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ASSOCIATION

TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

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COMMENT FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the December edition of *Table Talk*. Along with our regular timetable and transport news, we have provided an in-depth feature of Transperth's proposed changes on Perth's local northern and southern suburbs bus timetables, along with two interesting in-depth articles: Another corruption probe engulfing V/Line, and also an article shining a light onto the impact of Victoria's recent COVID-19 lockdown and the differing state policies on border crossings to the small coach operator industry.

RAIL & TRAM NEWS

QUEENSLAND



State member for Dubbo, Dugald Saunders, said "regional areas can do things just as well, if not better than, any metro areas". *PRIME7 NEWS CENTRAL WEST*

More trains if re-elected

Labor Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, promised, if re-elected, that Maryborough would enjoy a \$1 billion pipeline of train building work. The pipeline would include \$600 million to build 20 new trains, and \$1 million for a business case into replacement long-distance carriages.

Editor's note: Labor has been re-elected with a margin of over 100,000 votes over its nearest rival. Labor claimed 52 seats in the 93-seat house. ABC NEWS

NEW SOUTH WALES



South West Illawarra Rail Link

The Illawarra Business Chamber, University of Wollongong, Bluescope, NSW Ports and Wollongong City Council have renewed calls to the state government for a rail line connecting the Illawarra with Western Sydney which it says would attract around 20,000 daily passengers between the two regions.

The Chamber says the plan is also critical to supporting the growth of Port Kembla terminal and connecting the region to upcoming jobs growth from the new Western Sydney Airport precinct.

Touted as the most cost-effective rail solution to the Illawarra's congestion issues, the \$3.23 billion South-West Illawarra Rail Link plan would include three stages of dual freight-passenger line:

- Illawarra to Maldon,
- Menangle to Western Sydney Airport, and
- Western Sydney Airport to St Marys.

The **first stage** would include the completion of the Maldon-Dombarton line, partially built in the late 1980s, with a new dual track 35-kilometre electrified line between Unanderra on the South Coast Line and Maldon on the Southern Highlands Line.

The **second stage** would follow the future Outer Sydney Orbital corridor with a new railway station at Wilton to support strong residential growth, a preserved corridor to cross the Nepean River near

Dubbo regional facility

Construction has begun on the Dubbo facility that will service the upcoming regional rail fleet, named Mindyarra (pronounced Min-dga-rra).

The fleet will be made up of 29 trains which will replace the XPT, Xplorer, and Endeavour trains operating across the regional NSW network. The trains are being built by Momentum Trains (a consortium of UGL, Spanish carriage builder CAF, and CPB Contractors) who will also maintain the fleet for their first 15 years of operation from 2023.

Maldon, and the option of connecting to the Southern Highlands Line at either Douglas Park or Maldon (the latter by following the Menangle Road alignment).

The **final stage** adds 18 kilometres to connect the line with St Marys and the freight terminal.



Critically, the line would be used for both freight and passenger services, helping to relieve the congested Picton, Appin and Heathcote Roads as well as easing the burden of a planned container terminal at Port Kembla which is expected to generate up to 1.6 million extra road trips and 9,300 extra freight train paths annually.

Transport for NSW analysis has previously indicated that the South Coast rail line will reach its freight haulage capacity in 2036. *WIN NEWS ILLAWARRA, ILLAWARRA FIRST, NSW PORTS*

New trams for Inner West Light Rail

The state government announced in early November it would look to undertake the purchase of another four light rail vehicles for the crowded Inner West light rail line. The trams will be expected on tracks by the end of 2022. *THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD*

Tweed: Light rail

The state government has announced a \$1 million study into a light rail line between Coolangatta and Tweed Heads. Under a Memorandum of Understanding, the Queensland state government would conduct a study into a connection between Coolangatta and the Gold Coast light rail line.

Member for Tweed, Geoff Provest, said (pre-COVID) there were 30,000 trips made daily between Tweed Shire and the Gold Coast. *TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

Rail freight lagging

The state government's self-imposed target of having 28 per cent of all freight into Port Botany being transported by rail, is falling well-short, with little over 12 months remaining. Currently, 18 per cent of freight into the Port comes from rail.

Freight operators have suggested that the state government has derailed its own policy by continuing to issue A-double truck permits (read: incentivising road freight) and they want the government to look at a rail subsidy system such as the one in Perth.

Pacific National's chief executive, Dean Dalla Valle, said the Western Australian plan had boosted the share of rail freight in that state from just 2 per cent to the highest in the country.

A Transport for NSW spokesperson said that rail freight into Port Botany had increased by three percentage points since the release of the government's Freight and Ports Plan, it was "actively exploring" strategies to increase this, and was equally committed to working with the industry on productivity solutions in rail. *THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD*

Opal card goes digital

MasterCard, with Commonwealth Bank and EML Payments, will trial a new digital version of the Opal card on smartphones for travel on the state's transport network.

10,000 adults will participate in the trial starting before the end of the year. In a statement (paraphrased by the Editor), MasterCard said 'contactless payments via mobile phones and smartwatches are becoming increasingly popular. MasterCard's 'Assemble' platform will enable a simple and effective design, development and deployment of a customised payment system to meet consumer needs.' *TRANSPORT FOR NSW*

Senior student entitlements

From next year, Transport for NSW will no longer issue the Senior Secondary Student Concession Card, the Proof of Age Card, and the Boarders Rail Pass.

Instead, they will be replaced with the Transport Concession Entitlement Card in a move that simplifies the entitlement cards that they must carry in their mid-late teen years travelling to and from school.

Under the changes, eligible students aged between 16 and 18 travelling to and from school, who do not hold a School Opal card or School Bus Pass, will need to hold a Transport Concession Entitlement Card as proof of entitlement to their discounted fare (Child-Youth Opal or single trip ticket). Without either option, they must pay the full adult fare.

Existing Boarders Rail Pass holders can continue to use their existing card until expiry, while the Senior Secondary card and the Proof of Age card will expire on 31 March 2021.

The Transport Concession Entitlement Card is already used by TAFE and university students across New South Wales as their proof of entitlement to a discounted fare. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW**

VICTORIA



Level crossing removal project

On 2 November, the state government trumpeted that the state's biggest "level crossing removal construction blitz" on the Upfield line had finished two weeks ahead of time. Also from Monday, 2 November, the line reopened with the new 2.5 kilometre elevated railway, skipping four level crossings.

Meanwhile, the new railway stations at Coburg and Moreland are slated for opening in mid-December.

Further north, works to remove a further five level crossings across Glenroy and Preston, including at Bell Street in Preston, will be ramping up with completion expected in 2022.

Source supplied by – **ROSS MORRISON**

Source - **VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT**

Yarra Trams – COVID-19 alterations

Between Monday, 13 July and Saturday, 7 November, Yarra Trams implemented alterations to some routes as a result of impacts from COVID-19 to increase overall capacity in the city.

- **Route 12** trams diverted away from Collins Street via La Trobe Street between Stop 12 (St Vincent's Plaza) and Stop 124 (Batman Park). *Passengers along Collins St could board a route 109 tram then change at Stop 124 for the normal service, or catch a route 11/48 tram to Docklands to change onto a Route 12a tram at Stop 122 (Southern Cross Station, Spencer Street). For the opposite direction to Victoria Gardens, board a route 11/109 tram to change at Stop 12 for the normal service.*
- **Route 30** trams were cancelled.
- **Route 11a** trams supplemented the Collins Street service, running between Stops 12 (St Vincent's Plaza) and 34 (New Preston Tram Depot) during peak times.

Source supplied by – **ROSS MORRISON**

Source – **YARRA TRAMS**

Yarra Trams: timetable changes

Since Sunday, 8 November, two newly-restored W-Class trams have been added to operate on Route 35 City Circle services. Some timetable adjustments have been made:

- **Route 12** – Trams return to running along Collins Street between Stop 124 Batman Park and Stop 12 St Vincents Plaza.
- **Route 30** - Minor changes to accommodate new E-class trams.
- **Route 35 (City Circle)** – Changed operating hours with no services after 6pm from Thursday to Sunday.
- **Routes 86, 96 and 109** - Journey time adjustments.
- **COVID-19 shuttles** - The **11a shuttle** continues to run during peak periods at a 20-minute frequency on weekdays (07:00-10:30 and 15:00-19:30 operating between Stop 34 – New Preston Depot and Stop D18 – Victoria Harbour Docklands via Collins Street).

Source supplied by – **ROSS MORRISON**

Source – **YARRA TRAMS**

Melbourne Airport Tunnel

The government announced in late November its plan to construct an Airport Tunnel between Melbourne Airport and Sunshine, connecting with the existing suburban network, using the new High Capacity Metro Trains, which would use the tunnel, then continue onto the Pakenham/Cranbourne lines.

The operating plan would involve Airport trains running at a 10-minute frequency from 2029. Airport passengers from western Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo would have to change at Sunshine.

The project would be jointly-funded by the state and federal governments with \$5 billion from each. The announcement knocks the previously-mooted private sector proposal dead in the water.

Source supplied by – **ROSS MORRISON**

Source – **ABC NEWS**

Geelong line upgrade

The state government has also simultaneously announced it would match the federal government's \$2 billion investment in the Geelong fast rail project dollar-for-dollar.

The project would see the majority of Geelong line services diverted onto the Werribee line, removing 8 kilometres in distance from the trip between Melbourne and Geelong. The remainder would continue to operate via Sunshine to connect with the proposed Melbourne Airport Tunnel service.

The federal government also spruiked that freeing up the Sunshine corridor of Geelong services would enable more trains to run from the city to western Melbourne, including Wyndham, Melton and Ballarat.

The state government said that this plan builds on more than \$1 billion of work already underway to improve services on the Geelong corridor (Waurm Ponds Station Upgrade, South Geelong to Waurm Ponds Duplication and Waurm Ponds Stabling). Both governments would now work together on detailed planning and technical investigations to inform a business case for the first stage, as well as scoping future investments for the Geelong corridor.

