

TABLE TALK

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RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Jolly Holiday season?

Anyone in Brisbane immediately after Christmas or in Melbourne in early January would have been well advised to sit at home or their hotel room with a big book, rather than attempting to use the railway systems.

From Christmas Day until 29 December **Queensland Rail Citytrain** was closed for engineering from Albion to Darra and Park Road.

From Christmas Day until New Year's Eve 2018 **Sydney Trains** ran a Saturday base timetable, but New Year's Day was a Sunday base timetable.

In **Victoria** major construction projects took place to prepare for the new fleet of High Capacity Metro Trains and the Metro Tunnel. One of the biggest ever power, signalling and communications upgrades will take place on the Cranbourne/Pakenham lines. The works were co-ordinated with construction on the Metro Tunnel's eastern entrance in South Yarra. From 2-13 January, buses replaced trains between Flinders St and Westall, between Flinders St and Moorabbin and the entire journey on the Gippsland Line. Trains did operate on this line – however only for driver familiarisation with new signalling associated with the new Pakenham East Metro EMU Depot.

There were also significant works across the rail network, with overnight and weekend works on the Belgrave/Lilydale, Glen Waverley, Alamein, Sandringham, Sunbury, Werribee and Williamstown lines.

Buses replaced Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca trains from 12-27 January for maintenance and essential works between Sunbury and Swan Hill. Replacement V/Line buses on the Gippsland, Bendigo and Ballarat lines operated express and semi-express services,

Further power and signalling upgrades will take place on more than 80 kms of track in 2019.

ARTC: Access Agreement denied

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission announced on 21 December that it will not accept the proposed 2019 interstate rail network access undertaking lodged by the Australian Rail Track Corporation. "The ACCC considers that the proposed access undertaking is not acceptable on a

number of fronts," ACCC Commissioner Cristina Cifuentes said. "In making our draft decision we have had regard to a number of fundamental issues being proposed by ARTC and the lack of information available to the ACCC and the above-rail operators to assess the impact of these." ARTC is seeking more flexibility by shifting from indicative tariffs approved by the ACCC, to a proposed range within which ARTC and above-rail operators can negotiate access charges. However, the ACCC has significant concerns with ARTC's proposed value of the regulated asset base, the rate of return and the ceiling limit which determine the bounds of the access charges ARTC can levy. The other key issue in this assessment is the potential for gaps in access regulation, between the proposed expiry of the 2018 interstate access undertaking in 2023 and the intended commencement date of Inland Rail and any replacement undertaking in 2025.

On 6 March 2018, ARTC submitted the 2018 interstate access undertaking to the ACCC for assessment pursuant to Part IIIA of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 which allows infrastructure providers to submit a voluntary access undertaking. An access undertaking allows access providers to obtain a degree of certainty about the terms and conditions on which access will be made available to their infrastructure and allows rail operators that are considering establishing new infrastructure to settle access matters before they invest.

This access undertaking is for the provision of access to the interstate rail network operated by ARTC. The ACCC previously accepted an access undertaking in relation to the interstate rail network on 30 July 2008. ARTC has sought to extend the 2008 interstate access undertaking twice, which the ACCC has consented to. The 2008 interstate access undertaking is due to expire on 28 February 2019.

For the ACCC's detailed response see <https://www.accc.gov.au/regulated-infrastructure/rail/artc-interstate-rail-access-undertaking/interstate-rail-access-undertaking-2018/draft-decision>

Great Southern Rail: Overland saved

Three weeks before it was to cease operation, the Victorian government moved to save the Overland passenger train between Melbourne and Adelaide. On 11 December the Minister for Public Transport Melissa Horne announced the Vics will provide \$3.78 million to help fund the service for 2019. It was put in jeopardy when the South Australian government announced it would not be continuing its annual subsidy of \$300,000 after 31 December. Victorian Premier Andrews said he was “puzzled” by the SA government decision. Great Southern Rail will absorb \$130,000 in operational costs to continue the Overland until 31 December 2019. GSR will do a “full review” of the Overland service early next year.

The 828-km service has been supported by both governments since 2000. The service first ran as the Adelaide Express in 1887, before becoming the Overland in 1926. It has been operated by GSR since 1997.

Great Southern Rail: Great Southern starts

GSR has announced the inauguration of a new luxury service, the Great Southern from Adelaide to Brisbane. It will depart Adelaide on Fridays for a two night/three days journey including touring in the Grampians, Canberra and a “special beachside dining experience” on the Northern NSW Coast. The southbound service will take three days/three nights. It will take in a “beachside dining experience” on the Northern NSW Coast, and time in the NSW Hunter Valley wine region, regional Victoria and the Twelve Apostles on the Victorian SW coast.

These are the only times which are currently known:

Adelaide	0900 Fridays
Brisbane	1620 Sundays
Brisbane	1015 Mondays
Adelaide	0930 Thursdays

The inaugural season will be for less than two months, from 6 December 2019 until 27 January 2020. This is during the tropical wet season when the Ghan does not operate from Adelaide to Darwin. Hence it will use otherwise idle carriages and crews. The train will comprise 28 carriages and two locomotives. The Great Southern will be the first regular operation of a GSR train to the ACT and Queensland, or, to put this another way, this will be the first regular operation of a GSR train on tracks controlled by John Holland Rail Country Regional Network (Joppa Junction to Canberra) and by Queensland Rail (Acacia Ridge to Roma St). Actually, the publicity is exceedingly vague. It is unclear, for example, if the train will come to Canberra, or if the Canberra excursions will be from Yass and/or Goulburn.

Fares start from \$1649 per person for Gold Single accommodation, \$1829 per person for Gold Twin and \$3899 per person for Platinum. All fares are inclusive of onboard dining, beverages and off train excursions.

Rio Tinto mine and railway

Mining giant Rio Tinto will invest \$3.5 billion on a new iron ore mine, processing plant and an additional 166

km to its Pilbara railway network, as part of its new Koodaideri project. First production is expected in late 2021, leading to the addition of 43 million tonnes of annual high-quality iron ore capacity to Rio’s Pilbara operations. The operation is roughly 35 kms from Rio’s Yandicoogina site.

Adani mine and railway

On 28 November, Adani announced it will proceed with scaled-down plans to build a coal mine and 200 km narrow gauge railway in Queensland’s Galilee Basin. It now plans to build a project which scales up to a final capacity of 27.5 million tonnes per annum. The railway will connect with Aurizon’s existing network. The initial cost of the project will be about \$2 billion.

Queensland Rail Citytrain six-car trains

Six-car trains replaced three-car trains on 193 Queensland Rail services on the Beenleigh, Shorncliffe, Ferny Grove, Cleveland, Northgate and Doomben lines from 3 December 2018. This provides 46,000 seats per week. Notably, the popular 0654 Shorncliffe to Cleveland, 0655 Ferny Grove to Park Road and 1618 Bowen Hills to Cleveland services were upgraded to six-cars.

Roughly 6% of Monday to Friday services had been provided by three-car trains, but after these changes that figure dropped to 3.2%, according to Transport Minister Mark Bailey. “Queensland Rail has focused on upgrading Monday to Friday services rather than at weekends when fewer people travel. Of the 193 services where capacity will be doubled, 40 are classified as high patronage where average seated capacity occupancy rates are more than 80%. A small number of three-carriage trains will still be required to run during morning and afternoon peaks due to current operational restrictions,” Bailey detailed, “however each of these will be preceded and followed by a six-carriage train to assist with customer loading. The increase in six-car trains is being facilitated by the rollout of the New Generation Rollingstock (NGR) fleet, with 37 NGRs now available for service, Bailey said.

