



TABLE TALK

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TOP TABLE TALK – SYDNEY BUS TIMEKEEPING

by Geoff Lambert

On Tuesday 17 July, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published an on-line and a two-page print story entitled '*Late every time*': Sydney's worst bus revealed. The story attracted hundreds of comments - so many that comments had to be closed soon after the story hit the streets.

The story was based on research by Nigel Gladstone and Cassandra Morgan into Sydney Buses' database of on-time running and was prompted by, and aided by research, done by Ms Kathrin ("Katie") Bell into the notorious lateness of the Route 370 bus which she used to use to travel to University of Technology Sydney. A description of the work which Katie did can be found in this month's (August 2018) edition of ATA's *Times* magazine. Following is the text of the *SMH* story:

Late every time: Sydney's worst bus revealed by Nigel Gladstone and Cassandra Morgan

Sydney's least reliable buses have been revealed by real-time bus data showing more than 600 services ran late daily during peak hour over two weeks in the past month. On the worst routes, over a four-month period, one in five buses was 20 minutes or more late. During evening peak hour - between 3pm and 7pm - 471 buses or 4.3% of all trips in Sydney were 10 minutes or more late, on average, over 10 weekdays between June 21 and July 4. In the morning peak - between 6am and 10am - an average of 189 buses ran 10 minutes or more late over the same period.

One in five people from the north-west and inner west of Sydney were "partly to very dissatisfied" with bus punctuality, according to the latest Transport for NSW [passenger survey](#)¹ conducted in November 2017. The survey showed that only 2% of lower north shore and northern beaches passengers felt frustrated by bus reliability.

Sydney's tardiest bus is the 370 from Leichhardt through Newtown to Coogee. The bus copped more than 500 complaints in the year to June 2016, according to the latest figures obtained by Fairfax Media. Almost 950 people follow its timeliness on a Facebook page called: [The Universe Would Cease to Exist if the 370 Bus Arrived on Time](#)². So entrenched is the 370's lateness that software engineer Katie Bell [collected real-time bus data every minute](#)³ for four

months from late 2017 to early 2018 on 3.7 million trips to see if the 370 is the worst bus in Sydney.

Ms Bell, who created [a website](#)⁴ using real-time bus data, found 3% of about 5,000 buses ran more than 20 minutes late. The worst buses, measured at least 20 minutes late at some point in their route, were the Castle Cove to Chatswood route 277, which was late about 25% of the time; the 370, late about 23% of the time; and the 281 Davidson to Chatswood bus, late about 22% of the time.

Martin Cooper catches the 370 bus from Newtown to work in Leichardt. "I catch the 370 bus every day and it's been late every time. Every single time," Mr Cooper, 43, said. "It's terribly annoying. I have to catch an earlier bus just to make sure that I get to work on time. That's half an hour [and] I have been late because of it." Alison Turner catches the 370 from Newtown station to Prince of Wales Private Hospital where she works as a student nurse. "I want to catch the bus that comes at 12.45pm but because it's always late I have to catch the one that comes 15 minutes, 20 minutes or sometimes half an hour earlier," Ms Turner said. "It's also frustrating because there's only one, like, every half an hour. If there weren't so many cars on the road, perhaps the buses would be able to run on time."

Sydney buses are held to a lower standard than those in Melbourne. Falling behind schedule by five minutes at any point or leaving early from a bus stop is considered tardy in Melbourne. But in Sydney, bus delays are only measured at the start, middle and end of trips. Sydney buses also have an extra 59 seconds before being classified as late and can leave a bus stop two minutes early.

Transport for NSW said it closely monitors the network in real time and uses "smart technology to plan bus routes that match customer movements and demand". "We also have a raft of traffic devices – such as diversions, clearways, tidal flow and bus indented bays – that can be rolled out as required to help manage disruption so buses can navigate congested areas," a Transport for NSW spokeswoman said. The number of people taking bus trips has grown rapidly, with about 1.2 million more trips taken in January, February and May 2018 compared with the corresponding months in

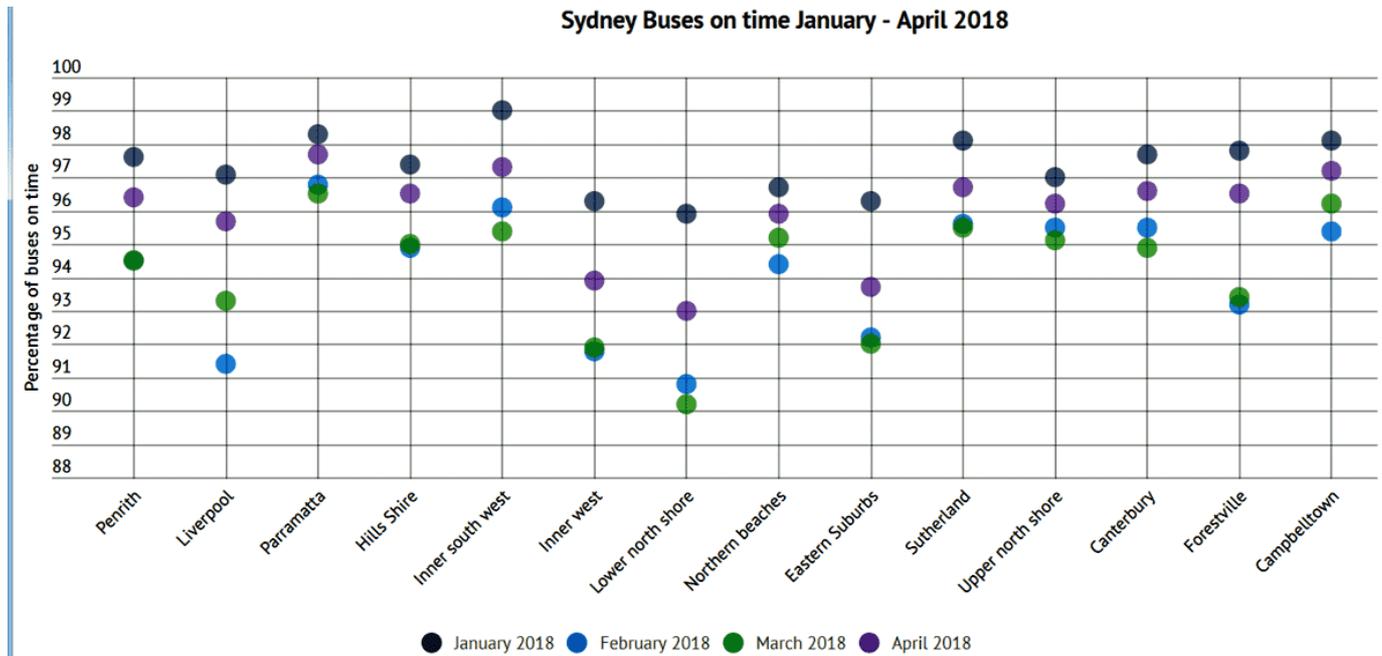
2017. In April 2018, bus trips increased by 2.3 million compared with the same month last year.

More than 100 trucks equipped with technology that tells traffic lights to stay green for them might be rolled out on buses running late. A three-month trial over 40 kilometres of freight routes on Pennant Hills, Parramatta and King Georges Roads began in June and NSW Minister for Roads Melinda Pavey said the trial could be extended to give priority to late-running buses in Sydney.

Web citations:

1. <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/news-and-events/reports-and-publications/customer-satisfaction-index>
2. https://www.facebook.com/groups/2262028391/?ref=group_header
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7jqU39wvKk>
4. <https://bus-shaming.com/>