Source supplied by – ROSS MORRISON

Source – ABC NEWS

Suburban rail loop

The state government confirmed on Monday, 16 November its plans for the proposed Suburban Rail Loop, a project expected to nudge \$50 billion in costs, however a full cost analysis is still being undertaken. Starting at Southland Shopping Centre, the first leg of the line would link Clayton, Monash University, Glen Waverley, Burwood (near Deakin University), and Box Hill.

Premier, Dan Andrews, said "It's not my practice to tell people who are about to begin bidding for this work, the number that would win them that tender. [The full project] will take many decades to finish, it's started by our government, but it will be finished in decades to come by another government. It's not about the electoral cycle, it's about getting people where they need to go." He also said the project would enable a reduction of trips into the city from people who specifically did not need to go into the city.



(source: ABC News).

In the recent Budget, the government set aside \$2.2 billion in funding for "future works" on the project. A location for a new train stabling yard is yet to be determined.

Source supplied by – ROSS MORRISON and ALBERT ISAACS

Source – ABC NEWS

New V/Line trains

The state government announced on 11 November that the previous two months had seen nine new three-carriage V/Locity trains enter the V/Line fleet. It has given V/Line extra flexibility for maintenance and less need to replace trains with coaches due to no train being available. **VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT**

Ballarat line upgrade

Testing, commissioning, and driver knowledge training will see a five-week disruption to Ballarat services across December and January.

From Monday, 28 December to Saturday, 30 January, coaches will replace trains on sections of the Ballarat, Ararat and Maryborough lines. Victorian Senator Sarah Henderson said the completion of works on the \$600 million project would see not only additional peak-period services, but a 40-minute service frequency in the daytime off-peak. Station upgrades at Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh and Wendouree will also be completed.

Source supplied by – ROSS MORRISON

Source – VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

Regional DTRS project sidelined

The state government has paused works on the Digital Train Radio System project following budget overruns and schedule blowouts. The project, scoped in 2011, with infrastructure works commencing in 2014, was supposed to be completed in 2018 at a total cost of \$47 million.

Initially, the project reportedly progressed well, however an update from earlier this year noted an increased risk of "scope creep", with the Ministry of Transport now evaluating the worthiness of completing the now-\$63.3 million project, because it needs additional funding which would be "unlikely" to be "secured before FY21/22". **ITNEWS**

Cleaning with benefits

The Project Esperance inquiry held by Victoria's Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) revealed the details behind the sudden suspension of V/Line's chief executive officer, James Pinder, in August.

Mr Pinder has been accused of being part of a three-member group that arranged for secret cash payments in exchange for private cleaning contracts on the V/Line and Metro networks. The other co-accused in the scheme are Metro Trains fleet manager, Peter Bollas, also suspended, and the private cleaning company Transclean's co-owner, George Haritos. Poached from the United Kingdom, Mr Pinder had been Mr Bollas' boss at Metro between 2012 and 2016.

Messrs Bollas and Pinder gave contradictory evidence when they each fronted the counsel assisting the commission, Paul Lawrie, over the procurement and tendering processes between V/Line and Transclean.

Mr Lawrie submitted to IBAC that "The investigation has uncovered suspected collusion by public officers", including "close, undisclosed relationships with contractors through the receipt of financial benefits. For a period of nearly four years, James Pinder and George Haritos used a pair of burner mobile phones, subscribed in the names of Transclean associates, to communicate secretly with each other, and with Peter Bollas, thereby attempting to keep the trio's dealings beyond detection".

Questions were initially raised over a \$100,000 electronic transfer towards Mr Pinder's payment of a deposit for a \$2.5 million Williamstown property in late 2018 – part of what Mr Pinder called an "elaborate ruse". Mr Lawrie said that further payments totalling \$220,000 were made over the following six-month period. These payments came after V/Line awarded more than \$40 million in contracts to Transclean in May 2018. This included \$23 million in a new four-year contract extension where authority had been delegated by the V/Line board to Mr Pinder.

Initially, Mr Pinder said, regarding the origin of the payments, "I don't know specifically, I have to check", but later admitted that they were part of a "loan agreement" with another Transclean associate, who managed the company's cleaning contracts with V/Line.

On the question of his direct dealings with Mr Haritos, Mr Pinder said that "I have many, many relationships, with many, many people in this industry. I am a people-centric person". Mr Pinder later said that he was part of a secret "gambling arrangement" with the two others, which he had been "trying to hide".

Wiping away tears, Mr Bollas, who managed Metro's cleaning contracts, detailed how he had taken payments of up to \$10,000 at a time over the course of four years from Mr Haritos. On the question of why he had taken these cash payments, Mr Bollas said "[because of] pretty much all of the evidence put up over the last two days".

IBAC commissioner, Robert Redlich, QC, asked whether Mr Bollas was seen as "facilitating Transclean having a good reputation that would keep work coming in his direction", to which Mr Bollas agreed, "Yes".

Mr Bollas said that Transclean had been awarded an extra \$1.3 million a month in extra COVID-19 cleaning contracts, in exchange for \$50,000 each, but Mr Haritos had only so far paid him \$10,000.

He also said that Mr Pinder often delivered the payments to him on Mr Haritos' behalf, denying the notion of a "gambling syndicate" between the three men, "I was never in a gambling syndicate".

Evidence included tapped phone calls from the three men - in one call, Mr Pinder said that COVID-19 was an opportunity "for us to throw you an extra bit of you-know-what... to boost your coffers". Covert photos captured Mr Haritos, on several occasions,

withdrawing amounts between \$8,000 and \$12,000 before meeting Mr Pinder in cafes, car parks, and even the V/Line offices. In a raid, investigators found \$10,000 stuffed in an envelope behind his front door. A note, hand-written by Mr Pinder for Mr Haritos, said "This is about you, me and Pete. They will look at the procurement process and find nothing... This may not end well – prepare for the worst. We need to stick together".

Both Messrs Pinder and Bollas have been fired from their respective positions, while V/Line, Metro Trains and Yarra Trams have each terminated contracts with Transclean. Yarra Trams has also terminated a separate security service contract with Transclean which it had for over a decade. On Transclean's work output, Mr Bollas said "They cleaned well but the quality wasn't there". *ABC NEWS (2) (3), THE AGE (2)*

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Flinders line

With the imminent opening of the Flinders line extension, slated for early December, the pre-existing Tonsley line has closed to allow for testing and driver familiarisation. After the last service on Friday, 20 November, Clovelly Park railway station was permanently closed. However, closure of the Tonsley branch line for these works was delayed by the recent COVID-19 outbreak. Buses are now replacing trains between Clovelly Park and Woodlands Park until the new line opens.

However, the mooted weekend services on the new line will be delayed by several weeks (until the weekend of 26/27 December) to allow for finishing works to be completed. Adelaide Metro also advised that the Alawoona level crossing resumed operating on 21 November after 18 months of inactivity.

Member for Boothby electorate, Nicolle Flint, said that "the extended line will help local residents [travel to/from] the city, help people get to Flinders Medical Centre and Flinders University, ... help the University unlock investment in their \$1.5 billion Flinders Village redevelopment, [and link the University's] main campus at Bedford Park to the new Tonsley Innovation Precinct". *ADELAIDE METRO (2)*

Gawler electrification project

Works are continuing on the Gawler line electrification project. On the weekend of 28/29 November, the entire Belair line was closed, with replacement buses in operation. *ADELAIDE METRO*

Gawler service disruption

It was a busy period for the Gawler line with a police operation on Friday, 27 November forcing the

suspension of all services between Adelaide and Mitcham. Adelaide Metro reported at 10:45 that emergency buses had been organised to operate. At 13:00, the line was reported as reopened to rail traffic.

ADELAIDE METRO

Ghan turned around

The Ghan service which operates between Adelaide and Darwin was terminated early on Monday 16 November after an outbreak in COVID-19 infections in Adelaide forced the Northern Territory government to close its border.

“The service had already crossed the Northern Territory border when the restrictions were announced and there [were] no suspected or confirmed cases on-board” a spokesperson from the train’s operator — Journey Beyond — said. “[221] guests on-board were given the option to disembark in Alice Springs and quarantine for 14 days or stay on-board and continue [back] to Adelaide where they will be supported to return home safely.

Coincidentally, this was the final scheduled return trip for the year. The Northern Territory opened its borders to South Australia in August, with The Ghan resuming on 30 August after a five-month suspension.

Sources supplied by – **AGNES BOSKOVITZ**

Sources – **THE AUSTRALIAN, ADELAIDE ADVERTISER, ABC NEWS**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Patronage update

The Public Transport Authority has provided a positive update following impacts from COVID-19 which led to the state government closing its border with the rest of the country.

As of early October, total public transport patronage was at 78 per cent of pre-COVID levels, the best in the country. This compares to the peak of the pandemic in Western Australia, when patronage sat at just 15 per cent of normal levels.

While primary and high school students were at 99 per cent in early October, pensioner trips had rebounded to 90 per cent of pre-COVID levels. Tertiary students have had a slower return to public transport, sitting at 60 per cent.

Comparatively, most other capital cities in Australasia have been sitting at between 40 and 60 per cent of pre-COVID levels:

- Adelaide – 70 per cent (buses only)
- Auckland, NZ – 70 per cent
- Brisbane – 60 per cent.

- Sydney – 50 per cent.

Meanwhile, Melbourne, having been in lockdown until November, was sitting at under 10 per cent. **PTA**

NEW ZEALAND



Wellington disruption

In late October, loose rocks threatening to fall on live tracks between Pukerua Bay and Paekakariki forced KiwiRail to implement a track speed restriction delaying commuters travelling on the Wellington to Waikanae service.

The Dominion Post reported that loose material had come down the Escarpment Track, only held back by vegetation.

While short-term fixes had been implemented, a long-term fix consisting of anchored mesh was “being considered” - but would take several months. **THE DOMINION POST**

Wellington fare increase

Greater Wellington Regional Council confirmed on 29 October that public transport fares would increase by 1.5 per cent from February. **RADIO NEW ZEALAND**

INTERNATIONAL

Wales nationalises franchise

The government has brought the Wales and Borders rail franchise under public control, due to COVID-19's dramatic impacts on passenger demand for rail services, and subsequently revenue.