Only 171 of the 6,248 weekly services in South East Queensland are now serviced by a three-car train. 100 of those are the Rosewood shuttle, which won’t be upgraded due to low demand and infrastructure limitations. “Current patronage numbers also show the three-carriage trains meet demand on that line at weekends when patronage is lower,” Bailey added.

Aurizon: Charging

On 6 December, the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) published its final decision on the access undertaking to govern Aurizon’s monopoly operation of the Central Queensland Coal Network. The decision allows Aurizon a maximum allowable revenue over the next four-year term of \$4.123 billion. That figure is almost a quarter of a billion dollars more than what was allowed under the QCA’s draft decision, which, since it was handed down a year ago, has led Aurizon to slash its maintenance program, cutting capacity and damaging its relationship with coal mining customers.

The new maximum allowable revenue figure is still \$728 million lower than the revenue Aurizon originally argued it should be allowed to earn, and it's \$588 million below the revised figure Aurizon suggested in its response to the draft decision in March. In its final decision the QCA has been more favourable to Aurizon regarding the return on capital, depreciation and operating cost components, but is suggesting a further reduction in forecast maintenance costs – the figure which Aurizon has already used to justify cutting its maintenance practices.

Under Queensland's competition legislation Aurizon now has 60 days to respond to the final decision, and it said "all available options will be considered". Aurizon has said it will continue to fight not only for a fair outcome for this access undertaking, but for a more favourable process in the future, which it says will benefit miners and the market.

Aurizon: New coal lines

Not hitherto recorded in *Table Talk* is the opening of two new Aurizon lines for coal traffic:

- Byerwen branch, 5 km, Newlands-Abbott Point system (junction between Leichhardt Range and Suttor Creek), in January 2018, and
- Baralaba branch, 6 km, Moura system (junction between Moura Mine and Moura), in May 2018.

Development of Ironbark No. 1 mine, owned by Fitzroy Australia Resources, has been approved. This is 35 km south of Moranbah and is expected to produce six million tonnes pa starting in early 2020. It will be served by the existing Carborough Down mine branch.

Aurizon: Mt Isa freight

Aurizon recommenced operation of Townsville-Mt Isa freight trains from 30 October. A new contract with lead and copper producer Glencore will see some of its output conveyed by Aurizon along with general freight. After the loss of an earlier contract with Glencore in February 2018, Aurizon had withdrawn from this route, leaving all rail freight traffic to Pacific National.

Queensland Rail: New WTTs

New Working Timetables for the Townsville-Mt Isa line undated but effective 7 November 2018 (tabular format) and for the Western line (Toowoomba-Wulkuraka) effective 4 March 2019 (graphical format) are on their website at

<https://www.queenslandrail.com.au/forbusiness/access/access-undertaking>

Queensland track diagrams

Revised Queensland Rail track diagrams dated October 2018 have been published -

<https://www.queenslandrail.com.au/forbusiness/access/access-undertaking>

Revised Aurizon track diagrams dated June 2018 have been published - <https://www.aurizon.com.au/what-we-deliver/network/network-downloads>

Watco: Queensland grain trains

Watco will base its Queensland grain train operations at Warwick, using the depot established by Southern Downs Steam Railway. Operations are expected to begin in early 2019. Watco, primarily a US small line operator, already operates grain trains in WA for CBH.

Queensland bushfires

Passenger, coal and freight trains between Mackay and Bundaberg were cancelled or disrupted as dangerous fires threatened property across Central Queensland from 28-29 November.

NSW High Speed Rail

The NSW government announced on 3 December that it will start work on a fast rail network in the next term of government, significantly slashing travel times across the State. Four potential routes have been identified and High Speed Rail expert Professor Andrew McNaughton has been appointed to confirm the most appropriate routes, train speeds and station locations. The investigation would be funded by a \$4.6 million allocation from the Snowy Hydro Fund.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian said a fast rail network will give people greater choice about where they live and how they commute to work. "We know a fast rail network will transform NSW unlike any other project and we will make it a reality. We need to make it easier for people to consider moving to regional NSW and there is no better way to do that than building a fast rail network. The expert will provide advice to Government on what is possible and what would be involved." Ms Berejiklian said the first stage could involve simply straightening out kinks in the state's railway lines.

The four routes identified by the Government are from Sydney:

- North to the Central Coast and Newcastle.
- Southern Inland to Goulburn and Canberra.
- West to Lithgow, Bathurst and Orange / Parkes.
- Southern Coastal to Wollongong and Nowra.

Approximate travel times could be:

Journey	Current Rail Time	Faster Rail <200km/h	High Speed Rail
Sydney to Canberra	4:07	3:00	1:00
Sydney to Goulburn	2:31	1:45	0:30
Sydney to Newcastle	2:35	2:00	0:45
Sydney to Gosford	1:19	1:00	0:30
Sydney to Wollongong	1:25	1:00	0:30
Sydney to Nowra	2:39	2:00	0:45

The advice from Professor McNaughton will pave the way for the NSW Government to take a new approach

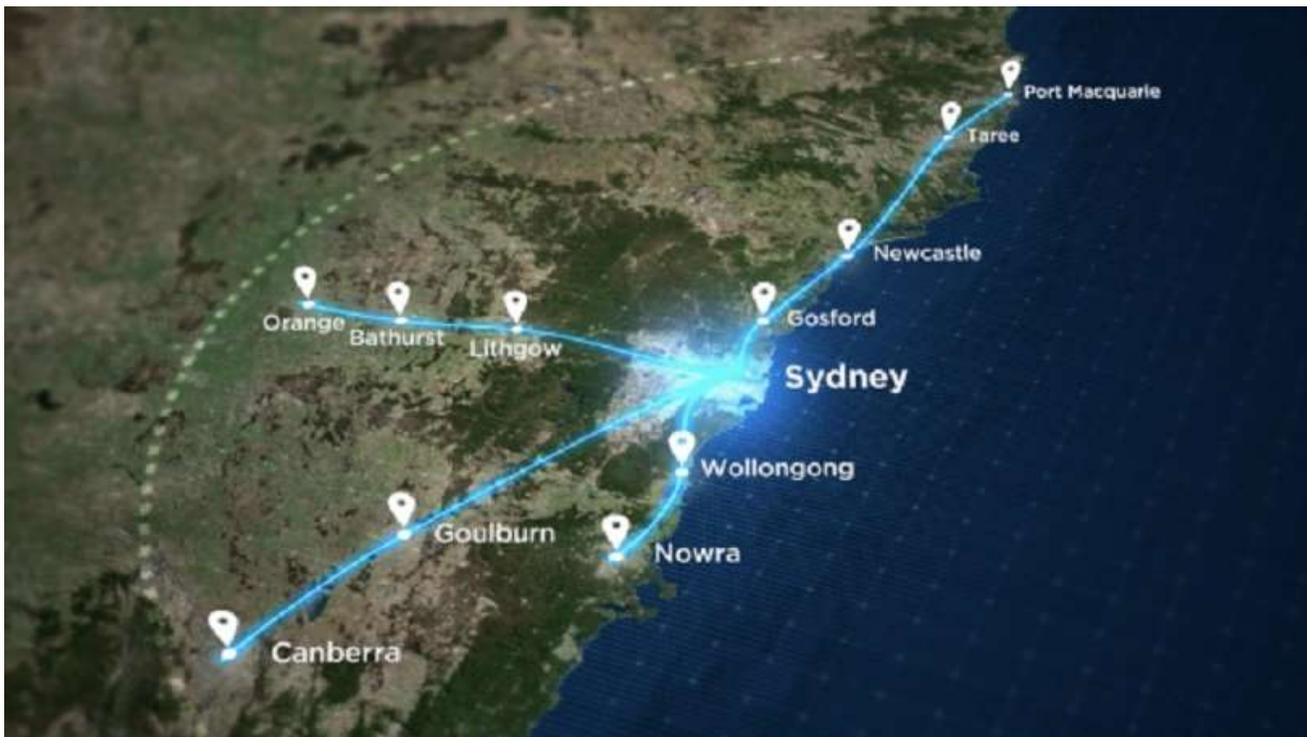
to the delivery of fast rail by identifying immediate improvements to existing rail corridors, while undertaking long-term visionary planning.

