



TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

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RAIL & TRAM NEWS

QUEENSLAND

Additional services

As part of the state government's COVID-19 Safe Public Transport Plan, an additional 21 shoulder-peak train services have been provided every weekday since Monday 10 August, to support social distancing measures, while hand sanitiser will be provided at all train stations.

The services are operating across the Beenleigh, Caboolture, Cleveland, Ipswich, Redcliffe Peninsula, Shorncliffe and Springfield lines, turning usual 30-minute service gaps to 15 minutes. These new services will be permanently added into the timetable.

Transport Minister, Mark Bailey, said that patronage is currently at around 50 per cent of normal levels.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

Cross River Rail

In August, the state government publicised its upcoming re-use of two Tunnel Boring Machines that had been used in the construction of tunnels for the Sydney Metro in New South Wales. The machines are currently undergoing a refit and refurbishment by Herrenknecht. *QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT*

North-west upgrade

A \$6 million upgrade of the outback line between Hughenden and Cloncurry has begun. Works over the next two months involve bridge abutment repairs, drainage upgrades and embankment flood protection. The state government also announced on 28 July that it had released \$20 million for its funded freight rail incentive scheme. *QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT*

NEW SOUTH WALES

Additional COVID services

Updating this article from last month's *Table Talk*, the "one-third" of temporary COVID-19 shoulder-peak services, which had been removed by Sydney Trains in the week beginning Monday 20 July, were returned on the following Monday. *SYDNEY TRAINS*

NSW TrainLink services to QLD resume

From 10 July, NSW TrainLink services resumed operating its various coach services into Queensland, following an extended period of curtailment caused by COVID-19 state border restrictions. The XPT service resumed running into Brisbane on 19 July, following a period of infrastructure maintenance. *TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

NSW TrainLink services to QLD stop again

From 01:00 Saturday 8 August, Queensland closed its border to New South Wales, with the Premier labelling NSW as a COVID-19 hotspot.

As a result, the NSW TrainLink XPT service to Brisbane is once again only operating between Sydney and Casino. See the *Bus & Coach* section for coach service changes. *TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

Gerringong crossing loop

Geotechnical works started in early August for a four-kilometre crossing loop between Gerringong and Berry. The local state member, Gareth Ward, said that the state government is looking to boost passenger service levels between Kiama and Bomaderry with a peak frequency of every 30 minutes and off-peak every hour. As part of the same project, Transport for NSW is also undertaking geotechnical works for a second platform to be constructed at Bomaderry. There is no immediate timeframe for construction to begin except for "the early 2020s". *WIN NEWS ILLAWARRA, TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

Southern Highlands re-rail project

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) announced in July that its \$40 million "re-rail" project between Goulburn and Macarthur had been completed. The project saw nearly 10,000 tonnes of Whyalla steel rail replace older rail, which ARTC says has seen "positive results" for customers.

Another \$28 million will now be invested in a two-year second stage of works, replacing a further 98 kilometres of rail – starting immediately. *ARTC*

Parramatta Light Rail project

As of mid-August, the state government announced that the review and relocation of utilities across Church Street is now complete. A project spokesperson said that this included high-voltage power cables that power Parramatta CBD, Sydney water mains, gas crossings, 500 metres of stormwater pipes and thousands of metres of conduit. The project team was quoted as using augmented reality and 3D modelling technology to map over 300 in-ground services.

Transport for NSW has reiterated that the works in the outdoor dining corridor called "Eat Street" will reopen from 1 November for a three-month period before the project retakes the street.

Meanwhile, works have progressed along the former Carlingford heavy rail branch line to set up the rail corridor space for construction. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW**

Western Metro battle

Since April, when it was announced that the option of diverting the proposed metro line between Westmead and Sydney CBD to include a station at Rydalmere (at the Western Sydney University campus) had been scrapped, the local Parramatta City Council has been pushing for a new stop to instead be built on the existing path at Camellia. Camellia is the site of the former Hardies site, much of which has remained vacant due to expensive decontamination requirements. The local Council sees the stop as an opportunity to foster residential development throughout the southern banks of the Parramatta River at Camellia – a traditionally industrial area.

Meanwhile, at the eastern end of the line, the City of Sydney Council is pushing for the addition of a station at Pyrmont, which the Council says is the country's most densely populated suburb.

These moves bring a headache to the state government, who are eyeing a promised 20-minute travel time between Sydney CBD and Sydney's second CBD at Parramatta by limiting the number of stops along the line, while also keeping already exorbitant construction costs down – each station adds hundreds of millions of dollars to the final bill. A transport spokesperson said that a station at Camellia would not be built due to "contamination and flooding creating construction challenges".

Tunnelling along the line is due to commence in 2022, with the line opening by 2030. **THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD**

VICTORIA

Night services suspended

The lockdown enforced by the second COVID-19 wave has seen the state government implement a night curfew for everyone across Melbourne since Wednesday 5 August between 20:00 and 05:00 daily. The 'State Of Disaster', which was declared on Sunday 2 August, will last for a minimum of six weeks. Due to

this, late night Metro Trains and Yarra Trams services have been drastically reduced, with frequencies slashed to between every 40 and 60 minutes, while 'Night Network' services, which operate after midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, are fully suspended. The remaining evening services allow essential workers, caregivers and residents needing medical care to continue to travel.

Internally, Metro is producing new circulars of train running for each night of the curfew – put down to the sheer volume and variety of works and possessions being undertaken across the network.

Many Protective Service Officers have also joined the state government's COVID enforcement frontline to ensure Victorians are doing the right thing for their fellow Victorians.

Patronage since the lockdown is back down to just 10 per cent of normal levels across the metropolitan public transport system. Friday 7 August saw 43,000 trips on trams and 71,000 rail trips made across the city.

At the same time, regional Victoria entered stage three restrictions, as small clusters of cases began to develop outside Melbourne. In early August, regional bus patronage recorded a fall to 20 per cent of the February (pre-COVID) baseline, with V/Line trains recording just 7 per cent of the same baseline. **ROSS MORRISON, LEN REGAN, ANDREW JAMES, STEVEN HABY, VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT, THE AUSTRALIAN, YARRA TRAMS**

Station upgrades

On 28 July, the state government announced that it would be spending \$24 million from its Building Works program on upgrading sixteen train stations across the state, including new stopping pattern information screens, PA system upgrade, and works on various customer facilities. 11 of the stations will be in the metropolitan area – including Heathmont, Frankston, Melton, and Moonee Ponds, while the other five come from regional Victoria – Broadford, North Shore and Lara. **VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT**

Big Build

The state government's Big Build website provides an update on upcoming works and operational impacts on Metro services. The Spring season sees works on fifteen sets of level crossings across the Upfield, Frankston and Cranbourne lines.

The Sunbury line will also be affected by works for the new Metro Tunnel line under construction.

Meanwhile, Yarra Trams' routes 48 and 75 will be partially replaced by buses at the end of October for East Melbourne stabling yard upgrades, which PTV says will boost the number of services that can be provided for special events.

