High Priority Projects are potential infrastructure solutions for which a full business case has been completed and been positively assessed by the IA Board. A High Priority Project addresses a major problem or opportunity of national significance. **All** projects in this category are:

M4 Motorway upgrade (Parramatta to Lapstone)

NSW: Connectivity in outer western Sydney

WestConnex NSW: Sydney inner west road congestion

Melbourne Metro Rail Vic: Melbourne rail network capacity

M80 Ring Road upgrade Vic: Melbourne M80 Western Ring Road congestion

Ipswich Motorway Rocklea–Darra Stage 1c Qld: Southern Brisbane-Ipswich road network capacity

Western Sydney Airport NSW: Sydney aviation capacity

Perth Freight Link WA: Perth freight network capacity

Priority Projects are potential infrastructure solutions for which a full business case has been completed and been positively assessed by the IA Board. They address a nationally-significant problem or opportunity.

Rail and public transport projects in this category are:

Murray Basin Rail Project Vic: Freight rail connection between north-west Victoria and the ports of Geelong and Portland

Adelaide – Tarcoola Rail Upgrade Acceleration SA: Rail reliability and axle loadings on the interstate rail network

Inland Rail (Melbourne to Brisbane via inland NSW): National Freight connectivity Melbourne-Brisbane

Eyre Infrastructure Project (Iron Road) SA: Eyre Peninsula freight capacity (Railway from Port Hardy to Central Eyre Peninsula Iron ore project)

High Priority Initiatives seek to address major problems or opportunities of national significance. **Rail and public transport** projects in this category are:

Sydney Metro: City and Southwest NSW: Rail network capacity

Bus Rapid Transport: Northern Beaches, Parramatta Road, and Victoria Road NSW: Sydney corridor congestion: Northern Beaches, Parramatta Road, Victoria Road

Southern Sydney to CBD public transport enhancement NSW: Connection between inner south urban growth area and Sydney CBD

Sydney Metro West: mass transit between Parramatta and Sydney CBD NSW:

Connectivity between Parramatta and Sydney CBD

Cranbourne & Pakenham rail lines upgrade Vic: Melbourne outer south-east suburbs access to CBD

Cross River Rail Qld: Brisbane CBD public transport capacity

Perth CBD – north corridor capacity WA: Perth northern corridor capacity

Gawler Line rail upgrade SA: Adelaide outer north east suburbs access to CBD

Port Botany freight rail duplication NSW: Sydney Port Botany rail freight capacity

Chullora Junction upgrade NSW: Sydney freight rail network capacity

Port of Brisbane dedicated freight rail connection Qld: Freight rail access to Port of Brisbane

National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy National: Strategic planning for future freight initiatives

Preserve corridor for Western Sydney Freight Line and Intermodal Terminal access NSW: Future freight rail capacity to Eastern Creek Intermodal and Sydney Main West Line

Preserve corridor for Lower Hunter freight rail realignment NSW: Future freight rail bypass of Newcastle urban area

Preserve corridor for Outer Sydney Orbital road and rail/M9 NSW: Future connectivity between Western Sydney and Central Coast/Illawarra

Preserve corridor for Western Sydney Airport rail connection NSW: Future rail connection to Western Sydney Airport

Preserve corridor for East Coast High Speed Rail National: Future connectivity between east coast capital cities

Priority Initiatives are potential infrastructure solutions for which a business case has not yet been completed. These seek to address a problem or opportunity of national significance. **Rail and public transport** projects in this category are:

Central Station redevelopment – rail and station infrastructure NSW: Connection between urban and intercity rail, buses, light rail and metro

Active transport (walking and cycling) access to Sydney CBD NSW: Inner city access to Sydney CBD

Public transport access to Parramatta CBD NSW: Public transport access to Parramatta CBD

Melbourne level crossings removal Vic: Melbourne urban road network congestion

Melbourne Airport to CBD public transport capacity Vic: Access to Melbourne airport

Melton Rail Line upgrade Vic: Melbourne outer western suburbs access to CBD

Melbourne outer northern suburbs to CBD capacity upgrade Vic: Melbourne outer northern suburbs access to CBD

Brisbane to Gold Coast transport corridor upgrades Qld: Brisbane to Gold Coast transport capacity

Perth major east-west and southern corridor capacity upgrades WA: Perth urban road network capacity

Adelaide north-south corridor upgrade (remaining sections) SA: Adelaide north-south urban road network capacity

AdeLINK Tram Network (Adelaide tram network expansion) SA: Adelaide public transport capacity

Canberra CBD to north corridor ACT: CBD to north transport corridor congestion

Canberra public transport improvements ACT: Canberra public transport capacity

Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan NSW: Access to Western Sydney and Western Sydney Airport

Freight rail access to Port Kembla NSW: Freight rail access to Port Kembla

Western Sydney Airport public transport connection NSW: Access to Western Sydney Airport

Northern Sydney Freight Corridor Stage 2 (additional track West Ryde to Rhodes and Thornleigh to Hornsby) NSW: Sydney freight rail network capacity

Southern Sydney Freight Line upgrade NSW: Sydney South to Moorebank rail freight capacity

Lower Hunter freight corridor construction NSW: Freight rail capacity constraint in suburban Newcastle

Newcastle–Sydney and Wollongong–Sydney rail line upgrades NSW: Connectivity between Newcastle, Wollongong and Sydney CBD

Melbourne container terminal capacity enhancement Vic: Container terminal capacity

Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade Qld: Queensland north coast rail congestion

Mount Isa–Townsville rail corridor upgrade Qld: Mt Isa–Townsville rail capacity

Gladstone Port land and sea access upgrade Qld: Land and sea access to Port of Gladstone

Gawler Craton rail access SA: Freight rail connection to Gawler Craton mineral province

Melbourne–Adelaide–Perth rail upgrade SA: Freight connectivity Melbourne–Perth

Burnie to Hobart freight corridor strategy Tas: Tasmania freight network planning

Advanced Train Management System implementation on ARTC network National: Rail freight capacity constraint on ARTC network

Preserve corridor for Salisbury to Beaudesert, rail connection Qld: Future urban rail connection to Beaudesert

IA's Report, with more information and reasoning, can be accessed at http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/2017/2017_02_25.aspx

House of Representatives Inquiry

The Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities presented a report on 6 February into the role of transport connectivity in stimulating development and economic activity in major urban areas, and in regional Australia.

