



TABLE TALK

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REPLACEMENT FEBRUARY TABLE TALK AVAILABLE

The February edition of *Table Talk* was misprinted by our printer. Replacement PDF or paper copies are available to members. If you would like to take advantage of this offer contact the Rail Editor on abvi.iinet.net.au.

RAIL NEWS

Queensland Rail Traveltrain: Temporary Tilt Train replacement

Queensland Rail Traveltrain is refurbishing its two electric Tilt Trains. This will commence from 15 March and take until mid 2016. QR states this will provide a significant overhaul of the mechanical, electrical and safety systems, and refresh the interiors. While this is being carried out, half of the schedules will be maintained by a replacement diesel locomotive hauled train on a slower schedule with reduced capacity and no Business class.

- The Brisbane-Rockhampton train on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays will depart Brisbane at the usual time of 1100, but arrive in Rockhampton at 2125 - 2 hours and 55 minutes later than the normal time of 1830. (The Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays northbound will operate normally).
- The Rockhampton-Brisbane train on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays will depart Rockhampton at the usual time of 0710 but arrive in Brisbane at 1745 - 3 hours and 5 minutes later than the usual time of 1440. (The Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays southbound will operate normally).
- The Brisbane-Bundaberg train on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays will depart Brisbane 35 minutes earlier than normal at 1620 (instead of 1655) and arrive in Bundaberg at 2230 - a deceleration of 1 hour, 40 minutes. It appears also that the Tuesdays and Sundays services will not be extended to Rockhampton. (The Mondays and Thursdays trains will operate normally).
- The Bundaberg-Brisbane train on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays will depart at the usual time of 0515 and arrive in Brisbane at 1135 - 1 hour 45 minutes later than normal. It appears that there will be no Bundaberg-Brisbane train on Wednesday mornings, but there will be one on Saturdays. (The Tuesdays and Fridays trains will operate normally).

There also appears to be a fair amount of empty working.

The temporary timetable is at

www.queenslandrailtravel.com.au/RailServices/Documents/Tilt_Train/RTT_Diesel_Timetable_Booklet_A4_LR.pdf

Queensland Rail Traveltrain: Cyclone Marcia 20 February

Category 5 tropical cyclone Marcia disrupted all Queensland Rail Traveltrain passenger trains along the coastal route on and after 20 February. All passenger trains were cancelled.

Replacement buses sometimes operated, but often this was not possible. Given the size of the system, the effects of cancelled trains meant it was some days before timetables returned to normal. Even the Westlander was terminated before descending the Toowoomba Range and the 150th QR anniversary special steam train was delayed. Speed restrictions remained between Gladstone and Rockhampton at the beginning of March.

Queensland Rail CityTrain: significant closures

Trains on the Ipswich-Rosewood line are often being replaced by buses late at night for construction of the new train depot at Wulkuraka.

The Gold Coast line will be closed for the weekend of 13-15 March for overhead wire replacement, a power upgrade, crossover installation at Yeerongpilly, level crossing upgrades and track maintenance.

East Coast High Speed Rail

The idea that will not die, East Coast High Speed Rail, has been revived again. The Federal Minister for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb, is reported to be preparing a submission to be taken to Cabinet mid-year.

ARTC: Hunter Valley closedown

The next scheduled closure of the Hunter Valley network for civil engineering works, will be from 9 to 13 March. As usual, coal trains will be cancelled and NSW Train Link trains to NW NSW replaced by buses.

ARTC: Port Botany upgrade

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) commissioned the last sections of the Port Botany line upgrade (Stage Two) over the holiday period. The \$145 million project delivered the major signalling components required to bring the entire project, including the Enfield Staging Yards, to full capability. By replacing the signalling that was nearing its end of life, with ARTC infrastructure, it finalises the separation of the ARTC metropolitan freight network from the Sydney Trains network.

The project included:

- Major reconfiguration and signalling of Port Botany yard reducing congestion and increasing capacity
- A train staging area at Enfield, to hold and re-sequence trains away from the port
- Additional signalling to effectively extend double tracks from Cooks River to Mascot

- Complete separation of signalling systems from Sydney Trains passenger operations
- Dedicated network control with operated from ARTC's Junee Control Centre.

Final works to close off the Port Botany project are expected to be complete by mid-2015.

