



TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

No. 245, January 2013

ISBN 1038-3697

RRP \$4.95

Published by the Australian Association of Timetable Collectors

www.aattc.org.au

TOP TABLE TALK

Melbourne: Tunnel under city or face rail chaos

From the *Sunday Age*, 2 December 2012, by Farrah Tomazin:

Melbourne's trains will become so overcrowded passengers will be increasingly left behind during peak hour, unless work on an underground city rail tunnel begins within two years. State government documents obtained by the *Sunday Age* reveal that unless work begins soon on the so-called "Melbourne Metro" rail project, several of the city's busiest train lines will come under further strain because the number of passengers will outstrip services. 'In the event of no further infrastructure being provided, all corridors except Sandringham will have significant overcrowding ... by 2020. Moreover, it is anticipated that crowding will be so severe on the Werribee, Sunbury and Dandenong lines some passengers will be unable to board the trains in the critical peak hour,' business case documents reveal.

The long-awaited Melbourne Metro project involves building a nine-km tunnel across the inner city, with five new underground stations between South Kensington and South Yarra: Arden, Parkville, CBD North, CBD South and Domain. The tunnel will in turn link the Sunbury rail line, in Melbourne's north-west, to the Dandenong rail corridor in the outer south-east, allowing an extra 24,000 passengers an hour across the train network.

The Baillieu government regards the project as one of its top infrastructure priorities after the east-west link, an 18-kilometre road connecting the Eastern Freeway and the Western Ring Road. But a business case "concept of operations" report, obtained under freedom-of-information laws, has revealed the urgency of the proposal, which requires state and federal funding to get off the ground.

The Department of Transport's June report warns that without the infrastructure the number of "load breaches" - where there is an average load of more than 798 passengers in a train - will grow over the next seven years. Projections suggest that by 2020 trains will be overcrowded for at least three hours during the morning peak, and on the Werribee, Sunbury and Dandenong lines, demand will exceed 1200 passengers, meaning many commuters would be left behind. The Werribee/Williamstown and Frankston lines will start to face "significant shortfalls" from around 2015. The Craigieburn, Upfield and Sunbury lines will face significant shortfalls by 2016, and the Sandringham line from 2017. Shortfalls on the Dandenong corridor are "immediate" and "will rise to a severe shortfall by 2020".

The documents also show:

■ The rail project "will need to be progressively implemented over the next decade, commencing in the next two years".

■ Part of the plan involves upgrading the Dandenong rail line with longer "nine-car" trains, timetable changes, signalling upgrades and road-rail separations.

■ New branch lines to Rowville and Melbourne Airport (the subject of feasibility studies) are being considered as part of longer term improvements to the network.

■ The underground tunnel will not be able to accommodate freight trains, meaning existing freight services that operate during peak time would have to be re-timed.

Transport Minister Terry Mulder described the Melbourne Metro project as a "city shaping" plan that will "fundamentally change the way our transport network operates". "More frequent trains, more stations and increased capacity will also deliver significant flow-on benefits to the rest of the transport system, it will take pressure off the major arterial roads including West Gate and Monash Freeways," he said.

Opposition transport spokeswoman Fiona Richardson said the government had been too slow to tackle overcrowding. "The Liberal government has attempted to dampen the fires of discontent among commuters by initiating numerous studies into the Doncaster, Rowville and Tullamarine rail links as well as the Melbourne Metro Tunnel. The problem is, commuters can't catch a feasibility study to work and the Liberal government has given absolutely no indication that they plan to actually build any of the rail lines under investigation," Ms Richardson said.



Infrastructure Australia, which makes recommendations to the federal government about funding of major

projects, puts the Melbourne metro rail project at the top of its priority list as one of Australia's most urgently needed projects. The project has been deemed "ready to proceed" and is in the planning approvals stage. Public Transport Victoria says that if planning approval is granted, the start of construction will be contingent on Commonwealth funding, but it is refusing to disclose how much the project is likely to cost.

A similar project for a tunnel from Footscray to Caulfield was proposed by the former Labor government and costed at \$4.5 billion for the first stage. Labor's track was about 17 kms; the Coalition's tunnel is nine kms. About \$90 million in state and federal funds has been allocated so far.

PTV also admits construction will cause some disruption across the city, but the extent will depend on the precise tunnel route and station design. Community feedback will be sought by the government next year.

THE PROBLEM

- Train patronage has grown by 70% in the past 10 years, and 40% in the past five.
- Melbourne's population is expected to reach 5 million by 2025.
- By 2020, trains on all lines will carry 900 to 1200 passengers in peak hour, resulting in "significant overcrowding".

■ Crowding will be so severe on the Werribee, Sunbury and Dandenong lines that some passengers will be let behind.