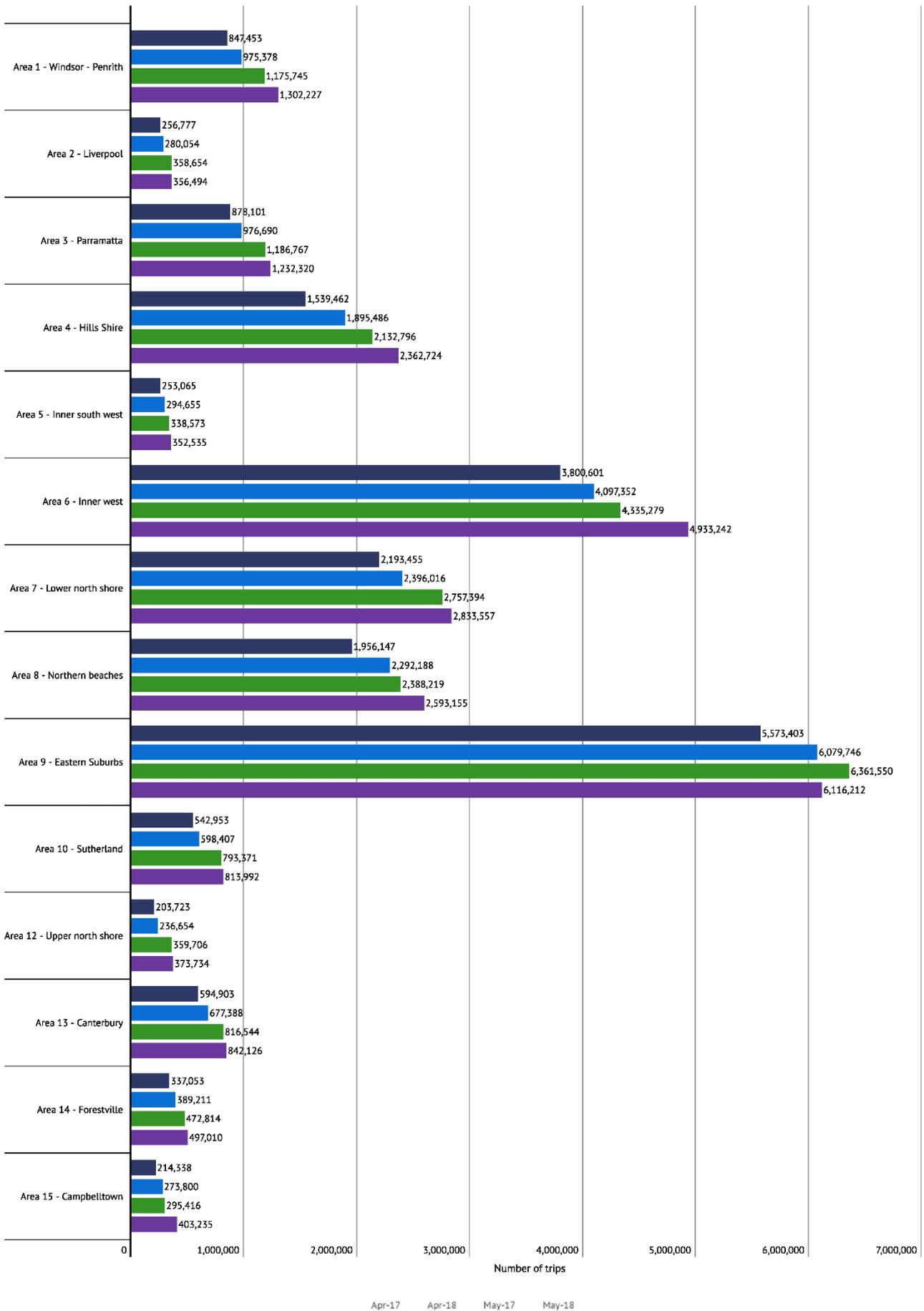
The story was accompanied by a package of graphics (different in the in-line and on-paper versions), based predominantly on TfNSW data, rather than Ms Bell's data. Extracts of these follow:



Source: Transport for NSW on-time running

Bad buses on time Jan-Apr 2018 - Source TfNSW

Total Sydney bus trips by area April, May 2017 vs 2018



Sydney Bus passenger rides - Source TfNSW

Western area

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
T64	12	18	Rouse Hill Town Centre to Parramatta via Kellyville
T71	13	49	Castle Hill to Blacktown via Standhope Gardens
723	20	24	Mount Druitt to Blacktown via Eastern Creek
745	8	35	Castle Hill to St Marys via Standhope Gardens
T70	26	13	Castle Hill to Blacktown via Glenwood
756	11	18	Blacktown to Mount Druitt via Woodcroft and Plumpton
795	16	12	Warragamba to Pennrith
M92	57	110	Sutherland to Parramatta
962	17	44	Bankstown to Miranda
961	6	35	Barden Ridge to Miranda
850	8	24	Narellan Town Centre to Minto
852	6	23	Carnes Hill Marketplace to Liverpool via Greenway Dr and Cowpasture Rd
T80	19	25	Liverpool to Parramatta via T-way
802	15	23	Liverpool to Parramatta via Green Valley
812	9	29	Blacktown to Fairfield

Mid western

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
M91	50	93	Hurstville to Parramatta via Padstow and Chester Hill
M90	29	78	Liverpool to Burwood
909	6	29	Bankstown to Parramatta via Birrong and Auburn
907	15	19	Bankstown to Parramatta via Bass Hill

Inner north-west

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
533	15	32	Sydney Olympic Park to Chatswood via Rhodes and North Ryde
506	32	14	Macquarie University to City Dornain via East Ryde
M40	21	23	Bondi Junction to Chatswood
M54	21	21	Parramatta to Macquarie Park via Epping
545	23	17	Parramatta to Chatswood via Eastwood and Macquarie Centre
525	13	27	Parramatta to Burwood via Sydney Olympic Park
291	12	27	Epping to McMahons Pt
292	4	33	Marsfield to City Erskine St via Macquarie Park
M52	13	19	Parramatta to City Circular Quay (Limited Stops)
261	7	23	Lane Cove to City King St Wharf via Longueville
501	11	18	West Ryde to Central Pitt St via Pymont and Ultimo

Forest coach line area

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
280	16	50	Warringah Mall to Chatswood
270	15	46	Terrey Hills to City QVB
197	18	28	Mona Vale to Macquarie University via Gordon
271	4	38	Belrose to City QVB
281	12	25	Davidson to Chatswood
283	4	27	Belrose to Chatswood
260	14	15	Terrey Hills to North Sydney
274	2	27	Davidson to City QVB via Frenchs Forest

Inner west

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
M20	51	75	Botany to Gore Hill
M10	12	100	Maroubra Junction to Leichhardt via City
413	16	85	Campsie to City Martin Place
418	17	63	Bondi Junction to Burwood
444	37	35	Campsie to Balmain East Wharf
422	28	44	Kogarah to City Martin Place
348	23	47	Wolli Creek to Bondi Junction
480	10	55	Strathfield to Central Pitt St via Homebush Rd
423	11	48	Kingsgrove to City Martin Place
428	20	38	Canterbury to City Martin Place
412	35	22	Campsie to City Martin Place via Earlwood
526	13	42	Rhodes Shopping Centre to Burwood
483	14	38	Strathfield to Central Pitt St via South Strathfield
M50	15	35	Coogee to Drummoyne
461	9	40	Burwood to City Domain
487	14	32	Bankstown Central to Canterbury
389	19	25	Bondi Junction to Pyrmont
426	30	11	Dulwich Hill to City Martin Place
492	21	19	Rockdale to Drummoyne
M30	4	36	Sydenham to Taronga Zoo
L23	10	29	Kingsgrove to City Martin Place (Limited Stops)
M41	15	23	Macquarie Park to Hurstville
491	14	24	Hurstville to Five Dock
433	10	28	Balmain Gladstone Park to Central Pitt St
438	24	9	Abbotsford to City Martin Place
415	24	8	Chiswick to Campsie
440	5	25	Bondi Junction to Rozelle
490	11	18	Hurstville to Drummoyne
470	8	21	Lilyfield to City Martin Place
431	3	26	Glebe Point to City Martin Place

Lower north shore

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
136	22	41	Chatswood to Manly
81	5	39	B Line Mona Vale to City Wynyard
144	3	28	Manly to Chatswood via Royal North Shore Hospital

Upper north shore

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
572	4	25	Turrumurra to Macquarie University via South Turramura and West Pymble

Eastern suburbs

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
370	123	156	Leichhardt Marketplace to Coogee
400	67	107	Bondi Junction to Burwood via Eastgardens (Limited Stops)
343	39	77	Kingsford to Chatswood
373	34	81	Coogee to City Circular Quay via Belmore Rd
X73	28	57	Coogee to City Museum (Express Service)
377	19	54	Maroubra Beach to City Circular Quay
374	22	49	Coogee to City Circular Quay via Bream St
X74	13	55	Coogee to City Museum via Alison Rd (Express Service)
X77	10	57	Maroubra Beach to City Museum (Express Service)
393	11	47	Little Bay to Central Railway Square via Maroubra and Kingsford
303	18	39	Sans Souci to City Circular Quay via Mascot
379	27	33	North Bondi to Bronte
311	20	33	Central Railway Square to Millers Point via Darlinghurst and Potts Point
372	13	40	Coogee to Central Railway Square
376	29	21	Maroubra Beach to Central Railway Square
301	21	28	Eastgardens to City Circular Quay via Mascot
309	15	33	Port Botany Depot to Central Railway Square
352	16	27	Marrickville Metro to Bondi Junction via Oxford St Crown St and King St
324	15	28	Watsons Bay to Walsh Bay via Old South Head Rd
X40	9	30	Clovelly to City Museum (Express Service)
394	12	24	La Perouse to City Circular Quay via Maroubra and Kingsford
410	6	30	Bondi Junction to Rockdale
200	16	18	Bondi Junction to Chatswood
391	4	26	La Perouse or Port Botany to Central Railway Square
338	3	27	Clovelly to Central Railway Square
L94	6	23	La Perouse to City Circular Quay (Limited Stops)

Inner south west

Bus	AM peak	PM peak	Route
945	24	28	Bankstown to Hurstville via Mortdale
446	12	21	St George Hospital to Roselands

Worst bus routes - scans from pages 2 and 3 of *SMH*. The second and third columns show the number of buses that were at least ten minutes late over the ten weekdays between 21 June and 4 July.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Who operates what

An article entitled “Who Operates What” appeared in our sister magazine, the *Times* in May 2016, pages 11-15 (cdn.timetable.org.au/thetimes201605issue.pdf), detailing the current railway industry in Australia – infrastructure controllers and train operators. Following are the principal alterations which have occurred since then.