This approach allows for significant improvements in travel times for customers in the coming years, while at the same time delivering the building blocks for a high speed dedicated rail network.

“In the immediate future, faster rail would see upgrades along existing rail alignments and provide services of at least 200km/h, slashing travel times by one third,” Transport Minister Constance said. “Ultimately, in the long term, high speed rail would see the development of new alignments and lines, providing speeds of over 250km/h, with examples overseas travelling up to 350km/h and higher – giving the potential to cut travel times by up to 75%.”

For more information visit: www.nsw.gov.au/fastrail

ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr said he welcomed the announcement. He said, “The ACT government has been working closely with our NSW counterparts over the past two years on improvements to the service, having jointly bid for Federal funding for the project. Earlier this year, the ACT government committed up to \$5 million in matched funding for business case development on the project. We know that Canberrans will use a faster train service. In a recent Government survey, 57% of respondents said they would be more likely to travel via train between Canberra and Sydney if the travel time was between 2-3 hours. With both major parties in NSW making funding commitments for this work, I call on both major parties at the Federal level to also commit to being a funding partner for the Canberra-Sydney faster rail project ahead of the 2019 Federal election.”



Graphic: NSW government

Sydney Trains timetable review

Transport for NSW released a report on the performance of the Sydney passenger rail network, 12 months after the introduction of the November 2017 timetable. The report was commissioned to examine the performance of the timetable, with the findings to inform the implementation of future developments. The report states that the 1,500 extra weekly services introduced with the new timetable have led to a “significant increase” in journeys across all time periods throughout the day.

On the lines targeted in the new timetable – the T1 Western, T2 Inner West and Leppington, T3 Bankstown, T5 Cumberland, and T8 Airport and South lines – average passenger loads have reduced slightly from 137% to 127% while at the same time

experiencing a 4.3% increase in morning peak passenger numbers. Some parts of the network reportedly saw train loads drop by 47%.

Approximately 70% of suburban stations now receive a minimum 15 minute service frequency across most of the day, up from 29% of stations prior to the release of the new timetable, while 89% of passengers are able to catch a train every 10 minutes (at a minimum) during the AM and PM peaks.

An extra 750 services on weekends and 180 late night services have led to a significant increase in demand. Journeys made on the weekend (13.6%) and late night (10.7%) has outstripped AM (2.5%) and PM (3.1%) peak travel as a result of the more frequent and consistent services provided by the timetable.

The report can be accessed here <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/news-and-events/media-releases/one-year-on-more-services-prove-vital-keeping-sydney-moving>

Sydney Trains: Delays December

There were major delays on Sydney Trains on the afternoon of Monday **3 December** after a signal failure at Central station coupled with track repairs on the inner west line. Some services took 30 minutes to move between stations on the City Circle. Buses supplemented trains between Hornsby and Berowra, and Blacktown and Penrith, in both directions.

On the afternoon of Friday **14 December** trains were suspended between Hornsby and Gosford when severe storms caused a power failure.

On the afternoon of **20 December** a very severe hail storm caused suspension of services between Sydenham and Bankstown, 'delays on the T4 and Illawarra lines around Hurstville due to a set of points stuck in reverse, on the North Shore line due to points failed at Hornsby, and on the Inner West Tram'.

On one of the busiest nights of the year, **New Year's Eve**, services were chaotic, after another severe electrical storm. Delays continued into the next morning. On some lines 50% of services cancelled. There was lateness up to 127 minutes showing for some run numbers. There were no trains on Richmond line. Stopping patterns all disorganised and there were many platform transpositions. Interurbans mostly ran alright. The stand-out run was 609B (0538 out of Bondi Junction). It was 63 minutes late at Bondi Junction, Martin Place 76 late, Town Hall 114 late! (A bad train for claustrophobes 40 minutes stuck in a tunnel) Woolli Creek 117 late. Delays and cancelled trains were still being reported as late as 1900 on 1 January as staff worked across up to five lines yesterday to repair signal boxes that had been directly hit by lightning during the storms. Up to 1000 lightning strikes hit the network at seven sites, destroying vital pieces of rail infrastructure in places including Central, Flemington, Gordon and Casula, causing pandemonium for passengers on the busiest night of the year. South of central, At Central Station, the vital flying junction was taken out of action for about 40 minutes following the thunderstorm. The flow-on effects cascaded across multiple lines, resulting in severe levels of overcrowding at Central, Town Hall and Wynyard as people returned home after watching fireworks on Sydney Harbour or attending other festivities. Trains were either late or did not arrive. Police were called to help contain the overflow.

Sydney Trains pressure

Sydney Trains are moving more passengers than ever, topping 200,000 in total across the one-hour morning and afternoon peaks, but the punctuality of services is sagging under the pressure. Morning and afternoon rush hours pushed about 3% more people into carriages in March 2018 compared to March 2017. Across the Sydney rail network, new passengers are boarding at twice the rate they have historically, up by 5% in the past 12 months.

This runaway growth makes the system more "fragile", but it is also a "good problem", senior lecturer at the University of Sydney Institute of Transport and Logistics and ATA member Dr Geoffrey Clifton said. "We're going to see a network that's busier across the day than ever before and it will be a bit more fragile, so when things go wrong it will have more of a cascading effect. New York is a warning for Sydney, they didn't keep up with the investment as numbers were growing, and the quality of service there has deteriorated so much that the number of people using the subway is dropping, and people are forced to look for alternatives like Uber."

Investment in buses and light rail will take pressure off the train network, but improving public transport brings more people to it, so more investment will be needed to keep up with growing demand, Dr Clifton said. "The government is doing some good things like opening up new entrances to stations such as at Redfern to help the network cope with bigger numbers."

Sydney Metro: Stage 3

Planning approval has been granted for the conversion of the existing railway between Sydenham and Bankstown as part of the Sydney Metro City and Southwest project. Work will get underway early next year. The John Holland/Laing O'Rourke joint venture currently upgrading infrastructure at Sydenham station was recently appointed to undertake early works along the line, where work will soon begin to prepare, upgrade and make all 11 stations fully accessible. Future work will include upgrades to tracks, stations and signals, with the contract to design the upgraded stations currently out to tender.

Recent work at Sydenham station to install a rail crossover will mean existing Sydney Trains services will not be impacted by the closure and conversion process, the State says.

The NSW government says the project will see an air-conditioned train every four minutes at all stations along the line during peak, and an ultimate capacity of a metro train every two minutes in each direction under the Sydney CBD.

Sydney Metro said the Bankstown Line creates a significant bottleneck as it merges with other railway lines close to the Sydney CBD, including the Airport and South line and the Inner West and Leppington line. By moving Bankstown line services to the new standalone metro system, Sydney Metro says it will remove the bottleneck and provide more capacity on the existing network across Sydney. Sydney Metro City and Southwest is expected to open in 2024.

Parramatta Tram

Contracts to build, and supply and operate the first stage of Parramatta Light Rail were announced on 20 December. A joint venture of Downer and CPB Contractors has won the \$840 million contract to build the light rail line. A consortium of Transdev and CAF has won a \$540 million deal to supply and operate the network and build the depot, light rail stops and power systems. Roughly four kms of the twelve-km route would be wire-free, with stretches between Westmead

and Cumberland Hospital, and between Prince Alfred Square, North Parramatta and Tramway Avenue, Camelia. Targeted for first operations in 2023, stage one of Parramatta Light Rail will provide services every 7.5 minutes during peak periods. The contracts announcement comes after remediation works began in October on the future site of the project's stabling and maintenance facility at Camellia. Roadworks are also underway to prepare the Parramatta CBD and North Parramatta for the project.