■ The Werribee/Williamstown and Frankston lines will face "significant shortfalls" – where demand exceeds capacity – around 2015, followed by the Craigieburn, Upfield and Sunbury lines in 2016, and the Sandringham line by 2017.

■ Shortfalls on the Dandenong line are "immediate" and will be severe by 2020.

THE (POSSIBLE) SOLUTION

A nine-km tunnel under Melbourne to link the Sunbury and Dandenong lines. Five new underground stations:

- Domain (under St Kilda Rd in South Yarra)
- CBD South (below Flinders St Station)
- CBD North (below Melbourne Central)
- Parkville (under Grattan St and Royal Parade)
- Arden (Queensberry St)

■ Existing northern and Caulfield rail groups will become four independent corridors, allowing more services on the Craigieburn, Sunbury, Werribee/Williamstown, Upfield, Frankston and Sandringham lines, and longer trains on the Sunbury, Pakenham and Cranbourne lines.

- It would mean an extra 24,000 passengers an hour across the network.

RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

Queensland: Coal and grain contracts

Rio Tinto has split its contracts for the carriage of coal from its Queensland mines. It has awarded a contract to Aurizon (formerly QR National) for 12 million tones of coal from the Clermont mine to Dalrymple Bay near Mackay. It has awarded a contract to Pacific National to haul 8 million tones of coal from Hall Creek and 500,000 tonnes from Kestrel to Dalrymple Bay.

Aurizon and GrainCorp have signed an agreement for haulage of grain commencing in December 2012 and running to November 2019. It provides for up to one million tonnes per year to be hauled from the Roma, Thallon and Goondiwindi regions in Southern Queensland to Fisherman Islands and Pinkenba ports in Brisbane, and from the Emerald, Capella and Mt McLaren regions in Central Queensland to Mackay and Gladstone.

Sydney: Trams to serve Sydney's Eastern suburbs

A \$1.6 billion light rail line will be built between Circular Quay and Sydney's eastern suburbs, reducing congestion in the city, NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell says. The 12km link to Randwick will run down George St, past the Moore Park precinct, Randwick Racecourse, the University of NSW to the Prince of Wales Hospital. Construction will commence in 2014 and it is expected to be completed by 2020. The line is the major new announcement in the NSW government's final 20 year transport master plan, which restates its commitments to the northwest and southwest rail links and the West Connex road. The stretch of George St between Bathurst and Hunter Streets will become a pedestrian and tram only street – this is about 40% of the major artery.



Map from Daily Telegraph, 6 December. The NSW government has now decided to build the lines in one stage.

"This is a once-in-a-generation project to revitalise the centre of Sydney by reducing congestion and offering a fast, attractive public transport option to key locations," Mr O'Farrell said on 13 December. The light rail line, together with a redesigned bus network in the city, would reduce by more than 220 the number of buses entering the CBD every hour of the morning peak. "With the introduction of light rail and the redesigned bus network announced today, we will be able to significantly reduce the number of buses clogging the city's streets

and provide fast and reliable links for people to key destinations like the Prince of Wales Hospital, University of NSW, SCG, Allianz Stadium, Moore Park, Central and Circular Quay," NSW Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian said.

There now seems little hope of Infrastructure NSW's Nick Greiner and Paul Broad's idea of building a \$2 billion bus tunnel under George St instead of light rail.

Full details of the proposed tram routes will be in the February edition of Transit Australia magazine.

Sydney Transport Plan

As well as announcing trams for Sydney, other significant NSW government responses to NSW Infrastructure's recommendations are:

- The government is investigating how additional off-peak services can be provided between Parramatta and the City, starting with the development of the 2013 timetable.
- The government is investigating time savings on the Wollongong and the Central Coast lines. The Transport Minister, Ms Berejiklian said the government was looking to introduce more express services between Sydney and the regions as part of a new timetable, and would consider any other measures to make intercity services faster.
- Upgrades to Town Hall and Wynyard station should be progressed in the medium term to ease passenger congestion and improve train operations.
- The government does not support metro-style train operation between Chatswood and Strathfield. The government will consider removing the station usage fee at Sydney airport stations, but there are significant commercial and funding issues.
- The government supports the development of intermodal freight terminals at Moorebank and also – in the long term – at Eastern Creek.
- The government will identify and preserve a corridor for a Western Sydney Freight line.
- The government will not build a bus tunnel under the CBD.
- CBD bus congestion must be alleviated as a priority through re-design of the Sydney bus network, such as moving routes from York St to the Cahill Expressway, more through routing and more cross-suburban Metrobuses.
- The government will proceed with the West Connex toll motorway connecting the M4 and M5 motorways.