The next page provides an overview of the upcoming effects of construction on Metro Trains, Yarra Trams and V/Line services. **ROSS MORRISON, WWW.BIGBUILD.VIC.GOV.AU, VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT**

Buses replace trains and trams

Line	Disruption	Works start	Works finish
Sunbury	Buses replace trains between Flagstaff, North Melbourne and Sunbury.	Saturday, 7 November	Sunday, 22 November
Werribee	From 14:35 every day until end of service, buses replace trains between Newport and Werribee.	Monday, 24 August, 14:35	Sunday, 13 September
Werribee & Williamstown	Buses replace trains between North Melbourne, Newport and Williamstown.	Saturday, 7 November	Wednesday, 11 November
Upfield	Buses replace trains between Brunswick, Anstey and Upfield. Buses replace trains between Flagstaff and Upfield. <i>Additional nightworks may be undertaken during this period.</i>	Monday, 3 August Monday, 9 November Monday, 27 July	Sunday, 8 November Sunday, 15 November Sunday, 15 November
Coburg and Moreland stations	Both stations will be closed.	Monday, 27 July, 20:30	late December
Frankston and Stony Point	Buses replace trains between Mordialloc and Frankston, and between Frankston and Stony Point. Due to Metro Tunnel works, every night until end of service, buses replace trains between Parliament and Caulfield.	Tuesday, 1 September, 21:00 Monday, 31 August, 20:30	Sunday, 6 September Thursday, 3 September

Tram works

Route	Disruption	Works start	Works finish
Route 58	Buses replace trams between Stop 27 Royal Park Station/Royal Park and Stop 45 Bell St/Melville Rd.	Saturday, 14 November	Wednesday, 2 December
Route 16	Buses replace trams on Glenferrie Road between High Street and Malvern Road.	Saturday, 19 September	Friday, 25 September
Route 72	Buses replace trams on Malvern Road between Adelaide and Bride streets.	Saturday, 19 September	Friday, 25 September
Route 96	Buses replace trams on Canterbury Road between Whiteman Street, South Melbourne and Fitzroy Street, St Kild	Monday, 28 September	Sunday, 4 October
Route 109	Buses replace trams between Stop 125 Clarendon Street Junction and Stop 129 Beacon Cove Light Rail	Monday, 5 October	Saturday, 10 October
Routes 12 and 109	Buses replace trams between Wellington Street and Barkers Road.	Friday, 21 August	Sunday, 30 August
Route 48 and 75	Buses replace trams between Stop 10 - Jolimont Rd/Wellington Pde and Stop 29 - Barkers Road.	Sunday, 25 October	Monday, 2 November

Coaches replace trains

Line	Disruption	Works start	Works finish
Bendigo	Coaches replace trains between Southern Cross Station and Bendigo.	Saturday, 7 November	Saturday, 21 November
Geelong	Buses replace trains between Southern Cross and Sunshine (weekends) and coaches replace trains between Southern Cross and Geelong (weeknights) (<i>for Warrnambool customers, coaches replace trains between Southern Cross and Geelong on both weekends.</i>)	Saturday, 7 November	Thursday, 19 November
Ballarat	Coaches replace trains between Southern Cross and Sunshine stations (weekends) and between Southern Cross and Ballarat stations (weeknights).	Saturday, 7 November	Sunday, 15 November

V/Line services curtailed

As at 30 July, V/Line coach services into South Australia have been curtailed to operate wholly within Victoria only as follows (until further notice):

- *Adelaide to Albury* – now operating between Wodonga and Underbool only (Murrayville passengers have alternate local transport arrangements in place).
- *Adelaide to Bendigo* – now operating between Lillimur and Bendigo only.
- *Warrnambool to Mount Gambier* – now operating between Warrnambool and Dartmoor only.
- *Ballarat to Mount Gambier* – now operating between Ballarat and Casterton Hospital only.

V/LINE

Face masks compulsory

Victoria's second wave of COVID-19 infections pushed the state government to make the wearing of face masks on public transport compulsory from Thursday 23 July. The state is currently in a declared "state of emergency". The penalty for breaching the health order is a \$200 fine. *ABC NEWS*

New Bendigo stations

Two new stations are soon to be constructed on the Echuca line - Huntly and Goornong - following the state government's release of concept maps for each station precinct. A third station, Raywood, will be constructed on the Swan Hill line.

Public consultation on stage three of the Bendigo and Echuca Line Upgrade project, costing \$50 million, is now open online at bigbuild.engage.vic.gov.au.

Promised by the government during their last election campaign, the stations are scheduled to be opened by the end of 2022. *BENDIGO ADVERTISER* (2)

Dandenong South Intermodal Terminal

The state government has signed an agreement with developer Salta Properties to jointly partially fund the Dandenong South Intermodal Terminal project. The facility will connect with the Port of Melbourne's on-dock rail project (see page 5 of the March 2020 edition of *Table Talk*) with the operation of freight shuttle trips between the two locations.

Both the state and federal governments will inject a total \$28 million into connecting rail to the Salta property boundary. The state government's effort will come from their ongoing 'level crossing removal project'. Meanwhile, Salta will inject at least \$50 million into the Terminal's construction located on its 180-hectare Nexus Dandenong South Intermodal Estate. Woolworths, Bunnings, Visa Global Logistics and Silk Contract Logistics all call the estate home.

Table Talk – September 2020

Starting in the new year, initial first stage works are planned to be completed by early 2023, enabling an initial annual throughput of 100,000 TEU.

Federal infrastructure and transport minister, Michael McCormack, said that the facility would help cut up to 100,000 truck trips throughout inner Melbourne a year. *ROSS MORRISON, VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT*

Additional regional investment

The state government announced on 20 July it would invest an additional \$126 million in regional rail projects as part of its COVID response.

An \$83 million freight-improvement package will replace sleepers and ballast and renew level crossing equipment along 400 kilometres of freight-only lines.

\$36 million will be spent with Bombardier to maintain the V/Line Classic fleet.

Another \$7.5 million would be spent on upgrading regional passenger lines:

- Deer Park Junction to Ballarat,
- Ballarat to Ararat,
- Donnybrook to Seymour,
- Corio to Waurn Ponds, and
- Along the Bendigo East Track.

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Claremont turnback project

John Holland has won the \$36 million contract to construct two train turnbacks which will enable more services to operate in the peak on the Forrestfield/Airport and Fremantle lines.

To be opened late next year, the operating plan will involve trains using the first turnback (between Claremont and Stirling Road) to turn peak-hour services every 10 minutes, while the second turnback (between Swanbourne and Stirling Road) would essentially be used in peak periods and for special or unplanned events as an overflow facility.

FORRESTFIELD-AIRPORTLINK

Yançep extension station designs

The state government released the expected photographic shots of several new stations that will be constructed as part of the Yançep rail extension project. These stations will be at Alkimos, Eglinton and Yançep.

PERTHNOW, METRONET



Eglinton early design (source: MetroNet).



Alkimos early design (source: MetroNet).

New diesel railcar factory

As part of its slate of economy-boosting projects, the state government announced on 5 August it would spend \$40 million on building a new diesel railcar manufacturing facility on the same site that it is constructing the new Metronet facility in Bellevue. The contract will be due to be awarded next year. **WA GOVERNMENT**

NEW ZEALAND

Post-lockdown patronage

Following New Zealand's lockdown earlier in the year, various agencies have confirmed patronage levels (as at late July) were as follows:

- **Auckland** – over 70 per cent of the previous year's levels.
- **Wellington** – over 90 per cent of pre-lockdown patronage.
- **Queenstown** – 60 per cent of last year's levels. **STUFF.CO.NZ**

Auckland lockdown returns

Stage three COVID-19 lockdown returned to Auckland from Wednesday 12 August for a minimum two-week period. As a result, until further notice, Transdev services have moved to a level 20-minute weekday daytime service frequency with a service every 30 minutes on weekday evenings and all day on Saturdays and Sundays.