Infrastructure: In July 2017, Canadian-owned **Brookfield Rail**, responsible for the rural railway network in WA, was renamed **Arc Infrastructure**.

Southern Cross station, Melbourne, is owned by an asset investment company called **AssetCo**, a subsidiary of IFM Investors.

Operators: In August 2017, major freight operator **Pacific National** was taken over by Australian Logistics Acquisition Investments, a consortium of Global Infrastructure Partners, CPP Investment Board, China Investment Corporation, GIC Private Limited and British Columbia Investment Management Corporation.

In August 2017 major freight operator **Aurizon** decided to exit the intermodal business and concentrate on mineral and other bulk haulage. The business was sold to its main competitor, **Pacific National**. Aurizon’s last interstate intermodal trains operated in December 2017. Transfer of the Queensland business has been delayed while the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission examines the related takeover of the Acacia Ridge terminal in southern Brisbane.

Espee Rail, the small freight subsidiary of the Australian Railway Historical Society, ACT Division, ceased operation when the parent body became bankrupt in November 2016.

The new tram in Canberra, ACT is owned by the ACT Government. It will be operated by **Canberra Metro** consortium consisting of Pacific Partnerships, CPB Contractors, John Holland, Mitsubishi Corporation, Aberdeen Infrastructure Investments, DB Engineering & Consulting (formerly Deutsche Bahn International), CAF and Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Ltd.

ACCC takes action against Pacific National and Aurizon

On 19 July the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission instituted proceedings in the Federal Court against Pacific National, Aurizon and their related entities, for allegedly reaching an understanding in relation to Aurizon’s intermodal business that had the purpose and/or would be likely to have the effect of substantially lessening competition in the supply of intermodal and steel rail linehaul services.

The ACCC alleges that in July 2017 PN and Aurizon reached an understanding that would lead to Aurizon exiting its intermodal business through a combination

of closure and transactions with PN. The effect of the understanding was that Aurizon would stop competing with PN to supply intermodal and steel linehaul services throughout Australia.

The ACCC also alleges that PN’s proposed acquisition of Aurizon’s Queensland intermodal business and the Acacia Ridge Terminal, as well as an agreement for PN to operate the interstate side of the Acacia Ridge Terminal, would separately each have the likely effect of substantially lessening competition.

The ACCC is seeking declarations, pecuniary penalties, orders restraining PN from acquiring the Acacia Ridge Terminal and Aurizon’s Queensland intermodal business, and costs. The ACCC has also applied for an injunction to prevent Aurizon from closing its Queensland intermodal business while the case is being determined.

The ACCC alleges that, in late July 2017, PN and Aurizon reached an understanding leading Aurizon to terminate its sales process with other bidders. The ACCC alleges that the understanding involved PN obtaining control of Acacia Ridge Terminal, either by PN acquiring the terminal or, if that was prevented by the ACCC, by a long-term contract appointing it as operator of the interstate side of the terminal, commencing 1 December 2018. The ACCC also alleges that the understanding involved PN becoming the exclusive bidder for Aurizon’s Queensland intermodal business, but that if PN did not acquire that business, Aurizon would close it. The ACCC alleges that PN and Aurizon gave effect to this understanding by executing formal contracts including contracts for the sale of the Acacia Ridge Terminal and the operation of the Acacia Ridge Terminal (the Terminal Services Subcontract), and to negotiate exclusively for the sale/purchase of the Queensland intermodal business. Subsequently, PN and Aurizon entered into an agreement for PN to acquire the Queensland intermodal business.

In addition, Aurizon announced the closure of its interstate intermodal business on 14 August 2017. The business was closed by December 2017. Earlier this year, Aurizon announced that it would close its Queensland intermodal business if the ACCC opposed the proposed acquisition by PN. The ACCC alleges that the closure of Aurizon’s interstate intermodal business and the planned closure of the Queensland intermodal business is a direct and expected consequence of the understanding reached with PN.

PN is the largest provider of intermodal rail freight services in Australia. Currently, PN and Aurizon are the only providers of intermodal rail freight services within Queensland. Aurizon previously also competed with PN and SCT on interstate routes.

Queensland Rail Citytrain: Unusual diversion

Overhead power problems on Saturday evening 7 and Sunday 8 July caused the suspension of train services in the inner southern suburbs of Brisbane. Beenleigh, Gold Coast, and even Cleveland line trains were diverted to travel non-stop via the Yeerongpilly-Sherwood line. A New Generation Rollingstock train and 1.2 kms of overhead equipment were damaged.

Queensland Rail Citytrain: Incidents

Queensland Rail incidents on Friday 13 July were caused by congestion and "heavy passenger loading". Some services were delayed up to 45 minutes. Sixty passengers were trapped in another train for an hour in a tunnel due to a power issue. QR said the problems were caused by multiple separate issues, most notably an electrical fault, a mechanical fault and two separate medical issues. Chief executive Nick Easy said six NGR trains had also been removed from service as a precaution to be inspected by the manufacturer as a result of an earlier mechanical fault. Mr Easy said the disruptions equated to only 2.1% of the 1192 services on Friday.

Aurizon loses Queensland freight

Grain: Aurizon has lost its contract with GrainCorp for grain haulage in Queensland. The successful tenderer is US shortline operator, Watco. Watco will operate trains to ports at Mackay, Gladstone, and Fisherman Island (Brisbane). It has ordered eight 1067mm-gauge diesel locomotives from National Railway Equipment Corporation in the US for the contract, along with a new fleet of grain wagons, which will be manufactured in China. Because of the lead times required, start-up for the contract is expected in the fourth quarter of 2019. Watco has been operating narrow and standard-gauge grain trains in WA since 2012 on behalf of local grain handler CBH Group, transporting up to 10 million tonnes of grain per annum. It also operates standard-gauge intermodal shuttles and engineering trains in WA.

GrainCorp is seeking to end its current take-or-pay contracts. GrainCorp's Queensland grain harvest at 557,250 tonnes in 2017 (a dry year), was small compared to NSW (2,087,500 tonnes) and Victoria (2,944,500 tonnes).

Sugar: Aurizon has lost its contract with Wilmar for sugar haulage in Queensland. Pacific National now has a ten year contract to haul bulk sugar and molasses from Wilmar's four Burdekin area mills to the port of Townsville using three train sets and sugar from Proserpine to Mackay using one train set.

Intermodal: Aurizon's exit from the Queensland intermodal business and its takeover by Pacific National has been delayed. The originally set date of 30 June has passed while the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission examines the takeover of the Acacia Ridge terminal in southern Brisbane by a consortium of PN and Linfox. (See also article above.)

Following Aurizon's exit from interstate intermodal traffic, it is selling surplus container wagons.

Coal: In the light of the controversy about Aurizon reducing windows for the haulage of coal on its Central Queensland network, in response to the Queensland Competition Authority refusing to grant it the full haulage rates it sought, Aurizon is now examining possibly divesting infrastructure.

On 5 July, train controllers at Rockhampton control centre initiated industrial action in support of negotiations over pay and conditions with Aurizon. Coal trains in central Queensland were affected for an indefinite period.

When all these moves are complete, Aurizon will provide bulk haulage only, mainly coal in Queensland and the Hunter Valley, and a relatively small amount of iron ore in the Geraldton area of WA.

Queensland Rail: Central line

\$44 million is being spent to replace 240,000 timber sleepers between Emerald and Clermont, and Emerald and Winton. Replacement between Emerald and Clermont, and Emerald and Jericho, has been completed, with sleepers between Jericho and Winton due for completion by November 2019. \$48 million is being spent to replace timber rail bridges with more durable steel and concrete structures with a 100-year lifespan. Between Emerald and Clermont, and Emerald and Winton, 109 timber bridges have been replaced, with the most recent completed in February this year.

Queensland: Proposed Beaudesert line

The Queensland Department of Transport is undertaking long-term planning and land reservation for a railway to Beaudesert. The proposal envisages a double-track electrified narrow gauge line parallel to the ARTC line from Salisbury to Kagaru. It would then swing south east towards Veresdale where it would roughly take up the alignment of the former Beaudesert branch (closed 11 Dec 2002). This is impacting on planning for the Salisbury-Kagaru section of the Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Freight Railway. Details are at

<https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Projects/Name/S/Salisbury-to-Beaudesert-Rail-Corridor-Study>

2018 and 2019 Working Timetables

Anticipated dates for new Working Timetables for the Australian Rail Track Corporation, Sydney Trains and John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network are 30 September 2018, 6 January and 1 April 2019.