TfNSW "Summer Holiday Timetables" Leaflet

This leaflet (which folds out folds out to 37 x 42 cm double-sided on good quality paper) provides a summary of holiday transport arrangements for the period 15 December 2012 to 28 January 2013. Advice is given for travelling, buying tickets and for CityRail trackwork. The remarkable aspect is that it is truly multi-modal. It gives information about the following operators: CityRail trains, Sydney Buses, Newcastle Buses, Forest Coach Lines, Hillsbus, Busways Blacktown, "Other Operators" (buses), Sydney Ferries, Manly Fast Ferry, Sydney Fast Ferry, "Other Operators" (ferries), Light Rail and Monorail.

CityRail, Countrylink & ARTC: Christmas closedowns

As usual, there were extensive closures of the CityRail network for trackwork during the holiday season, of which the biggest were:

- Hornsby-Chatswood 26 to 30 December.
- Glenfield to Fairfield and Villawood 2 to 18 January.
- Glenfield to Goulburn on each of the first three weekends of January.

Pamphlets were issued, in hard copy and online, for each major closedown, detailing the diversions, and substitute buses.

From 2 until 18 January all weekday Countrylink trains were diverted to travel via the East Hills line, rather than via Strathfield. On weekends, the Melbourne XPTs were replaced by buses between Goulburn and Sydney and v.v., while Canberra trains were substituted completely.

ARTC: Chilcotts Creek loop commissioned

From 17 December a new crossing loop at Chilcotts Creek between Ardglan and Willow Tree at 371-373 km, in the NSW upper Hunter Valley, was commissioned.

ARTC Working Timetables 21 October 2012 and 21 January 2013

Version 2 of the 21 October 2012 ARTC Master Train Plan (aka Working Timetable), Hunter Valley lines only was issued in late November. This seems to be account of the completion of the Minimbah Bank third track. There is an increase of about 30% in the number of paths on the Hunter Valley lines. So far, there does not appear to be a major take-up of these new paths.

A new ARTC Working Timetable will come into effect from 21 January 2013. This takes account of the opening of the South Sydney Freight Line. It was posted on the ARTC website on 20 December and is at www.artc.com.au/Content.aspx?p=161

NSW: NW disruption

A major derailment of a coal train occurred at Boggabri on 28 November. Six wagons were derailed and fell off a bridge. Damage was extensive. The bridge required complete rebuilding. The line was closed until 20 December. Coal and wheat trains and Countrylink passenger trains could not run.

Pacific National: Hunter Valley coal operations

PN's refueling and maintenance facility for coal trains in Greta was opened on 13 December. The facility removes the need for trains to be maintained in Newcastle, removing some train movements. At the opening, chief executive of parent company Asciano said that coal demand is back to record levels in NSW and Queensland.

PN has signed a contract with Whitehaven for the carriage of 16 million tones of coal a year from the proposed Maules Creek mine near Gunnedah. The haulage will commence in 2014 and run for twelve years.

NSW: Newcastle line closure

In contrast to the positive announcements about transport infrastructure for Sydney, on the next day, 14 December, the NSW government announced the closure of the railway line from Wickham to Newcastle from an unspecified date. Trains will be replaced by a "regular, frequent bus service". Significantly, the closure

announcement was included in a statement about land development by the NSW Development Minister, and the Transport Minister has refused to comment on the move. There is no doubt that this is a move inspired by land development companies.

East Coast Very Fast Train: Canberra access

From the *Canberra Times*, 3 December 2012:

The federal government will be asked to consider a very fast train line that travels into the heart of Canberra via a tunnel through Mount Ainslie. The radical plan is one of three options for fast trains into Canberra to be presented this month to Prime Minister Julia Gillard and her infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese by consultants working on a feasibility study for the high-speed rail lines to link Australia's east coast capitals. After tunnelling through the Canberra landmark peak, the line would continue down what is now Ainslie Avenue and terminate in the heart of Civic.

Sources close to the study's reference groups have confirmed that private sector consultants Aecom will also include two other options for the proposed Canberra leg of a high-speed rail system, a station in Mitchell, no further south than EPIC [the showgrounds], and taking the line down the Majura Valley to the airport with the latter options linked to Civic by light rail. The *Canberra Times* understands that some Canberra-based bureaucrats close to the research work are "appalled" by the tunnel option with its expense and potential for years of protest and legal action. But the consultants are also grappling with the "challenging terrain" of the Brindabella Mountains if they are to design a through-line to Melbourne. It looks more likely that a spur line to the national capital with a junction at the head of the Majura Valley and using one of the three Canberra terminus options would be proposed.

The report, the second stage of the Gillard government's "implementation study" into high-speed rail for the east coast, is expected to be made public next month. It will follow up on the work completed in August 2011 that found an east coast network would cost between \$61 billion and \$108 billion. The second phase of the work will contain recommendations for track routes and station locations, an assessment of the commercial and financial viability and funding options for the project, and environmental, social and economic appraisals.