NSW TrainLink: Proposed new services

Additional train to Griffith?

NSW Department of Transport state that a midweek train service between Griffith and Sydney is being proposed from the second half of 2019. The Sydney-Griffith service is proposed to operate on either Wednesday or Thursday, with an early morning or midday departure. The return service would depart Griffith on either Thursday or Friday, with a morning or afternoon departure. Community consultation will start in February.

Central West buses?

Additional bus services in the NSW Central West are proposed. One proposal is for a service leaving Dubbo at 1000 and travelling through Parkes and Manildra to arrive at Orange at 1245. It would leave Orange at 1715 and arrive back in Dubbo at 1915.

NSW and Elvis

Some people think that mid-January in Parkes, Central West NSW, is the time for the annual Elvis Festival. We know that the more interesting aspect is the special trains. On 10 January NSW TrainLink's Elvis Express XPT will arrive in Parkes at 1622, followed by Lachlan Valley Railway's locomotive hauled Blue Suede Express at 1710. On Monday 14 January, LVR's train is due to depart at 0830 and TrainLink's XPT at 0916. (John Holland Rail's Country Train Notice 7-2019 refers.)

Botany port

NSW Ports will spend \$120 million on rail infrastructure at Patrick's Port Botany container terminal, with work to begin in 2019. The work will provide one million TEU in additional rail capacity to the terminal and, in time to Port Botany's other two container terminals.

ARTC: Inland Rail construction

Construction officially commenced on the Inland Rail project, with a formal ground breaking ceremony in Parkes on 13 December. Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack turned the ceremonial first sod. Shadow Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese said Labor welcomed the start of Inland Rail construction, but accused the Coalition of being more than two years late to the first sod-turning.

Sydney Trains and ARTC WTTs 5 and 6 January 2019

The tabular version of the **ARTC** Working Timetable of 6 January 2019 is available at

<https://www.artc.com.au/customers/operations/mtp/2018-05-20/>

Sydney Trains' WTTs from Saturday 5 January (Weekends) and Monday 7 January (Weekdays), Passenger and Freight, are version 4.62. Changes are believed to be due to:

Removal of Gosford Loco Sidings,

Relocation of an OSCAR set from Gosford to Hornsby MC for maintenance purposes, and.

Transfer of 2 x 8K sets from Liverpool to Flemington MC, due to complaints from residents of noise.

Geoff Lambert offers an explanation of why Working Timetables of organisations that work closely together commence on different days, ie, Sydney Trains and John Holland Rail Country Regional Network on Saturday 5 January and ARTC on Sunday 6 January.

They inherited their tabular timetable conventions from RailCorp, which had separate books for Mon-Fri versus Weekend. These came out simultaneously and, because Sunday had always been the traditional starting day of a timetables in Australia. RailCorp and JHR CRN opted to date their timetables from the Saturday before that Sunday rather than the Saturday after. ARTC apparently thought this was a silly idea and didn't run with it. (However, ARTC has the rather contrarian idea in both its Tabular and Graphical MTPs that Monday is the first day of the week and the numbering system acknowledges that.)

ARTC: Rules and Procedures

From 16 September 2018 the following ARTC terminology was amended:

Old term	New term
Weekly Speed Notices	Speed
Restriction Notices	
Qualified Worker	Competent
Worker	
Train Operating Conditions Manual	Route Access
Standards	
Detonators	Track Signals
Drivers and track vehicle operators	Rail Traffic
Crews	
Signaller	Network
Control Officer.	

(SAFE Notice 2-4084 refers).

From the same date, **Sydney Trains** changed the title Train Controller to Network Controller.

JHR NSW CRN: Rules and Procedures

From 30 November 2018 the following John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network terminology was amended:

Old term	New term
Train Controller	Network Control Officer
Signaller	Network Control Officer
(where appropriate)	
Qualified worker	Competent worker
Trains	Rail traffic (where appropriate)
Line	Track (where appropriate)
Detonators	Railway tack signal

Driver	Rail Traffic Crew (where appropriate)
Track vehicle operator	Rail Traffic Crew
Train crew	Rail Traffic Crew
Track vehicle crew	Rail Traffic Crew

From 30 November 2018 the following JHR CRN *Rules and Procedures* were withdrawn:

Electric Staff system
 Staff and Ticket system
 Using Electric Staff Instrument
 Switching an Electric Staff Instrument
 Using Train Staffs
 Using Staff contact locks
 Using drawer locks
 Using bell signals, and
 Train Staff Ticket.

These methods of safeworking are no longer in use anywhere on the JHR CRN.

(SAFE Notice 48-18 refers).

JHR NSW CRN: Weemelah line

The 83 km line from Camurra West (11 km on the down side of Moree) to Weemelah, part of John Holland Rail NSW Country Regional Network, was placed out of use from 1 November 2018 (SAFE Notice 44-18 refers). It is believed that two bridges are in bad condition, and with the current very poor wheat harvest, it is unlikely the line will be re-opened in the foreseeable future. It is believed the last grain train was by Southern Shorthaul Railroad in February 2018.

JHR NSW CRN: Network Control Workstations

Commencing 0600 hrs Sunday 4 November 2018, the North West and South West Control Workstations at the Mayfield (Newcastle) Network Management Centre have been amalgamated during quiet periods from:

- 2200hrs (Monday to Thursday) until 0600hrs (Tuesday to Friday), and
- 2200hrs Friday continuous until 0600hrs Monday.

Outside these hours, the former arrangement of separate North West and South West workstations apply, but subject to amendment to suit operational requirements at the discretion of a Network Control Team Leader.

The JHR CRN Control Boards are generally arranged geographically, but with exceptions to balance the workload. During normal working hours these are:

West: Lithgow to Orange, Wallerawang to Baal Bone, Parkes Yard (excluding Goobang Junction).

South West: Joppa Junction to Canberra, Junee to Griffith, Stockingbingal to Griffith, Temora to Lake Cargelligo, Ungarie to Naradhan, The Rock to Boree Creek, Narromine to Cobar-Elura, Nevertire to Warren.

North West: Baal Bone Junction to Rylstone (usually out of use), Orange East Fork Junction to Parkes, Orange to Dubbo, Troy Junction (Dubbo) to Coonamble, Camurra West to Weemelah (but now out of use - see preceding item), Werris Creek to

Armidale, Narrabri Junction to Walgett, Burren Junction to Merrywinebone.

(SAFE Notice 42-18 refers).

Victoria: Transport complaints

Metro Trains is being probed by the Public Transport Ombudsman over complaints about trains changing destinations while commuters are still on board. In a bid to meet its punctuality targets, MTM sometimes changes the destination of a train after it departs Southern Cross and arrives at Flinders St - a practice known as transposing services. This is done on incoming trains arriving late at Flinders St - where the train is scheduled to wait for a few minutes as drivers changeover - to avoid delays flowing onto other lines.

Complaints about punctuality and reliability overtook complaints about Myki ticketing. The high number of rail upgrades, level crossing removal works and road works have driven up complaints about disruptions by more than 100% to 138 issues raised this year. Nearly 1100 people complained about service delivery on the public transport network - a rise of 40%. Commuters took issue with infrequent train replacement buses and inadequate signage and announcements during rail shutdowns. There were also safety concerns over the lack of crowd management at temporary stops, with disruptions putting pressure on other nearby rail lines, trams or buses.