A new state-owned entity, a subsidiary of *Transport for Wales*, has been formed to assume day-to-day operational responsibilities in partnership with Keolis and Amey.

Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates said “the Welsh government has had to step in with significant support to stabilise the network and keep it running”, while also working to “secure the important Metro projects”. **GLOBAL RAILWAY REVIEW**

Germany, Austria: \$6.5 billion tram order

Six operators from across Germany and Austria have launched a combined tender for the construction of 246 light rail vehicles, with various options to bump that number up to 509 vehicles which would provide total contract value of €4 billion (\$AU6.5 billion).

The operators include Karlsruhe Transport Authority (minimum order of 73 vehicles), Saarbahn (28 vehicles), Schiene OO (20 vehicles), State of Salzburg (20 vehicles) and Baden-Wurtemberg State Rail Vehicle Authority, on behalf of both Albtal Transport Company (75 vehicles) and the Neckar-Alb tram-train association (30 vehicles). *INTERNATIONAL RAILWAY JOURNAL*

Austria: Brenner Base Tunnel

Construction of one of the world's longest rail tunnels, the Brenner Base Tunnel (64 kilometres long including the Innsbruck diversion), looks likely not to be completed until, at least, the end of the decade due to process delays.

The latest setback is the termination of a contract (worth nearly €1 billion) with a consortium to build the section between Pffons and the Italian border due to a "definitive refusal to provide contractually agreed services and a loss of trust". However, a member of the consortium, Porr, said this was "plainly unlawful and therefore the contract remains valid".

Starting in 2011, the project was initially costed at €8.4 billion (\$AU13.6 billion), with opening planned by 2025. In May, Austria's public auditor said it expected works to not be completed until 2030 due to various disputes between companies in the project. *CONSTRUCTION REVIEW, CITY OF TYROL, MACAUBUSINESS.COM*

Spain opens high-speed line

On October 27, a new 111-kilometre section of high-speed rail was opened. The €898 million (\$AU1.46 billion) section, between Zamora and Pedralba de la Praderia, forms part of the Madrid to Galicia line.

Other than improved journey times with train speeds of up to 350 km/h, benefits of this line include an increase in service frequencies with RENFE Viajeros trains between Madrid and Ourense, Santiago and A Coruna now operating four return trips daily, Madrid to Pontevedra operating six return trips daily, Madrid to Lugo operating five trips daily, and Madrid to Vigo with four services daily.

RENFE has plans to increase service levels further once passenger demand returns closer to pre-COVID levels. *INTERNATIONAL RAILWAY JOURNAL, RAILWAY GAZETTE*

Pakistan opens first metro line

The eastern city of Lahore is now home to Pakistan's first metro line following its opening.

The 27-kilometre \$AU2.6 billion Orange Line, with 26 stations, opened on Monday, 26 October with two ribbon-cutting ceremonies for the delayed and politically-charged project. The notoriously congested city now enjoys significant travel time reductions – from a two-and-a-half-hour bus ride to 45 minutes by metro. Local officials expect 245,000 people to use the line daily.

Much of the project was funded under China's Belt and Road initiative, with questions by some over Pakistan's debt load in recent years. Speaking at the official inauguration, Chinese Consul General Long Dingbin called the metro system a milestone in the Pakistan-China friendship. "I congratulate the Punjab government and the people of Pakistan on this occasion," he said.

Source supplied by – ROSS MORRISON

Sources – BBC NEWS, PAKISTAN TODAY

Chinese patronage rebounds

Patronage on trains and freight volumes have both rebounded strongly following earlier significant declines from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The China State Railway Group reported that daily average passenger trips reached 7.7 million in September, which was 80 per cent of the number from the same month in 2019. Freight volumes transported across the country between January and September totalled 2.6 billion tonnes, an increase of 4.8 per cent on the same period in 2019. *CHINA DAILY*

ENDS

BUS & COACH NEWS

NATIONAL



Greyhound update

The following Greyhound services are operating as of Thursday, 12 November:

- Adelaide – Alice Springs **GX580** departing daily 18:00 arriving Alice Springs 13:30 the next day (timetable (TT) effective from 4 October 2020)
- Alice Springs – Adelaide **GX850** departing daily 10:30 arriving Adelaide 07:25 the next day (TT effective 4 October 2020)
- Alice Springs – Darwin **GX880** departing daily 17:30 arriving Darwin 15:35 next day (TT effective 4 October 2020)
- Brisbane – Byron Bay **GX427** departing 09:30 daily arriving 13:30 same day (TT effective 1 November 2020)

- Brisbane – Cairns **GX443** daily departing 14:00 arriving 19:30 the next day, and **GX457** departing Townsville 08:00 daily arriving 13:35 same day (TT effective 12 October 2020)
- Brisbane – Hervey Bay **GX441** and **GX443** departing daily at 10:00 and 14:00 arriving 16:50 and 19:50 respectively (TT effective 31 October 2020)
- Brisbane – Miles **GX742** daily departing 13:20 arriving 18:35 (TT effective 12 November 2020)
- Brisbane – Toowoomba sees four services daily departing the capital at 09:20, 11:20, 13:20 and 16:20 (TT effective 12 November 2020)
- Broome – Darwin sees a weekday-only service departing as **GX680** from Broome 06:00 (TT effective 19 October 2020)
- Byron Bay – Brisbane **GX247** daily departing 14:15 (TT effective 1 November 2020)
- Cairns – Brisbane **GX411** daily departing 07:00 and **GX458** departing 15:00 daily to Townsville only (TT effective 12 October 2020)
- Canberra – Sydney **GX322** operating Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays departing 06:00 (TT effective 8 August 2020)
- Darwin – Alice Springs **GX882** departing daily at 09:55 (TT effective 14 September 2020)
- Darwin – Broome **GX860** departing 15:20 Saturdays to Wednesdays (TT effective 12 November 2020)
- Hervey Bay – Brisbane sees **GX411** and **GX445** daily departing at 06:55 and 10:45 (TT effective 1 November 2020)
- Longreach – Rockhampton sees **GX477** ex Emerald on Mondays only; **GX578** ex Emerald Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays; and **GX470** ex Longreach on Wednesdays, and **GX472** ex Longreach on Sundays (TT effective 10 August 2020)
- Miles – Brisbane sees **GX751** departing 05:30 (TT effective 13 November 2020)
- Rockhampton – Longreach sees **GX471** Tuesdays and Saturdays only, **GX475** and **GX476** to Emerald on Sundays, Mondays to Wednesdays and the latter on Fridays only (TT effective 10 August 2020)
- Sydney – Canberra **GX233** on Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays (TT effective 8 August 2020)
- Toowoomba – Brisbane sees four trips daily at 06:30, 09:00, 11:00 and 16:00 (TT effective 13 November 2020). **STEVEN HABY**

QUEENSLAND



Electric bus trials

Sunbus in Cairns has been confirmed as the home of five new trial electric buses from next year.

Meanwhile, Labor Minister of Transport, Mark Bailey, confirmed, if re-elected, that the Gold Coast and Logan areas would be “super-charged” as the home of a trial of 10 new Bustech electric buses. Route 777 (Broadbeach to airport) would be the first to benefit.

Editor's note: Labor has been re-elected with a 100,000+ vote margin over its nearest rival. Labor has claimed 52 seats in the 93-seat house. ABC MAGAZINE, CAIRNS LOCAL NEWS

Electric bus trials 2

On 28 October, Transdev confirmed its own plans to trial a 39-seat electric bus using 100 per cent harvested sustainable solar energy, based at its Capalaba depot, for two years across its bus network, in partnership with the state government.

At the depot, Transdev will install a Green Mobility Megawatt with 10 Tesla Power Wall units and a row of 250 solar panels capturing up to 159,000kWh of power annually. The trial will commence in the first half of 2021. **ABC MAGAZINE**

Time nearly up for natural gas buses

Brisbane City Council has announced it will be working to replace its fleet of natural gas buses over the next seven years, replacing them with diesel buses which will be used as a stop-gap measure over the next few years until a suitable procurement strategy is in place to take advantage of newer and cleaner technologies such as hydrogen and electric, but “it’s got to work in Brisbane conditions” at scale.

Brisbane Public and Active Transport chairperson, Ryan Murphy, said the natural gas “at its heart” was cleaner than diesel, but the technology had not progressed in 20 years.

Additionally, explosions in 2008 and 2012 led to a policy of only filling gas tanks halfway, affecting their productivity and efficiency.

The Council plans to bring in 60 electric buses for Brisbane Metro, but there has been acknowledgement that a plan is needed for its entire fleet of 1,200 buses. **ABC MAGAZINE**

NEW SOUTH WALES



Newcastle timetable improvements

Services operated by Keolis Downer will be adjusted, effective from Sunday, 13 December, to boost service numbers and reliability:

- **Route 11** – The 22:30 weekday outbound service will be withdrawn.
- **Route 12** – An additional weeknight service will depart at 23:55.
- **Route 13** – Timing adjustments for better NightOwl service frequency.
- **Route 14** – Two additional weekday services departing Swansea at 07:18 and 07:29. An additional weekday service departing Customs House at 16:54.
- **Route 21** – Now truncated to start/finish at Customs House. On Saturdays, the 06:58 and 21:04 services from Broadmeadow, and the 20:59 service from Customs House will be withdrawn.
- **Route 22** – The 07:05 weekday service from Charlestown, and the 07:05 Sunday service from Newcastle Interchange will be withdrawn.
- **Route 23** – In response to customer feedback, this route will be extended to/from Newcastle East in lieu of route 21, to provide a direct service into Marketown. Also, the 21:10 Saturday service from Newcastle East will be withdrawn.
- **Route 24** -The 22:37 weekday service departing Newcastle East will be withdrawn.
- **Route 26** – An additional 05:50 service from Wallsend, and adjustments to deliver improved connections with trains at Broadmeadow.
- **Route 27** – Alignment of times to better meet school start/finish times.
- **Route 29** – Adjustments to deliver better connections with trains at Cardiff.
- **Route 43** – Increased service frequency to one-an-hour on both weekdays and weekends. Keolis Downer's Hunter General Manager, Mark Dunlop, said that this would provide a good balance in services together with the Newcastle 'On Demand' service.