Chris Faulks, of the Canberra Business Council, a key proponent of high-speed rail for the ACT, said Canberra's unusual configuration meant a city-centre station was less important than in other cities. "The optimal option always is that the station should always be in the centre of the city, that's the accepted knowledge base all around the world, in which case the best option would be in the middle of Canberra city," Ms Faulks said. "But there are several things about Canberra that diminish the importance of that. It would be very expensive to get into the city because it would have to go underground. "Also we don't have that defined city centre like Sydney or Melbourne, we have those five nodes and people who come here don't necessarily go to the city centre, they might go to Parliament House or Defence or where other government offices are." Ms Faulks said the council believed the airport would make most sense as a location for a Canberra station. "From our point of view, because we're very keen on the airport having international flights, we think it's imperative that there be a station at the airport," she said. "So you get off an international flight you go down the escalator, get onto

high speed rail and you go to Sydney or Melbourne." And that would have a big impact on the region economically, an absolute game changer for Canberra. "We don't think that Mitchell is the best option and that's because you tend to get a lot of commercial development around stations and it would almost make Mitchell a second city centre, which we don't think is a good idea."

Australasian Rail Association chief executive Bryan Nye said that his organisation had no preferences on Canberra stations. "That's between the ACT government and the airport, but I think the airport's offer to fund a station at a price of \$140 million might be persuasive," Mr Nye said. "We just want to see high-speed rail to Canberra and a commitment to get it underway at the next election."

Pacific National: Greta Train Support Facility

On 30 November PN's Greta Train Support Facility (near Maitland) was commissioned and connected to the Hunter Valley mainline. ARTC SAFE Notice 2012 2-1804 refers.

CityRail: Timetable changes 3 January 2013

Slight amendments to CityRail Western / Blue Mountains timetables apply from 3 January 2013:

- 1553 Chatswood-Emu Plains now terminates at Penrith at 1722
- 1608 Chatswood-Penrith has been extended to Emu Plains arriving at 1738
- 1638 Central-Springwood runs 1 to 3 minutes later Parramatta to Springwood.
- 0716 Penrith-North Sydney extended to St Leonards 0843 and Chatswood 0849.
- 1733 Emu Plains now commences from Penrith at 1740.

Countrylink: Where's Elvis?

If you haven't booked on this year's Countrylink Elvis special it is too late. It runs on 10 January from Sydney Central arriving Parkes at 1552, and returning from Parkes at 0830 on 14 January.

ARTC: South Sydney Freight Line

The SSFL was commissioned on Sunday 23 December. ARTC SAFE Notice 2012 2-1821 refers. The line will be controlled from Junee.

On 27 and 28 December vintage CPH rail motors hired from the railway enthusiast group the Rail Motor Society were scheduled to be used for testing and crew training of the South Sydney Freight Line.

ARTC: North-South mainline

From 3 December a deviation of the main NSW South line between Picton and Tahmoor, from 92 km to 93 km, was commissioned. This bypasses the Redbank tunnel, which could be undermined by nearby coalmining. ARTC SAFE Notice 2012 2-1802 refers.

The final report into deficiencies in the Melbourne-to-Sydney line is now expected around the end of February. This is six months after the report was first due. The inquiry was ordered in August 2011 by Federal Transport Minister Anthony Albanese. It was prompted by a series of incidents on the line, including one where a controller switched a V/Line train with 300 people on board onto a closed track.

A team of Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigators has been examining safety issues and the

quality of the \$750 million of work on the line over three years. Train drivers have said the track is in worse condition than when works began in 2008. Investigators have spoken with drivers who highlighted "the potential for confusion" because multiple speed limits prompted a "high density" of warning signs, with differences between NSW and Victoria. "In general, training, experience and driver professionalism has reduced the safety risk associated with unique state-based rules and procedures," the Bureau reported. "However, a risk remains that operating under multiple rules and procedures has the potential to create driver confusion and, as such, may impact on rail safety." A preliminary report revealed inconsistent speed limits on damaged sections of the Melbourne-to-Sydney rail link could pose a safety risk.

Damage on the Melbourne-Sydney railway line has contributed to a \$290 million write-down this year by ARTC. This is revealed in ARTC's 2012 annual report, and is despite a 24% increase in access revenue from the 8500-kilometre network. In its report, the corporation noted the impairment loss, or asset write-down, was due to the poor condition of the Melbourne-Sydney corridor, which has been blighted by severe speed restrictions and safety concerns since the rail line was converted to standard gauge at the turn of the decade. A corporation spokeswoman said the impairment loss was "a standard accounting practice, and reflects the investment we are making in the entire north-south corridor".