The number of complaints about train replacement services rose by 50%, with the ombudsman now investigating bus replacement services on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines (buses are replacing trains on sections of the lines for most of December). The ombudsman is also probing the reimbursement of Hurstbridge line commuters who were forced to use buses for an extra week during rail crossing works earlier this year.

Overall, trains had the biggest spike in complaints about service delivery, with V/Line facing a 75% increase and Metro Trains a 68% increase. In response to service delivery complaints, a Metro spokesman said trains were often changed due to ill passengers, vandalism and infrastructure faults. "Train controllers make real-time decisions to alter some services with the whole network in mind to reduce delays to more passengers, and maintain the timetable."

Yarra Trams saw a rise of 29% in service delivery issues and Transdev an increase of 51%.

Victoria: Benalla freight

Qube has constructed an intermodal terminal inside the former railway yards at Benalla. Tankers convey cement and fly ash from Sydney to Benalla, transferred to trucks for a short haul to Boral's new plant where it is turned into pre-fabricated panels which are then railed to Dynon for the new West Gate tunnel.

Melbourne: No longer level crossing city

Fourteen more level crossings will be removed as part of the recently re-elected Victorian government's ongoing level crossing removal program:

- Belgrave/Lilydale line: Union Road, Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert, with two new stations also to be constructed as part of the project. Preliminary engineering advice indicates that the preferred option for the removal will see the rail line go under the roads. This will make the line crossing-free between the CBD and Ringwood. Four level crossings have already been removed, with works currently underway at Manchester Road, Mooroolbark and Maroondah Highway.
- Sunbury line: Gap Road Sunbury.
- Mernda line: Cramer St, Murray Road and Oakover Road Preston.
- High St Reservoir: The Level Crossing Removal Authority has awarded the \$232 million contract to build an elevated rail bridge and a new Reservoir station. The John Holland/KBR team that removed level crossings in Frankston, Essendon and Campbellfield will form an alliance with Metro Trains Melbourne. Major construction is due to start in early 2019.
- Werribee line: Old Geelong Road Hoppers Crossing.
- Frankston line: Glen Huntly Road and Neerim Road Glen Huntly, and Chelsea Road, Argyle Avenue, and Swanpool Avenue Chelsea.
- Upfield line: Munro St and Reynard St Coburg.

Metro Trains Melbourne and V/Line: Boundary

From 0200 hours, Saturday 1 December 2018, MTM assumed responsibility for the track and signal infrastructure between Pakenham, 60.835 km, and the down side of Mount Ararat Road at signal gantry, 64.6 km. The Train Control boundary for Metrol now extends to 64.6 km. The Train Control functions on the down side of the new boundary remain with Centrol. Control of signalling between Pakenham and Pakenham East is now with the signaller at Dandenong. This is a result of the commissioning of MTM's new Pakenham East Depot.

V/Line: Timetable alterations

From 14 January, due to the provision of new infrastructure and the changed V/Line/Metro Trains boundary point, the following new timing points apply: Dandenong East, Pakenham East, Pakenham MTM.

From 14 January, due to ongoing speed restriction between Echuca and Toolamba, the Qube Logistics freight train from Deniliquin on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays is altered:

Deniliquin Rice Growers Siding 1205, Moira Block Point 1318 non-stop, Henwood Block Point 1355 non-stop, Echuca 1410-1415 receive Train Order, Toolamba 1645-1655 receive Train Order, then as formerly to arrive WestGate Port Siding at 2010.

V/Line: Revised Fleet Plan

Revised Fleet Plan FP49B will be introduced on 28 January. A few trains will have minor alterations to platforms at Southern Cross and to routings near SX.

V/Line: Loops restored

From December 2018 Warrenheip Loop, 149 km from Melbourne measured via North Geelong, on the Geelong-Ballarat line and Carwarp Loop, 578 km from Melbourne measured via North Geelong on the Mildura line, were restored to use.

Victoria: Is it hot?

On 3 January V/Line announced "Due to the initiation of the extreme weather timetable", the 1205 Southern Cross to Albury, 1245 Albury to Southern Cross, 1720 Albury to Southern Cross and 1802 Southern Cross to Albury have been replaced by road coaches. This was despite the Trainlink's XPTs and freight trains continuing to run normally on the ARTC track.

Next day, 4 January, was worse with extreme temperatures in Victoria. In Melbourne 42°C was expected. **V/Line** cancelled the 1254 Swan Hill-SX and 1825 SX-Swan Hill as well as the above Albury trains. From 1200 until 1800 all V/Line trains were slowed to 90 k/h. On **Metro Trains** services were delayed by speed restrictions in the afternoon peak. **Yarra Trams** cancelled route 30 from 1000 with route 12 diverted along Latrobe St instead. Route 75 was truncated from Etihad Stadium to Auburn Road, Hawthorn with buses on the outer part of the route. Route 82 was replaced by buses for its full length from Moonee Ponds to Footscray.

Metro Trains Melbourne, Yarra Trams, V/Line: Performance

Metro Trains met its punctuality target only six times in the past 12 months, but received \$6 million in bonuses. It paid \$770,000 in penalties. It had the potential to win up to \$14 million in bonuses under the terms of the contract.

Yarra Trams was awarded \$1.26 million in bonuses (but had the potential to receive \$5.5 million), although it failed to meet its monthly on-time performance target five times. It paid more than \$300 000 in penalties.

Both operators signed seven-year contracts in November 2017, including higher performance targets and larger fines for lateness and cancellations. The renewed \$7 billion contracts set out tough penalties for station skipping, bypassing the City Loop and stopping trams before they reach the end of the route, known as short shunting. (See item below.)

Metro's target for on-time monthly performance was lifted from 88 to 92%. But in the first year of the contract, Metro failed to meet the new target six times. It has continued to cancel services and bypass the City Loop, with more than 900 Frankston trains cancelled in the past year (1.1% of services) and 730 Pakenham services bypassing the loop (1.2%). Train lines with the lowest proportion of City Loop bypasses were Hurstbridge, Upfield and Sunbury. More than 2000

train services have been short shunted on the Lilydale line (3.2%).

Yarra Trams failed to meet its new 82% punctuality target (up from 77%) in five of the past 12 months. More than 6500 services (7.5%) on the busy Route 86 were short shunted and 5520 services on Route 70 (8%). Tram routes 82, 78 and 1 had the lowest proportion of short shunted services

VLine failed to meet its 92% on-time target every month in the past year. In May, its performance drastically dropped to 79%.

But the government says train and tram performance has improved overall due to the tougher targets. Train faults on the suburban network have dropped almost 20% and infrastructure faults reduced by nearly 30%, it says. Public Transport Victoria data shows that Metro Trains has met its 98.5% reliability target in 11 of the past 12 months. New customer satisfaction and mystery-shopper surveys showed a 15% drop in complaints to Yarra Trams. Bonuses are handed out to Metro and Yarra Trams for exceeding performance targets. To determine the penalties or incentives, PTV performs a complex calculation that gives greater weighting to altered or cancelled services than to late running.

Yarra Trams: Route 30 improved

A new timetable for route 30 (Docklands-St Vincent's Plaza) started on 1 January. Services were extended until midnight on weekdays and Saturday, Sunday and public holiday services have been introduced.

Yarra Trams: Route 75

Route 75 was truncated to operate only from Etihad Stadium to Fordham Gardens, Camberwell from 3 to 12 January for track and overhead replacement works. Buses operated the outer part of the route, connecting at Orrong Crescent.