Transport for NSW: Freight WTT 21 February 2015

A new Working Timetable for freight trains in the Sydney area has been introduced by Transport for NSW - Weekdays from 23 February and Weekends from 21 February. (February *Table Talk* recorded that a new WTT will be introduced by ARTC from 22 February.)

Sydney Trains: South Coast line

Since Monday 23 February, a new all-stations train has departed Coniston on weekdays at 0601 arriving at Thirroul at 0623 to connect with the 0629 Thirroul to Central train.

Crisis looms for Sydney train commuters by Jacob Saulwick, Sydney Morning Herald, 16 February 2015

Major corridors in Sydney's rail system will be overloaded within five years, the NSW government's own analysis shows, with commuters throughout the city regularly confronting trains too crowded to board. After decades of urban development and underinvestment, the Western Line between the CBD and Penrith is looming as the big crisis point for the city's train system, regardless of which party wins government next month. Confidential analysis shows the government's own forecasts predict commuters from as far as Blacktown will be unable to get a seat into the city and trains will be overloaded by the time they get to Parramatta.

Documents obtained using freedom of information laws also show the government is assuming that by 2021 all seats will be filled on morning Illawarra line trains from as far south as Sutherland, and there is a risk commuters from stations such as Oatley and Mortdale will be unable to board trains. Inner west trains could also be too full to pick up passengers at Newtown and Macdonaldtown, the analysis shows. And the document shows the number of people forced to change trains to get to their destination is expected to increase about 80% by 2021, putting huge pressure on already-overcrowded city stations.

The state government's election pitch is to fund a massive expansion in the rail network using the proceeds of the privatisation of electricity assets. The Labor opposition has not stated its transport policy. The government's expansion would extend the \$8.3 billion North West Rail Link, which is under construction, through the city via a new harbour crossing and connect it to the Bankstown line at Sydenham. But this series of projects, to cost about \$20 billion, would not address the most congested artery in the rail network.

Transport for NSW's Sydney's Rail Future 2021 Demand Assessment shows the Bankstown line has the most spare capacity of all big rail lines between the city and Sydney's west. The government says that by removing Bankstown line trains from the City Circle, and extending them across the harbour on the new line, space would emerge for extra services on the Inner West line and from Campbelltown and East Hills. But this would do little to enhance capacity on the Western Line, which emerges clearly as the biggest crisis point in Sydney's train system.

The document obtained by Fairfax Media shows patronage on the Western line is expected to increase 4.5% a year until 2021, the fastest growth on the network. This is followed by the Northern line (3.7%) between Epping and Strathfield and the Airport & East Hills line (3.3%).

The documents show the average load on Western line services arriving at Parramatta would be more than 1400 passengers a train. It is difficult to run services on time when trains carry more than 1200 passengers because people take a long time to get on and off carriages in the crush. Punctuality figures released last week show the Western line, Sydney's busiest, is already struggling to cope. The line recorded the city's lowest punctuality figure last year at 92.2%, just above the government's 92% target and below the overall rate of 94.7%.

As well as the new harbour crossing, slated to cost more than \$10 billion, the government has promised more than \$1 billion of works for a "western Sydney rail upgrade", which it says should allow more trains to run on the Western line. Transport for NSW says the upgrades will include new signalling systems between Westmead and Granville, track improvements at Homebush, new "turn-backs" at St Marys, and a new train control system. But it is understood there is still much scepticism within the department about whether the upgrades will produce the stated benefits.

Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian said the western Sydney rail upgrades, combined with the second harbour crossing, would produce 60% more capacity on the overall rail network. "One thing is very clear – the do-nothing scenario is simply not an option," Ms Berejiklian said. "Labor left this city in a complete mess and that is why the NSW government laid out its plans in Sydney's Rail Future and continues to deliver on its promises."

Labor leader Luke Foley does not yet have a transport policy, though he has said he would announce one this month.

The analysis obtained by Fairfax Media includes the operation of the North West Rail Link, scheduled to open in 2019. Transport for NSW says passengers who use the Western line will shift to the new north west stations. "Thousands of customers in the morning peak will stop using the Western line and instead use the North West Rail Link from places like Seven Hills, Blacktown and the Richmond branch – because it will be faster to get to where they're going, particularly when the second harbour crossing is complete," a spokeswoman said. And the analysis predicts a huge increase in the number of people changing from one train to another. By 2021, it is expected that there will be 107,000 "interchange" movements, up from about 60,000 in 2011.