KiwiRail is also undertaking maintenance works meaning that some trains may operate to slower speeds at some locations. **AUCKLAND COUNCIL**

Northern Explorer

KiwiRail has announced their intention to resume operating the Northern Explorer service, which runs between Wellington and Auckland, in the coming months, in time for the usual Summer holiday period. KiwiRail has also outlined a Spring return date for its Coastal Pacific service, which operates between Picton and Christchurch.

Chief executive, Greg Miller, also advised that the return of the TranzAlpine in early July had been successful with their winter promotion.

Meanwhile, almost twenty local and regional councils have penned a letter to KiwiRail with a desire to see the Northern Explorer resume operating a commuter-oriented service. The existing services are marketed as a tourist service, with almost three-quarters of patronage (pre-COVID) made up of international tourists. A KiwiRail spokesperson has confirmed that the Northern Explorer's future is not set in stone. "We're continuing to evaluate the viability of our tourism services and no decision has been made", he said.

Transdev, operator of the Auckland suburban network, has even offered to run such a service if KiwiRail did not want to. Chief executive, Greg Pollock, said that "there might be room in the market for a different offering, which could be more focused on passenger travel. I personally think a sleeper train could do really well. I haven't done any market research, but I think more and more Kiwis are looking to trim their emissions and are looking for different experiences. When you feel the community support for the Northern Explorer, it's clear people really like seeing the train run through their town ... you can't go past the romance of train travel."

He also estimated that such a service would need to operate at least daily to be viable. Transdev's plan would involve getting government funding for a one-year trial to test the market. **STUFF.CO.NZ** (2) (3)

INTERNATIONAL

Singapore Jurong Region Line

The Land Transport Authority has awarded four contracts for design and construction of three new stations, associated infrastructure, and a train control and communications system for part of the 24-kilometre Jurong Region Line (JRL), Singapore's seventh Metro Rapid Transit line.

A Daewoo/Yongnam joint-venture will construct Toh Guan, Jurong Town Hall and Pandan Reservoir stations for S\$320 million. Meanwhile, for the entire JRL, Siemens Mobility/Siemens Rail Automation joint-venture will supply platform screen doors and the signalling system for S\$216 million. ST Engineering

Electronics will supply the train control system for S\$147 million.

Hyundai Rotem has a S\$417 million contract to supply the fleet of 62 driverless three-car sets for the JRL.

Construction is due to begin by the end of the year, with completion of this section in 2027. The entire JRL, serving the regions of Choa Chu Kang, Boon Lay and Jurong with 24 stations, is scheduled to be opened in stages between 2026 and 2028. *RAILWAY TECHNOLOGY*

Amtrak service cuts

In late June, it was revealed that United States long-distance rail operator Amtrak had plans to cut services on its routes across the country by up to one-third, due to the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to cause damage to travel demand.

In late May, Amtrak President, Bill Flynn, said it needed US\$1.5 billion in additional funding to ensure "minimum service levels" while also keeping up with capital investment in the Amtrak network. This is on top of a previous request for just over \$2 billion, also for the 2020/21 fiscal year starting on 1 October 2020.

He also said that many services "are struggling to reach 10 per cent of the ridership levels we had only months ago" and that Amtrak had already restructured timetables and its workforce, saving \$500 million from operating costs. *TRAINREVIEW, MSN NEWS*

Brightline drops Virgin

Floridian rail operator, Brightline, has terminated an agreement with Virgin Group which include their train operation branded as Virgin Trains USA. It will return to its previous Brightline brand. The business was expected to publicly list its shares as part of the agreement, however this did not happen. Brightline services have been suspended since 25 March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brightline operates between Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, with pre-existing plans to extend the service to Orlando in 2021. *TRAINREVIEW*

Deutsche Bahn new trains

German rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) has announced a €1 billion investment in 30 new ICE trains to operate from 2022 on services between North Rhine-Westphalia and Munich via the Cologne-Rhine-Main line. The trains will be built by Siemens at its German and Austrian factories and have a top speed of 320 km/h. This brings DB's fleet of ICE trains to 421. There is also an option for an additional 60 trains available to DB.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reducing patronage, DB's chief executive officer, Dr Richard Lutz, said that the future looked bright for climate-friendly rail transport in the longer term – doubling down on DB's commitment to growing its train fleet. *GLOBAL RAILWAY JOURNAL*

French temperature checks

Since 21 July, temperature checking of passengers has been undertaken by SNCF at Paris Gare de Lyon station, while, since 5 August, trials have been underway at Paris Gare de l'Est and Montparnasse for the next few months. The system works using thermal cameras when a passenger approaches a "health terminal". Where someone records a temperature over 38.5 degrees, station staff are electronically notified to provide a surgical mask and pack of hydro-alcoholic gel. SNCF are allowing any passenger that is over that level to exchange or cancel their ticket without charge until 31 August. *INTERNATIONAL RAIL JOURNAL*

Transport for London bailout 2

Transport for London (TfL) has asked for another £1.9 billion bailout to enable services to continue operating between October and April next year. It said it would likely need an additional £2.9 billion from April for the following twelve months. The Transport Secretary and Mayor are undertaking their own reviews of TfL funding. According to London's transport commissioner, Andy Byford, "the pandemic revealed that the current funding model, with its unusually heavy reliance on fare revenue, simply doesn't work when faced with such a shock [COVID-19]. *THE GUARDIAN*

Scotland train derailment

A train derailment occurred in Aberdeenshire on 12 August. Images of the incident site show some carriages lying on top of others. The service was the 06:38 from Aberdeen to Glasgow Queen Street. Three people have died, including the driver, conductor and a passenger, with another six taken to hospital. The Rail Accident Investigation Branch and the Office of Rail and Road are leading the investigation into the derailment. *BBC NEWS*

British fare increase

From January, England and Wales will experience an increase to ticket fares of up to 1.6 per cent, which authorities say is in line with periodical reviews on fare revenue, regardless of significantly lower patronage aboard many services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, fares will not be impacted as they are set by the state-owned service operator, Translink, while Scotland has delayed changes as it continues a review with the aim of making its fare system better for commuters. *BBC NEWS*

BUS & COACH NEWS

QUEENSLAND

Additional services

As part of the state government's COVID-19 Safe Public Transport Plan, an additional 192 shoulder-peak bus services are being provided on weekdays across Brisbane since Monday 10 August. The aim of the additional services is to support Queensland's social distancing measures. Also as part of the Plan, hand sanitiser is now being provided at major bus stops.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT



Extra train services from 10 August

Following each weekday morning and evening peak on these lines:

- Cleveland
- Redcliffe Peninsula
- Ipswich
- Caboolture
- Springfield
- Beenleigh (PM only)
- Shorncliffe

Sunshine Coast mass transit plan

Councillor plans for community consultation on Sunshine Coast Council's Mass Transit plan have been delayed after the Mayor, Mark Jamieson, vetoed a motion calling for the consultation, which received majority support during a recent councillor vote. Whilst political opponents, like the Liberal National Party's local member, Jarrod Bleijie, asked what the Mayor was "so scared of talking to the community?", the Mayor later commented on the veto saying "we got to be in the position where we're able to give community the sort of information they need to make an informed decision" - pointing to the upcoming delivery of the Options Analysis and Detailed Business Case.