PTV website

Public Transport Victoria is experimenting with a new website. The draft version looks considerably more attractive than their present website. PTV is seeking comments. It can be viewed at <https://beta.ptv.vic.gov.au/>

Melbourne public transport franchises

The franchise agreements between the Victorian government and the private rail, tram and bus operators in Melbourne can be accessed at <https://beta.ptv.vic.gov.au/footer/legal-and-policies/public-transport-partnership-agreements/>

Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual

A new edition of the Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual has been published dated 1 January 2019. It can be obtained at <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/general-information/victorian-fares-and-ticketing-manual/>

TransPerth Metronet

After months of consultation, two more Metronet projects have passed the thorough the Infrastructure Australia process and been given the green light. The

Yanchep rail extension, 14 km, and Thornlie-Cockburn link will be delivered under a single alliance contract, with a shortlist for tenderers to be announced in early 2019. The projects are backed by a joint funding arrangement between the Commonwealth and WA governments. State Parliament passed the *Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018* for the Yanchep Rail Extension and Thornlie-Cockburn Link projects in mid November 2018. The Yanchep extension is from Butler with new stations at Alkimos, Eglinton and Yanchep to support population growth in the city's north-west.

TransPerth: Airport line

Completion of the Forrestfield Airport railway will be delayed by up to a year after the WA government confirmed a series of incidents. Transport Minister Rita Saffioti said the \$1.8 billion line would not be finished until the "second half" of 2021, a year later than the original deadline of late 2020. She confirmed the biggest incident to affect the rail link to date — a major sinkhole that brought construction to a standstill. This developed in September when work by a boring machine on a "cross tunnel passage" triggered flooding and slippage of soil on a section of the line along Dundas Road on the eastern edge of Perth Airport. Ms Saffioti said the failure appeared to have been caused by defective work and she had received an apology from head contractor Salini Impregilo-NRW over the incident. Work was now under way to determine the best option to fix the problem, with a complete excavation of the site and replacement with a concrete box a possibility.

Pilbara iron ore railways documentation

Overview maps of Rio Tinto's iron ore railways in the Pilbara are available at

<http://www.riotinto.com/australia/pilbara/rail-9752.aspx>

A track diagram of the Roy Hill railway is at

<https://www.royhill.com.au/overview/rail/>

A basic overview map of the BHP Billiton railway is at

<https://www.bhp.com/-/media/bhp/documents/.../mikedarbyrailoperations.pdf?la=en>

TasRail: Freight increase

Total freight volumes for Tasmania's state-owned TasRail rose 10.5% in 2017-18, thanks primarily to standout growth in forestry and intermodal volumes. TasRail had a monthly record for containers in November 2017 at 4,687 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) – a record already broken twice so far in FY19, with 5,125 TEU hauled in October 2018 and 5,356 TEU hauled in November 2018. Timber volumes grew 24%.

TranzScenic: Additional passenger trains

On 23 November 2018 NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced that KiwiRail is to receive \$NZ 40 million to provide for year-round service of the Coastal Pacific train from **Christchurch to Picton** and v.v., rather than just during summer, and to upgrade Kaikoura, Blenheim and Picton stations.

The NZ Transport Agency has approved funding for a trial **Hamilton to Auckland** passenger train. The five-

year trial is scheduled to begin in March 2020. The total cost is estimated at \$NZ 78.2m (\$A 53.65m), including services supplied by KiwiRail. NZ Transport Agency will provide \$NZ 68.4m (\$A 46.93m), with the remaining \$NZ 9.8m (\$A 6.72m) contributed by local authorities.

The trial service will commence in Hamilton at Frankton, and stop at The Base in Rotokauri, then Huntly and terminate at Papakura in Auckland. There is future potential to include stops at Te Kauwhata, Pokeno and Tuakau. The service will be a four-carriage train accommodating 150 passengers. If demand increases, a five-carriage train with the capacity to carry up to 200 passengers will be deployed.

Denmark, Croatia: Timetable books

The DSB Danish Railways official timetable book is no longer being published. This was the last official – as opposed to privately published – printed timetable book in western Europe. On the other hand, HZ Croatian Railways has resumed publication of their timetable book.

Thanks to Paul Brown, Scott Ferris, Hilaire Fraser, Steven Haby, Albert Isaacs, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Max Michell, Ross Morrison, Samuel Rachdi, Len Regan, Jim Wells, www.railexpress.com.au, www.railpage.com.au. *Catchpoint, Infrastructure Rail Monthly, Railway Digest, Age, Australian, Central Western Daily, Daily Telegraph, Sydney Morning Herald* for Rail news.

RECOMMENDED READING

Trainline 6: This very useful compendium by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics provides insights, analysis, and an understanding of the railway industry. It presents an overview and data on railway transport tasks performed; characteristics of the railways and train operators' rolling stock that runs; and aspects of railway performance, including safety, environment and reliability. Available at https://bitre.gov.au/publications/2018/train_006.aspx

FERRY NEWS

From 0400 Thursday 6 December to 0400 Saturday 8 December, Brisbane City Council ferry services (including CityCats and CityFerries) experienced industrial action by Transdev employees. Limited services ran.

Thanks to Steven Haby for Ferry news.

ODD SPOT

Happy New Year!

The Rail Motor Society of Paterson in the Hunter Valley ran a mystery New Year's Eve trip. Celebrations at midnight was spent in the Port Waratah Freight yard (arrive 2335, depart 0053). (ARTC Train Alteration Advice 1299-2018 refers.)

Moo

From the Public Transport Victoria website on 8 December:

Route 695 services in both directions may experience possible delays between Avonsleigh and Cockatoo due to roaming cows on the road.

Melbourne: Not well said

From the Metro Trains Melbourne website:
Sandringham line: Buses replacing trains from 1.20am Saturday 1 December to last train Sunday 2 December 2018

Added: 22 November 2018: Buses replace trains between Parliament and Elsterwick stations from

1.20am Saturday 1 December to last train Sunday 2 December, due to upgrade works.

And this:

Sandringham Line: No City Loop trains from Saturday 1 December to Sunday 2 December 2018

Added: 28 November 2018: Sandringham Line trains will run direct to and from Flinders Street Station, not via the City Loop, Saturday 1 December to Sunday 2 December 2018, first train to last train, due to maintenance works.

Melbourne: Well said

A quote from John Kennedy, the unexpectedly successful Labor Party candidate for Hawthorn in the 24 November Victorian election: "Behind my wife, my family and friends, my greatest love is the 75 tram and the train from Hawthorn station."

Thanks to Victor Isaacs, Ross Morrison and the *Herald Sun* for Odd Spot.

BUS NEWS

NEW SOUTH WALES

On demand buses fail or success

A report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (7 December 2018) reported that the introduction of Uber-style buses in parts of Western Sydney have been a spectacular failure. However it continues and notes that northern beaches and inner west and regional area services have been an outstanding success. The report noted that two new routes to commenced on 10 December and would serve suburbs such as Newington, Lidcombe, Cabarita, Mortlake, Olympic Park and North Strathfield. Routes that failed included Bankstown and Wetherill Park and vehicles were allocated to inner west and eastern suburbs.

In regional areas trials are to commence in December along the north and south coast, Riverina, northern NSW and Shoalhaven.

ATA member and UTS Business School of Transport expert Dr Geoffrey Clifton was quoted in the article and stated that on-demand buses provided a niche for people with mobility issues or trips that don't fit along standard routes.

The following is a list of the current trial routes and those that have ended.

Carlingford and North Rocks [5.30am-9am / 5pm-8pm]: Runs across North Rocks, Carlingford, Beecroft and Epping to and from Carlingford and Epping train stations.

Edmondson Park [6am-9am / 4pm-8pm]: Service to and from the Edmondson Park station.

Manly [6am-10pm]: A service to and from the Manly ferries - expanded on 20 August 2018.

Northern Beaches [6am-10pm]: Palm Beach to North Narrabeen to Northern Beaches B-Line.

Sutherland Shire [7am-7pm]: Runs across Jannali West, Sylvania, Caringbah and Gymea to transport hubs or local shops.