Melbourne Metro Rail Authority

On 16 February Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan, announced the establishment of the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority. Funding of \$40 million was committed to establish the Authority and start work on the project as soon as possible. The Authority will oversee immediate planning works, complete development of the Reference Design and undertake detailed site investigations. Project consultation and a business case update will commence immediately. An Expression of Interest will be released in 2016 with major construction expected to commence in 2018. The project includes five new underground stations to be located at Arden, Parkville, CBD North, CBD South and Domain, providing access to the university and hospital precinct, and to major employment centres in Parkville and St Kilda Rd. The north-south underground railway will link the Sunbury and Cranbourne/Pakenham lines.

Public Transport Victoria Chairman Ian Dobbs welcomed plans by the new Victorian government to build a new Metro rail tunnel through the CBD, but says more is needed in the shorter term to "buy some time" and alleviate strain across the network. Mr Dobbs said there were "a whole lot of different pressures that will emerge on the rail system in the next few years" that, without the necessary investment,

would result in passengers being increasingly left behind on stations at peak periods. There are places like the track between Clifton Hill and Jolimont that are going to be overcrowded really quickly - as in, the next three to four years - and we won't be able to run any more trains on those tracks," Mr Dobbs said in an interview with the *Sunday Age* (published on 22 February). "There are also other bits of the system like the Werribee line, the northern group of services, or the Dandenong line itself, where such is the growth that it's generating significant peak-hour pressures. The tunnel is not the only way of dealing with that - one of the things that we do need to move to is high-capacity signalling."

High-capacity in-cab signalling would allow trains to be run more efficiently across the network. But while the technology is used in dozens of cities around the world, it has not yet been introduced in Australia. Mr Dobbs said high-capacity signalling was a "big technical jump - like going from a Tiger Moth to an Airbus 380". But he said it would give the state the ability to run "more trains, more reliably ... closer together".

Mr Dobbs warned there were several challenges involved - digging beneath Melbourne's Yarra River; cutting through Swanston St; navigating the city's electricity grid - but said: "If London can do it, New York can do it, and Paris can do it, we can damn well do it - and we will."

Melbourne: Level crossing removal

The Victorian government has created an authority to remove level crossings in Melbourne. The Andrews government wants to have 20 level crossings removed in its first term in office and ultimately 50 level crossings will be removed in eight years. Melbourne has an unusually high number of level crossings compared to other cities and they constitute half of the RACV's worst traffic spots in metropolitan Melbourne. Five level crossings were removed across Victoria in 2014 as part of an ongoing plan to eliminate delays for motorists and to prevent accidents. The next level crossings to be removed are Main Rd, St Albans, Blackburn Rd, Blackburn, Burke Rd, Glen Iris, and North Rd, Ormond. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$5-6 billion.

An unconfirmed report is that there will be a five week closedown of a portion of the busy Frankston line from Christmas 2016 to late January 2017 for work to remove the level crossing at North Road, Ormond.

V/Line: Regional Rail Link opening delayed

The second, and final, stage of the Regional Rail Link will open on Sunday 21 June. This is two months after the planned opening in April. The delay is because of a shortage of V/Line rolling stock, while new VLocity DMUs are still being delivered. This stage of the RRL is from Deer Park Junction (west of Sunshine) to Manor Junction (south-west of Werribee). Geelong line V/Line trains will use the new route avoiding the existing lines used by suburban trains. It is expected that the weekday daytime frequency of Geelong trains will be improved to every 20 minutes. The new line will also serve the very fast growing south-west suburbs of Melbourne with new stations at Tarneit and Wyndham Vale. The \$4.3 billion, 47 km, RRL has been the biggest public transport project built in Australia in recent years. The second stage was physically completed in December, and since then there has been intensive driver training and testing.

The delayed opening of the RRL will also delay from April until 21 June new timetables to be introduced for Metro Trains Melbourne, Yarra Trams and buses.

V/Line: Langwarrin station

Public Transport Victoria is conducting public consultation on possible re-opening of Langwarrin station on the Stony Point line between Leawarra and Baxter.