The project's website states that the aim of the project is to provide a "sleek and modern rapid transit system as the backbone of the region's future network" with "a solution that encourages people to get out of their cars whenever possible".

The project's website also states that "doing nothing is not an option", however Council's project has now been in the works for eight years having gone through:

- 2012 "Line In The Sand" report,
- Light rail route planning and impact assessment,
- Light rail feasibility study,
- Development and public consultation on light rail route options, followed by a consultation report,
- Urban transformation directions paper,
- Participation in the 'Shaping SEQ Regional Plan',
- Integrated transport strategy,

- Mass transit 'Strategic Business Case', and
- Mass transit 'Preliminary Business Case'.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) preliminary business case confirmed that the first stage of the mass transit solution should run from Maroochydore to Sunshine Coast University Hospital to support urban renewal and tackle the highest proportion of estimated future congestion. This would be delivered by:

- Upgrading existing bus lanes on major roads with a new branded and high frequency service (such as Sydney's Metrobus), what PWC calls a "Quality Bus Corridor",
- Bus rapid transit system using electric bi-articulated buses with exclusive lanes in the middle of major roads, or
- Light rail line using the middle of major roads with exclusive right-of-way.

The project is now undergoing an 'Options Analysis'.



A look at Option 2 (sources: WIN News, Sunshine Coast Ccl).

If the Options Analysis is endorsed by Council, the current timeline shows a 'Detailed Business Case' to be delivered in conjunction with the state government in time for the project's ten-year anniversary in 2022. This would finalise a preferred project design with community consultation henceforth.

Reportedly, only 3 per cent of journeys in the area are on public transport. State government sources indicate that in the next twenty years, the Council area's population will grow by 200,000 to over half-a-million residents. **WIN NEWS SUNSHINE COAST, SEVEN NEWS SUNSHINE COAST, SUNSHINE COAST COUNCIL**

NEW SOUTH WALES

Hillsbus network update

A slew of Hillsbus routes and services have received an update effective from 23 August, as follows:

- **600** – Some additional late night services.
- 610N – Timetabled services renumbered to **610X**. The section between Castle Hill station and Norwest station has now been removed.
- 620N – Cherrybrook station stop subsumed into new NightRide route **N92**. The remainder of the route has been withdrawn.

- **700 (Parramatta to Blacktown)** – Increased weekday afternoon and weekend services with longer operating hours. Service frequency on Sundays doubled to every 30 minutes.
- **705 (Parramatta to Blacktown via Seven Hills)** – Weekday off-peak and Saturday daytime service frequency doubled to every 30 minutes.
- **711 (Parramatta to Blacktown via Wentworthville)** – Longer operating hours with additional early morning, peak and evening services. Weekend service frequency doubled to every 30 minutes due to conversion of former route 712 services.
- **712 (Parramatta to Westmead Children's Hospital)** – Now only operates on weekdays. Former weekend services are renumbered as **711** with trip extension from Westmead Children's Hospital to Blacktown.

[TRANSPORT FOR NSW, HILAIRES FRASER](#)

Randwick route update

Effective from 23 August, buses 348, 370, 400, 400N and 891 had their original routes around High Street, Randwick restored with the completion of CSELR (CBD South East Light Rail) construction. The routes were initially re-routed in mid-2017 to enable construction. They all now once again run eastbound along High Street. Additionally, routes 400 and 400N now operate via the new Juniors Kingsford Interchange.

See the next page for a look at the updated 400/400N route map. [TRANSPORT FOR NSW, HILAIRES FRASER, TABLE TALK](#)

Forest route 194

Effective from Monday 24 August, on CDC Forest's route **194**, AM peak services towards the City and PM peak services away from the City have been renumbered as **194X**. Hence, the 194 timetable now has three to four hour gaps in the peak-running direction. Additional off-peak, evening and weekend services have been added to the remaining 194 timetable with a 30-minute service frequency. The 194/194X route corridor now enjoys longer operating hours throughout the week.

194 and 194X also have different stopping patterns between Chatswood and Wynyard – 194 operates express between Cammeray Shops and Wynyard, while 194X operates express between Chatswood Business Park and Wynyard. [TRANSPORT FOR NSW](#)

NightRide update

From 23 August, additional NightRide routes and services were added to the timetable:

- **N71** – on Sunday to Wednesday nights, buses extend from Schofields through to Richmond and return. This now mirrors the operation of the route on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.
- New route **N31** operating hourly seven nights a week between Liverpool and Leppington. It does not stop at Glenfield. Operated by Hillsbus.
- New route **N92** (partial replacement for axed Hillsbus route 620N) operating between Town Hall and Tallawong via Macquarie Park and Kellyville. The route keeps to the Gore Hill Freeway into/out of the City, therefore skipping Chatswood. Operated by Hillsbus.

[TRANSPORT FOR NSW, HILAIRES FRASER](#)