JHR NSW CRN WTT alterations

The following alterations to the John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network Working Timetable apply from 29 July (Country Train Notice 155-2018 refers.):

Southern Region:

3MC2 (PNIN) for --T---- runs as tabled by ARTC to pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Junee 0007, Old Junee 0022, arrive Marrar 0043, depart 0118, pass Coolamon 0145, Grong Grong 0236, Narrandera 0257, arrive Leeton 0342, depart 0457, arrive Griffith 0625 – forms 3372/4CM3

4MC2 (PNIN) for ---W--- runs as tabled by ARTC to pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Junee 2304, Old Junee

2320, arrive Marrar 2342, depart 0015, pass Coolamon 0045, Grong Grong 0137, Narrandera 0159, arrive Leeton 0244, depart 0329, arrive Griffith 0458 – forms 3372/5CM3

5MC2 (PNIN) for ----T—runs as tabled by ARTC to pass CRN/ARTC Boundary Junee 2304, Old Junee 2320, arrive Marrar 2342, depart 0015, pass Coolamon 0046, Grong Grong 0138, Narrandera 0200, arrive Leeton 0244, depart 0329, arrive Griffith 0458 – forms 3372/6CM3

-CM3 (PNIN) for -MTWTF- departs Griffith 1408, arrive Leeton 1525, depart 1610, pass Narrandera 1700, Grong Grong 1728, Coolamon 1835, arrive Marrar 1850, depart 1920, pass Old Junee 1941, arrive CRN/ARTC Boundary Junee 1955 thence as tabled by ARTC

Western Region:

8862 (QUBE 420m) for ---W--S departs Hermidale 1230, arrive Nyngan 1336, depart 1411, arrive Nevertire 1519, depart 1529, pass Trangie 1608, arrive CRN/ARTC Boundary Main Line - Narromine 1646 – terminate

Deletions Western Region:

1837 (PNRB 700m) for ---W---

8138 (PNRB 700m) for ----T--

9839 (PNRB 600m) for -M-----

9837 (PNRB 900m) for --T-T-S

8938 (PNRB 900m) for S--W-F-

Transport for NSW/Sydney Trains: Information downgrade

STNs (Special Train Notices) for weekend and other closedowns on the Greater Sydney train network are no longer available on the part of the NSW Transport website designed for operators.

Summaries of weekend and other closedowns are no longer available on the part of the NSW Transport website designed for the public -

<https://transportnsw.info/alerts#/train> The PDFs of forthcoming closedowns are apparently no longer produced. Closedown information now has to be searched for among all sorts of other operational alterations (some of which is trivial, such as lift outages).

NSW TrainLink: New buses

July *Table Talk*, page 5, reported the commencement of new NSW TrainLink buses on a trial service from Wagga Wagga to Albury from 16 July. In fact, these extend to Wodonga, Victoria. TrainLink has now issued detailed timings as follows:

	Daily	Daily
Wagga Court House	0800	1700
Wagga Sturt Mall	0805	1705
Wagga Station	0810	1710
Uranquinty	0825	1725
The Rock	0840	1740
Yerong Creek	0850	1750

Henty	0900	1800
Culcairn	0915	1815
Gerogery	0915	1830
Lavington	0950	1850
Albury	1000	1900
Wodonga	1015	1915

	Daily	Daily
Wodonga	0800	1700
Albury	0815	1715
Lavington	0825	1725
Gerogery	0845	1745
Culcairn	0900	1800
Henty	0915	1815
Yerong Creek	0925	1825
The Rock	0935	1835
Uranquinty	0950	1850
Wagga Station	1005	1905
Wagga Sturt Mall	1010	1910
Wagga Court House	1015	1915

NSW: Fixing Country Rail projects

In addition to upgrading the Griffith and South Coast lines (see July *Table Talk*, page 5), the NSW government has announced the following projects:

- Ettamogah Rail Hub siding expansion, \$7.5 million;
- Condobolin siding extension and signalling, \$1.8 million;
- Hermidale multi-user siding, \$2.5 million;
- Bellata siding, \$2.6 million;
- Red Bend siding extension, \$970,000;
- Merrygoen loop extension, \$4.2 million;
- Port Waratah yard upgrade, \$3.3 million;
- Tarago loop extension and signalling for garbage trains, \$7.7 million; and
- Mount Murray loop extension, \$7.5 million.

Newcastle tram

A local report is that the Newcastle Tram might open as early as October. However, this seems optimistic, with late 2018/early 2019 more likely. Hunter St will reopen between Union St and Darby St at the end of July. By then the track base will be laid along the entire route, while Worth Place will be permanently opened.

Sydney Signal Box closes; Sydney station platforms close.

On the weekend of 28 and 29 July the remote control of the Sydney East, Sydney Illawarra and Sydney Yard areas was transferred to new panels at Homebush Control Centre. Four new workstations called Sydney East Down, Sydney East Up, Sydney Illawarra and

Sydney Yard, manage the City Underground, Sydney East Down, Sydney East Up, Sydney Illawarra and Sydney Yard areas of control. One of the existing spare workstations at Homebush Control Centre will be upgraded to include the new Sydney control areas. The existing push button Sydney panel and the City Underground panel at Sydney Signal Box will be decommissioned and permanently booked out of use.

On Saturday, 4 August platforms 13 and 14 Sydney Terminal Yard will be booked out of use for an extended period for the Central Station Sydney Metro works. All points and signals giving access to the portion of line will be booked out of use and locked.

Sydney train delays

Sydney Trains failed to reach on-time running targets for almost 80% of days in June, leaked internal transport documents reveal. This is the worst on-time running figures for peak hour trains since the introduction of the 2017 timetable. The percentage of trains arriving and leaving Central in the morning and afternoon, shows punctuality targets were only achieved on four out of 28 days. The Sydney Trains' punctuality target is for 92% of trains to arrive within five minutes of the scheduled timetable in the Sydney Central station between 0600 and 1000, and 1500 and 1900. The internal documents show the same punctuality figure last September — before the timetable changes — showed the target was not met 19% of days. By January — at the height of the threatened strike action, the punctuality target was not met for 33% of those days.

Sydney Tram

With utility work in the track area and track installation nearing completion, barriers along the Sydney CBD and South East light rail line will be removed or reduced over the coming months. However it might be as long as eight months before construction barricades are removed on the retail area of George St.

Track has been laid in 29 of the 31 zones with around four kilometres left to be laid. Civil construction will be substantially completed by the end of 2018. As these works wind down, systems, signalling, cabling and stop fit out works will start. Then the line will be energised for the continued testing and commissioning of the system and the light rail vehicles. Seven stops are under construction in the City's north, Randwick and Moore Park.

Intersection work is underway again on Hunter and Margaret Streets, Park and Drutt Streets, and Goulburn St in the CBD. Double track installation is continuing on George St between Margaret/Hunter Streets and King St, George St between Hay St and Rawson Place, Eddy Avenue between Pitt St and Elizabeth and Chalmers Streets, and Circular Quay along Alfred St to George St. Excavation works have begun for the Queen Victoria Building and Wynyard light rail stops. Work on the other CBD stops will begin in the coming months.

The Circular Quay and Haymarket substations are also under construction, with trenching work being carried

out and a high voltage cable being installed along Barlow St and Parker St. Near Central station, work has begun on the Central Chalmers Street stop. Elizabeth St and Devonshire St intersection work is progressing and some of the last remaining utilities works will be completed by November. Rail installation along Devonshire St between Riley and Crown Streets is also nearing completion. Construction will begin soon on the Surry Hills stop.

Construction is now complete on the base of the Kensington stop on Anzac Parade between Todman Avenue and High St, while work on the eastern and western side of the UNSW bus layover will allow crews to start on the UNSW Anzac Parade light rail stop outside NIDA.

Construction began in late 2015 and was originally due to be finished in March 2019.

Victoria: Punctuality

Metro Train Melbourne delivered 92.6% of its services on time in June, surpassing its May performance of 90% and its contractually-obliged monthly standard of 92%. The improvements were across 15 of the 16 metropolitan train lines, with the lowest results experienced on the Stony Point (88%) and Pakenham (88.5%) lines. It also bettered its reliability target (the percentage of timetabled services that actually run during the month) of 98.5%, posting a result of 99.1%.

Yarra Trams exceeded its punctuality target of 82%, and posted its highest result of the year, with 84.1% of its services running on time. Yarra Trams also exceeded its reliability target (98.5%) for a sixth successive month, delivering a June result of 98.6%.

V/Line improved its performance in June, with punctuality rising from 79.3% in May to 83.1%. The Bairnsdale line was the worst-performing as usual, with 48.4% of trains running on time. However, even this was a marked improvement upon May's result of 27% of the line. V/Line had a 95.9% reliability result, short of its target of 96%.

Victoria: High speed to Geelong?