Evidence to the Committee indicated that value capture potentially provides a mechanism by which planning and funding can be linked, ensuring effective and efficient transport connectivity. A broad range of potential value capture mechanisms could be applied. The Committee noted that there is scope for the Australian government to design a new value capture mechanism, to apply in cases where the value of privately owned property increases as a result of a combination of new transport infrastructure and rezoning of land. The Committee supported developing value capture models that can be applied to major infrastructure projects such as high speed rail.

The report can be accessed at

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/ITC/TransportConnectivity/Report_1

Senate Inquiry

The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee is inquiring into the state of Australia's rail industry and how government procurement, including through the Australian Rail Track Corporation, and other policy levers can improve the value for money, competitiveness, stability of work and capability of the rail manufacturing industry.

The reporting date is 18 October 2017. Details and copies of submissions are at

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural_and_Regional_Affairs_and_Transport/RailIndustry45

ARTC Rules

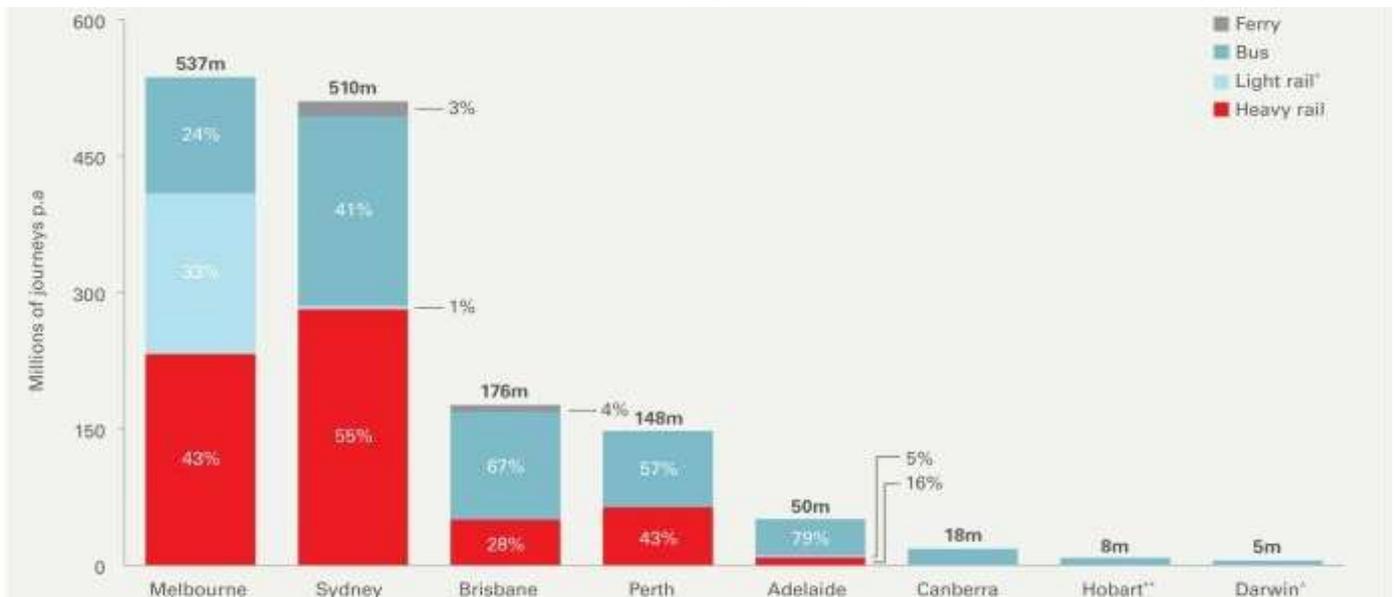
From 5 February ARTC removed the following Rules and Procedures:

- ANSY 504 Electric Staff System,
- ANPR 729 Using Electric Staff Instruments,
- ANPR 730 Switching an Electric Staff Instrument,
- ANPR 733 Using Drawer Locks, and
- ANPR 736 Using Bell Signals.

These are now all obsolete.

Public Transport patronage

Public transport patronage in capital cities in 2013-2014 was:



Source: Tourism and Transport Forum via ABC News

ARTC: Hunter Valley closedowns

There will be two types of scheduled major closedowns of the Hunter Valley network for maintenance in 2017. **Major** shutdowns will involve the entire network from Kooragang to Narrabri and Ulan. Only the Port Waratah terminal will remain open.

Mains shutdowns will involve Islington Junction (near Newcastle) to Maitland and Sandgate to Port Waratah. The Kooragang terminals will remain open. Scheduled 2017 closedown dates are:

21 to 24 February (Major),
 11 to 13 March (Mains),
 4 to 6 April (Major),
 9 to 13 June (Major and Mains),
 15 to 17 August (Major),
 26 to 28 August (Mains),
 10 to 13 October (Major),
 28 to 30 October (Mains), and
 20 to 24 November (Major).

ARTC WTT

The following amendment to the 22 January 2017 Master Train Plan (WTT) applies from 5 February:

6SP5 on Fridays will depart SOY 0015, pass Sefton Park Junctions (EW) 0021, Leightonfield (ARTC) 0027, Glenfield Loop 0039, Picton 0117, arrive Moss Vale 0235, depart 0255, pass Exeter 0308, Wingello 0323, Medway Junction 0331, Goulburn 0354, Joppa Junction 0359, arrive Harden 0627, depart 0654, pass Wallendbeen 0721, Cootamundra North Jct 0736, Cootamundra West 0740, Stockinbingal 0812, Parkes Jct 1033, arrive Goobang Jct 1035, depart 1410, thence as tabled.