V/Line: Avalon Air Show 27 Feb - 1 March

Graphs of the Geelong line showing regular V/Line trains, additional V/Line trains for the Avalon Air Show, and Metro Trains (as far as Werribee) are at www.vicsig.net/passenger/operation/airshow2015

V/Line: Temporary closure of the Gippsland line

Trains on the Gippsland line between Traralgon and Bairnsdale will be replaced by buses from 28 March to 13 April. This includes during Easter school holidays when train patronage is usually lower than normal. Works to be undertaken include the replacement of the Latrobe River bridge near Kilmany, track renewal at Rosedale, Sale and Bairnsdale, upgrades to various level crossings, and replacement of 27,000 wooden sleepers with concrete.

Victoria: Mildura line standardization.

The new Victorian government has committed to standardising the Mildura line. Premier Daniel Andrews, along with Agriculture Minister Jaala Pulford and Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan, announced in Mildura on 17 February that the government would commit \$30 million to stage one of the Murray Basin Rail Project with \$5 million expended this financial year to conduct pre-construction safety and maintenance works. The Ministers said that the project will standardise rail freight services in Northern Victoria and allow larger trains to carry more product with each trip. This will increase the capacity and reliability of the Mildura rail line and make rail freight more cost-effective, supporting primary producers and businesses across northern Victoria, they said. There was no mention of any return of passenger services rail in the announcement.

TasRail: Bauxite contract

TasRail has been selected by Australian Bauxite Ltd to provide transport for the proposed Bald Hill bauxite mine. TasRail will operate up to six new rail services between Conara and Bell Bay each week. The bauxite will be hauled in covered bulk containers utilising the existing intermodal wagon fleet, beginning this year. By utilising the existing rail network TasRail estimates that it has removed the need for at least 250 additional truck movements per week (13,000 per year) on the Midlands and East Tamar Highways and through the Launceston CBD.

Adelaide Metro: Seaford and Tonsley line timetable 16 February

With a new timetable from Monday 16 February, frequency on the Tonsley line has been increased to half hourly throughout the day. It was formerly half hourly in the peaks and hourly between the peaks Monday to Friday. There are an additional twelve services on weekdays. The Tonsley line still only operates on weekdays. Trains now depart Adelaide every 30 minutes from 0642 to 1842 and from Tonsley every 30 minutes 0709 to 1939 Mondays to Fridays. This increased frequency of Tonsley trains enables additional Seaford line trains to run express between Adelaide and Woodlands Park. Now, as well as peak express running, every second Seaford off-peak weekday line train does so.

In the year since 23 February 2014, when the line was extended from Tonsley to Seaford and when the first electric trains were introduced, patronage on the Seaford line totalled 4.18 million passengers (an average of almost 15,000 people each weekday). Fourteen electric trains have now been delivered and commissioned on the Adelaide Metro network. There are still eight units to come. From mid-

2015 Seaford will operate with a completely electric fleet. As new electric trains are deployed to the Seaford and Tonsley lines, all remaining 3000-series diesel trains will be gradually allocated to Gawler and Outer Harbor services.

Not full time

The preceding item prompts a review of suburban railway services in Australia and NZ which do not operate full-time:

Sydney: The **Cumberland line** from Campbelltown to Schofields operates every 30 minutes Mondays to Fridays during the day only. However, most of this route is also served by other trains operating to/from the City. The only unique part of the Cumberland line is the direct connection from Merrylands to Harris Park, which is about one km.

In the current timetable, there are three weekday counter-peak services which run from the City Circle to **Liverpool** via Regents Park or vice versa (rather than the usual routes via Bankstown or Granville). These are at 0733 ex Museum and at 1458 and 1528 from Liverpool.

There is one train in the weekday morning peak which runs through from **Carlingford** (at 0659) to Central (0739). All other trains on this branch are only to/from the junction station of Clyde.

Melbourne: **Werribee** line trains operate via "the straight" between Altona Junction and Laverton, 9 km, during the day Mondays to Fridays only. These operate every 20 minutes in the off-peak, more frequently in the peak. In the evenings and at weekends trains operate via the Altona loop. However, at all times there are plenty of V/Line passenger trains via "the straight". But this will cease when the Regional Rail Link opens on 21 June, when V/Line trains will be diverted to the RRL.