The Victorian government announced on 26 April that it has started work for a high-speed rail link between Geelong and Melbourne, beginning detailed planning work and technical investigations to determine a preferred option. The Victorian Budget included \$50 million for detailed investigations of fast rail infrastructure upgrades, costs and train requirements. This will help identify a preferred option and pave the way for a full business case. A number of options will be investigated including possible electrification to Geelong along the existing rail corridor, as well as new dedicated high-speed rail alignments with new rolling stock. The investigations will also consider a new fleet of dedicated trains capable of travelling between 250 and 300km per hour.

The Melbourne Metro Rail Authority, established under the Coordinator General, will now become Rail Projects Victoria to lead the investigation, development and delivery of the program.

V/Line: Ballarat line

The public timetable PDFs for Ballarat and Ararat were re-issued dated 8 in May and 26 August – available at <https://www.vline.com.au/Timetables/Additional-pages/Timetable-list>

The Victorian government will spend \$130 million on track and signalling upgrades in Ballarat to provide more efficient routes for freight between the Murray Basin region and ports. State Transport Minister Jacinta Allan said the works were a necessary addition to the original Murray Basin Rail Project and would also support any expansion of the passenger network in the future. Broad-gauge passenger services will be separated from standard-gauge freight services, decongesting the Ballarat area. Tracks between Ballarat and North Ballarat will be reorganised. The number of signalling systems on the Ballarat corridor also will be reduced, while the systems themselves will be upgraded.

[John Hearsch of Rail Futures Institute comments:

The additional \$130m is almost all to cover the blow-out in the cost of the Murray Basin project and does not provide any additional functionality than what was originally proposed. The blow-out was actually caused by poor project management and inadequate scoping; for example, there was no allowance for a new signal interlocking at Ballarat, even though that was an obvious need from the outset. The layout of Ballarat is also unchanged from the original proposal which includes two tracks between Ballarat and Ballarat North Junction, the northern one standard gauge and the southern one broad with a turnout at the junction connecting to a gauge splitter on the Maryborough leg. The main difference will be restoring two tracks under the Armstrong St overbridge which will be at sub-standard clearance.]

The government has committed to ensuring a minimum of 42 weekly return freight paths from the Murray Basin region through Ballarat, with the Ararat and Maryborough loop providing the capacity to boost this to 65 if required. The upgrades also aim at potential increases in passenger train services to Ararat and Maryborough and allow future passenger rail to Dunolly by retaining the line's dual-gauge connection from Maryborough.

Rail Projects Victoria, Transport for Victoria and V/Line will be seeking feedback from the freight rail industry as the plans for the project are finalised. The announcement of the works comes as the second stage of the Murray Basin Rail Project nears completion, with freight trains now running between Yelta and Maryborough, and between Maryborough and Ararat on a standard gauge line.

As of early July:

- Earthworks for the duplication from Caroline Springs to Melton were well advanced – the final capping layer was in place over about half the distance;
- Preliminary site works for the new Toolern station had commenced;

- Construction of a second bridge over Toolern Creek near Melton had commenced;
- Earthworks for continued duplication for about 1.5 km beyond Melton (through Coburns Road crossing) had commenced.
- Construction of new stabling sidings at Kerrs Road, Maddingley were well advanced (pre-requisite for work in Bacchus Marsh yard);
- Construction of the new Ballan 4.5 km crossing loop and second Ballan platform had just started (extends approximately from 1 km up side of Ballan to 3.5 km beyond Ballan); and
- Construction of new Millbrook (name changed from Spreadeagle) crossing loop on the Bungaree deviation – preliminary work had just commenced.

By late July the Bacchus Marsh car sidings were well under construction, however there was no sign as yet of the duplicated track from the station to the new stabling yard. The foundation for the new double track from Caroline Springs to Melton was nearly completed. Ballast and sleepers were building up at the new loop site near Millbrook. It is expected that works will start in Ballan in October. The aim is to have the Caroline Springs to Melton duplication commissioned in November. Electrification to Melton is not part of the present project.

V/Line: Bendigo line

Signalling and track upgrades have been announced for the Bendigo/Echuca line, with the state government looking to boost speed and reliability. The works, due to begin in late 2018, will include track re-sleepering, changes to train control and train protection systems, and upgrades to level crossings and drainage. State Transport Minister Jacinta Allan said the upgrades will enable trains to travel at up to 130 km/h, up from 80 km/h. 28 extra trains weekly were added to the Bendigo line last year. Additional services to/from Epsom and Eaglehawk will be an outcome of the upgrades. Performance on the line has dipped of late, with only 76.6% of services running on-time in May.

The project is expected to cost approximately \$91 million. \$81 million for the Bendigo/Echuca line upgrades will be provided by the Federal government and the remaining funding by the State government.

V/Line: Bairnsdale line

The public timetable PDFs for Traralgon and Bairnsdale were re-issued dated 9 July and 26 August – available at

<https://www.vline.com.au/Timetables/Additional-pages/Timetable-list>

A late night bus from Traralgon (2200) to Southern Cross (0040) on Friday and Saturday nights stopping only at Morwell, Moe, Warragul and Pakenham was introduced from 13 July. The public timetable PDFs for Traralgon and Bairnsdale were re-issued.

VLocity trains will be introduced on some Melbourne-Bairnsdale services from August, replacing some locomotive-hauled trains.

Early work has begun at Traralgon as part of the \$530 million Gippsland line upgrade. There will be second platforms at Morwell, Bunyip and Longwarry. There will be duplication between Bunyip and Longwarry, and between Traralgon and Morwell, as well as an extension of duplicated track near Moe, east towards Traralgon. Level crossings will be upgraded, and drainage improved at the Morwell River, a crossing loop extension at Morwell, and a signalling upgrade. The project's final stage will replace the rail bridge over the Avon River.

From 17 July to 13 August all Gippsland trains stopped Caulfield and Huntingdale to pick up/set down pilots.

Metro and V/Line Gippsland train services will be replaced by buses from 6 to 14 August. Buses will run between Dandenong and Cranbourne on 4 and 5 August, between Dandenong and Pakenham from 4 to 12 August, then between Westall, Cranbourne and Pakenham on 13 and 14 August. There will be express buses between Westall and Cranbourne and Pakenham, and additional services that stop at all stations. Direct buses will run between Warragul, Drouin and Parliament during peak times. The Steamrail Snow Train will run to Traralgon as scheduled on Sunday, August 5.

During the disruption, platform upgrade works will continue at Dandenong, Officer, Cranbourne and Hallam for longer seven carriage trains, to run from mid-2019. Signalling will be upgraded.

V/Line: Warrnambool line

The public timetable PDFs for Geelong and Warrnambool were re-issued dated 15 June and 26 August (as well as the connecting V/Line buses to Mt Gambier and Casterton) available at <https://www.vline.com.au/Timetables/Additional-pages/Timetable-list>

V/Line: Mildura-Yelta line

On 11 June and again from 23 July schedules again changed for the V/Line portion of the overnight container trains from Melbourne to Merbein and return. No **7901V**, Mondays now departs Ararat at 2245, Maryborough 0242-0247, Dunolly 0315-0317, Donald 0452-0537, Ouyen 0827-0832, arrive Merbein 1020; Thursdays, Ararat 0355, Maryborough 0752-0757, Donald 1002-1047, Ouyen 1337-1342, Merbein 1530; Saturdays Ararat 0315, Maryborough 0717-0722, Dunolly 0750-0752, Donald 0927-1012, Ouyen 1302-1307, Merbein.1455.

No. **7902V**, Sundays departs Merbein 1345, Ouyen 1533-1538, Donald 1825-1910, Dunolly 2151-2156, Maryborough 2226-2231, Ararat 0125; Tuesdays Merbein 1940, Ouyen 2128-2133, Donald 0020-0105, Dunolly 0346-0351, Maryborough 0421-0426, Ararat 0835; Thursdays Merbein 2120, Ouyen 2308-2313, Donald 0200-0245, Dunolly 0611-0616, Maryborough 0646-651, Ararat 1100.

No doubt, as work continues on rebuilding this line, there will be more changes to the schedule.

Line speed between Ouyen 509.492km and Red Cliffs 594.440km is 80km/h (Y Class 65km/h); between Red

Cliffs 594.440km and 595.487km is 70km/h (Y Class 65km/h); between Red Cliffs 595.487km and Mildura 608.432km is 80km/h. (Y Class 65km/h); between Mildura 610.990km and Merbein 620.783km is 65km/h; between Merbein 620.783km and Yelta is 65km/h.

Metro Trains Melbourne 2018 timetable

When the South Morang-Mernda line opens, probably in August, new timetables are likely throughout Victoria. The new Metro Trains timetable will include 190 new and hundreds of extended weekday services every week. South Morang passengers will have 115 new and extended services each week. The new Mernda line will have 982 services a week. Thirty-five trains will be extended to/from Eltham. Thirty-five new weekday services will also be added on the Werribee line, providing a "turn up and go" service at South Kensington, Seddon, Yarraville and Spotswood.

There will be 80 additional or extended services on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines each week and a longer period of turn-up-and-go service frequency in the evenings, meaning trains every 10 minutes until 2200 on weeknights. The new timetable also makes room for 14 of the 24 new High Capacity Metro Trains to be introduced from mid-2019 on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines.