Byron Bay train

The Byron Bay Railroad Co expects to commence operation in April along 3 km of restored track of the former Murwillumbah line, north of the town between Northbeach station in Sunrise Beach and the Byron

Beach platform located adjacent to the Shirley St level crossing. It will use a restored 620/720 NSW Railways DMU powered by roof-mounted solar panels. They propose an hourly service, from Byron Beach platform from 0800 to 2200. The Byron Bay Railroad Co is a not for profit company which is an accredited heritage rail operator, owned by the Elements of Byron resort. It hopes to eventually extend its line. Its website is <http://byronbaytrain.com.au/>

Blayney-Demondrille line

The prospect of the Blayney to Demondrille line reopening has again been raised with a new study to examine the likely costs of re-establishing the line. It will be completed by specialist rail consultants, Lycopodium Group, and commissioned by the four councils along by the line, Blayney, Cowra, Hilltops and Weddin. The impetus for the study has come from the \$5 million that the NSW government set aside for the reopening of the Demondrille to Maimaru section of the track.

QR CityTrain: New Generation Rollingstock

Queensland Rail is undertaking testing of its New Generation Rollingstock. The first trains are expected to enter service by mid-2017, with full implementation in 2018.

QR CityTrain: Gold Coast line

Duplication of the line between Coomera and Helensvale is currently on schedule for completion in late 2017.

Brisbane Cross River Rail

The Federal government has warned that Cross River Rail does not properly integrate with the rest of Brisbane's transport network, in a blow to the State government's top-priority project. Federal Urban Infrastructure Minister Paul Fletcher has insisted that "more work" is required on plans for the \$5.5 billion

10.2 km project to ensure a better long-term solution for commuters. This could force the cash-strapped Queensland government to find new funding solutions.

Aurizon: Diminishing in North Queensland

At the end of 2017, Aurizon will stop carrying sugar and molasses from Proserpine Mill to Mackay Port and from Burdekin to Townsville. It says this is following “operational requirements” and commercial returns review, as well as discussions between Aurizon and Wilmar Sugar.

Mining company Glencore plans to use more trucks in its Mt Isa copper operations, after a review found it to be a cheaper short-term option than rail. Glencore’s Australian copper assets chief Mike Westerman said rail was in the company’s long-term plans, but road freight was cheaper for now.

In January Aurizon took a \$10 million impairment over the loss of a contract to haul mine inputs and outputs from Glencore’s Mt Isa operation to the port at Townsville. Glencore reportedly said Pacific National won the deal, but without wagons for now, the company has opted to go with road haulage. “As any operation would do, we went out and sought expressions of interest as [Aurizon’s] contract was ending. As part of that commercial process, we had a rail provider that was significantly cheaper than the other and we eventually went for Pacific National.”

After failing to come to terms on a deal to buy Aurizon’s wagons, Glencore is spending over \$2 million to build its own. Until then, the material will travel by road. “It would have been good to have an orderly transition from one rail provider to another, but we were unable to strike an agreement,” he was quoted as saying. I’m frustrated that we can’t come to a solution that’s in the best interest of all parties.”

ARTC & Sydney Trains: NSW South line on 25 February

The TABCorp Miracle Mile horse trotting meeting was scheduled for Saturday evening 25 February at the Menangle Park trotting course, next to the main south line south of Campbelltown. Sydney Trains scheduled a fairly intensive series of trains shuttling between Campbelltown and Menangle Park (8.2 km) to cater for patrons – ten trains (Endeavour DMUs) each way between 1700 and 2400. These, apparently, were to use the Up line when travelling in the Down direction between the Glenlee Crossovers and Menangle Park (2.8 km). (This mainline is signalled for two-way running on both lines in this area.) As well as these additional trains, there are usually 19 trains in this section between these times. It probably would have been much more interesting to watch the trains rather than the horses. (ARTC Train Alteration Advice 0285-2017 and Sydney Trains Special Train Notice 0192-2017 refer.)

Parramatta Light Rail



Map: Sydney Morning Herald

On 17 February the NSW government announced plans for stage 1 of the Parramatta light rail from Westmead via the Parramatta CBD and Rosehill Racecourse to Carlingford. This will take over the Carlingford railway between Camellia to Carlingford.

Construction will start in 2018 and it is planned to open in 2023. The proposed route will be 12 kms with 16 stops. The route, which is open for community feedback, has proposed stops at Westmead, Westmead Hospital, Children’s Hospital, Cumberland

Hospital, Factory St, Fennell St, Prince Alfred Square, Eat St, Parramatta Square, Harris St, Tramway Avenue, Camellia, Rydalmere, Dundas, Telopea, Carlingford. Services will run every 7½ minutes and use Opal Card.

The decision to split the project into two stages means the much-anticipated connection to Olympic Park is now years away from being delivered. A new Western Sydney heavy rail line is being built from the CBD and the government argues that it needs to integrate planning of that project with the light rail, which is why Olympic Park is not on the existing route map. Premier Gladys Berejiklian defended the government's decision not to include Olympic Park, which suffers from major transport connection issues, in the first section of the light rail project. She acknowledged transport to Olympic Park was "a major issue", but said the government was "absolutely" committed to delivering the whole project, including the connection to Olympic Park in stage two. She said more work was required to determine how the light rail would intersect with the new metro station at Olympic Park, which is part of the new Sydney Metro West underground rail link to be built by the late 2020s. "We do need to finalise plans of where a future metro will intersect with the light rail and that's why we are taking to the end of this year to get stage two down properly."

The government has committed \$1 billion in funding for the project but acknowledges the budget will increase. The business case is yet to be finalised. Remaining funding will come from value capture.

NSW storms 17 February

Severe storms in Sydney and surrounds on Friday afternoon 17 February adversely affected train services. Sydney Trains services were delayed. Power outages between Cowan and Woy Woy affected signals. Sydney Trains consequently would not accept freight trains into their network. NSW Train Link's 1441 Sydney to Brisbane XPT – a train often affected by delays along the long single-track mainline north of Maitland – was this time affected closer to Sydney. By Wyong it was 162 minutes late. At Casino it was 188 minutes late and terminated. It was replaced by a bus beyond – a common occurrence for this train. That also, of course, brought the consequential replacement of its return working, the 0455 Brisbane-Sydney XPT by a bus between Brisbane and Casino.

Sydney Trains: October 2017 timetable

The October 2017 timetable will introduce major changes, including an additional 1,800 services each week. It is designed to make full use of recent infrastructure projects.