TRANSPORT FOR NSW, ABC RADIO

Blue Mountains Transit changes

Some Blue Mountains Transit timetables have been adjusted, effective from Monday, 23 November:

- **686** – Additional services across the week, with all trips operating via the Golf Club now re-designated as 686G.
- **686G** – Additional trips provided by former 686 trips operating via the Golf Club.
- **696** - Altered route path in Katoomba with timing changes.
- **685, 685H, 690H, 695** and **698V** – Some altered timing changes to services.

CDC BUS

Regional Cities Services Improvement

The Regional Cities Services Improvement Program continues to make its mark across regional centres of the state, with the following changes made to the bus networks in Armidale and Tamworth, effective from Monday, 23 November:

Armidale

- **480** (Uralla – Armidale): An additional weekday service, and a new Saturday service.
- **481** (University of New England (UNE) – City via Niagara St): New year-round timetable (including during summer break), extended operating hours from Mondays to Thursdays, two additional Saturday afternoon return services, and services on Friday and Saturday nights through to midnight.
- **482** (UNE – City via Donnelly St): New year-round timetable.
- **483** (City – South Hill): Additional services until 16:15 on Saturdays.
- **484** (City to North Hill via Duval High School): Additional services delivering extended operating hours on Saturdays (from 08:15 to 15:15).
- **485** (UNE – City via station): As per 482 changes.

Tamworth

- **428** (Quirindi - Tamworth): New Saturday services between 09:00 and 16:00, and a Quirindi town service on Saturdays between 08:30 and 14:30.
- **430** (City – Oxley Vale): Additional stop at Tamworth Hospital, new servicing of Taminda industrial area, and extended operating hours on Saturdays to 17:30.
- **431** (City - North): New servicing of Taminda industrial area, and additional trips on Saturdays through to 13:40.
- **433** (City - South): New servicing of Taminda industrial area, and additional trips on Saturdays through to 16:30.

- **435** (City – Tamworth Sports Dome): Calala loop service split into new route 436, peak services to Taminda industrial area, servicing of the sports precinct Mondays to Saturdays, and extended operating hours on Saturdays until 17:30.
- **New route 436** (City - Calala): Route split from existing route 435, with trips to Taminda industrial area.
- **437** (City – Coledale and Westdale): Minor timing changes, with Saturday operating hours now until 17:00.

Meanwhile, in **Albury**, from Thursday, 26 November, additional services have enabled an extension of operating hours on Thursday and Friday nights to around 20:30 to 21:00. Also, on Saturdays, the biggest improvement in services for some time has seen operating hours extend to between 17:00 and 19:00.

- **901** (Albury – West Albury): Extended operating hours on Thursdays, Fridays (both until 21:00) and Saturdays (until 19:30) due to additional services.
- **902** (Albury – East Albury): Extended operating hours on Thursdays, Fridays (both until 21:30) and Saturdays (until 19:00) due to additional services.
- **903** (Albury – South Albury): Extended operating hours on Thursdays, Fridays (both until 20:15) and Saturdays (until 17:30) due to additional services.
- **906** (Lavington – Albury via Springdale Hts & North Albury): Extended operating hours on Thursdays, Fridays (both until 21:00) and Saturdays (until 18:00) due to additional services.
- **907** (Glenroy & Quicks Hill – Albury via TAFE & Mercy Hospital): Extended operating hours on Thursdays, Fridays (both until 21:00) and Saturdays (until 18:00) due to additional services.
- **908** (Thurgoona – Albury via Charles Sturt University): Extended operating hours on Thursdays, Fridays (both until 21:00) and Saturdays (until 18:30) due to additional services.

This completes the roll-out of Transport for NSW's Regional Cities Services Improvements Program, with the following timeline of changes made:

- **December 2019** – Tweed Heads and Wagga Wagga (*Table Talk, April 2020, pg. 12-15*);
- **July 2020** – Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Parkes, Griffith, Port Macquarie (*Table Talk, August 2020, pg. 7*);
- **September** – Queanbeyan (*Table Talk, Sept 2020, pg. 10*), Nowra and Grafton (*Table Talk, Oct 2020, pg. 9*);

- **October** – Coffs Harbour and Lismore (*Table Talk, Nov 2020, pg. 11*); and
- **November** – Armidale, Tamworth and Albury.

TRANSPORT FOR NSW, HILAIRE FRASER

COVID-19 update

As of Thursday, 12 November, the following companies and routes are not operating:

Auswide Coaches (Orange):

The Orange – Bathurst – Sydney service remains suspended with no date for planned resumption.

Skybus:

The Gold Coast – Byron Bay service remains suspended due to the ongoing border closure.

NSW TrainLink coach trial services:

Due to impacts from COVID-19, the following trial coach services have been either suspended or cancelled since 30 September:

- Broken Hill – Mildura (suspended)
- Foster – Coffs Harbour (suspended)
- Goulburn – Canberra (suspended)
- Anglers Reach – Cooma (cancelled)
- Ben Lomond – Guyra (cancelled)
- Bigga – Goulburn (cancelled)
- Delegate – Nimmitabel (cancelled)
- Goodooga – Lightning Ridge (cancelled)
- Moree – Walgett (cancelled)

STEVEN HABY

NSW TrainLink coach changes

ATA members Paul Brown and Hilaire Fraser have supplied news of some changes that have occurred to some south-western NSW TrainLink coach services which appear to have not been announced through normal channels.

Effective from Sunday, 25 October, coach services 717 and 718 (Condobolin-Cootamundra) were withdrawn. Route **719** and **720** coach services have been introduced to operate between Condobolin and Wagga Wagga via Euabalong and Lake Cargelligo.

Cootamundra residents have access to Wagga with express services **721** and **722**. **PAUL BROWN, HILAIRE FRASER**

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



More weekend services

As foreshadowed by Transport Canberra in July (see *Table Talk*, August 2020), the first phase of weekend bus services improvements across Canberra have been implemented, effective from Saturday, 10 October. There were 210 services added on weekends, including improving all Saturday morning services to hourly or better [whoopie! - contributor's reaction – but note that many services operate every 15 minutes].

Contributor: AGNES BOSKOVITZ

Sources: TRANSPORT CANBERRA, THE CANBERRA TIMES

VICTORIA



Craigieburn changes

Effective from Sunday, 25 October, route 525 buses (Donnybrook – Craigieburn via Mickleham) now terminate in Donnybrook at the new bus interchange. PTV advises that buses continue to “coordinate with train services”.

Effective from Monday, 26 October, route 511 is extended to Olivine Estate. PTV advises that buses now connect at Donnybrook with rail services, instead of at Craigieburn. Some additional services have also been added.

Effective from Sunday, 8 November, changes were made to route timetables for 343, 578, 579, 580 and 582 services in the Eltham and Diamond Creek areas. Route 582 also has an extra service on weeknights to fill a gap between services. School deviations on routes 578, 579 and 582 have also been revised with some deviations becoming “school specials”. The changes aim to improve service reliability, promote connections with trains and better meet school start and finish times.

Supplied by - HILAIRE FRASER

Source - PTV

Ballarat changes

Effective from Sunday, 22 November, route 25 has been extended to Delacombe town centre with some associated timing changes.

Supplied by - HILAIRE FRASER

Source – PTV

Link Bus comes to Wallan and Kilmore

The Link Bus initiative was introduced on Monday, 26 October to Wallan and Kilmore. Link buses are mandated to wait for up to a maximum of 20 minutes at Wallan and Kilmore East stations for late running V/Line connections scheduled to arrive between 17:00 and 23:00 weeknights.

In Wallan, from 17:00 on weekdays:

- Routes 1 and 2 combine to become **Link Bus A** running to an altered stopping pattern.
- Route 3 becomes **Link Bus B**.

In Kilmore, services have also been added on Saturdays.

Supplied by - HILAIRE FRASER

Source - PTV

COVID-19 update

As of Thursday, 12 November, the following companies and routes are operating as follows:

Balfours Airport Direct (Shepparton):

Services to Tullamarine ceased from Wednesday, 1 April. They continue to be suspended until further notice.

Ballarat Airport Shuttlebus:

Ballarat to Tullamarine services remain suspended, but there is the potential for services to resume in December 2020 (at the earliest).

Bendigo Airport Service:

Bendigo to Tullamarine services are suspended until at least December 2020.

Gull Geelong:

Geelong – Tullamarine airport service continues to be suspended, but there is a new timetable under development (dependent on border openings and resumption of air services).

Skybus:

The Southern Cross – Tullamarine service is operating seven days a week between 06:00 and 18:00. No timetable information is available from their website, however observations at Southern Cross on Sunday, 8 November indicated a 30-minute frequency has been running.

All other services operated by Skybus in Melbourne (Southbank – Docklands – Tullamarine; St Kilda – Tullamarine; Mornington Peninsula – Tullamarine; Werribee – Tullamarine; and Eastern Suburbs – Tullamarine) appear to be still suspended until further notice. The Avalon – Southern Cross service is also suspended.

Melbourne Night Network:

Friday and Saturday ‘Night Network’ services recommenced operation from Friday, 13 November.