Bus timetables will also be adjusted to maintain connections. New timetables will be available around one month before the changes are introduced.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Extension to Mernda

Services to Mernda will commence on Sunday 26 August.

From 29 June to 2 July, works were undertaken to commission the extension from South Morang to Mernda. The following are the principal alterations:

- A new double line section of railway is commissioned between South Morang and Mernda. Both tracks are unidirectional in operation.
- The new double line section includes three individual viaduct sections of railway located at Hawkstowe station, Simon's Creek/The Parkway and Mernda station.
- New signalling is three position LED signals. All new main line signals will be provided on tilt masts. Signal post telephones are provided for each Controlled Home Signal.
- Signalling at Mernda is controlled from the existing Sigview control system at Epping. The existing Sigmap system at Epping will be upgraded as a result. Automatic Block Signalling is in force on the Up and Down Main Lines between South Morang and Mernda.
- Axle counters are utilised as the primary method of rail vehicle detection.
- The new railway station at Mernda is at distance 33.178 km. The station is elevated and has an island platform. Trains are capable of terminating in either platform.
- Four new stabling sidings are provided at the Down end of Mernda station. Each siding has a standing

room of 300 metres. Movements to and from each siding will be fully signalled and interlocked. Friction arrestors are

provided at the end of each siding.

- New stations at Middle Gorge and Hawkstowe are at 28.409 and 30.808 km respectively. Hawkstowe is elevated and constructed as an island platform, whilst Middle Gorge is at 'at grade' and has individual up and down platforms.

- New substations are provided at South Morang, Hawkstowe and Mernda.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Frankston line

A third track has been proposed between Moorabbin and Frankston. The Federal government has expressed its support to allow for more express services. But the so-called "Frankston flyer" proposal has been dismissed by the Victorian government, which claims the project would cost well in excess of \$20 billion, require hundreds of homes and businesses to be acquired, and the removal of all level crossings along the line.

In 2016, the Federal government committed \$4 million for Frankston line upgrades. The money was intended to be split evenly between a business case for the Frankston flyer project and a business case for extending metropolitan rail services from Frankston two stops to Baxter. Of that money, \$3 million is being spent on the Baxter business case, while the remaining \$1 million promised is sitting idle. Acting Minister for Public Transport Luke Donnellan said the extra \$1 million had not been provided to the Victorian government, and the government would not undertake a business case into the project. The Frankston train line is an extremely narrow corridor and expanding it would involve lane closures on Station Street and the Nepean Highway, the removal of car parking, and the acquisition of hundreds of properties, he said. All of the level crossings along the line (about 30) would also have to be removed, to allow for trains to run fast enough to complete the journey from Frankston to the city in 30 minutes.

Nine level crossings on the Frankston line are currently being removed by building a mix of rail trenches and bridges, including a 900-metre rail bridge to remove three crossings in Carrum and Bonbeach.

Alternatively, a shorter express track between Carrum and Moorabbin stations could be built, although it would do less to cut the journey time between Frankston and the City.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Werribee line

From 1915 Saturday 16 June to last service Monday 24 July works took place as part of the Kororoit Creek level crossing removal project. Buses replaced Altona Loop trains between Newport and Laverton. The following works occurred on the Altona Junction – Westona single line section:

- The Kororoit Creek Road level crossing, pedestrian crossing and all associated equipment abolished.
- The Altona Junction loop lines extended in the Down direction and elevated on a 'rail over road' bridge. The

bridge passes over the former location of the Kororoit Creek Road level crossing.

- The bridge section, including the grade approaches, extends for a distance of 277 metres between 13.861 and 14.138 km.

- Track and signalling alterations to complement the new infrastructure arrangement.

This work finished early. It had been expected to last until Sunday 29 July.

Metro Trains Melbourne: More construction

Major works will be undertaken in August to remove three more level crossings in Essendon, Seaford and Dandenong South.

The Buckley St level crossing which is set to be removed by early October, is among Melbourne's worst with the boom gates down for around 78 minutes during the morning peak, leading to major road traffic delays. To remove this level crossing, buses will replace trains along some sections of the Craigieburn line between 24 August and 9 September. Buses will replace Seymour and Shepparton trains for the entire journey to and from Southern Cross Station during this time.

The Seaford Road level crossing leaves motorists waiting for around 32 minutes during the morning peak. To enable it to be gone by the end of September, Seaford Road and Railway Parade will be closed near the level crossing for six weeks from 17 August, and buses will replace trains between Carrum and Stony Point on the weekend of 18-19 August and from 2030 on 8 September to 0600 on 16 September.

The dangerous Abbots Road level crossing will be removed by early September following a 10-day construction blitz. Once it is gone, 11 level crossings will have been removed on the Cranbourne line. From the evening of 28 August to the morning of 8 September, buses will replace trains between Dandenong and Cranbourne as crews put the finishing touches on the 410-metre-long bridge over Abbots Road.

26 level crossings have been removed over the past three years and a further three removals are under construction. Work is well ahead of schedule to remove 50 level crossings by 2022.

Melbourne Airport railway

Construction of a railway to Melbourne Airport is expected to commence within a few years. The Victorian government will provide up to \$5 billion towards the construction of the long-awaited project, matching a similar commitment from the Federal government. A route options assessment undertaken by Transport for Victoria has shown that of the four routes considered, the Sunshine alignment (previously known as the Albion East alignment) is the Victorian government's preferred route. This goes via a new Sunshine "Super Hub", which will connect regional and metro train lines, including the Metro Tunnel. From Sunshine, trains will head north utilising both the

Albion East rail reserve and sections of tunnel to the Airport.

Adelaide Metro: Gawler line

Electrification of the Gawler line is likely to be complete in late 2020, after the SA government approved an extension to Lend Lease's contract for the electrification of Stage 2. Lend Lease was already contracted to deliver Stage 1 of the project, which covered the first 20 kms of the 42 km Gawler line, between Adelaide and Salisbury. There will now be electrification of the line from Salisbury to Gawler. The expected cost of the second stage is approximately \$462.5 million, towards which the previous State government committed \$242.5 million in its 2017-18 Budget and the Federal government \$220 million in its 2018-19 Budget.

The Gawler electrification works will include:

- Installation of the overhead wiring system including masts and gantry supports,
- Installation of a new signalling system,
- Installation of an Automatic Train Protection system,
- Installation of a new fibre optic communications system cable,
- Installation of protective works and modifications to existing infrastructure,
- Service relocations, vegetation trimming and removal and other works necessary to enable the electrification to proceed,
- Electrification of the Dry Creek Railcar Depot,
- Construction of a new electricity feeder station at Kilburn,
- Installation of pedestrian level-crossing enhancements and fencing along the rail corridor for improved safety, and
- Fifteen additional three-car electric trains.

Adelaide Metro: Seaford line

From 23 July, the 0808 from Seaford will stop all stations from Seaford to Woodlands Park, then run express to the city. The 0853 arrival time of this train in the city has not changed. The change is designed to make it easier for students around Marion and Hove to get to school and for parents to drop them off and get into the city before 0900.

Adelaide Metro: Port Adelaide extension

Plans for for the \$16.4 million Port Dock railway station indicate a one-km branch and railway station on Baker St. The original announcement included a bus interchange next to the station but this has been dropped.

Adelaide Tram extension delayed

The new stretch of tramway along North Terrace was to have been brought into service from Sunday 29 July, however that has now been delayed indefinitely. There is a fault with the signalling and Adelaide Metro cannot work out why. The signalling fault caused a tram to accidentally cross onto the new section of track at the intersection with North Terrace and King William St on 16 July. The fault means that driver training on the new line has stopped. SA Transport Minister,

Stephan Knoll, could not say how long the project would be delayed — only that it would be more than a week. He said experts from Hanning and Kahl, the German company that designed the signalling system, were on their way to Adelaide. The signalling problem is the latest in a series of delays on the tramline extension project that was originally due to open by the end of March.

It is believed that services will eventually run from the Exhibition Centre along North Terrace to the former site of the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Bowmans Rail

It is believed that current services operated by Bowmans Rail are:

- Six or seven return container trains from Bowmans to Outer Harbor weekly,
- Two or three return container trains from Bowmans to Port Pirie weekly,
- Four or five return mineral sands trains from Kanandah (near Broken Hill) to Port Adelaide weekly.

Rio Tinto automated operation

The first fully automated Rio Tinto iron ore train operated on Friday 13 July. The train conveyed 28,000 tonnes of iron ore from Tom Price mine 280 km to Cape Lambert overseen by controllers in Perth, 1500 km away. Rio Tinto is planning to operate 50 driverless trains a day by January. The average return distance for trains between the mines and port is 800kms and including loading and dumping takes 40 hours, and three driver changeovers. The 600 rail operation workforce will be cut by 20%. Development of the AutoHaul program has cost \$940m but is expected to deliver benefits in removing rail delays.