Sydney Metro: Bankstown line

A planning application by the NSW government has been lodged for conversion of the Sydenham to Bankstown line from rail to Metro standards. The 11 stations between Sydenham and Bankstown will be converted with lifts, level platforms and screen doors. This will require a closure of between three to six months once Sydney Trains have stopped operating the line. This closure will be just before Metro services

start in 2024. Transport for NSW is working on temporary transport plans for this period

V/Line WTT of 29 January

The V/Line WTTs of 29 January 2017 were placed on their website, <https://corporate.vline.com.au/Network-Access/Network-service-plan> on 1 February. However, the passenger WTTs are undated. The freight WTTs are dated.

There is one cross scheduled at the new Rowsley Loop (between Bacchus Marsh and Ballan) each weekday at 2306-2309. The unusual thing is that the up train goes into the loop. Day-by-day ordinary practice during out-of-course running is that the down goes into the loop. The union had put a ban on the use of the loop by up trains because of the adhesion problems discovered on opening day last June.

V/Line timetable of 29 January put to the test

Geoff Mann sampled the Geelong line on Monday 30 January, the first weekday of V/Line's new timetable:

I had the pleasure of sampling the first public timetabled loco-hauled express from Geelong to Melbourne since the opening of the Regional Rail Link. The trip was on the newly introduced additional 0905 Up Warrnambool service.

Late running on the line beyond Geelong has been prevalent since the imposition of numerous speed restrictions at level crossings. There are 27 (some applying in one direction only), many of which are 60 km/h. One applies over four kilometres.

I joined the Up Warrnambool at Wauran Ponds (departure 1142). The VDU and auto announcement stated that the train was running 25 minutes late, but recovery time into Wauran Ponds resulted in a 17 minute late departure from there. Stops are Geelong, Footscray and Southern Cross.

Late running creates problems with crosses on the busy single line section between Wauran Ponds and Geelong. The frequent out-of-course running must be a pain for the signallers, but on my trip it was dealt with sensibly, albeit at the expense of two other services. We ran through 2 road at Marshall where a Down VLocity was held (7+ min late) in the platform. At South Geelong, an Up VLocity was held in the loop (by then 4 minutes after its departure time) to give us a clear run. Despite this, 5 minutes were lost in the 8 minute allowance from Wauran Ponds to Geelong.

Geelong departure was 21.5 min late. The consist was N454 + three car set N11. Trailing load a hefty 130t! With 1680Kw traction available, a high power to weight ratio, but of course loco weight (124t) must be added to this. So 6.6Kw/t is easy work over a level line. Speed was at the max 115km/h over many km, apart from two minor temporary speed restrictions.

Overall elapsed time Geelong to Southern Cross was 56min 32 sec (schedule 61 min) for the approximately 81km. Geelong to stop Footscray was 46min 32 sec (\cong 76km) = 98km/h average. Net running time in from Footscray was 9m15s, but we arrived at

Plat 1. If we had arrived at a more distant platform such as 2A it would have taken about 10 min.

The speed restrictions on the Warrnambool line present a massive problem that might require total level crossing protection and re-signalling (as some TSRs are due to signal design issues). Remedial action should be a very high priority to overcome the prevailing unreliability.

*On the same day, **Albert Isaacs** had an incident-laden trip on the inaugural day return service to Maryborough:*

The well-publicised recent changes to the V/Line TT laudably saw the introduction of a number of new services on either Sunday 29 or Monday 30 January 2017. One of these was a regular Monday-Friday day return Southern Cross-Maryborough, which supplements the evening down and morning up over the same route, the latter introduced in December 2008. Since then, a few day return specials have been run for specific events such as the annual Clunes Book Fair. I have travelled on many of these specials but decided that I would like to travel on the first of the regular day returns from Melbourne.

Although there was already a regular service on this line, this second service was treated to the type of hype that one usually associates with a brand new service. At Ballarat, the Minister for Public Transport and Major Projects, the Hon Jacinta Allan, made a speech welcoming the new service. Although her speech was comparatively short, it did hold up the train for five minutes. (The train was already running a little late due to an extremely slow run through Parwan loop where a cross was made without actually stopping.) Other special events to commemorate the first day of service included complimentary fruit juice and a cake for all passengers travelling beyond Ballarat, served by the Ballarat-based female conductor. There were 50 or so people at Maryborough ready to greet us, along with a banner and balloons. Included amongst those on the platform were a number of local politicians, councillors and media.

There were nine passengers on board when the Down left Ballarat; they were joined by two at Creswick and a group of 20 ex Clunes. This group of Clunes locals had been organised by a well-known rail enthusiast now resident in Clunes. They had lunch in Maryborough and did some shopping.

Let us now look at some of the other unusual things on this trip. The 0917 from Southern Cross was a joint train consisting of two VLocity sets which were to split at Ballarat with one going to Maryborough and the other to Wendouree. The VDUs and announcements at Southern Cross stated that the front set would go to Maryborough and the back set to Wendouree. About half-a-dozen on-train announcements to this effect were made, and the conductors even went through the train and personally asked each passenger where they were going. Immediately prior to arrival at Ballarat an announcement was made rescinding all earlier pronouncements and advising that the front set would go to Wendouree and the back to Maryborough!

Anyone who had looked at the timetable would have guessed that this would have to be the case because the Wendouree was due to leave Ballarat at 1043, with the Maryborough following at 1045. The Wendouree got away just one minute late, after which the Maryborough set sidled a few metres along the platform where it stopped again for the Minister to make her speech.

Monday 30 January was the second day (first weekday) of services to the new station at Caroline Springs. Nevertheless the down Wendouree/Maryborough was not tabled to stop there. However, on the up eight people boarded at Caroline Springs during the tabled stop.

Weather forecasts were for temperatures of around 40° in Central Victoria. As it happened, the weather was extremely mild. Nevertheless, because of the forecast, V/Line had decreed their usual hot-weather speed restrictions prior to the train departing, and these were adhered to. Things weren't that bad on the Down – after leaving Ballarat, 5½ minutes late, we arrived at Maryborough just 6¾ late, mainly due to a lot of padding in the timetable. On the up, we left Maryborough half a minute late and departed Ballarat 12½ late. Not only had we now lost our path and not only were we still on unnecessary speed restrictions, but someone at Control appeared to have decided not to worry about the increasingly late running up and instead concentrate of getting the long chain of peak-hour downs through as near to on time as possible.