Victoria's Transport Minister Terry Mulder says the botched \$600 million conversion of the line in 2009-10 was costing rail freight operators money and travellers time. "For V/Line passengers, the speed restrictions limiting trains to 60 or 80 kilometres an hour on parts of the Southern Cross to Albury train trip mean inevitable daily delays," Mr Mulder said. "Rail freight operators' transit times are blowing out and becoming less predictable." He called on federal Transport Minister Anthony Albanese to assure Victorians he was serious about restoring the line to much better condition.

V/Line's midday trains from Melbourne to Albury and v.v. were restored from 9 December. However, on that date V/Line issued a flyer indicating possible delays to all trains of up to 25 minutes. The line from Melbourne to Albury was closed again from 27 to 31 December for further work on the track and for Regional Rail Link works near Southern Cross station. Then from 5 until 11 January the midday trains in both directions were again cancelled for ARTC trackwork.

See also the article "A year of living dangerously" in the January issue of the "Times", page 16.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Timetable publication

Metro Trains produced 680,000 copies of new timetable booklets for the 18 November timetable change, as follows:

- Pakenham/Cranbourne 120,000
- Frankston 100,000
- Werribee/Williamstown/Sunbury 100,000
- Belgrave/Lilydale 100,000
- Glen Waverley 100,000
- Craigieburn/Upfield 80,000
- Alamein 80,000.

Victoria: Grain lines review

The Victorian government has responded to the December 2011 report from the Grain Logistics Taskforce. There is in principle agreement with most of the recommendations but little commitment in the way of

additional funding for the required rail upgrades. After several years of poor harvest, the 2010/11 Victorian grain harvest was a record at 7.1 million tonnes. This placed significant pressure on the grain supply chain, particularly for exports, with around 30% of that harvest still in storage in October 2011. As a result this pressure the Government established a Grain Logistics Taskforce in August 2011 to recommend improvements to the efficiency and capacity of Victoria's grain storage and handling system including the rail and road networks.

The Taskforce considered that the grain supply chain is currently performing well compared to this time last year and that progress has been made in a number of areas, by both industry and government, to improve the smooth functioning of the supply chain. It is anticipated they will continue to meet at six monthly intervals or as needed. It will meet again in February 2013. The report recommended that the Department of Transport work with track managers, rail operators and grain companies to review and assess the merits of funding the rail infrastructure issues raised.

A number of 'quick wins' were identified and have been implemented including the reopening of the Dimboola to Rainbow railway line, improved safe working or operational arrangements at a number of locations, and work by the DoT to facilitate alternative freight train operating arrangements during the construction of the Regional Rail Link. It says a number of other proposed infrastructure improvements which would need to be funded require further evidence for a business case and further discussion with rail operators and customers.

The upgrade of the Geelong Grain Loop and associated works to improve access to the Loop is one immediate priority now being actioned in conjunction with the grain industry, V/Line and the Australian Rail Track Corporation. They will spend \$5.6 million upgrading the rail loop at the Geelong grain terminal and signalling in Geelong and Dunolly. The loop can currently only handle grain wagons with an axle load of 19 tonnes - well below the 23 tonnes/axle rating for the lines leading into the terminal. By increasing the track rating from 19 tonnes to 23 tonnes, more grain could be delivered to the port by rail, reducing the number of trucks on the road. The upgrade would allow an extra 16 tonnes of grain to be loaded on to each grain wagon. The higher payloads applied to the main lines controlled by the ARTC. Many of the state's branch lines still cannot carry heavier loads. The funding would also be used to automate signalling systems at Dunolly and Geelong, speeding up rail deliveries of grain into the GrainCorp terminal. Automated signalling meant GrainCorp could run an extra 500 train deliveries to Geelong each year.

V/Line Gippsland line services

The V/Line timetable of 18 November revived the old timetabling practice of Gippsland line trains starting from and terminating at Flinders St station, rather than at Southern Cross - albeit only in regard to one train. The 0530 ex Traralgon terminates at Flinders St at 0730. This then forms the 0742 commencing from Flinders St to Traralgon.

V/Line: Geelong line services

A V/Line spokeswoman confirmed on 26 November that the State government had not yet accepted its proposal to run off-peak Melbourne-Geelong trains every 20 minutes.

Victoria: Holiday services

Extra **NightRider** bus services ran on the Lilydale; Knox/Belgrave; Dandenong; and Frank ton/Mornington

routes on the four weekends from 1-23 December, with services every 15 minutes between 0200 and 0330. All other NightRider routes operated to their normal timetable, with services every 30 minutes from 0130. NightRider services depart from City Square on Swanston St.