Eastern Suburbs [6am-9am / 3pm-9pm]: Service to or from, Edgecliff or Bondi Junction station or Rose Bay wharf.

Illawarra [5.30am-9pm]: Runs in Thirroul, Figtree and Shellharbour to and from train stations or bus interchanges.

Inner west [6am-11.30pm]: Runs to and from Rhodes Waterside Shopping Centre, Concord General Hospital, Mortlake, Breakfast Point, Cabarita, Canada Bay, Burwood and Strathfield.

Macquarie Park [6am-10am / 3pm-7pm]: Services within 15 kilometres of the precinct.

Central Coast [5.44am - 7.47am/ 4.55pm - 7.26pm]: Service to and from the Woy Woy train station.

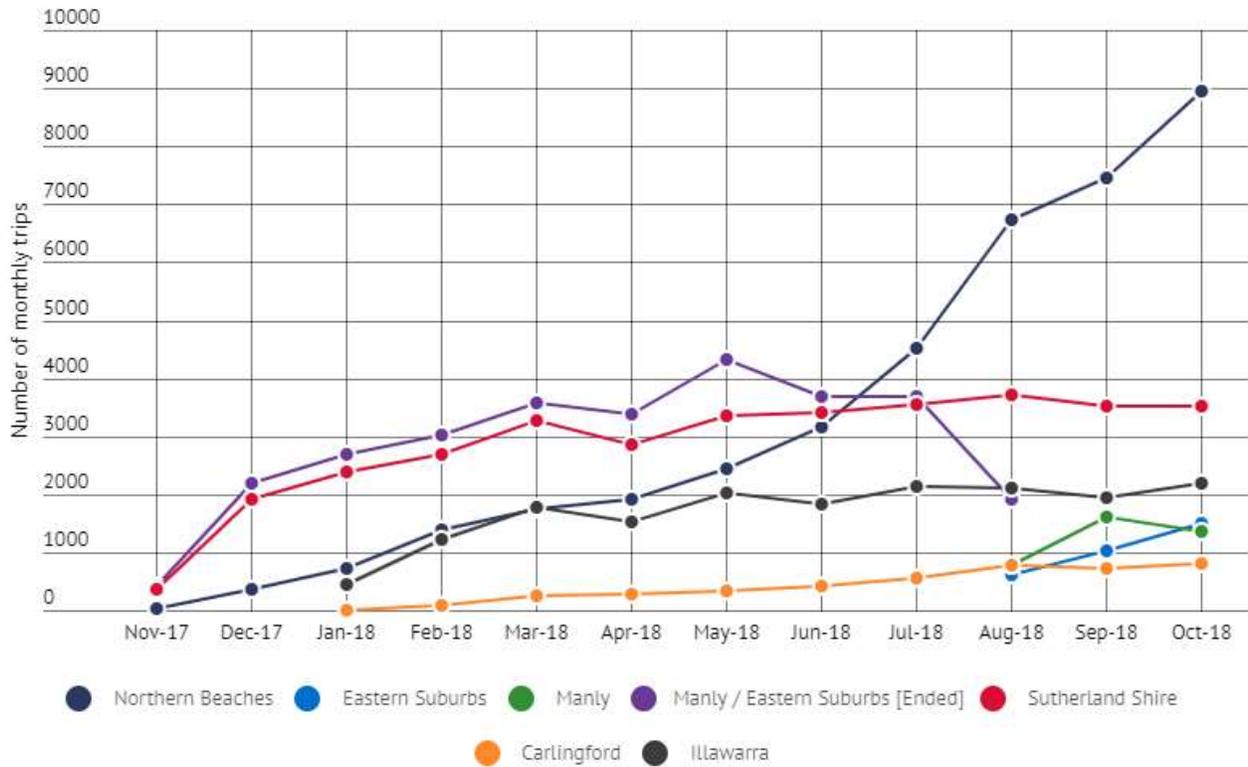
Trial services that have ended.

Bankstown for visitors, patients and employees of Bankstown Hospital operated 18 hours a day.

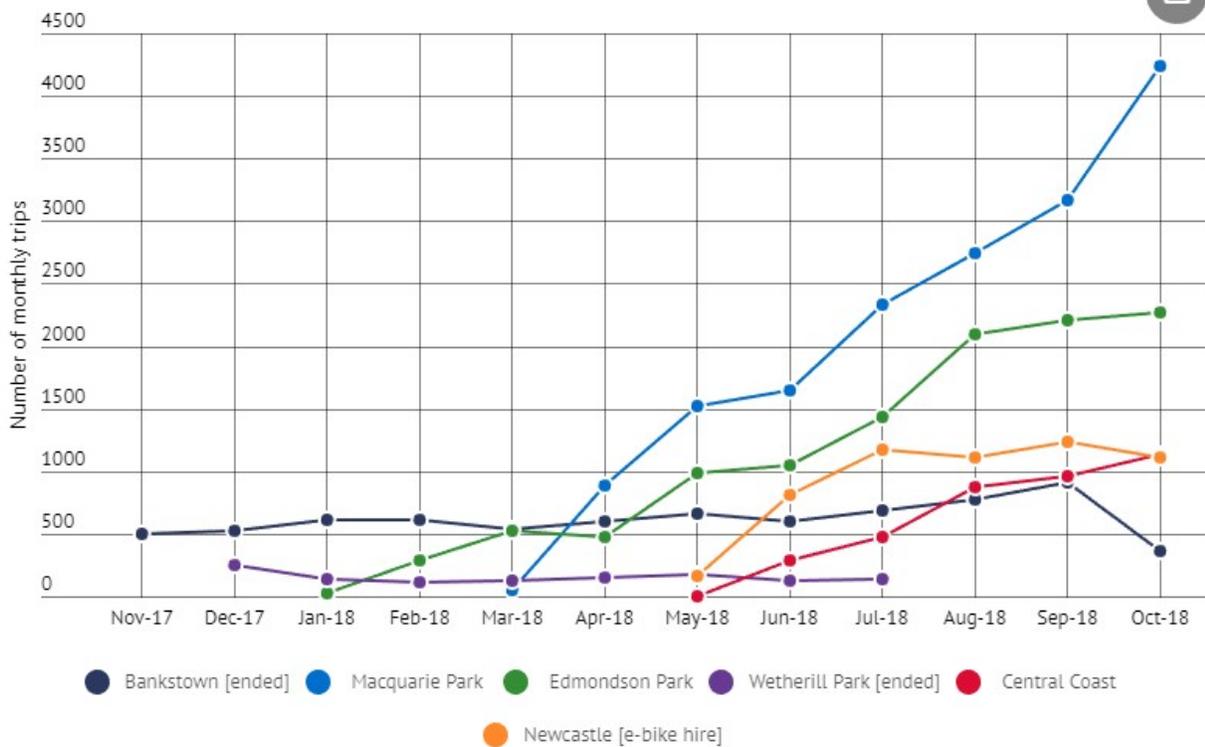
Wetherill Park and Greystanes Connected employment precincts to T-Way bus interchanges.

The cost for Sydney services for example which can pick people up from home and take them to a railway station or other destinations range from \$2.60 to \$5.60 and the buses can be booked via a variety of mobile apps.

On-demand buses – east, south and north



On-demand buses West, Central Coast, Newcastle [e-bikes]



Source: Transport for NSW

Sydney route 412 improves

A new timetable came into effect from 2 December 2018 for route 412 Campsie – City with off peak frequencies improving from 20 minutes to 15 and early evening frequencies increased from 30 to 15 minutes. No changes have been made to weekend services.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Christmas / New Year services

Transport Canberra (formerly ACTION) operated a revised network and holiday timetable over the Christmas and New Year period from Monday 24 December 2018 until Friday 11 January 2019 inclusive, with a special Christmas Day timetable with free services.