The Maryborough/Ballarat train was due at Southern Cross at 1714 but the conductor made an announcement after leaving Bungaree Loop East that Control had given a revised arrival time of 5.40 (12 hour clock). For the benefit of those boarding at Ballarat, the announcement was repeated, but this time the conductor appeared to have trouble with his 12 hour and 24 hour clock and announced that the train would arrive at Southern Cross at 7.40! Luckily, this was corrected within a couple of minutes, but not before loud cries of consternation from many passengers.

So what of our hold-ups? We were held at Bungaree Loop East for 12¼ minutes to cross a Down VLocity. This was nothing, because at Parwan Loop we were held for 21½ minutes. At the beginning of our wait, a very embarrassed conductor told us that we would cross two trains. After a Sprinter set and a local Bacchus Marsh pass had passed, the now even more uncomfortable conductor had to tell us that there would actually be a third cross (another VLocity). At Rockbank we were held in the platform for 4½ minutes whilst there were another two crosses (both VLocities). Times were comparatively good for the suburban section of the journey, doing Sunshine-Southern Cross in 14 minutes instead of the tabled 15.

Nevertheless, our Southern Cross arrival was 61 minutes late, at 1815! What happened to Control's promised 1740 arrival? So there you have it – more than an hour added to a tabled 2¼ hour journey. What an introduction for the first regular afternoon train out

of Maryborough! What a pity the politicians who were on the down were not on the up!

One final remark on the up train; this is the first time that I can recall being on a V/Line service where tickets were not actually checked! In case you think that this was some sort of sop on the part of embarrassed conductors for the late running train, I should explain that tickets were not checked even in the Maryborough-Ballarat section.

V/Line WTT amendments 26 February

Commencing Sunday 26 February the following alterations occurred to facilitate recovery from late running due to additional speed restrictions imposed on level crossings on the Warrnambool line after the finalisation of the current Network Service Plan (Working Timetable):

SATURDAY & SUNDAY SOUTH WEST:

- 0700 (No.8861) Pass; Southern Cross to Warrnambool altered to operate as per NSP to Sherwood Park 1040, then arrive Warrnambool 1101 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 1300 (No.8865) Pass; Southern Cross to Warrnambool altered to operate as per NSP to Sherwood Park 1623, then arrive Warrnambool 1645 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 1850 (No.8801) SATURDAY VLocity Pass; Southern Cross to Waurn Ponds altered to operate as per NSP to Geelong 1645, then arrive Waurn Ponds at 2013 (6 minutes later than NSP)
- 1900 (No.8869) Pass; Southern Cross to Warrnambool altered to operate as per NSP to Sherwood Park 2224, then arrive Warrnambool 2245 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 0735 (No.8862) Pass; Warrnambool to Southern Cross altered to arrive Southern Cross 1116 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 1125 (No.8864) Pass; Warrnambool to Southern Cross altered to arrive Southern Cross 1512 (15 minutes later than NSP)
- 1725 (No.8868) Pass; Warrnambool to Southern Cross altered to arrive Southern Cross 2107 (10 minutes later than NSP).

MONDAY-FRIDAY SOUTH WEST:

- 0720 (No.8861) Pass; Southern Cross to Warrnambool altered to operate as per NSP to Sherwood Park 1053, then arrive Warrnambool 1113 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 1320 (No.8865) Pass; Southern Cross to Warrnambool altered to operate as per NSP to Sherwood Park 1645, then arrive Warrnambool 1705 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 1713 (No.8867) Pass; Southern Cross to Warrnambool altered to operate as per NSP to Sherwood Park 2048, then arrive Warrnambool 2109 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 1905 (No.8869) Pass; Southern Cross to Warrnambool altered to operate as per NSP to Sherwood Park 2238, then arrive Warrnambool 2257 (10 minutes later than NSP)
- 0555 (No.8860) Pass; Warrnambool to arrive Southern Cross 0957 (25 minutes later than NSP) (A *Maxi Taxi* required at Waurn Ponds for

customers travelling to Marshall. A bus required at Marshall for customers travelling to Geelong to connect with 0847 (8742) to Southern Cross)

- 0905 (No.8862) Pass; Warrnambool to arrive Southern Cross 1313 (20 minutes later than NSP).
- 1203 (No.8864) Pass; Warrnambool to arrive Southern Cross 1558 (22 minutes later than NSP) (A *Maxi Taxi* required at Waurn Ponds for customers travelling to Marshall. A bus required at Marshall for customers travelling to Geelong to connect with 1447 (8778) to Southern Cross)
- 1735 (No.8868) Pass; Warrnambool to arrive Southern Cross 2144 (20 minutes later than NSP) (A *Maxi Taxi* required at Waurn Ponds for customers travelling to Marshall. A bus required at Marshall for customers travelling to Geelong to connect with 2034 (8868) to Southern Cross).

MONDAY-FRIDAY NORTH EASTERN BROAD GAUGE:

- 2150 (No.8339) Pass; Southern Cross to Seymour altered to depart Southern Cross at 2215 and now arrives Seymour at 2344 (25 minutes later than NSP).

The Victorian government is committed to upgrading 20 level crossings on the Warrnambool I line this year, to improve safety and restore the timetable.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Hurstbridge line

The Victorian government signed a \$395 million contract on 7 February for improvements to the Hurstbridge line, comprising:

- removal of level crossings at Lower Plenty Road and Grange Road,
- duplication for 1.2 km between Heidelberg and the down side of Heidelberg (over the high overbridge and a new tunnel next to the existing single line tunnel), and
- construction of a new station at Rosanna.

Yarra Trams: route 58

Route 58 is to be introduced on 1 May. This will replace routes 8 and 55 and operate through from Toorak to west Coburg via William St, City. Passengers for Swanston St will need to change at Domain Interchange where there will be many connecting services.

WA election

WA Labor has promised a \$2.53 billion expansion of Perth's rail system called Metronet. The first stage would include four new rail lines, the removal of four level crossings, two new train stations and several upgrades. In addition, the new railcars will be built locally, a \$410m boost to WA's manufacturing sector. Most of the money to build Metronet will come from consolidated funds (\$1.01bn), land sales (\$667m) and state government funds already allocated to Perth Freight Link road project (\$486m).