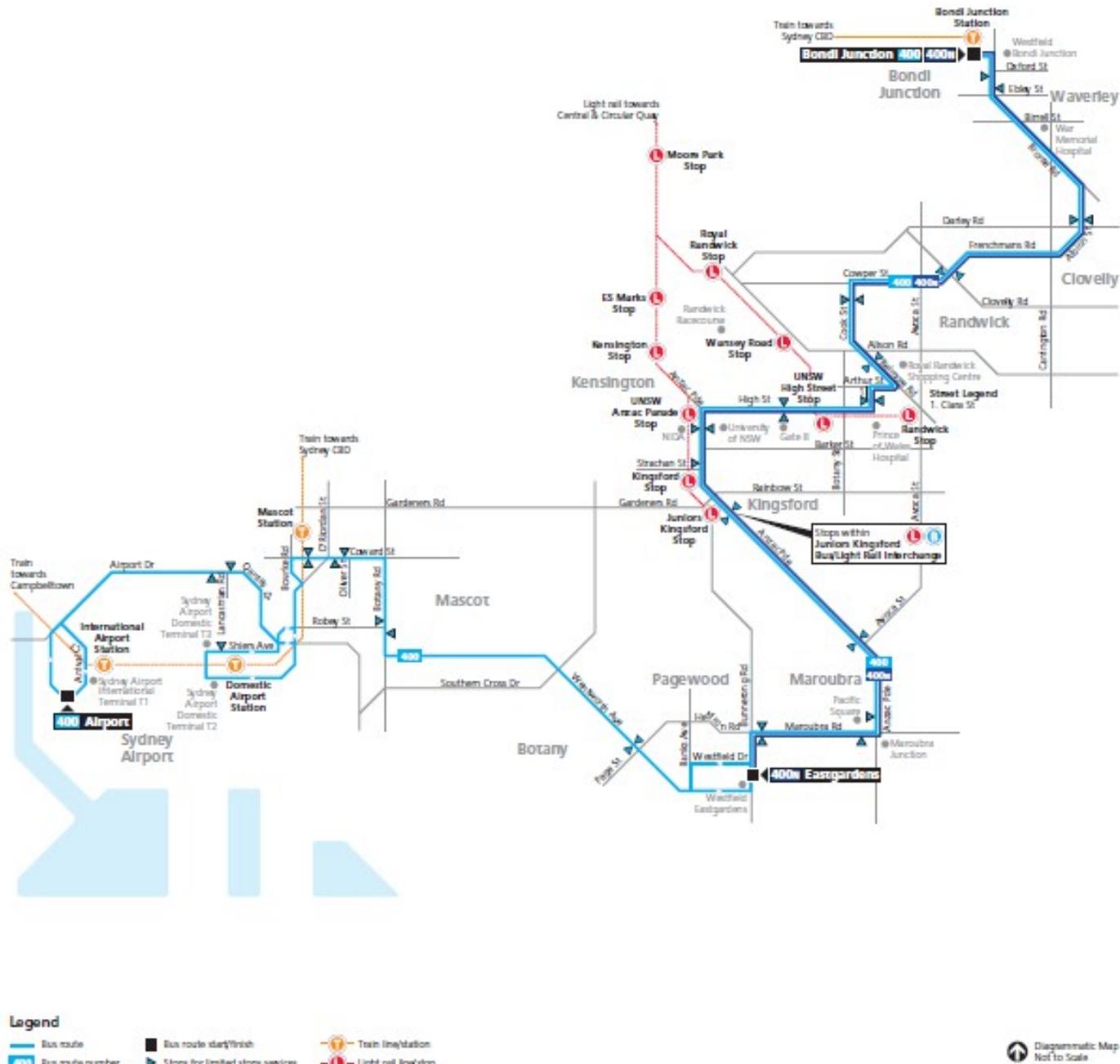
Other Sydney bus changes

From 23 August, other changes to Sydney bus services became effective, as follows:

- **533 (Chatswood to Sydney Olympic Park)** – Extra shoulder-peak and evening weekday services. On Saturdays and Sundays, services operate later into the evening to Olympic Park, Rhodes and Ryde.
- **841 (Narellan to Leppington)** – More direct route through Emerald Hills. Peak services are extended from Leppington to Narellan. Additional short-run services on weekday off-peak and weekend periods between Edmondson Park and Carnes Hill.
- **869 (Ingleburn to Liverpool)** – Longer operating hours with additional weekday early morning, evening and weekend services. Weekend service frequency doubled from every 60 to every 30 minutes.
- **923 (Bankstown to Panania via Picnic Point)** – Longer operating hours with additional afternoon peak and weekday evening services. All Sunday services have been extended from Picnic Point through to Panania.
- **924 (Bankstown to East Hills via Panania)** – Longer operating hours with additional evening services, while all Sunday services have been extended from Panania through to East Hills.
- **926 (Bankstown to Revesby Heights)** – Longer operating hours with additional afternoon peak and evening services. The route now also operates on Sundays to an hourly frequency.

[TRANSPORT FOR NSW, HILAIRES FRASER](#)

Routes 400, 400N



Route 507 additional services

From Monday 3 August, Transport for NSW has temporarily added a handful of hourly late evening short-run shuttle services on State Transit route 507 between Kissing Point wharf and Charles Street, Gladesville to link with bus route M52. This provides F3 ferry passengers with a public transport option between the wharf and the City/Parramatta. Kissing Point wharf is closed for upgrade works which is expected to last for five months. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW**

Hunter Valley Buses service changes

Effective from 23 August, route **189 (Stockland Green Hills to Thornton)** now operates on weekends, while longer operating hours are enjoyed with additional weekday off-peak and evening services.

Meanwhile, route **280 (Morisset town centre)** now extends to the Watagan residential development area. The timetable also sees additional weekday and Saturday services. There are also, for the first time,

services on Sundays with a two-hourly service.

[TRANSPORT FOR NSW](#), HILAIRE FRASER

Additional 837 Googong services

Transport for NSW has announced that from Monday 21 September, an additional 12 services will operate every weekday on Qcity Transit's route 837 (Googong to Queanbeyan Interchange), which almost doubles the trips provided with the existing timetable. In addition, the route will also operate on Saturdays with eight trips across the day. The additional services are being rolled out as part of Transport for NSW's '16 Regional Cities Services Improvement Program'.

[TRANSPORT FOR NSW](#)

Queensland border closure

From 01:00 Saturday 8 August, Queensland closed its border to both New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, with the Premier labelling them both as COVID-19 hotspots.

The following NSW TrainLink coach services now operate wholly within NSW until further notice:

- **163/164/172/173** (Casino to Surfers Paradise/return) – ends/starts at Tweed Heads.
- **171/174** (Casino to Robina/return) – ends/starts at Tweed Heads.
- **175/176** (Casino to Brisbane/return) – entire service is suspended. [TRANSPORT FOR NSW](#)

Regional real-time data expansion

Transport for NSW announced on 27 July that real-time data has been switched on for regional buses in the Dubbo and Coffs Harbour areas, completing phase one of the Transport Connected Bus program.

Operators whose buses now have active real-time data from these areas include Buslines, Ogden's Coaches, Langley's Coaches, CDC Forest, Busways North Coast, Sahdra Coaches, Newcombe Buses, Lemitscom, Weick Buses, Keough Buses, Natureland Buses and Baldwin Buses. This expansion adds to Bega and Wagga Wagga as beneficiaries of the program.

According to Transport for NSW, passengers in these areas can now:

- Plan their trip more accurately using the online Trip Planner, Opal Travel mobile application, or third party mobile applications, and view the predicted arrival time of a bus at a bus stop,
- View how full their next service is,
- Send a travel query to the Facebook Messenger bot, and
- Ask Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa to 'Talk to Transport for NSW' to access real-time updates.

[TRANSPORT FOR NSW \(2\)](#) (3) (4)

Table Talk – September 2020

State Transit drivers threaten strike action

The Rail, Tram and Bus Union announced on 17 August its intention for public bus drivers to strike for a 48-hour period on Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 August, based on claims of driver safety issues by the lack of enforcement of physical distancing on board services.

The state government is moving ahead with its plans to privatise the operation of services within the three remaining bus regions operated by State Transit over the next two years.

The Union says that it wants the wearing of masks to be mandatory. The wearing of masks on Sydney's public transport is currently "strongly recommended" with the potential for mask use to become mandatory if COVID-19 infection numbers worsen.

Days before the action was to take place, the RTBU advised that it would drop the two-day strike in favour of a two-hour stop work meeting from 11:00 on Monday 24 August. Transport for NSW sent out advisories for people to avoid bus travel in northern suburbs, northern beaches, lower north shore and eastern suburbs between 10:00 and 14:00 due to "a planned lunchtime employee briefing for bus drivers".

After thanking the union, Transport Minister, Andrew Constance said "Following constructive discussions with the union's leadership, we will work towards a meeting on Monday". [SYDNEY MORNING HERALD](#), [SKY NEWS](#), [SYDNEY TRAINS](#)

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Transport Strategy 2020

On 26 August, the territory government published the *ACT Transport Strategy 2020*, available at <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/act-transport-strategy>.