Supplied by – STEVEN HABY

Source – PTV

TASMANIA



COVID-19 update

Skybus' Hobart Airport service resumed from 26 October, however there is no timetable information on the website except to note that a new timetable will be published shortly. **STEVEN HABY**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Minor south-east changes

From Sunday, 29 November, bus routes 177, 178, 179 and 930 underwent minor timing changes in an effort to improve service reliability. No trips have been removed or added. **TRANSPERTH**

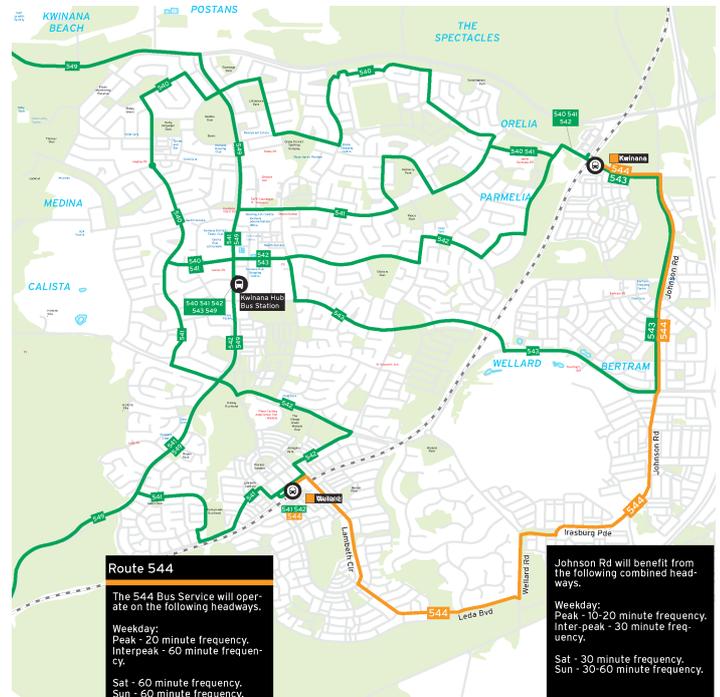
Transperth timetable proposals

Transperth has invited interested parties to provide feedback on proposed changes to multiple Transperth routes in the southern suburbs of Perth. The changes include a slew of new routes, and alterations to existing routes, including connections with trains at multiple locations. They are:

Southern suburbs

- New route 523** – Covering new ground for the bus network, it would operate between Cockburn Central station and Treeby with buses every 15 minutes during peak periods, and hourly in the off-peak and on weekends. Timed for train connections at Cockburn Central (see illustration below).

- New route 544** – Operating between Kwinana and Welford stations via Bertram & Wellard, buses would operate every 20 minutes during peak periods, and hourly during off-peak and weekend daytime periods. Timed for train connections at Kwinana. Bertram residents would benefit from a shared corridor with existing route 543 along Johnston Road halving waiting times (see illustration below).



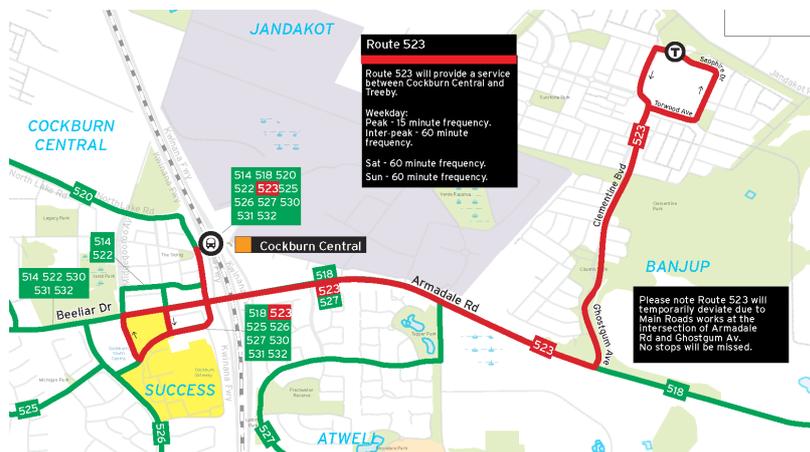
- New route 233** – Operating between Cockburn Central and Gosnells via Southern River, Harrisdale and Piara Waters, buses would operate every 15 minutes during peak periods, and hourly in the off-peak and on weekends. Timed for train connections at Gosnells, with secondary consideration for connections at Cockburn Central (illustration at the top of page 13).

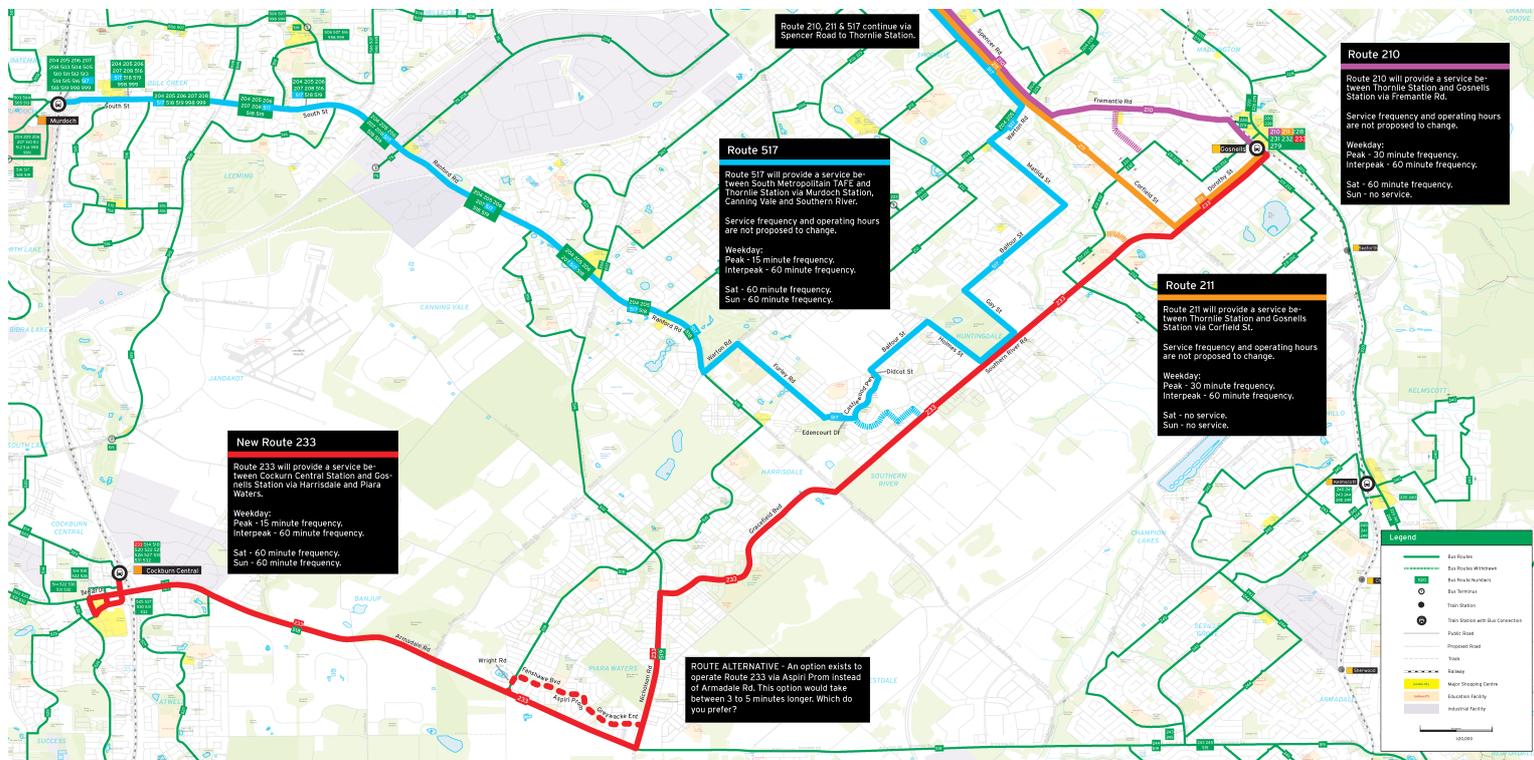
A **secondary option** for route 233 is to instead operate via Aspiri Promenade, rather than Armadale Road, which would increase end-to-end journey times by up to five minutes.

Subsequent changes to routes 210, 211 and 517 include:

- Route 210** would divert to operate via Fremantle Road to Gosnells station,
- Route 211** would divert to operate via Corfield and Dorothy Streets towards Gosnells station.

(There would be no changes to routes **231** and **232**, which would continue to be options for above-affected passengers).



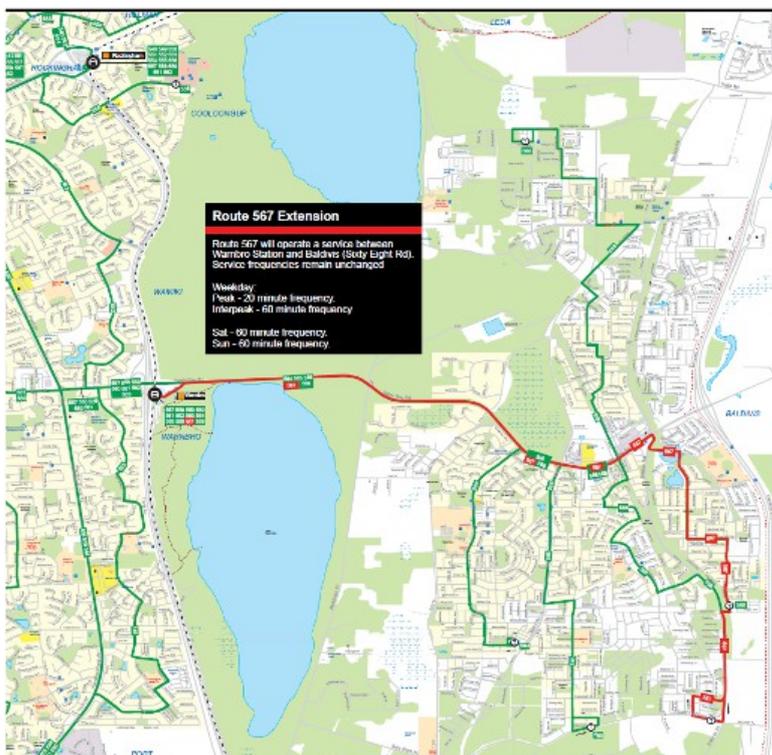
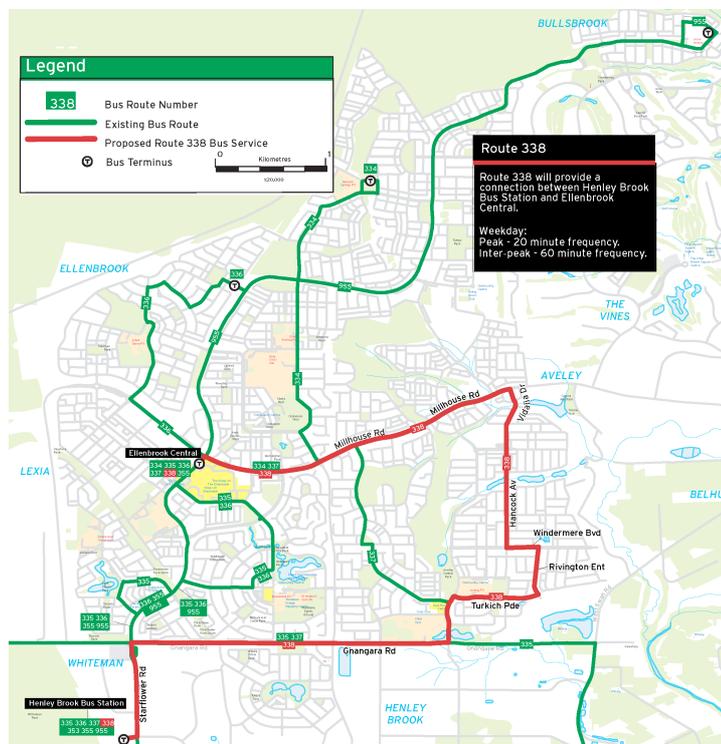