Public transport across Victoria was free on **Christmas Day**. Metro Trains ran a Sunday timetable. Yarra Trams ran a Holiday Sunday timetable (Sunday timetable with weekday start and finish times). The City Circle service did not operate. V/Line ran a Sunday timetable with limited coach trips. Bookings were required for long-range services (Bairnsdale, Swan Hill, Shepparton, Albury).

Travel was also free from 1800 on **New Year's Eve** until the first normal scheduled service the next day. On V/Line, free travel applied on trains arriving, and departing from, Melbourne after 1800. There was also free travel on the first train departing Melbourne to each regional destination on New Year's Day. Metro Trains ran a normal weekday timetable with more trains from 1800 including all night trains. Yarra Trams operated to a Holiday Saturday timetable (Saturday timetable with weekday start and finish times) with more trams from 1800. All-night trams ran on all routes except Routes 24, 30, 79, 82 and City Circle. Reduced services operated into Docklands to accommodate events. Normal Night Rider services operated on NYE, with buses departing from Collins St. On V/Line normal Monday train and bus services ran. Some services had added capacity. A special timetable applied for private bus routes.

Victoria: Sunbury passengers

Some Bendigo line commuters have started a petition calling for Sunbury passengers to be stopped from boarding V/Line trains. The petition to V/Line, Public Transport Victoria and the state government is being handed out on V/Line trains. Metro began services from Sunbury on 18 November. The State government promised Sunbury commuters access to both V/Line and Metro trains.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Use of Southern Cross station

Metro Trains Melbourne has sought access to platforms 15 and 16 at Melbourne's Southern Cross station. These are new platforms built as part of the Regional Rail link project. They will be unused until 2016 when the project has progressed further. Metro and V/Line approached the Department of Transport last year with a proposal to share the two platforms until then. Metro would use them to augment services from the northern and western suburbs. However, the department rejected the plan as too costly. Instead the idea of Metro running trains into dead-end platform 8 has been considered. This, however, would be undesirable because these trains could not reach Flinders St and because Metro trains would have to cross the path of V/Line trains to access the platform.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Delays

The latest weird reason for disruption to train services in Victoria is this: On Thursday 29 November a set of runaway balloons became wedged in the overhead wires between Flinders St and Southern Cross stations.

V/Line: Network condition

As at 8 November 2012 the following portions of the V/Line freight network were "booked out of service due to track condition" (and lack of commercial incentive to repair them):

- Barnes-Moulamein (in southern NSW)

- Manangatang-Robinvale
- Rainbow-Yaapeet
- Eaglehawk-Inglewood
- Maryborough-Ararat
- Murrayville-Paninya
- Shepparton-Dookie
- Swan Hill-Piangil
- Toolamba-Echuca.

TasRail: Freight contracts

TasRail has signed a major tenancy agreement with transport and logistics specialists Toll Group to become the anchor tenant at the new Brighton new intermodal freight terminal, north of Hobart. The agreement includes a long-term sub-lease that will see Toll commit to a substantial capital investment in new warehouse facilities, and a long-term freight haulage agreement that will see Toll increase its usage of rail transport. The Brighton Transport Hub is designed to help TasRail increase freight volumes due to the terminal facilitating longer trains with reduced shunting and a more efficient interface with customers. It will consolidate freight, significantly changing the way it is moved between the north and south of Tasmania. TasRail will now focus on finalising plans for its relocation from Macquarie Point (Hobart), with the transition to full operations at the Brighton Transport Hub subject to the construction of Toll's warehouse and freight handling facilities.

In late November TasRail signed a new, long term contract with one of its major customers, MMG Rosebery. This secures current rail freight volumes for up to ten years, and includes logistical support arrangements including bulk handling and storage, and direct ship loading at the Port of Burnie. TasRail moved around 200,000 tonnes of mineral concentrates for MMG Rosebery last year, operating eight services a week between Primrose and Burnie. The Rosebery mine has operated continuously since 1936 and produces zinc, lead and copper concentrate and gold. Concentrates are transported to the port of Burnie by rail where they are shipped in bulk carriers to smelters in Hobart, Port Pirie, and internationally.

Hobart Light Rail proposed

Glenorchy is the best choice for the northern terminus of a proposal for Light Rail to Hobart's northern suburbs. The review acknowledged its potential benefits including reliable travel times and a reduction in road congestion. However it raised concerns that some capital and operating costs were not factored in. It also said patronage on the line was forecast to be low and that significant community changes such as higher housing density along the rail line and a reduction in car-friendly developments would be needed to increase passenger numbers. Tasmanian Sustainable Transport Minister Nick McKim has asked the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources to work on a new business case for Stage One to submit for Commonwealth funding consideration