Rio Tinto has had many enquiries from other heavy haul railways around the world, particularly from North America. Mr Ivan Vella, managing director in charge, says, "They look at it almost in disbelief because they appreciate how complex it is and what a pioneering outcome it is. What AutoHaul does is it drives every train as well as or better than our best driver. That gives us a 6% improvement on average. The second and much bigger source of benefit is that we don't have to stop trains for a driver changeover. You can imagine what it takes to stop a 33,000 tonne train and then start it again and the knock-on effect for all the trains behind it."

Fortescue Metals: Expansion

Fortescue Metals will construct a 130 km line from Solomon hub to Eliwana mine where production is due to commence in December 2020. Ore will be exported through Port Hedland.

Tasmanian Transport Museum operation

The Tasmanian Transport Museum Society (TTMS) will gain access to 5 km of the former TasRail mainline between Glenorchy and Berriedale in Hobart's northern suburbs. The line has been non-operational since TasRail's freight rail terminal shifted from Macquarie Point to Brighton on 21 June 2014. The TTMS will be required to seek necessary approvals

from the National Rail Safety Regulator, and they are working on a range of operational matters including the implementation of level crossing controls. The heritage operation will not preclude any future light rail operation on the corridor.

TranzScenic: Northern Explorer

From September, the days of operation of the northbound Northern Explorer Wellington to Auckland will change to Sunday, Wednesday and Friday (from the former Sunday, Tuesday and Friday). The southbound days of Monday, Thursday and Saturday remain unchanged.

KiwiRail: West Coast line

The NZ government will spend \$250,000 to investigate the viability of a scenic passenger train service between Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika on the West Coast of the South Island, which is hoped would help boost tourism in the region. The study will examine options for a daily, two-way service. The line is currently used for coal and dairy freight. Along with track upgrades, a new train station in Hokitika and carriage maintenance facility in Greymouth would need to be constructed.

NZ transport policy

The NZ government has signalled its intention to increase investment in rail projects and reduce highway spending in its 10-year government policy statement (GPS) on land transport released on 28 June, the first published by the new Labour-led government. A second stage GPS next year, which will further consider the role and funding of rail will be informed by the future of a rail study which is currently underway.

Between \$NZ 310m and \$NZ 815m has been allotted to the transitional rail funding over seven years, to improve current urban rail services for passengers accessing housing, major employment areas and metropolitan areas, as well as existing and new interregional commuter rail services, including the

capital costs associated with the rolling stock. Between \$NZ 1.7bn and \$NZ 4.8bn has been budgeted for rapid transit funding over 10 years, to deliver modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling. This could include busways and light rail infrastructure indicated in the Auckland Transport Alignment Project, as well as projects in other major centres. The regional improvements also includes funding which could be used to maintain and develop rail in the regions.

With the significant cost of rapid transit infrastructure, it says alternative funding arrangements will be required to deliver rapid transit and supplement the funding available in the national land transport fund.

Auckland Trams

Major changes are on the way for Auckland's \$6 billion tram program. NZ Transport Authority chief executive Fergus Gammie said the plan for trams from the CBD northwest to Westgate will probably be extended to Kumeu. This is being driven by already congested roads from a housing boom and projections of 25,000 more homes in the northwest by 2032.

He said NZTA believes that the best route between the CBD and the airport is by train to Puhinui and transferring to buses or trams for the 6 km leg to the airport. The transport agency still intends to build a \$3.7b line for modern trams, referred to as light rail, from the CBD to the airport but sees the line as combining transport and development opportunities along the corridor, Gammie said. For this reason, the project has been renamed the CBD to Māngere project, which will still serve the airport and allow workers to travel to the airport, a major employment centre.

The changes have been made after the government handed over responsibility for light rail from Auckland Transport to the transport agency, which is going from being a road builder to looking at all forms of transport to benefit people and communities.



Wellington

New train timetables were introduced on 15 July with increased off peak weekday frequencies on the two important lines, Hutt Valley and Kapiti Coast, which are improved from 30 to 20 minutes. Kaiwharawhara (the first station out from Wellington) has been closed.

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EDITORIAL

Editing a news magazine sometimes has its challenges. A major source of information is, of course, the general news media. However, these organisations have a great interest in opting for reporting the negative aspects of stories, ignoring the positive parts. Another major source of information is the flow of press releases from ministers, authorities and companies. In contrast, without fail, these write stories in terms of unqualified positivism. Negative aspects are ignored or vastly downplayed.

To take a theoretical situation of a new timetable being introduced. New timetables almost always result in improved services for the majority of users. But there will always be some users who are disadvantaged. The news media will always concentrate on the say, 20%, of users disadvantaged and ignore the 80% advantaged. If 3,000 people, for example, gain direct services, but elsewhere, little Johnny now has to change trains on the way to school, you can be sure that the news articles will be about little Johnny, not

the 3,000. On the other hand, the ministerial press releases won't ever mention any possible downsides.

So, the truth is out there. However, it often takes sceptical searching to approach it.

Readers' observations are always excellent, but, by their nature, specific, rather than general.

Internal information is usually an excellent source for information which is both detailed and unbiased. However, by its very purpose and nature, these gems are not always found. In this age, many railway infrastructure controllers and operators put some such information on the web. The extent this is done varies greatly between organisations. Sometimes, we manage to obtain copies of internal information not placed on the web – many thanks for the people who help here!

So, the moral is: Accept all sources, but treat them sceptically.

ODD SPOT

Russian Railways will stop running all long-distance trains across its 11 time zones on Moscow time (GMT+3), ending a frequent cause of confusion for travellers. This is, it said, to "improve the quality of service for passengers." From 1 August, at all stations, all information boards, clocks and loudspeaker announcements on the time on arrival and departure of long-distance trains use the local time. Formerly the time for a train departing from the Pacific city of Vladivostok at the end of the Trans-Siberian route, was shown on station timetables, display boards and tickets according to Moscow time, even though there is a seven-hour time difference. This rule was introduced

in the Soviet era to achieve consistency across the network and so passengers didn't have to keep changing their watches. But it often causes confusion for passengers joining trains in cities across Russia who may not be familiar with the current Moscow time. The time difference even meant that passengers had to buy tickets for a different date than they were expecting. Russia has recently tinkered with its time zones, cutting them down to nine in 2011 and then going back to 11 in 2014. It has also been on permanent winter time since 2014 after a failed experiment to put the nation on summer time all year round.

BUS NEWS

New South Wales

NSW TrainLink bus news is in the Rail news section above.

NEWCASTLE: New timetables commenced on 29 July with the following adjustments:

- Route 14 Newcastle to Charlestown has been extended to Swansea Heads restoring a direct link.
- Routes 23, 26, 28 now service Marketown.
- Route 27 now travels along Young St, Lambton to better serve The House With No Steps.
- Routes 41 and 43 have been extended from Lake Macquarie Fair to Charlestown.
- Route 44 Warners Bay to Kotara no longer serves Charlestown.
- Route 29 is now Swansea North to Stockland Glendale (previously Swansea Heads).
- Route 45 has been discontinued and incorporated into amended route 29.

There are no changes to dedicated school service routes, but minor adjustments have been made to better reflect congestion and actual travel times.

CDC Wallsend (Hunter Valley Buses) route 263 also received a new timetable from 29 July. It now operates via Cardiff South.

SYDNEY: From 1 July, Transit Systems took control of Region 6 Sydney inner west. From the TfNSW website, following is a summary of who operates what:

REGION 6 TRANSIT SYSTEMS: Routes 305 308 348 389 401 406 407 408 412 413 415 418 422 423 425 428 431 433 436 436 438 439 441 442 444 445 460 461 464 466 470 473 476 477 478 479 481 483 487 490 491 491 492 493 502 504 508 525 530 L23 L28 L37 L38 L39 M10 M20 M30 M41 M50 X04 X25 with 400 410 shared with Region 9.

REGION 7 STATE TRANSIT: Routes 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 261 265 267 269 272 275 285 286 287 288 290 291 292 293 294 295 297 458 500 501 505 506 507 513 515 518 520 521 523 524 525 533 534 536 538 540 541 543 544 545 546 549 551 552 553 M40 M52 M54 X00 X06 X15 and X18.

REGION 8 STATE TRANSIT: Routes 132 135 136 137 139 142 143 144 145 146 151 155 156 158 159 168 169 173 178 180 182 185 188 191 192 199 201 225 227 228 229 230 236 238 243 244 235 246 247 248 249 B1 L90 E50 E54 E60 E65 E68 E69 E70 E71 E75 E76 E77 E78 E79 E80 E83 E85 E88 and E89.

REGION 9 STATE TRANSIT: Routes 200 300 301 302 303 309 310 311 313 314 316 317 323 324 325 326 327 328 333 338 339 342 343 352 353 355 360 361 370 372 373 374 376 379 380 381 382 386 387 388 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 399 400 410 891 893 898 L09 L24 L94 X09 X10 X39 X40 X73 X74 X77 X79

X84 X92 X93 X94 X96 X97 and X99.