Monday 24 December	Holiday timetable
Tuesday 25 December	Christmas Day – Free Service
Wednesday 26	Sunday timetable
Thursday 27 December	Holiday timetable
Friday 28 December	Holiday timetable
Saturday 29 December	Saturday timetable
Sunday 30 December	Sunday timetable
Monday 31 December	Holiday timetable
Tuesday 1 January	Sunday timetable
Wednesday 2 January	Holiday timetable
Thursday 3 January	Holiday timetable
Friday 4 January	Holiday timetable
Saturday 5 January	Saturday timetable
Sunday 6 January	Sunday timetable
Monday 7 January	Holiday timetable
Tuesday 8 January	Holiday timetable
Wednesday 9 January	Holiday timetable
Thursday 10 January	Holiday timetable
Friday 11 January	Holiday timetable

The free City Loop service did not operate between Christmas Day and Friday 11 January 2019.

The late night Rapid Services operated on selected dates in connection with Uber on:

- Friday 7 December 2018
- Saturday 8 December 2018
- Friday 14 December 2018
- Saturday 15 December 2018
- Friday 21 December 2018
- Saturday 22 December 2018
- Monday 31 December 2018 (New Year's Eve).

At the same time the Blue and Red Rapid bus services are extended to operate every 20 minutes to 0200 and every 15 minutes on New Year's Eve.

Canberra bus network delayed

The new network that was supposed to be introduced in conjunction with the commencement of light rail services has been delayed. This is primarily due to the pushback of the opening of the light rail network and is likely to be now introduced from 27 April 2019. This delay is four months behind the original plan of January 2019.

Meanwhile a report in the *Canberra Times* dated 30 November noted that principals and parents had still not received full details of the proposed new school bus network that would have seen significant cuts to school bus routes in favour of standard routes. At least half the schools will lose their dedicated routes.

New 'cultural loop' bus

In an effort to get people out of their cars, ten cultural organisations in Canberra have commenced a six month trial of a loop service running seven days a week from 0900 to 1700.



The service which commenced on 20 December 2018 with a dedicated bus will service the National Museum of Australia, National Film and Sound Archive; Regatta Point; National Library; Questacon; Museum of Australian Democracy at old Parliament House; Parliament House; Canberra Museum and Gallery and the Canberra Centre. A round trip takes one hour. The National Gallery; Australian War Memorial and the National Portrait Gallery declined to participate and are not included in the service.

The cost of the trial is \$150,000 over six months. The bus is provided by Capital Touring Services trading as Redbus. This was reported in the *Canberra Times* (20 December 2018).

VICTORIA

Transdev loses Melbourne contract

The Andrews State government has finally lost patience with Transdev's ongoing performance and management issues and announced on Saturday 15 December that the company will lose their lucrative Melbourne bus contracts from 2021. This was reported in *The Age* on Saturday 15 December in their online edition with a follow-up in the printed paper the next day.

The government has clearly become tired with the ongoing issues with this company and the considerable amount of negative publicity from the travelling public. As a result the seven year \$1.7billion contract signed in 2013 will not be rolled over for an extra three years and will conclude in 2021.

The company which acquired 47 bus routes primarily from Ventura and Dyson which included the orbital and SmartBus branded services found itself in severe trouble when Transport Safety Victoria and VicRoads raided their depots late in 2017 which resulted in 140 buses being removed for various mechanical defects including brakes. This resulted in severe disruptions across their network with the company having to dry hire buses from other companies including Sita, Kastoria, McHarry's, Mee's, Panorama and ironically Ventura. In some cases companies that provided buses refused to allow Transdev drivers to drive them with the result that some services had two drivers – one from each company with the Transdev driver acting as a guide.

Further setbacks occurred in 2015 when Labor refused to allow the company to introduce a new (and drastically scaled back) network and also a unsolicited \$500m proposal to construct a dedicated busway in the Eastern Freeway median strip met with wry amusement by many.

The company has one of the worst performance results compared to other companies probably not helped by some routes running through the CBD east – west and the 232 North Altona service hampered by lack of dedicated bus lanes and the notorious Westgate Freeway which does not have emergency lanes.

Melbourne's bus routes have long been seen as the 'Cinderella' of Melbourne's public transport offering with common complaints of late running, poor connections with other modes, dirty and unreliable buses, and long and circuitous routes. It appears that the new Transport Minister might finally be keen to take some action and undertake real reform to ensure that Melbourne's (and Victoria's) bus network is a viable value proposition for the commuter.

Melbourne's worst bus routes

By way of a prediction of what was to happen with Transdev, a report in *The Age* (10 December 2018) reported on a number of poor performing bus routes operated by Transdev. By far the worst was the 232 Queen Victoria Market – North Altona via Westgate Freeway which suffers from congestion, the lack of a dedicated bus lane and that the freeway has no breakdown lane. Every second trip according to the report is late with anecdotal evidence suggesting some trips can run up to 90 minutes behind schedule (for a trip that normally takes 30-40 minutes).

Other underperforming routes included the former 'crosstown' 220 Sunshine – Gardenvale with 57% on time running since 2013; 350 City – La Trobe

University with 57% on time running in 2015 and 'crosstown' 216 Sunshine station – Brighton Beach with a 55% on time running rate increasing to 71% in 2018. It should be noted that routes 216 and 220 were 'split' with the St Kilda Road portion temporarily removed (see November issue of *Table Talk*).

This comes at a time when complaints about Transdev to the Victorian Public Ombudsmen increased by 51% in 2018 mainly due to defective buses, poor running and vandalised vehicles. Early in 2018 a significant proportion of Transdev's fleet was taken off the road due to RWC concerns resulting in widespread cancellations and dry hiring of buses from other operators.

By way of comparison Dyson's operate at 80% on time running and Ventura at 84%.

Flooding causes delays

Torrential rain caused the Hume Highway to be closed for several days from 13 December around the Benalla and Wangaratta areas. This resulted in Greyhound and Firefly coach services being diverted. Somewhat ironically V/Line rail services to Albury were unaffected.

At the same time Melbourne copped a drenching which resulted in many roads being cut and subsequent delays to bus (and tram) routes.

Minor timetable updates

The following routes were issued with new timetables:

- Route 624 Kew – Oakleigh dated 4 November 2018 (CDC Melbourne)
- Route 822 Sandringham – Chadstone SC dated 2 December 2018 (Ventura)

As part of the usual Christmas traffic buildup one of Melbourne's most popular (and lengthy) bus routes 788 Frankston – Portsea was issued with new timetables as follows:

- 26 December to 26 January 2019
- 27 January to 31 January 2019

Extra services including 'double heading' and use of articulated buses are incorporated into the timetable to account for holiday loadings.

Kyneton town service upgrade

It appears that a new route structure and expanded services will be introduced at the end of March 2019. Currently the town service operates Wednesdays to Fridays from 0900 to around 1500. The upgraded network will see services operating 6 days a week and connecting with most trains on the Bendigo line. Further details as they come to hand.

Thanks to: Steven Haby, Allan Miles, Victor Isaacs

AIR NEWS

Domestic

QantasLink will launch direct flights between Bendigo and Sydney from 31 March 2019. These will be the first-ever regular passenger services between Bendigo and Sydney, and the first commercial services from Bendigo in more than 30 years (new airport code BXG). This follows runway upgrades at Bendigo Airport in 2017. Bendigo is the 57th destination on the

QantasLink network and the Qantas Group's fourth destination in Victoria after Melbourne, Mildura and Avalon. The southbound flight will depart Sydney at 1725 six times a week due to reach Bendigo at 1925. The northbound will depart Bendigo at 0630, to arrive Sydney at 0820.

Thanks to Paul Brown, Steven Haby and Ross Morrison for Air news.

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