South Australia: G & W freight

Genesee & Wyoming Australia has signed a rail haulage agreement with WPG Resources to transport 3.3 million tons per year of hematite iron ore from WPG's Peculiar Knob mine. GWA plans to operate unit trains of iron ore from a rail siding near Wirrida on the Tarcoola-Darwin rail line, to a new bulk export facility in Port Pirie. The haulage service is expected to start in the second quarter of 2012 and continue for a minimum of five years, and it may be extended depending on the development of certain nearby iron ore deposits. To provide the above rail haulage service, GWA will buy

nine new, 4,400-horsepower locomotives and will make certain other rolling stock and facilities investments of approximately \$67 million. When the iron ore mine is shipping at full capacity, GWA expects the new contract to generate total annual revenues of approximately \$50 million. These transactions are contingent on final approval from the SA government of development of the mine and port infrastructure.

G & W has signed an agreement with Carpentaria Exploration for the transport of five million tonnes pa of magnetite concentrate from near Broken Hill to Port Pirie.

Perth: Vision or wishful thinking?

WA Opposition leader Mark McGowan has announced plans to overhaul Perth's rail network and build a new Metronet system to reduce traffic congestion, should Labor win the state election in March. Key features include:

- Airport line, with stations at Airport West, Perth Airport and Forrestfield
- South Circle line connecting Thornlie station to the Mandurah line, with new stations at Nicholson Rd and Ranford Rd
- North Circle route connecting the Joondalup Line (at Balcatta) to the Ellenbrook line (at Noranda), with new stations at Balcatta, Wanneroo Rd, Mirrabooka Ave and Alexander Drive.
- Extension of the Clarkson line to Yanchep, with new stations to be determined
- Extension of the Armadale line to Byford
- New stations on the Mandurah line.

Transwa: Christmas

No Transwa services operated on Christmas Day.

Fortescue Metals Group

Fortescue Metals Group has stepped up a search for a potential buyer of its large WA rail and port network. A possible buyer might be Aurizon (until recently called QR National), which could combine the FMG network with future projects in the Pilbara including a proposed rail line for junior miners such as Atlas.

NT/WA: Railway mooted to the Kimberleys

A new railway across the top of Australia linking Kununurra in the remote east Kimberley region with Darwin is said to be under consideration, although it must be considered unlikely. Federal Minister for Regional Australia Simon Crean backed the need for a new rail line connecting to Darwin's port to realise the food bowl potential of northern Australia. NT Chief Minister Terry Mills said he had discussed with Mr Crean whether the federal government would pay for a new northern rail corridor to Darwin, as part of joint talks on the expansion of the Ord irrigation scheme across the border from the east Kimberley into the NT. But Mr Crean said he hoped private enterprise would fund any new rail link, as corporations such as Chinese property development company Shanghai Zhongfu prepare to turn remote bush country into vast irrigated sugar cane plains with a \$700 million investment.

Recommended reading: BITRE reports

TrainLine 1 is a joint report by the Australasian Railway Association and the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics. It provides an overview of rail freight performance, railway infrastructure standards and freight haulage between 2007–08 and 2009–10. The report is split into three sections that provide freight

market, freight train and track indicators. *TrainLines* can be accessed at

http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/2012/train_001.aspx

Understanding Australia's Urban Railways is another recent publication by the BITRE. It provides an overview of the urban passenger and freight railways in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. For passenger rail, the report explores service provision; patronage trends; recent and planned network expansion; and the key challenges facing each system. The report also examines the main characteristics of each city's rail freight network including: the extent of the freight/passenger rail interface; recent and planned network expansion; and the principal freight task on each system. The report is at http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/2012/files/report_131.pdf

KiwiRail: Dismal long-distance passenger train patronage

Low tourism in the Christchurch area which has still not recovered from the late 2011-early 2012 earthquakes, may impact on the *Coastal Pacific* train between Christchurch and Picton. It might be suspended during the winter. Patronage on the *Northern Explorer*, the revamped Wellington-Auckland train, has not met KiwiRail's expectations. A decision on the future of the *Capital Connection* Wellington-Palmerston North has been deferred as the train may be transferred to be the responsibility of the Wellington Regional Council.

China for speed

The world's longest high-speed rail route, from Beijing to Guangzhou in China's south opened for business on 26 December. Trains, at an average speed of 300 km per hour, will slash journey times from 22 hours to eight hours. The December opening means the 2,298 km route, with 35 stops including major cities Zhengzhou, Wuhan and Changsha, will be operational for China's Lunar New Year holiday period, in which hundreds of millions of people travel across the country in the world's largest annual migration. China's high-speed rail network is booming. Only established in 2007, it has quickly become the largest in the world, with 8,358 km of track at the end of 2010 and expected to almost double to 16,000 km by 2020.