Brisbane: The **Doomben** branch 3.4 km from Eagle Junction, operates on Mondays to Saturdays during the day only. Services are every 30 minutes on Mondays to Fridays and at 60 minute frequency on Saturdays.

Adelaide: The **Tonsley** branch, 3.9 km from the junction station of Woodlands Park, operates on Mondays to Fridays during the day only, at a frequency of 30 minutes. Frequency was improved from 60 minutes on 16 February following electrification.

Auckland: The final section of the Western line from Swanson to **Waitakere**, 3.8 km, has a 30 minute frequency on Mondays to Fridays. But this section has no trains on weekends. On Saturdays, a substitute bus operates, but this does not operate on Sundays. Electrification of the Auckland suburban system is approaching completion. On the Western line electrification will extend only to Swanson. The final section – on which there is, in fact, very little patronage - will be closed to passengers. This may occur as soon as April.

Wellington: The **Melling** branch, 3 km from Melling Branch Junction, operates on Mondays to Fridays during the day only, at a frequency of 60 minutes.

Adelaide Metro: Track closures

The Outer Harbor and Grange lines were closed over the Adelaide Cup Day (Labour Day) long weekend from Friday night 6 March until Tuesday 10 March. Substitute buses replaced trains. The closure was for "crucial track maintenance, pedestrian subway and signalling works".

SA: New mineral railway?

Oz Minerals has proposed to the South Australian government that the company construct a railway between its copper-gold mines at Prominent Hill and Carrapateena north of Port Augusta in northern SA.

TransPerth: Late night trains withdrawn

From 6 April the 0115 and 0215 trains from Perth on Friday and Saturday nights (Saturday and Sunday mornings) will be withdrawn due to poor patronage. The last trains will then depart from Perth:

- Joondalup and Mandurah lines at 0015
- Armadale, Fremantle and Midland lines at 0000
- Thornlie line at 2351 on Friday and 2352 on Saturday (no change).

Brookfield Rail website

The website of Brookfield Rail, long-term lessee of the Western Australian rural rail network, has been slightly revamped. It no longer provides a link to the latest edition of the Weekly Notice. It still provides access to a mass of information about the network's infrastructure. The map showing tonnages conveyed has been removed and replaced by detailed tables of tonnage from 2012 to 2014. Network information is at www.brookfieldrail.com/work-with-us/applying-for-access/

Aurizon reconsiders Pilbara and Galilee projects

Aurizon chief executive Lance Hockridge warned on 16 February that the outlook for the company's Pilbara rail and port expansion is "challenging" following the slump in iron ore prices. Aurizon plans to make a final investment decision next year on whether to proceed with building a new 430 km rail line to Anketell Point in the Pilbara to export iron ore after teaming up with China's Baosteel last year. Mr Hockridge said Aurizon would only proceed with the project if it made "commercial sense." Aurizon will consider long term iron ore prices before making a decision as it assesses the costs of the project. Mr Hockridge also warned the company's Galilee Basin rail and port project in Queensland, which is being developed with miner GVK Hancock, was unlikely to start until "the back end of this decade" and would depend on the price of thermal coal, which has also fallen sharply over the past year. If neither project goes ahead, and the company does not find any other projects to invest in, Aurizon will consider returning cash to investors in the form of dividends or stock buybacks.

Genesee & Wyoming acquires Freightliner

Genesee & Wyoming has acquired Freightliner. Genesee & Wyoming owns the majority of short line railroads in the United States. It also operates railways in Canada, Australia, the Netherlands and Belgium. In Australia it operates the intrastate freight lines in SA. Freightliner mainly operates in Britain where it is the second largest freight rail operator, providing intermodal and heavy haul services. It also operates in Poland, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia. In Australia it operates coal and containerized agricultural products trains in NSW. It is also accredited to operate in WA, SA and Queensland.

Future of Pacific National

It is believed that American companies are considering acquisition of parts of the Pacific National freight rail business.

A Fairfax Media report claimed that PN's intermodal business continues to struggle as volumes measured by net tonne kilometres dropped 2.4% in the first quarter of 2014-2015 due to falls in freight transported from the west to the east coast. This is partially because rail freight has been losing market share to container shipping, which is cheaper. PN's bulk haulage division, which moves grains and other commodities, has also been battling falling volumes, which were down 7.7% in the first quarter.