The strategy maintains previous emphases on sustainability, integrated land and transport planning, and using new technology. Specific long-term objectives for public transport include:

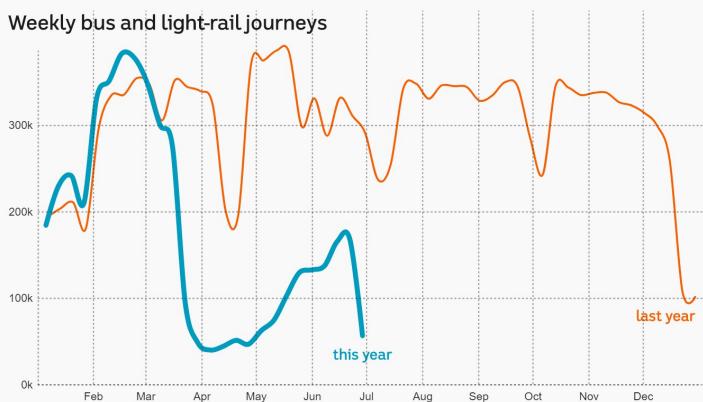
- direct routes that run 7 days per week;
- 15 minute frequency;
- a clear route structure of trunk, feeder and local routes;
- safe quick transfers; and
- suitable connections to other modes of transport.

The strategy also foreshadows an *ACT Transport Recovery Plan* for Canberra's recovery from the effects of COVID-19. [AGNES BOSKOVITZ](#), [TRANSPORT CANBERRA](#)

Patronage

Another graph was provided by ABC News in August showing weekly patronage levels across the Canberra public transport network last year and in the first six months of this year.

Patronage was higher in January (year-on-year) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic getting traction. **ABC NEWS**



Weekly Canberra patronage levels (source: ABC News)

VICTORIA

COVID-19 restrictions/curfew

From 18:00, Sunday 2 August, Melbourne went into Stage 4 restrictions with a curfew being introduced between 20:00 and 05:00 from Wednesday evening, 5 August, until at least the middle of September, due to a second wave of COVID-19 infections. There was some confusion in the first week regarding public transport services operating during the curfew, however over the following days, further clarity was provided as operators adjusted rosters and services to suit.

Under normal circumstances, most routes cease service around 21:00-22:00 each night. But there are some exceptions, such as Transdev's regional network. However, for some days there was very little information available.

As of Sunday 23 August, the following route alterations are in place:

- **Firefly** - All Melbourne to Sydney and Adelaide services are cancelled until further notice.
- **Skybus** - Services have once again been cut back, with a limited service operating between 06:00 and 18:00 daily. No further details are available.

- **Transdev** - See below table:

Route	Trips
216	Cancelled weekday trips ex Sunshine to City departing 20:33, 21:03, 20:40, 22:20 and 23:00. Cancelled trips ex City to Sunshine departing 20:35, 21:05, 21:35, 22:10, 22:50 and 23:30.
220	Cancelled trips ex Sunshine departing 20:15, 20:45, 21:25, 22:05 and 22:45. Cancelled trips ex City are 20:17, 20:47, 21:17, 21:47, 22:20, 23:00 and 23:40
223 Yarraville – Highpoint	Reduced 40-minute service frequency from 19:50 ex Yarraville and 20:00 ex Highpoint.
234 Garden City – City	Ex Garden City, all trips operate every 40 minutes from 20:19. Ex City, all trips operate every 30 minutes from 20:15 and every 40 minutes from 21:45.
246 Elsternwick – Clifton Hill	This route has significant cuts, with trips every 40 minutes in both directions from 19:50. Then, services operate only every 60 minutes from 20:30 ex Clifton Hill, and from 22:10 ex Elsternwick.
250 City – Latrobe University, and 270 Box Hill - Mitcham	An hourly frequency operates from around 20:15.
271 Box Hill – Ringwood	An hourly frequency operates from around 19:55.
279 Box Hill – Doncaster Shoppingtown	An hourly frequency operates from around 20:15.
302 Box Hill – City via East Kew	An hourly frequency operates from around 19:50.

305 The Pines – Doncaster Shoppingtown	An hourly frequency operates from around 20:10.
603 / 604 Alfred Hospital – Brighton Beach / Gardenvale	An hourly frequency operates from 20:30.
905 City – The Pines, 906 City – Warrandyte 907 City – Mitcham 908 The Pines – Doncaster Park and Ride	Cuts to services from 20:00. Services operating at frequencies ranging between every 30 minutes and hourly. Cuts to services from 20:00. Services operating at frequencies ranging between every 30 minutes and hourly.
901, 902 and 903	Many trips to/from Melbourne Airport and Airport West terminating early from 19:00.
691 Waverley Gardens – Boronia	Ex Waverley Gardens departing 19:40 and 20:40. Ex Boronia departing 20:18.
693 Belgrave – Oakleigh	Ex Belgrave departing 19:55. Ex Oakleigh departing 20:50.
732 Box Hill – Vermont South Tram – Knox City – Upper Ferntree Gully	Ex Vermont South to Knox City departing 20:13, 20:33, 20:45, 21:21, 22:01, 22:41, 23:16, 00:00 and 00:36. Ex UFT Gully to Knox City departing 20:16. Ex Knox City to Vermont South departing 20:22, 20:42, 20:47, 21:10, 22:10, 22:45, 23:15, 23:57 and 00:44.
834 Berwick local route	All trips cancelled after 20:05.

- **Ventura Bus Lines** - See below table:

Route	Cancelled Trips
201 Box Hill – Deakin University	Ex Box Hill departing 20:15, 20:55 and 21:35. Ex Deakin departing 20:35, 21:15 and 21:55.
627 Moorabbin – Chadstone	Ex Moorabbin departing 20:26 and 21:26. Ex Chadstone departing 20:57 and 21:57.
663 Belgrave – Lilydale	Ex Lilydale departing 19:44. Ex Belgrave departing 20:56.
664 Chirnside Park – Knox City SC	Ex Knox City departing 19:43 and 20:40. Ex Chirnside Park departing 20:06 and 21:03.
670 Ringwood – Lilydale	Ex Ringwood departing 20:20 and 21:20. Ex Lilydale departing 20:42.
679 Ringwood – Chirnside Park	Ex Ringwood departing 20:09 and 20:59. Ex Chirnside Park departing 20:14 and 21:12.

Details of the Night Network that operates after midnight Fridays and Saturdays are contained in the following link:

https://www.venturabus.com.au/images/Coronavirus/Stage_4_Services_Impacted_V5.pdf

STEVEN HABY, TRANSDEV, VENTURA BUS LINES, FIREFLY, SKYBUS

Transdev contract status

The state government says it will not take up an option to extend Transdev's bus contract beyond 2021, citing poor punctuality. However, the government has confirmed it will be providing a temporary contract extension through to 21 January 2022, blaming difficulties in proceeding through a new tender process due to COVID-19.