An On Demand public transport service, operated by **Transit Systems**, commenced on Sunday 1 July in the Sydney **Inner West** area, including Rhodes Waterside Shopping Centre, Concord General Hospital, Mortlake, Breakfast Point, Cabarita, Canada Bay, Burwood and Strathfield. The new mini-bus service operates from 0600 to 2330 weekdays and 0800 until 2030 on weekends. The service is designed to complement existing public transport

B LINE: The NSW government has announced that the extension from Mona Vale to Newport will now not go ahead due to opposition of local residents. Other options will be considered.

Punchbowl Bus Co route 450 departing Westfield Hurstville at 1618 Saturday will extend to Roselands Shopping Centre from Saturday, 30 June arriving at 1636. There is a new timetable on their website and also on Transport Info to reflect this.

WOLLONGONG The free shuttle bus 55A/C received a new timetable from 1 July. There has a reduction in the Sunday timetable which now only operates between 0940 and 1720 (previously 0800 and 1800 hours). It will remain as a free bus.

Victoria

Industrial action on Tuesday 10, Friday 13, Tuesday morning 17 July and Tuesday 24 affected the following **CDC** services in Ballarat, Geelong and in Melbourne west, inner east and south east:

Melbourne routes 150, 151, 153, 160, 161, 166, 167, 170, 180, 181, 190, 191, 192, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 414, 415, 417, 418, 419, 421, 423, 424, 425, 439, 441, 443, 461, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 601, 605, 606, 612, 623, 624, 625, 626, 630, 900.

Ballarat all routes.

Geelong routes 1, 10, 11, 12, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 43.

Western Australia

ALBANY: timetables 1 and 2 were reissued on 29 April.

BUNBURY: Following completion of the Millbridge-Treendale Bridge project, changes took place from 1 July to **TransBunbury** services:

- Time changes and route alteration to route 845, including an extension to Kingston Estate which links with the 841.
- Time changes and route alteration to route 841, including selected services operating to Kingston Estate which link with the 845.
- Time changes and route alteration to route 844, including an extension to Millbridge Estate. On Sundays and public holidays, the 844 extends to Kingston.
- Minor timetable changes to routes 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 832, 842 and 843.

PERTH: TransPerth updated the following timetables on 15 July: Numbers 3, 4, 35, 37, 38, 40, 47, 100, 108, 109, 110, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 138, 139, 208 and

209. Changes include reducing the number of trips due to low patronage on route 212 (one trip), route 220 (five short trips), route 223 (three trips), route 249 (two trips), route 558 (one trip on school days), route 930 (one Sunday afternoon trip), route 592 (one school trip). Routes 36, 40, 286, 287, 293, 295, 296, 299, 380 and 935 have minor route changes on outward trips.

Tasmania

Skybus has acquired **Hobart Airporter** from the Larrissey family. Commencing from 29 July there are four services daily from, and five services to, Hobart Airport, to connect with flights. SkyBus operates services from Melbourne Airport to the City, Southbank, St Kilda, Geelong, Werribee, Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula and in the Gold Coast and Auckland.

New Zealand

AUCKLAND: A new network was introduced to the central suburbs on 8 July. Changes include:

- Improved evening and weekend services;
- Introduction of 12 frequent routes with services at 15 minutes intervals;
- Introduction of the Tamaki link between the Eastern Bays and Central Auckland;
- Additional after midnight buses on Friday/Saturday nights.

A total of 12 booklets have been issued. Full details

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Tris Tottenham writes about **Newcastle Buses:**

Interesting that route 14 is to be extended to Swansea Heads in the review of Newcastle Bus services. The

can be found on the MAXX website, www.Maxx.co.nz

WELLINGTON: The entire bus network was revised from 15 July. The network now features more through routing, increasing travel options. A total of fourteen timetable booklets have been produced. Also revised on this date were Porirua and Kapiti Coast bus timetables with four timetable booklets. With the previous revisions to the Wairarapa and Hutt Valley in April and June 2018 (revised on 15 July) this now brings the entire region under one common identity in ticketing options and bus identification. Some brief observations are:

- Wellington new route 1 Island Bay - Churton Park features new electric double decker buses;
- Kapiti Coast buses are now operated by Uzabus, Mana Coaches having lost the contract.
- The greater percentage of the Wellington and Hutt Valley networks are now operated by Transit NZ. The previous operators, NZ Bus and Mana Coaches retain only scraps.

Full details can be found on the Metlink website, www.metlink.co.nz

Thanks to Paul Brown, Alan Gray, Geoff Hassall, Victor Isaacs, Ross Morrison, *Sydney Morning Herald* for Bus news.

present route 29 timetable does not mention the early Saturday/Sunday morning journeys to Swansea Heads – they are to be found in the route 14 timetable.

FERRY NEWS

Manly Fast Ferry (MFF) plans to introduce a 400 person "super- sized" fast ferry, as part of its fleet of 11 boats.

The NRMA, owner of MFF, said the new ferry, the *Ocean Adventurer*, will ensure an additional 280 passengers will be transported between Manly and Circular Quay during peak periods each morning and evening.

Will Ford, MFF CEO, said, "We could see we were reaching capacity and people were complaining that the queues were too long, There's a demand for more capacity and that's the idea with these boats. It means more people can get on the boats and get to work on time." He said there were also plans to increase the capacity of two existing ferries to 400 people (from 380) by the middle of September.

The launch of the *Ocean Adventurer* may also have a positive effect for Manly- Darling Harbour passengers. The 260-passenger boats currently working on the Manly-Circular Quay route could replace the 150-passenger boats on the Manly-Darling Harbour route."

Geoff Lambert comments: Most of the Fast Ferry boats were originally built for whale-watching, which is in full swing between May and October. The boats

operate an intensive ferry service in peaks hours and are employed on whale-watching trips in the middle of the day. A year or two ago, Manly Fast Ferries (MFF) changed its fare structure so that its charges during peak hour were brought down to the level of Sydney Ferries' "slow ferries". At a later stage, MFF also became part of the Opal card system. These two changes and the superior frequency of the MFF services, coupled with the increased frequency and much lower prices of the E70 express bus service have had a dire effect on Sydney Ferries commuter traffic with falls of up to 80% in the patronage during peak hours. In response, Sydney Ferries have replaced its take-away food cafes, with bars selling the local Three-Pines beer – to no avail. Tourist traffic, particularly on Sundays, when a cheap family ticket of \$2.50 is offered, is still healthy and the Sunday services are often loaded to their capacity of 1,100 people. Three other ferry operators also provide commuter and tourist ferries out of Manly – a total of nearly 100 daily services. It does not seem that the new boat will actually change the MFF timetables, but it will probably draw off more traffic from Sydney Ferries.

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

AIR NEWS

Domestic

On 6 July Regional Express (**Rex**) issued a media release entitled '*Rex Condemns the Lies, Deception and Incompetence of King Island Council*'. In it, Rex "solemnly warned" King Island Council that if they did not review their decision to double airport charges it would result in a degradation of air services to the remote Tasmanian island. Rex has now decided to cancel 30% of the services weekly between King Island and Melbourne "in an attempt to reduce the negative financial impact". Rex says it will be monitoring the situation thereafter and will make further adjustments to the schedule and ticket prices as necessary. The following services will be cancelled effective Tuesday 14 August:

Tuesday and Wednesday

ZL3871: Depart Melbourne 1105 - Arrive King Island 1200

ZL3872: Depart King Island 1220 - Arrive Melbourne 1315.

Rex also says it has been forced to review the viability of existing air services to Mildura after the local airport significantly increased charges which it claims is a "serious breach" of the partnership agreement in place.

In another strongly worded statement, Rex added that the aviation industry is suffering from a crippling global pilot shortage and Rex has recently announced that it will need to make schedule adjustments to prioritise its scarce resources, with priority given to airports and

regional communities that are supportive of, and work in partnership with Rex. Rex has decided to cancel/reduce its services between Mildura and Adelaide, Sydney and Broken Hill. Details of the changes will be announced shortly.

International

From 3 June **Air Canada** commenced thrice weekly non-stop Melbourne-Vancouver flights. A fourth flight will be added in November.

Virgin Australia will start flying directly between Newcastle and Auckland from November, the first international route out of Williamtown (Newcastle) airport in 16 years. The trial three-hour flights will operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, from Auckland at 1710 NZDT and arriving Newcastle at 1845 EDT. The return flight will leave Newcastle at 1930 EDT and arrive in Auckland at 0025 NZDT. The flights will run initially only this summer, from 22 November to 17 February, but will continue if they are deemed commercially viable.

Air China has suspended its direct flights from Beijing to Brisbane and v.v. This is believed to be due to problems with aircraft fleet availability. Four flights a week have brought 35,000 passengers to Queensland since last December.

Thanks to Victor Isaacs, Tris Tottenham, *Courier-Mail* and *Newcastle Herald* for Air news.

About Table Talk

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

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

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