WA wheat lines

CBH has signed an agreement with Brookfield Rail providing access to WA grain lines from 1 January until 31 December 2017. The parties are still negotiating about a long-term access agreement.

WA flooding

Record rainfall in SW WA caused TransWA's Prospector to be cancelled between East Perth and Kalgoorlie as well as the AvonLink between Midland and Northam. These were replaced by buses from Friday 10 February to Wednesday 15 February. Freight services were disrupted on the Eastern Goldfields Railway from Perth to Kalgoorlie until 16 February, the Great Southern Railway from Northam to Albany, the grain freight rail network in the northern wheatbelt and the lakes district and on the Leonora line from Kalgoorlie to Leonora.

NZ Midland line closure

KiwiRail's Christchurch-Greymouth line between Cass and Springfield KiwiRail was closed on 4 February after it was damaged in a major bushfire. After repairs, it will reopen on 3 April. Bridges, track and signal systems were all damaged in the blaze. Affected services include the TranzAlpine passenger train, coal and dairy freight services.

KiwiRail's general manager of network services Todd Moyle said crews from around the country would be brought in to tackle the reinstatement of the line as quickly as possible. "Hot and windy conditions at the weekend meant several of our bridges along the route were damaged, including one bridge where 12 wooden piles will need to be replaced," Moyle said. "We are still working through the quickest course of action to reinstate the line. Heat spots in the area remain a concern."

Moyle was also confident the added work would not impact the rail rebuild on South Island Main North Line, which is continuing towards a return to service after November's Kaikoura earthquake.

Auckland timetable 12 March

A new timetable will be introduced from Sunday 12 March. The main changes are:

- Opening of the new inner city Parnell station between Britomart and Newmarket. Southern line trains stop there. Western line trains also stop, but only in the evenings and weekends.
- Closing of Westfield station on the Southern line (12.9 km from Britomart). Auckland Transport says it was one of the quietest stations on the network – it had less than 330 passengers a day in November 2016. Forecasts indicated that demand was likely to remain low given the location in a light industrial area and new public transport options created recently in south Auckland, including the New Network for bus services in

October 2016 and the new interchange at Otahuhu.

- Weekday Onehunga line trains until 1912 will not stop at Parnell, Greenlane and Remuera. Remuera and Greenlane are the least used stations on the Onehunga line and are well serviced by the Southern line (10 minutes at peak times and 20 minutes between peak). When Southern line trains run less frequently in the evenings and weekends, Onehunga trains will stop at Remuera and Greenlane. Only 3.5% of passengers from Onehunga and Te Papapa travel to Remuera and Greenlane. By reducing the travel time, it is possible to get more round trips from the same train which frees up a unit to be used to increase peak capacity on other parts of the network.
- Most trains have altered departure times.
- There are three additional trains Britomart-Puhinui after 1900.
- Southern line trains are one minute faster outbound and three minutes faster inbound.
- Most connection times at Papakura between Southern line trains and the DMU Papakura-Pukekohe shuttles are reduced.
- An additional Onehunga train departs Britomart at 0012 on Friday nights.
- Western line trains are one faster inbound and three minutes faster outbound. This is partially achieved by reducing the reversal time at Newmarket from four minutes to two minutes outbound and three minutes inbound.
- An additional Britomart-Swanson train departs at 0040 on Saturday nights.
- Additional trains run as six car units using the units freed up by reduced journey times.

The new timetables are online at <https://at.govt.nz/bus-train-ferry/timetables/#Train>

The revised train network map also includes the North Shore Busway.

Auckland City Rail Link

Rail Link has issued a call for pre-qualification to tender for two inner city stations and tunnels for the \$NZ 3bn project to build a cross-city line in Auckland.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Gordon Dudman, Albert Isaacs, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Geoff Mann, Len Regan, Richard Talbot, www.qld.gov.au, www.strachaninquiry.qld.gov.au, www.railexpress.com.au, www.railpage.com.au, ABC News, Transit Australia, Australian, Blayney Chronicle, Courier-Mail, Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald for Rail news.

BUS NEWS

New South Wales

State Transit changes 12 February:

- Route 301 has more than 75 additional weekly trips between Zetland and the City providing a 24 hour, seven days a week bus service in the growing Green Square area. Green Square and Waterloo also have 30 additional weekly trips on 343 Martin Place-Kingsford and 160 additional weekly trips on M52 Wynyard-Zetland. Waterloo, along with Wolli Creek and Wentworth Point, are suburbs mainly comprising apartments. Whilst Wolli Creek is on a rail line and Wentworth Point is connected to a rail line at Rhodes via the Bennelong bus/cycle/pedestrian bridge. Waterloo will be dependent on buses until the South-West Metro line to Bankstown and a light rail extension are completed.
- 895 UNSW (Anzac Parade)-Central station services have been renumbered 891 and now commence from Gate 3, High St. Present 891 services will commence at Gate 9, High St and pick up at Gate 3. Morning 890 Circular Quay-UNSW (High St) via Taylor Square and afternoon 892 UNSW (High St)-Circular Quay via Central services have been discontinued.
- Evening services are now provided on 477 Rockdale-Miranda.
- Later evening trips are now provided on 370 Leichhardt to Coogee.
- An additional trip is provided on 372 Railway Square-Coogee weekdays departing Railway Square at 1805.
- Four additional weekday 389 trips will depart Seven Ways, North Bondi towards Bondi Junction at 0523, 0543, 0603 and 0656.
- Extra weekday trips are provided on 433 Balmain-Martin Place from Balmain at 0655 and Harold Park at 0647, 0724 and 0908.

The *Manly Daily* reports that services from Manly are significantly slower due to traffic congestion:

L90 Palm Beach to City four minutes slower
144 Manly to Chatswood four minutes slower
143 Manly to Chatswood six minutes slower
E70 Manly to City one minute slower
173 Narrabeena to City four minutes slower
E65 South Curl Curl to City seven minutes slower
E50 Manly to Milsons Point 13 minutes slower
E66 Allambie Heights to City eight minutes slower
E69 Narrabeena to City eight minutes slower.