An American operator such as Genesee & Wyoming could buy the intermodal and bulk haulage business, freeing PN's owner, Asciano, to focus on coal. G&W already owns nearly

5000 km of track in SA and the NT, including the 2200 km Tarcoola to Darwin railway. G&W provides intrastate haulage of bulk commodities including grain, steel, gypsum and minerals, as well as terminal operations. G&W also operates in Canada, the Netherlands and Belgium.

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BUS NEWS

Australia Capital Territory

National Multicultural Festival

The National Multicultural Festival was held in Canberra's City Centre from Friday 13 February to Sunday 15 February.

As a result of the festival, the City Bus Station was closed from Thursday 12 February until Monday 16 February, with all ACTION, Qcity Transit & Transborder services were diverted to depart temporary platforms 10 & 11 in Northbourne Avenue, 12 & 13 in Alinga St, platform 14 in Marcus Clarke St along with the Canberra Centre. Extensive customer information was provided online on both the ACTION and Qcity websites to assist passengers.

ACTION also took this an opportunity to test out contingency plans for when the City Bus Station is closed for emergencies, such as last year's fire in the Sydney building.

Free shuttle buses on the popular festival Saturday departed from ACTION's Park+Rides, departing EPIC (995) every half-hourly, and hourly from Kippax (996), Calwell (997) & Kambah (998) between 1100 and 1900. Passengers could also park at Mitchell, Jamison, Weston or Mawson and catch a regular ACTION bus for free (regular fares applied from other stops). No special routes or fares applied on Friday or Sunday.

ACTION's NightRider network returned for one-night only, offering services on 10 routes departing around 2300 & 0030 for a \$5 fare. Queanbeyan passengers could catch the Night Bus departing at 0105.

Other February Events

Bangladesh played Afghanistan on Wednesday 18 February in a World Cup Cricket match at Manuka Oval, followed West Indies versus Zimbabwe on Tuesday 24 February. Free Travel across the ACTION network was available all day for game ticket holders, who could reach the match on Routes 4 or 5 or half-hourly chartered buses departing City and Woden.

No extra buses were provided from Colour Run at Commonwealth Park on 22 February – participants were recommended to catch Blue Rapid Route 900.

EPIC played host to the Royal Canberra Show on 27 February to 1 March. Patrons could catch regular Routes 56, 57, 58 200, 251, 252, 255, 259, 950, 956 or 958 to the door, or one of the special show specials:

- 990 departing hourly from Belconnen
- 992 departing hourly from Tuggeranong
- 991 or 992 departing half-hourly from Woden
- 991, 992 or 993 departing every 15 mins from City Bus Station
- 994 departing hourly from Gungahlin

Normal fares applied. Return buses for Woden departed within 6 mins of each other, however the 993 provided alternative connections to the Blue Rapid.

Enlighten was held on the evenings of Friday 27 February, Saturday 28 February, Friday 6 March and Saturday 7 March, with national attractions opening their doors after-hours to host an array of exclusive events, including the National Library. ACTION provided a free continuous shuttle

bus from City Bus Station to Acton between 1700 & 2330, also stopping at the ACTION carpark on Barrine St.

New South Wales

Green's sell

Another family operator in greater metropolitan Sydney has called it a day, with Green's Northern Coaches selling to local rival Premier (King family), with the takeover reportedly taking place at 1700 on 2 February.

The operation of 18 buses had grown from the original six buses that Rod Green commenced running in 1973. It grew to 11 buses in 1992 when they purchased Helensburgh Bus Service.

Green's urban services consisted of Route 2 (Stanwell Park - Wollongong) & 15 (Helensburgh - Stanwell Tops), along with a number of school bus services in the local region.

The purchased operation officially trades as a separate entity, Premier Charters, rather than being integrated with the Premier Illawarra business. Timetable information and maps are available on both a rebranded Green's website along with the Premier Illawarra website.

Updated PDF timetable booklets have already made available, including a reprint of the booklet for Route 2 in TfNSW format for the first time, although retaining an effective date on 29 January 2013. Briefly the Green's versions of both timetables were hosted on the Premier Illawarra website.