Despite data cited by *The Age* newspaper showing a poor punctuality record since 2013, Transdev Melbourne says that its record has improved as the contract has run its course, with all contractual performance benchmarks met in the last 12 months, and a 30 per cent fall in customer complaints with their service over the past 24 months. A Transdev spokesperson said it had been able to improve its service reliability in large part through the state government's order and delivery of 100 new buses with "a significant number of less reliable older vehicles" retired. **THE AGE**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Perth changes

Effective from Sunday 16 August, the following changes were made to Perth's bus network:

- **322** (Midland-Glen Forrest) – route no longer services Robinson Rd in Midland. It now uses Lloyd and Clayton Streets.
- **330** (Mundaring-Sawyers Valley) - one less trip.
- **334** (Ellenbrook Central-Ellenbrook) and **336** (Henley Brook-Ellenbrook) - both have time changes, with some services withdrawn.
- **337** (Henley Brook-Ellenbrook Central), **353** (Bassendean-Henley Brook) and **355** (Whitfords-Ellenbrook) – all have time changes.
- **376** (Mirrabooka-Landsdale) – route has been extended from Warradale Tce to Gnangara Dr.
- **548** (Fremantle-Rockingham) – route has time changes and fewer trips. Meanwhile, a new Sunday service operates between Fremantle and Coogee.
- **549** (Fremantle–Rockingham) – route has time changes and fewer trips.
- **557, 558, 559, 560, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567** and **568** all have time changes.
- **594** (Mandurah-Dawesville) - one additional school day-only trip has been added.
- **955** (Morley-Ellenbrook via Bassendean) – route has time changes with some peak Bassendean trips extended to Morley.

The following timetables have been issued effective 16/08/20: TT86 (routes 313 to 327), TT96 (307 321 322), TT97 (320 328 330 331), TT98 (335 355), TT99 (955), TT100 (353), TT101 (334 336 337), TT125 (549), TT126 (548), TT130 (557 562), TT131 (558, 559, 561), TT135 (564 to 568), TT138 (560, 563) and TT204 (Fremantle CAT). *HILAIRE FRASER*

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland budget cuts

In light of the budgetary pressures caused by COVID-19, Auckland Council has flagged \$120 million in cuts (including Devonport's *AT Local* bus ride-share trial service), following a \$475 million hit to revenue.

Council's finance and performance committee chairperson, Desley Simpson, said that Council has now deferred "hundreds of millions" worth of capital works as a result.

Meanwhile, the national government announced almost \$100 million in upcoming infrastructure expenditure across Auckland (mostly in place of cancelled Council funding) for:

- Puhinui Interchange upgrade (\$47 mill), and
- Ferry Basin upgrade – stage one (\$50 mill).

This funding has come from their \$50 billion special COVID-19 response fund. *STUFF.CO.NZ, RADIO NEW ZEALAND, NEW ZEALAND HERALD*

Auckland fare integration

Auckland Transport has now implemented their bus/ferry fare integration plan (see July's article in *Table Talk*).

Since Monday 26 July, ferry users have been able to use an AT HOP Card to pay for their fare. Initially planned for late 2021, Auckland Planning Committee chairperson, Chris Darby, said "for the cost of a ferry, you'll be able to hop on the bus to the terminal, take the ferry into town, then bus or train to work, education or whatever in the city centre".

Auckland Transport says that while a user taps on and off each trip as usual, AT HOP fares automatically remove the cost of connecting bus and train trips in the same zone as the ferry.

Commuters travelling on Bayswater, Beach Haven, Birkenhead, Gulf Harbour, Half Moon Bay, Hobsonville Point, Pine Harbour, Stanley Bay, Northcote Point, West Harbour, Devonport and Waiheke Island services are receiving this benefit. *AUCKLAND TRANSPORT*

Auckland lockdown returns

Stage three COVID-19 lockdown returned to Auckland from Wednesday 12 August for a minimum two-week period. As a result, until further notice, school buses have been suspended since Monday 17 August. Some regular route bus services after midnight are also not operating. *AUCKLAND COUNCIL*

Wellington physical restrictions

Stage two COVID-19 restrictions returned to Wellington starting from Wednesday 12 August for a three-day period. Metlink had removed previous physical distancing capacity advice on its buses, and said it would look to reintroduce them if the restriction period was to be extended. *STUFF.CO.NZ*

Auckland bus refurbishments

Metlink will be undertaking an upgrade on 34 buses, following an agreement with operator NZ Bus on how to do this without reducing route service capacity. A "proof-of-concept" bus will be worked on initially, with the plan to have five buses off-the-road at any one time. Works will include internal layout modifications and branding refresh. Metlink has said it will utilise a number of single-door Airport Flyer buses as a replacement. All of the buses are expected to be back on the road by February 2021. *METLINK*

FERRY & SHIP NEWS

NEW SOUTH WALES

Brooklyn Ferry Service

Brooklyn Ferry Service has won a new contract to continue operating ferry services in the Hawkesbury River between Brooklyn, Little Wobby Beach and Dangar Island.

With the new contract come a number of service experience changes. From 20 August, the service will come into line with Transport for NSW standards on carriage of animals, concession ticketing and bulky/dangerous goods.

Ticket receipts are no longer provided for Tap and Go payments, although receipts can be requested by text message or email. Passengers eligible for concession fares must carry their proof of entitlement at all times "whether or not known personally to ferry staff". Also, the service no longer provides "loan muzzles" for pets – animals are allowed only in line with Transport for NSW standards.

The previous timetable (effective 22 February 2020) remains in effect, with an anti-clockwise operation on mornings, and a clockwise operation on afternoons. However, the Opal card continues to be not available.

BROOKLYN FERRY SERVICE

Kissing Point wharf works

From Monday 3 August until the end of the year, Kissing Point wharf is closed for wharf upgrade works. F3 Parramatta River passengers can instead use bus route 507 from Waterview Street to either Meadowbank wharf to use F3 services, Meadowbank station to change for Sydney Trains rail services, or stay on the bus through to the City in lieu.

Transport for NSW has also temporarily added some additional late evening bus route 507 shuttle services between the wharf (Waterview Street) and Charles Street, Gladesville to enable connection with bus route M52 (Parramatta to City/return).

Until September, F3 services to Parramatta are truncated to Rydalmer due to works at Parramatta wharf. *TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

Circular Quay ferry diversions

Due to maintenance works, from Monday 3 August to Saturday 5 September, Transdev Sydney Ferries' all F4 Cross Harbour, and selected F5 Neutral Bay and F8 Cockatoo Island ferries that normally use Wharf 5 have been diverted to instead use Wharf 4.

TRANSPORT FOR NSW

Woy Woy wharf works

Upgrade works have also temporarily closed the Woy Woy public wharf from Monday 3 August until the end of the year. Empire Bay ferries are instead using the nearby commercial wharf. *TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

Table Talk – September 2020

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland lockdown returns

Stage three COVID-19 lockdown returned to Auckland from Wednesday 12 August for a minimum two-week period. As a result, until further notice, Birkenhead, Bayswater, Stanley Head and Gulf Harbour ferries are suspended. Remaining ferry services operate to a reduced timetable. *AUCKLAND COUNCIL*

AIR NEWS

DOMESTIC

Virgin restructure

The Bain Capital-owned Virgin Australia has revealed the conclusion of the review into its operations moving forward, with around 3,000 positions to be abolished, and the retirement of the Tigerair discount brand. Additionally, it will now maintain an all-Boeing 737 mainline fleet of aircraft on its core service offering – with some other aircraft retained for use on regional and charter flights.

Chief executive, Paul Scurrah, said "Our best guess is that domestic and short-haul [international] demand may take three years to fully recover, with the very real chance that it could be longer".

Virgin said that any Tiger passengers affected by service cancellations would be given travel credits for use on Virgin services. *ABC NEWS*

Qantas restructure

Qantas confirmed in mid-August that 2,400 employees would lose their jobs as the airline works to recover its business in the wake of COVID-19's decimation of the airline industry.