Austria: Access to train operating data

In a landmark ruling, the European Court of Justice has decreed that Austrian infrastructure manager ÖBB Infrastructure acted unlawfully in preventing open-access operator Westbahn from accessing real-time data on the train movements of other operators. Prior to its launch last December, Westbahn had planned to provide real-time onboard passenger information about connecting trains, but ÖBB Infrastructure refused to supply any data on other operators. Westbahn subsequently filed a complaint with Austria's rail regulator which referred the case to the European Court of Justice.

ÖBB Infrastructure argued that it provided all the data it was legally obliged to offer Westbahn, and that the company should seek separate agreements with the operators concerned if it required more detailed information about their train services. The regulator sought a preliminary ruling to answer two legal questions. First, to establish whether information on main connecting services, in addition to scheduled departure times, should include delays or cancellations, including those affecting the services of other operators. Secondly, whether operators needed to make real-time

information about their services available to other operators, in so far as those services constitute main connecting services.

The court ruled that the infrastructure manager is obliged to release and provide real-time data on train movements to other operators for the purpose of their own operations, including information on delays and cancellations, to ensure passengers are correctly informed of the traffic situation regardless of operator. The Court explicitly denied the claim by ÖBB

Infrastructure that train information, which is displayed on information panels and screens in stations, is in any way confidential.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Roger Wheaton, *Age* (Melbourne), *Australian*, *Canberra Times*, *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), *International Railway Journal*, *Macedon Ranges Weekly*, *Railway Digest*, *Rail Express*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Transit Australia*, www.railpage.com.au and www.vicsig.net for Railway news.

EDITORIAL

What a strange edition this issue is! It reports some extremely positive news – the decision by the NSW government to reintroduce trams in Sydney's CBD and Eastern suburbs. The positive theme extends to proposals for much needed expansion of Melbourne's suburban railway system, and – even vaguer – proposals for an East Coast Very Fast Train. But then this issue also includes the melancholy, reactionary decision by the NSW government to close the railway into central Newcastle. When everywhere else in the world understands the importance of good public transport to urban regeneration, the developers in Newcastle cannot see past an immediate, quick return on a dollar.

FERRY NEWS

Sydney ferries

The now "usual" Manly Ferry summer timetable was introduced on 15-December. One unusual feature, however, is a 50 minute gap in service just at the end of the morning peak hour. There is a departure from circular Quay at 0810 then not until 0900, from Manly at 0850 then not until 0940. There is no such a gap in the afternoon. Special timetables also operated on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve (all-night service) and New Year's Day. Services are suspended during the Yacht Race start and the New Year Eve fireworks.

Melbourne ferries

A "city loop" ferry service began on 7 December connecting World Trade Centre, South Wharf, Southgate and Federation Square. The service is being provided by WTC Wharf and owned and operated by Hamish Turner with his restored riverboat Grower, which dates from 1924. There will be trips every half an hour from 1600 to 1900 on Fridays and on weekends

between 1200 and 1800, with a cost for adults \$5 and children \$2. The Yarra loop service follows the successful "float to the footy service", where boat rides to and from WTC Wharf to the MCG were offered for \$10 during the football season. The "city loop" is the first of three planned routes in the area.

The State government is spending more than \$300,000 on a feasibility study for a ferry commuter service from Werribee South to Docklands, with possible stops at Point Cook, Altona and Williamstown.

Perth ferries

The operating hours of Transperth's South Perth ferry service have been extended during summer. From 16 December until 30 April, the ferry will operate for an extra three hours Mondays to Saturdays until 2224, and an extra hour on Sundays and public holidays until 2024. There is no change to morning start times - 0650 weekdays and 0750 on weekends.

Thanks to Geoff Lambert and the *Age* for Ferry news.

ODD SPOT

The 2013 European train timetables were introduced on 9 December 2012. There are very big changes to services in eastern Austria as a consequence of the opening of the first section of the Wien (Vienna) Hauptbahnhof (Main station). One local service is now through routed from Deutschkreutz via Vienna to Bratislava. Such is the closeness of international borders in this area, that this local service, on its short run, starts in Austria, transits a corner of Hungary, runs through Austria again, then terminates in Slovakia! And

such is the present international situation, that there are no border checks or delays.

West of Vienna, a new high speed railway was opened to St. Polten on this date. The new line has one intermediate station, Tullerfeld, at which one train an hour stops. Westbound, this is a train of ÖBB, Austrian Federal Railways. However, eastbound, it is a train of the new private access operator, Westbahn! At the least, this must make for interesting ticketing arrangements.

About *Table Talk*

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

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Membership of the AATTC includes monthly copies of the *Times*, *Table Talk*, the Distribution List of timetables, and the monthly Auction catalogues. The membership fee is \$60 (Adult) and \$36 (Junior) pa. Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Officer at dbmclean@powerup.com.au.