- **Route 517** would deviate from its current temporary route in Southern River, operating north of Park Lake to provide more convenient transport for residents closer to Bletchley Park and Southern Grove Primary Schools. Park Lake residents could access route 233 buses in lieu. Existing Southern River College route deviations would move across to route 233 services.

Northern suburbs

- **New route 338** – Operating between Ellenbrook Town Centre and Henley Brook bus station, buses would operate every 20 minutes in peak periods, and hourly in the off-peak and on Saturdays. The route would connect with 955 buses for journeys towards Bassendean (*illustrated above*).

- **Route 567 extension** south for the Paramount and Brightwood estates with no change in service frequencies. Services would be times for train connections at Warnbro (see *illustration below*).



Feedback can be provided online via www.mysaytransport.wa.gov.au until 17:00 on Friday 4 December 2020. On the home page, click on the 'Public Transport' tile.

Source supplied by - **HILAIRE FRASER**

Source – **TRANSPERTH** (including all illustrations)

NEW ZEALAND



Reducing commuter travel times between Botany and Britomart by up to 33 per cent, the busway, running from Botany to Panmure is expected to carry over 30,000 people a day upon opening in 2025. **AUCKLAND TRANSPORT (2)**

COVID-19 update

As of Thursday, 12 November, Skybus' services have resumed between the CBD and Auckland Airport. A copy of the current timetable appears below.

However, their North Harbour – Auckland Airport service remains suspended until further notice.
STEVEN HABY

Auckland: Eastern Busway

A consortium, Interim Project Alliance, has been selected to design and build stages 2, 3 and 4 of the rapid transit Eastern Busway project. "Led by Auckland Transport", the alliance is made up of Fletcher, Acciona, AECOM and Jacobs.

Stage 1 (Busway between Panmure to Pakuranga) is currently under construction with completion due next year. Stages 2-4 will include completing the busway through to Botany, station works at Pakuranga and Botany, a flyover at Reeves Road at Pakuranga, and improved pedestrian/cycling facilities along the route.

Auckland: Electric buses

Auckland Transport (AT) launched the city's first 'extra-large' electric bus on 28 October. The Yutong E13 is being used on longer distance Howick & Eastern bus routes from East Auckland into the city centre, which AT says is helping it compare and analyse its operational performance power demand and costs alongside diesel and upcoming hydrogen buses.

Meanwhile, the transition to electric has also started on Waiheke Island, with six new electrics starting work in October. There will be another two due in December, while the nine non-electric buses that remain will stay in operation until the end of their useful lives.
AUCKLAND TRANSPORT (2)

ENDS

SkyBus



City to Auckland Airport

Journey time to Auckland Airport from our SkyBus City Lounge is approximately 40 minutes. Travel time can vary according to traffic conditions, please leave sufficient time to meet your check in. The first stop at Auckland Airport is the Domestic Terminal.

Stop 14 – SkyBus City Lounge

Weekday & weekend timetable

05:50	06:20	06:50	07:20	07:55	08:30	09:00	09:30	09:51	10:30	11:00
11:30	Midday	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:40	15:00	15:30	16:00	16:30
17:00	17:30	17:53	18:30	19:00	19:30	20:00	20:30	21:00		

Auckland Airport to City

Journey time of approximately 50 minutes to Auckland City.

Domestic Terminal

International Terminal

Weekday & weekend timetable

05:54	06:24	07:00	07:23	07:43	08:13	08:34	09:13	09:43	10:13	10:43
11:13	11:43	12:13	12:43	13:23	13:43	14:13	14:43	15:13	15:43	16:18
16:41	17:18	17:48	18:18	18:48	19:23	20:05				

Skybus Auckland – Airport timetable (source: Skybus).

FERRY & SHIP NEWS

VICTORIA



COVID-19 update

As of Saturday 14 November, the following ferry operators were providing services as follows:

Port Phillip Ferries (Portarlington / Geelong – Docklands):

Services commenced operating on weekends from Saturday, 14 November to a limited timetable.

From Thursday, 3 December, services will increase to four days a week (Thursdays to Sundays), with plans for the full service to re-commence from Thursday, 24 December.

Services on both routes will operate as a twice-daily departure based on the weekend timetable through January 2021.

Searoad Ferries (Queenscliff – Sorrento):

As from Monday, 9 November, normal weekday and weekend services resumed operating.

Westernport Ferries (Stony Point – French Island – Cowes):

Effective from Monday, 26 October, the regular timetabled service re-commenced. Interestingly, the service is still affected by strong winds and high tides which results in the regular cancellation of services – an issue which was the bane of the previous operator (whereby, at times, services would not operate for days causing considerable consternation to locals on French Island). *STEVEN HABY*

ENDS

AIR NEWS

DOMESTIC



COVID-19 update

Qantas Group:

A tentative route map has been released on their website effective from December 2020 (see *the back cover*).

A number of routes will recommence or start as follows:

- Brisbane to Hobart from 4 December,

- Brisbane to Port Macquarie since 18 November,
- Cairns – Canberra since 21 November,
- Canberra – Gold Coast since 25 September 2020 until 27 March 2021 only,
- Canberra – Hobart from 4 December,
- Canberra – Sunshine Coast since 19 November,
- Hobart – Perth since 14 November,
- Launceston – Sydney from 4 December,
- Merimbula – Sydney from 18 December,
- Orange – Sydney from 20 July 2020.

Qantas' re-entry to flying into Tasmania saw the Hobart to Sydney route re-commence with 11 return weekly flights from 6 November, various flights from Brisbane to Hobart, and the Launceston to Sydney route with four return flights each week (three in the first week) using Boeing 717s from 4 December until 1 February, 2021. Qantas' discount off-shoot, **Jetstar**, has resumed operating flights between the Gold Coast and Hobart.

Jetstar also confirmed on 10 November that it would resume flights between Melbourne's Avalon Airport and Sydney from 18 December, following a nine-month absence of flights at the airport. Jetstar plans to run flights twice daily, and would look to add more if there was demand.

Virgin Australia:

Flights and routes are slowly being re-introduced across the network as set out below:

- A Melbourne to Canberra service on Saturdays recommenced on 23 November,
- Melbourne to Hobart and Launceston flights operating Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays commencing from 27 November,
- Melbourne to Newcastle flights recommenced on 23 November operating on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays,
- Melbourne to Sydney increase with a Saturday service from 23 November,
- Perth to Adelaide flights recommenced on Sundays from 16 November,
- Perth to Brisbane flights recommenced on Sundays from 16 November,
- Sydney to Hobart increase with a Sunday service from 16 November, and
- Sydney to Melbourne increase with a Saturday service from 23 November.

Virgin also announced it would begin flying to several new regional destinations - Brisbane to Emerald five times a week, and Brisbane to Alice Springs twice a week. Meanwhile, Brisbane to Hamilton Island has

increased to 10 flights a week, and the Brisbane to Adelaide route has returned with three flights daily.

Link Airlines:

- Newcastle to Canberra route is now being services three times a week.

STEVEN HABY, ROSS MORRISON, GEOFF HASSALL

Editor sources include NINE TRAVEL, NEWS.COM.AU, AUSTRALIAN AVIATION

NSW/VIC border reopening, Rex readies

After over four months, Monday, 23 November saw the long-awaited reopening of the border between New South Wales and Victoria.

Qantas and Jetstar promised in early November to ramp up their services by 33 per cent on this news to hit 40 per cent of pre-COVID service levels flying between Melbourne, Bendigo, Mildura, Sydney, Newcastle and Ballina Byron. The airlines said this would enable them to “unground” aircraft and bring more employees back to work.

Amongst the routes to return was Melbourne to Newcastle with four flights a week from 24 November.

Pre-COVID, the Melbourne to Sydney route was the second-busiest on the globe. *Traveller.com* reported that in early November, the country's busiest route had been Brisbane to Cairns.

Meanwhile, Regional Express has put paid to its previous threats to take on Qantas and Virgin head on, saying it would dedicate its first six Boeing 737s (previously leased to Virgin) to flying between Sydney and Melbourne from March next year. The Rex route will launch on 1 March with services ramping up as the airline receives its jets.

However, when asked on Rex's play, chairperson John Sharp played coy on the assertion that Rex were looking directly to take from Qantas and Virgin, “all we see ourselves as doing is adding to the choice that travellers will have... we don't want to be seen to be taking on anybody”.

Mr Sharp also said that the airline estimates that 30-40 per cent of its existing passengers connect to other services, which it was hoping it would be able to capture. “Let's say you're flying from Dubbo to Melbourne. You fly the first sector with Rex to Sydney, and then you get onto a flight to Melbourne. Today, that inter-city leg is made with a competing airline. That gives us a good start, and obviously we're going to need more than them, and hence more leisure travellers, 'best fare of the day' government travel and so on.”