The losses include Qantas and Jetstar ground-handling positions (such as baggage handlers, cabin cleaners and tug drivers) at airports in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra, Cairns, Townsville and Alice Springs. A review of the airline's recovery plan is provided in a table on the top of the next page.

This brings the total job losses at Qantas group to 8,500 (almost one-third of its pre-COVID workforce). *THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, SAMCHUI.COM*

VIC-NSW flights

In early August, the NSW government initiated a requirement for all flights from Victoria to land only at Sydney Airport. The Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, said this would enable the government to centralise the transfer of people from flights from Victoria for mandatory hotel quarantine.

Building the strong foundation FY15 – 1H20

- Strong customer advocacy; leading airline loyalty program
- Leading corporate and low cost leisure position, growing SME share
- Strong employee engagement
- Record profitability and returns on invested capital; returned ~\$4.3b to shareholders
- Strengthened the balance sheet
 - Baa2 investment grade credit rating, minimal refinancing risk, no financial covenants on debt
 - Net debt towards the lower end of target range; strong liquidity and \$4.9b¹ unencumbered aircraft asset base
- Delivered over \$3.2b of transformation benefits and operational flexibility

Preserving liquidity 2H20

- Acted swiftly to safely hibernate the business, cut costs and preserve liquidity
 - Boosted liquidity; maintained no financial covenants on debt and investment grade credit rating (Baa2)
 - Disciplined capital allocation²; deferred aircraft deliveries
 - Renegotiated supplier contracts, grounded the majority of the fleet, stood down ~ 25,000 employees
 - Improved travel credit conditions for customers; introduced "Fly Well"
- Cut cash costs by ~75% in response to 82% fall in Group Total Revenue in 4Q20
- Changed Loyalty program to drive member engagement, including tier extension

Pathway to recovery FY21 – FY23

- Entering with a strong financial position
- Recovery program targeting up to \$15b in savings over three years through right sizing and restructuring
 - Targeting \$1.0b of ongoing annual savings from FY23
- Disciplined restart of flying with flexibility to respond to changes in travel restrictions and border closures
- Ongoing customer focus to maintain corporate, SME and leisure share
- Enhancements to Loyalty program to give members more value
- Well positioned to manage through the short term impacts of border restrictions and for the recovery

Queensland border closure

From 01:00 Saturday 8 August, Queensland closed its border to both New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, with the Premier labelling them both as COVID-19 hotspots. Although the ACT had no active cases, Queensland claimed the need to include the ACT as a hotspot due to a reported case where someone from a NSW hotspot had attempted to enter Queensland via Canberra. *WIN NEWS NORTHERN NSW*

Ballina Airport

The Queensland border lockout has reportedly seen an increase in interest in Northern New South Wales as a holiday destination. Byron Bay has been a particular beneficiary, as an alternative to the Gold Coast, with at least five flights a day reported to be operating between Sydney and Ballina Byron Gateway Airport. Guest reporter, Jim Wells, reports that on Sunday 16 August, out of 15 listed domestic arrivals into Sydney Airport, five were from Ballina. *JIM WELLS, JOHN HOYLE*

Pandemic storage

Table Talk can reveal that since the COVID-19 pandemic all-but-annihilated the airline industry in March/April 2020, the number of aircraft in storage in the Alice has jumped by 580 per cent with (what is believed to be) a record 68 aircraft now in storage at the Asia Pacific Aircraft Storage facility.

Joining the Fiji, Nauru and SilkAir Boeing 737s in long-term storage have been a range of Boeing 777s, Airbus A320s, A330 and A380s, three A787-8 Dreamliners, three Fokkers and four ATR 72-600s from operators Singapore Airlines, Scoot, NokScoot, Alliance Airlines, Cebu Pacific, Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon. *DENNIS McLEAN*

INTERNATIONAL

Antarctica flights

From November, Qantas plans to charter some of its B787 Dreamliner aircraft to Antarctica Flights, which will be used to operate 13-hour round-trip scenic flights above the Antarctica Treaty area from several Australian locations. Apparently, the flights will officially be categorised as "domestic" flights. Fares will range from \$1,200 to \$8,000.

COVID-19-safe screening and declarations will be required for intending passengers.

Further information for anyone interested is available on the operator's website:

<https://www.antarcticaflights.com.au/the-worlds-most-unique-scenic-flight>. *SAMCHUI.COM*

Virgin Atlantic bankruptcy

Another Virgin business is in the midst of financial difficulty due to the effects of COVID-19, with London-based Virgin Atlantic filing for Chapter 15 bankruptcy protection against its assets in the United States as it tries to remain solvent by finding other sources of cash to keep it operating.

In July, Atlantic said that it needed £1.2 billion to survive. As part of this process, Richard Branson has agreed to invest a further £200 million, while American hedge fund, Kampner Capital Management, would provide £170 million. Meanwhile, 49 per cent shareholder, Delta Air Lines, which no doubt has its own cash flow problems, has said it would assist where it could in the bankruptcy process.

SamChui.com reports that Virgin Atlantic has claimed in documentation that reservations are down 89 per cent on the previous year and demand for seats in the second half of FY20 is at only 25 per cent of 2019 levels.

With at least several months worth of cash remaining, flights continue to operate in the meantime as Atlantic continues trying to find time and money to save the business. [SAMCHUI.COM](#)

B737 MAX design changes

Following on from their extended grounding in 2019 after several high profile accidents in Indonesia and Ethiopia, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has directed Boeing to make four design changes to B373 MAX aircraft:

- Installation of updated flight control software,
- Installation of an updated display processing computer software which will generate an additional “Angle of Attack” “disagree alert”.
- Revision of some flight crew operating procedures, and
- Changes in the physical location of horizontal stabiliser trim wires.

[SAMCHUI.COM](#)

New Chinese carrier

Despite what some may think as unthinkable in the current climate, Chinese businessman, Bill Wong Chobau, has plans to shortly launch China's fifth aircraft

carrier – Greater Bay Airlines. The “property tycoon” already owns Donghai Airlines.

The airline would operate short-haul international flights out of Hong Kong to mainland China, Vietnam and South Korea. The South China Morning Post indicates that it could take the airline another two years to become operational, although the owner has already hired a chief executive and is awaiting licencing from local aviation authorities. [SAMCHUI.COM](#)

A380 ghost flights

As the COVID-19 enforced aviation downturn continues, unlike Qantas and Lufthansa, several airlines have been spotted operating non-revenue A380 flights to both keep their planes operational and ensure that their pilots maintain currency with their certifications.

After an initial period of being grounded, since June, **Etihad Airways** has kept each of its 10 A380 aircraft operational with flight times ranging from 18 to 39 minutes in their ghost flights.

South Korea's **Asiana Airlines** has kept two-thirds of its A380 fleet in operational status with ghost flights around Seoul Incheon Airport. Dozens of further flights have also been made to give many pilots the opportunity to maintain familiarisation with the aircraft. *SamChui.com* has also noted that the Korean Office of Civil Aviation has extended pilot qualifications regardless if they have piloted or not. [SAMCHUI.COM](#)

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Editor for Rail, Tram, Air and Ferry & Ship: Chris Pandilovski, tabletalk@timetable.org.au.

Editor for Bus: Steven Haby, busnews@timetable.org.au.

Production and Mailout: Geoff and Judy Lambert.

Proofreaders: Agnes Boskovitz, David Cranney and Geoff Hassall.

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