During the evening peak, the University of NSW now has chartered buses to run alongside Sydney Buses' route 891 services from High St Kensington to help to ease the queues for the trip to Central. These run between 1600 and 1900 until Friday 31 March 2017 (covering the busiest weeks of the year). Timetable changes have been made to simplify the service:

- Route 891 is the dedicated Uni NSW Express service. Route 895 has been renumbered to route 891 and starts from Uni NSW at Gate 3 – there has been no reduction in service levels.
- Route 890 and 892 to and from Circular Quay no longer run.
- All 891 trips towards Central run from High St (gates 9 and 3).

Hillsbus changes effective 19 February:

- Introduction of new route 605 North Kellyville to Rouse Hill Town Centre via Withers Road and Commercial Road operating hourly seven days a week.
- Operation of route 607X Rouse Hill Town Centre to City: Saturday inbound services at 0421, 0521 - previous start 0621, Sunday inbound services operate at 0430, 0530, 0630, previously start 0654. Saturday and Sunday outbound services operate at 0426, 0526, 0626, 0726, 0756 - previous start at 0826. Saturday afternoon inbound and outbound services operate every 15 minutes rather than every 30 minutes.
- Renumbering of route 610X Castle Hill trips to M61. 610 and 610X are used for Kellyville and Rouse Hill trips. Additional outbound 610X Rouse Hill Monday to Friday evening services provide a 30 minute frequency instead of hourly. Hourly Saturday 610 services to and from Castle Hill are supplemented by hourly 610X services giving a combined 30 minute services, 610X trips provided by extending M61 trips to and from Castle Hill.
- Addition of route 615X trips to and from North Kellyville.
- Addition of peak trips on route 619 Rouse Hill to Macquarie Park and Castle Hill to Macquarie Park in the morning and from Macquarie Park in the afternoon.
- Addition of extra Monday to Friday evening services on route 620X City to Cherrybrook, 621 Castle Hill to City with 1010 and 1120 services terminating at Cherrybrook. Extra Saturday and Sunday inbound evening services are provided on 621 and extra Sunday outbound services are provided on 621.
- Operation of route 611 Blacktown to Macquarie Park on Mondays to Fridays off-peak every 15 minutes instead of 30 minutes.
- Operation of route 700 Parramatta to Blacktown on Monday to Fridays off-peak and Saturdays every 30 minutes instead of every 60 minutes.
- Addition of Sunday services on T65 Parramatta to Rouse Hill Town Centre to provide a combined 15 minute service on T65/T66 instead of 30 minutes.

New Hillsbus Timetables effective 19 February:

- 605 North Kellyville to Rouse Hill Town Centre

- 607X 617X Rouse Hill to City
- M61 610 610X Rouse Hill and Castle Hill to City
- 611 630 Blacktown to Macquarie Park
- 615X North Kellyville to City (from 20 Feb)
- 619 Rouse Hill Town Centre to Macquarie Park
- 620 620X 621 622 642 642X Castle Hill and Dural to City and North Sydney
- 700 Parramatta to Blacktown
- T65 T66 Parramatta to Rouse Hill Town Centre.

Newcastle buses are likely to run down King St and Honeysuckle Drive while the light rail is being built, and most services will terminate at the Wickham interchange once the trams are operating on Hunter St. The free buses that have run throughout the CBD since 2004 are also likely to go once light rail starts. Although the NSW government and Transport for Newcastle operator Keolis Downer say that final decisions are yet to be made about the shape of the city's new public transport system, the light rail Review of Environmental Factors describes the removal of seven existing bus stops" along Hunter St and Scott St. Hunter St is likely to be shut, block by block, for up to 14 weeks at a time once construction of the light rail begins. Keolis Downer takes over Newcastle Buses and the Stockton ferry from July.

In an unusual move away from their home base, **Canty's** of Unanderra (generally a hire drive operator) run the courtesy bus contract at the Ramsgate RSL Memorial Club in Sydney. They have operated this contract since around 2012/13. It operates a service on the hour. Mon-Thurs. 1700-2200, Fri: 1100-0400, Sat: 1700-0400, Sun: 1300-2400, using two Toyota Hi Aces, distinctively painted all over dark blue with signage for the club.

Victoria

New Metropolitan Bus Contracts

In mid February the Victorian government announced their preferred model for new metropolitan bus contracts to commence in July 2018 for the 12 'traditional' private operators operating 70% of the Melbourne Bus Network (Transdev, who operate 30% of the former government network, have a separate contract framework for their 7-year contract that commenced in August 2013, with an option to extend it for a further three).

A damning report written by the Victorian Auditor General published in May 2015 suggested a number of flaws with the existing contracts and their management, including a lack of KPI benchmarking and associated penalties for bad performance, issues with real-time bus tracking (still ongoing), a failure to tackle fare evasion, limited options to deliver value for money due to the lack of a competitive tender process and area and route exclusivity preventing network reform. It had also found there was an 18% saving with the Transdev contract compared to the previous contracts with Nationalbus and Melbourne Bus Link, however rather than enforce contract breaches, a

number of extensions to various clauses had been offered. The new model will give existing operators the opportunity to negotiate a new 5-year contract with the state government or an alternative 10-year contract that will include stricter performance regimes.

Similar to the model adopted in Sydney after the 2004 Unsworth Report, both options will require operators to give up their right to exclusivity at the conclusion of their next contract period, with contracts to set to go to open tender in 2023 or 2028. The government believes that the contract overhaul will deliver a more efficient, cost effective and customer focused bus network than present, and reverse a slight decline in customer numbers since 2014.

BusVic has hit out at suggestions the existing operators are largely to blame for the performance of the bus network saying that patronage traditionally fluctuates with the price of oil, compounded by ongoing issues with the myki system and underreporting of fare evasion on parts of the bus network and lack of bus priority causing delays. Furthermore, the lack of evening or Sunday services is a direct result of funding provided by the government, who have also failed to provide funding initiatives such onboard wi-fi, bike racks and electric or hybrid buses. Additionally, the 16 bus reviews conducted between 2006 and 2010 led to little network reform in many areas.