Rex will also launch its own direct flights between Brisbane to Melbourne in April.

Sources supplied by – ROSS MORRISON

Sources – FLIGHTGLOBAL.COM, TRAVELLER.COM, EXECUTIVE TRAVELLER

South Australia suffers COVID outbreak

An outbreak of three locally-acquired COVID-19 cases from the same family on Sunday, 15 November across Adelaide's northern suburbs saw Western Australia slam the door shut on their neighbours.

Passengers on board flight QF887 from Adelaide to Perth were advised mid-flight that they would be required to immediately enter 14 days of self-quarantine upon landing at Perth Airport.

The outbreak quickly grew to 17 cases the next day as COVID-19 testing spiked. On Wednesday, 18 November, South Australia's Premier, Steven Marshall ordered the state into a six-day lockdown as it appeared to grapple containing the outbreak, now at 22 cases, with fears of turning into a Victorian second wave.

However, just three days later, it lifted this self-imposed exile from the remainder of the country, saying that a male had lied to authorities in the contact tracing process. A man at a pizza bar at the centre of a second outbreak reportedly said he only bought pizza there, when he really worked several shifts with another staffer who had contracted COVID-19. Authorities thought the man caught the virus during a short exposure, which led them to believe the strain was highly contagious. The Premier said the lockdown would not have happened if the man was being truthful - “To say I am fuming about the actions of this individual is an absolute understatement. [The] selfish actions of this individual have put our whole state in a very difficult situation.”

The person involved was not officially sanctioned, as the Premier saying they had to ensure “increased penalty wouldn't force information underground”.
STEVEN HABY, THE GUARDIAN, THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, MSN.COM, ABC NEWS

INTERNATIONAL



Trans-Tasman flights

Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, announced on 7 November a new deal that could see direct flights between Tasmania and New Zealand for the first time in over two decades.

Mr Morrison said that the plan was for 130 flights annually between Hobart and New Zealand starting in January with the federal government providing \$50 million and the Tasmanian government \$10 million to upgrade infrastructure at Hobart Airport.

Air New Zealand previously operated flights between the two jurisdictions until 1996 when it pulled the pin due to poor viability.

Again confirming plans for reciprocal trans-Tasman travel, federal tourism minister Simon Birmingham said “We are beginning to open up to New Zealand because of their similarly strong COVID outcomes and

it may be possible to do likewise with other low-risk nations. However, the prospects of opening up widespread travel with higher risk countries will remain very reliant on effective vaccination or other major breakthroughs in the management of COVID. Work continues on how we can facilitate two-way COVID-safe travel between Australia and New Zealand, and I hope that we can see a reciprocal arrangement of quarantine-free travel with New Zealand by the year's end."

Source supplied by – ROSS MORRISON

Sources – ABC NEWS, AUSTRALIAN AVIATION

American Airlines retires A330s

American Airlines has announced it has now retired its fleet of 15 Airbus A330-200s as the airline works to simplify its fleet. SAMCHUI.COM

Cathay restructures

Cathay Pacific announced a COVID-induced restructure in November that saw 5,900 jobs cut from its global operations and the cessation of its South-east Asian 'Cathay Dragon' unit which is expected to save Cathay up to one-third of the company's monthly ongoing losses. However, most of Dragon's routes have been transferred across to either Cathay Pacific or budget business HK Express. SAMCHUI.COM

ENDS

TALKING IN-DEPTH

COVID shatters small coach operators

Victoria's COVID-19 border closure uncertainty and Melbourne's extended lockdown deeply affected Victorians' way-of-life. A coach charter business has provided one such example on the consequences. Having great difficulty in planning and honouring tour bookings, the operator's owner protested his plight while being forced auctioning many of his coaches to help pay a spiralling multi-million dollar debt. Here is a condensed version of two articles from Australian Bus & Coach magazine.

Speaking to ABC Magazine (www.busnews.com.au) from a rural Victoria location - where he has had to diversify his work to hay bailing and silage trucking as a way of keeping money flowing and help reduce a growing \$3.8 million debt - Laurie Pincini, owner of Rockleigh Tours, recounted his harrowing financial predicament having been forced to shut down his coach operations in March - that would be similarly felt to varying degrees by charter bus operators Australia-wide in 2020.

"I've had one bus a day, or you know a couple out... Out of the 22 buses, the maximum I've had [doing]

work has been five in one day doing V/Line at night-time, at 3.00am, 4.00am in the morning. That doesn't pay the bills when it costs us \$200,000 a month to open the door and you've only got \$50,000 a month coming in."

"We've been in the bus game now for just on 75 years. We employ my sons, my daughters, my sons-in-laws, uncles, fathers-in-law... plus families and everything in the local community. Come the end of December and something opens and goes bang! They are all out of work because JobKeeper doesn't work past then when I've got to pay them the 20 hours a week. I can't afford it! ... but as I say to people, JobKeeper costs me \$160,000 before I've got any money back off the [federal] government; I'd had to go borrow that money because JobKeeper gets paid in arrears." Mr Pincini explained that the company doesn't get the money upfront from the federal government to pay its staff and that: "...we have to pay the staff first and sign a declaration that we've done it."

Mr Pincini had a coach redone in "sack Daniel Andrews" livery with his own money as part of his protest at government policy, which he believes was in stark contrast to New South Wales, for the worse.

The bus started doing the rounds recently when the amended Victorian Omnibus bill – still contentiously interpreted by pro-democracy civil libertarians while championed and defended by Premier Daniel Andrews MP - was passed. "The Omnibus bill now [means] I can be arrested because I'm seen to be an activist ... because I've got slogans against the [state] government.



To help try to stem the massive 'cash bleed' out of his charter company, Mr Pincini has started to offload most of his fleet, but hoping there is some dramatic change to Victoria's Omnibus restrictions and border crossing requirements fast.

Owing \$3.8 million, Mr Pincini went to Lloyd's auction house to sell 12 out of his business' 22-strong fleet. He said he was negotiating with his bank on the remaining 10 buses. Losing \$150,000 a month, "I'm a million bucks behind from where I should have been."

Once the protest bus was being used, Mr Pincini was contacted by Transport Safety Victoria [TSV] to outline that the bus' use in that manner was illegal. "'You can't do it' they said. I said 'pig's arse!' The person that's on it chartering it off us used to use an Uber, but because they knew we had no work they decided they would hire it off us. [TSV] tried to say it was non-essential work."

"I've received support and I've copped a lot of flak also for running the damned bus, mate. From people who have got no idea and haven't been in the industry and say 'what are you doing that for? How dare you? Dan's doing a great job'. I say 'Is he really? You show me how he's doing a great job. Oh, that's right – you are a public servant, you haven't lost any income; you've actually received more because you are working from home so he's paying you more. So that's the attitude that we [charter bus operators] are getting from public servants who haven't lost a dollar – 'poor me, poor you', and you go 'only if you bloody knew what life really is like when you run a small family business. Until they can get borders open for the charter industry, the industry is screwed. Every time Queensland decides that three people in NSW have got it and they are going to close the border on them, how can an operator book a tour – a five-day, 10-day, 15-day tour whatever – to not be able to go across the border? It took us until September to get money back off Jetstar because of cancellations, so how do I go to book tours when there's flights and things that cancel due to COVID and border closures and they only gave us back the money in the end because ... they [the passenger/airline] cancelled their flight?"

Asked how bus and coach peers in the area feel about the situation, Mr Pincini replied: "I've got heaps of support in keeping the bus going, but most of them have got a government contract here or there; they can't speak up. They can't say anything because they are in fear of losing the government contracts. And I've just said for that little bit of work that we [his company] get off the government, if I lose that work then I'm no worse off than what I am now. I'm still going backwards..."

"We run a tourist farm as well plus we run accommodation. I've had eight days of work for the tourist farm – and that's it since March. We can't just turn a key back on. It just doesn't happen. Last time when we started we got stock and everything, spent thousands of dollars to then be told to close again. And then they said 'ok we'll pay you for your cancellations' – I got \$900. Didn't go anywhere near the money that we had to spend to... set it all up and go again. And [he, state premier Daniel Andrews] just doesn't get it. [The banks] put us on the six-month hold, which was fantastic, and then I rang them just before the six-month hold [ended]. It's the same as the insolvency clause, right? So, now as a director because our debt is over a million dollars I can now be held liable for insolvency, whereas prior to that I couldn't be. So... I had to ring the banks and say 'come and take 'em [the buses] because I know I'm going to be insolvent from tomorrow'. That means if I haven't told you [the bank] and haven't started to talk to you I can then be charged and be liable. [As a small business,] we've gone from turning over \$4.2 [million] a year to now this year we'll be lucky to turn over \$300 [grand].

Asked about the stress and impact this is all having on his family and himself, Mr Pincini replied: "Well, mate – I've called Beyond Blue... I've been there. I've had to make those phone calls... to family and friends... I know they are out and having depression again. When you walk past a yard full of buses and an empty shed

and you go 'there will be nobody here for the next two weeks, if I knock myself off who's going to care?' So it gets to that point, mate. The mental strain and pressure... And, you know financially if the buses go, the house goes – they are only items. The mental pressure that you are dealing with that you've let your team down, your family down, your community down – that's what the problem is... even though it wasn't our fault, you still take it to heart."

"The cruise industry was about an eighth of our turnover. I think by March 16 was when they all got cancelled. Snow season – is a quarter of our turnover with our charters from interstate and everything else, so that got cancelled. School excursions, interstate school camp cruises to central Australia etc – all of them cancelled.

In terms of product support or OEM re-sale, Mr Pincini explained: "When the first wave hit I thought I'd have to look at some of these [the fleet's] buses that were less than 12 months old and probably on-sell them. So I contacted the company of one which I'd be making payments back on for 9 months [from new] to offer to re-sell it back and they wanted me to take a \$100,000 loss to get out of the bus. I still owed \$440 [thousand] on it. And so I said to them: 'which part of the bus is ****? The body or the chassis manufacturer's? Because one of them is for me to have to take a \$100,000 loss in [just] nine months'. And it was still under warranty and everything else."

Mr Pincini personally has been away from Melbourne for eight weeks now, driving silage trucks and working on hay bailers for much-needed income, he confirms, which has allowed him to personally experience a new societal divide, he says. "I walked into a shop the other day to buy a takeaway pie. The woman wasn't going to serve me because my address is still in Melbourne."

"I went to VicRoads to ask them if I can change my address because I've been working up here now for eight weeks, saying here are all my payslips. Oh no, you are not a permanent resident so we can't change your address', they said. For the first wave, we came up here to buy a tractor and hay bailer to do work until July, so we thought okay let's go invest in that. When I walked into the shop in Wodonga, I went and spent \$150,000 elsewhere because I refused to spend it in that shop because as soon as I said I was from Melbourne they told me I had to wait outside and that I could not go in there - 'You have to go away!'"

Meanwhile, a convoy of 15 'desperate mum and dad' bus operators rallied outside Parliament House on Monday, 26 October, who say they face demise without a government rescue package from COVID-19.

Craig's Mini Buses director, Marie Hartley, said "We have to have bus premises to house our vehicles. We have a lot of on-road, running and compliance costs which are very expensive... and lay off staff."

Near or Far Bus & Coach's Rod Williams said while they were thankful for JobKeeper, many industrial aspects had been overlooked. He said they want the government to share transport contracts with all accredited operators, not just the larger companies.

Williams also worried about the thousands of drivers, mechanics, cleaning and other ancillary staff employed by the industry. "We're not using our vehicles so we don't need windscreens, tyres or technicians, which means we're not bringing business to these people. It's life and death now. I've got guys ringing me in tears and threatening suicide, and that impacts my own mental health."

Paramount Tours' Laura Di Leva, who said that her business has had no income for 12 months, said small bus company owners felt helpless with no end in sight. The ongoing closure of international borders has wiped out bus tours to tourist sites across the country. With the repayment holiday now over, banks had started to demand commencement of repayments.

Having already sold one coach at a reduced rate, despite a repayment deferral extension until February,

she needed to pay an extra \$1,500 a month thereafter with eight months added to the repayment term. "I don't see how I can make this repayment if I don't have a substantial amount of work. I will have to draw down on my home loan to cover just the vehicle repayment costs. Our industry is not like restaurants or coffee shops that can convert their output to takeaways. We are one of the first industries impacted and the last ones to recover."

Mr Williams thanked Labor MP Susan Templeman, who arranged meetings with her colleagues and raised the issue in a private member statement in parliament.

If you are reading the digital edition, you can read both original articles by clicking on the following links:

- [ABC MAGAZINE](#)
- [ABC MAGAZINE 2](#)

ODD SPOT

Burnley, what...?

ATA member Albert Isaacs has supplied the following:

Below is the current Pakenham line TT, as screenshotted from the PTV website:

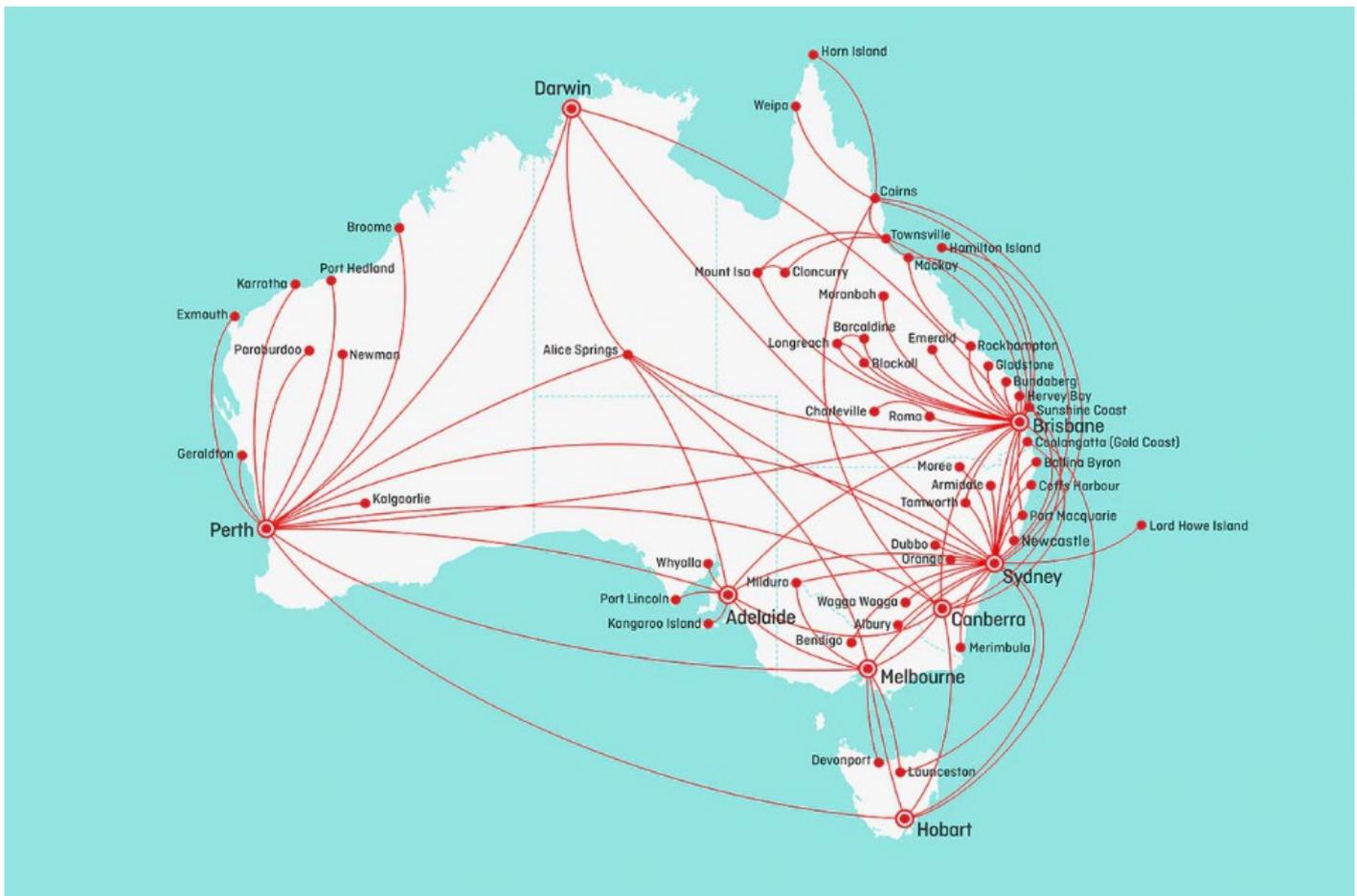
Station	7:48am	7:53am	7:57am	7:58am	8:02am	8:03am	8:09am	8:13am	8:13am	8:16am	8:16am	8:19am	8:21am	8:24am	8:28am
Richmond Station (Richmond)															
South Yarra Station (South Yarra)	7:51am	7:56am	8:00am	8:01am	8:05am	8:06am	8:12am	8:16am	8:16am	8:19am	8:19am	8:22am	8:24am	8:27am	8:31am
Hawkesburn Station (South Yarra)	7:53am	-	-	8:03am	-	8:08am	-	-	-	-	-	8:24am	-	-	8:33am
Toorak Station (Armsdale)	7:55am	-	-	8:05am	-	8:10am	-	-	-	-	-	8:26am	-	-	8:35am
Armadale Station (Armadale)	7:56am	-	-	8:06am	-	8:11am	-	-	-	-	-	8:27am	-	-	8:36am
Malvern Station (Malvern)	7:58am	-	-	8:08am	-	8:13am	-	-	-	-	-	8:29am	-	-	8:38am
Burnley Station (Burnley)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Caulfield Station (Caulfield East)	8:01am	8:03am	8:07am	8:11am	8:12am	8:16am	8:19am	8:23am	8:23am	8:26am	8:26am	8:32am	8:31am	8:35am	8:41am
Carnegie Station (Carnegie)	-	8:05am	8:09am	-	8:14am	-	-	8:25am	-	8:28am	-	-	8:33am	-	-
Murrumbeena Station (Murrumbeena)	-	8:07am	8:11am	-	8:16am	-	-	8:27am	-	8:30am	-	-	8:35am	-	-
Hughesdale Station (Hughesdale)	-	8:09am	8:13am	-	8:18am	-	-	8:29am	-	8:32am	-	-	8:37am	-	-
Oakleigh Station (Oakleigh)	-	8:11am	8:15am	-	8:20am	-	-	8:31am	-	8:34am	-	-	8:39am	-	-
Huntingdale Station (Oakleigh)	-	8:13am	8:17am	-	8:22am	-	-	8:33am	-	8:36am	-	-	8:41am	-	-
Clayton Station (Clayton)	-	8:16am	8:20am	-	8:25am	-	-	8:36am	-	8:39am	-	-	8:44am	-	-
Westall Station (Clayton South)	-	8:19am	8:23am	-	8:28am	-	-	8:39am	-	8:42am	-	-	8:47am	-	-
Springvale Station (Springvale)	-	8:22am	-	-	8:31am	-	-	8:42am	-	-	-	-	8:50am	-	-
Sandown Park Station (Springvale)	-	8:24am	-	-	8:33am	-	-	8:44am	-	-	-	-	8:52am	-	-

So what's all this about Burnley being between Malvern and Caulfield? In reality, Burnley is the junction of the Belgrave/Lilydale and Glen Waverley lines, and certainly has no place on the Pakenham TT!

Stephen Ward provides the answer through Mr Isaacs:

When there were bus replacements on the Up side of Caulfield, the buses actually went to Burnley where passengers would change to trains towards the city. In other words, instead of an express run from Caulfield into the city, passengers have had to endure two changes and a relatively long bus trip. Anyway, this no longer applies and Burnley should have certainly have been deleted from the current Pakenham TTs.

With thanks to Albert Isaacs and Stephen Ward.



Qantas network map for December 2020 (source: Qantas).

About *Table Talk*

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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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