More specific contract details, such as consolidation of the number of contract areas, scope of network reform, changes to depot locations etc., have yet to be outlined.

Fawkner consultation for route 530

PTV are currently considering making changes to Broadmeadows Bus Service's route 530 (Coburg – Campbellfield) to improve coverage for residents living in the south-east pocket of Fawkner currently only served by an off-peak deviation.

The local community is being asked their preference of one of three options:

1. Maintain status quo with off-peak deviation through south-east Fawkner
2. Operate peak trips via off-peak deviation in south-east Fawkner
3. Modify route via Queens Parade to improve directness and better peak coverage in south-east Fawkner. Fawkner station no longer served, but passengers can still transfer from trains at Coburg, Merlynston or Gowrie.

Route 600 timetable adjustments

Transdev Melbourne made minor revisions to the timetable for their route 600 (St Kilda – Southland) service with the opening of the Heatherton depot on 15 August, but the new timetable data only appeared on the PTV website and GTFS feeds in mid February.

On Saturday afternoons the 1730 ex Sandringham to Southland has been extended to commence at St Kilda at 1708. This rectifies an inadvertent 70 min gap between St Kilda departures on the 600/922/923 corridor created in the previous June timetable change – the general Saturday trunk frequency is 20 minutes

daytime and then 40 minutes until midnight. A few afternoon peak trips towards Southland have also been retimed five minutes later than previously, improving train connections at Sandringham and rostering efficiency.

The online timetable is still dated 5 June 2016 and a new printed timetable has been yet to be sighted.

Thomastown Depot routes

Further to the report in the February *Table Talk* regarding the planned opening date for Transdev's new depot on High St, Thomastown on Monday 6 March, sources suggest some shifts across the following routes will be transferred to the new facility - 200, 207, 246, 250, 251, 281, 295, 302, 305 and 350, although Doncaster and North Fitzroy will continue to operate several trips on each route.

The new depot will replace leased space at Tullamarine Bus Lines' Airport West depot (an arrangement dating back to the formation of the Green and Yellow Orbitals in 2010) with a number of shifts on orbital routes 901 and 902 also moving across.

St Kilda Festival detours

The annual St Kilda Festival on Sunday 12 February saw various detours but failed to deliver any additional services:

- Transdev route 246 (Elsternwick – Clifton Hill) was diverted directly along St Kilda Road and Brighton Road after 1130 to avoid traffic congestion on Barkly St, but missing 17 stops in St Kilda and along Glen Huntly Road in Elwood. Information online failed to highlight the detour until after 1800, leaving dozens of passengers waiting at stops for buses simply not coming, with either no information displayed at stops or poorly written advice at those stops shared with routes 600, 606 and 922. For around a decade afternoon buses on route 246 in the southern half of the route ran as a shuttle connecting with regular services terminating at Alma Road – it is unclear why Transdev did not follow this model in 2017.
- Transdev routes 600 and 922 (St Kilda – Southland) and CDC Melbourne Route 623

terminated at Barkly St and Carlisle St, not serving St Kilda Light Rail station or Luna Park

- CDC Melbourne route 606 (Elsternwick – Port Melbourne – Fishermans Bend) did not travel south of Park St and Mary St in St Kilda.

Passengers travelling to Elwood and Elsternwick were advised to use route 246, but as noted above the service was bypassing Elwood altogether!

Another White Night

Around 600,000 Melbournians descended on the Melbourne CBD between 1900 Saturday 18 February and 0700 Sunday 19 February for the annual White Night arts and cultural festival.

To assist Doncaster residents, Transdev's Route 907 (City – Mitcham) ran an extended half-hourly headway overnight instead of finishing at midnight, complementing Night Bus Routes 961 and 966. On White Night 2015, all DART routes ran overnight, but last year there was no DART services operating.

Trams and buses across the CBD were diverted, with two bus hubs established on the eastern and western sides of the festival from 1700 onwards.

Passengers for routes 200, 207, 216, 219, 220, 232, 234, 235, 236, 250 and 251 were directed to a Western public transport hub on Queen St between Bourke St and Little Bourke St, while routes 302, 304, 605, 905, 906 and 907 left from Spring St between Bourke and Collins Streets (outside Parliament station). Night Bus Routes 941, 942, 944, 945, 951 and 952 departed from Queen St while routes 955, 961, 966 and 969 left from Spring St, with no buses operating the usual 6-stop CBD loop. It was not clear if any later trips ran – official advice suggested services would continue until 0630 – this is the usual finish time of Night Bus Routes 961 and 966 but other routes conclude around 0530 normally.

Thanks to Jason Blackman, Geoff Foster, Hilaire Fraser, Craig Halsall, Geoff Hassall, Geoff Lambert, Victor Isaacs, Peter Parker, various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*, ABC News, the *Herald* (Newcastle), and the *Manly Daily* for Bus news.

FERRY NEWS

From 1 February Chiswick Wharf, **Sydney Harbour**, closed for approximately five months for an upgrade. A shuttle bus service, route 437 is running between Chiswick shopping centre and Abbotsford Wharf to allow connections with Parramatta River ferry services

Thanks to Tony Bailey and *Transit Australia* for Ferry news.

AIR NEWS

International

Tigerair discontinued its flights from Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth to Denpasar, Bali from 3 February, due to regulatory disagreements with Indonesian aviation authorities.

Qatar Airways plans to commence services to/from Canberra, initially via Sydney, in February 2018.

Thanks to Victor Isaacs for Air news.

ODD SPOT

Transport investigators examining the bus fire that shut down the Sydney Harbour Bridge last September were flabbergasted to discover a passenger ignored flames to jump back on to the bus to "tap off" his Opal card. A review of CCTV images from inside the bus showed him risking all in a bid not to pay the highest fare – a consequence of not tapping off. But the perilous pursuit of the correct fare was likely to no avail,

according to Jim Donovan of Action for Public Transport. "The Opal readers will only allow people to tap off when the bus is at a stop. This person should obviously just have stayed well clear in any case," he said.

Thanks to David Cranney and the *Sydney Morning Herald* for Odd Spot.

RECOMMENDED READING

"There's a (transit) app for that", *Trains* magazine, March 2017, pages 22-23. A variety of useful, innovative public transit apps are coming into use in the US.

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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