A new TfNSW format network map for network map for Wollongong & Shellharbour was released in February and includes new Routes 32, 41 & 52. It continues to include Dion's routes along with those operated by Premier.

South-West Rail Link Interline changes

Interline introduced new timetables across Routes 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858 (new service), 864, 865, 866, 867, 869 (new service), 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876 on 8 February in conjunction with the opening of the South-West Rail Link between Liverpool and Leppington. The S9 leaflet has also been reissued to show the Leppington branch on the route map. Connecting train times are now included however do not indicate which line trains serving Liverpool operate via.

Routes 855 (Liverpool – Rossmore) & 856 (Bringelly – Liverpool) have been extended to Leppington.

New Route 858 links Oran Park with Leppington, running half-hourly during the day on weekdays and hourly into the evening and on weekends. It supplements the existing 850 connection to Minto and the irregular 857 along Camden Valley Way.

A second addition, Route 869 (Ingleburn – Liverpool) passes Edmondson Park Station. The half-hourly weekday patterns flips early afternoon on weekdays to allow connections in the peak directions, while weekend intervals are hourly.

Busways updates

On 23 February, Busways introduced revised timetables on the Central Coast for the following routes:

- 63 (Gosford - Saratoga – Davistown)
- 64 (Gosford - Kincumber & Empire Bay (continues to Woy Woy)
- 66A & 66C (Gosford - Copacabana – Avoca loop)

A minor update was also made to the online timetable PDFS for Routes 774/775/776 in early February to more accurately reflect the driver's shift bat, however they remain dated 18 May 2014.

Wentworth Falls roadworks

Roadworks along Henderson Rd, Wentworth Falls between Angel St and Blaxland Rd necessitated Blue Mountains Transit operating a shuttle bus for route 685 on 25 February, 10 March & 17 March. The shuttle bus transfers passengers on Blaxland Road to continue on their journey.

Queensland

Route 615 via Aussie World

Commencing 23 February, two services a day in each direction on Sunbus' Route 615 (Maroochydore to Landsborough) detour to Aussie World, a private theme park on the Sunshine Coast.

Ex-cyclone Marcia suspends buses in Northern Brisbane

Brisbane copped heavy rain from Thursday 19 February to Saturday 21 February, as Ex-cyclone Marcia headed south after causing widespread damage along the north-east Queensland coast. Caboolture was hit by as much as 576mm, with falls of 250mm or more in the CBD, significantly more than the usual 157.9mm monthly average for February. Due to extensive flooding in Brisbane's north, Kangaroo Bus Lines suspended their entire network from early afternoon on Friday 20 February for safety reasons, including school services. Caboolture Bus Lines' Routes 652, 655 & 657 also faced suspensions, along with Hornibrook's trunk Route 680. Other operators closer to the CBD and in the south and west largely battled on with various detours.

Victoria

Regional Consultation reopens

In late February, Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan announced that residents in Geelong and Bendigo would get a second chance to provide feedback on proposed major changes to bus networks in both cities, with further community drop-in sessions to be held in March, along with the reopening of the online survey.

The original proposals (as outlined in last month's *Table Talk*) were not approved by Allan or her government, but rather had been signed off by the previous Liberal Government prior to the state election, but with consultation being held in the weeks immediately following the election.

Backlash, including by the local council, over changes to Spring Gully Route 12, which would see the current direct route alerted to incorporate a 'cooks tour' before reaching central Bendigo was a key driver of the second round of consultation, especially given Allan's local electorate is in Bendigo.

The announced postponement of opening of stage 3 of the Regional Rail Link from April to June will allow PTV and operators time to revise routes and timetables accordingly.

At the time of writing it was unclear if Transdev's proposed Greenfields changes had been finalised or would also be subject to further review. These changes had also been signed off by former Liberal Transport Minister Terry Mulder.

Orbital booklets at last

In the first week of February, over 6 months since timetable changes on 27 July, booklet timetables for Transdev's orbital SmartBus routes finally appeared for Routes 901 (Frankston – Melbourne Airport), 902 (Chelsea – Airport West) & 903 (Altona – Mordialloc). A print date on the rear cover shows '1214'.

It is not clear for the delay in publishing the booklets – by January staff at several outlets were advising customers that timetable booklets were unlikely to appear until the next change, originally earmarked for April (now June), which is likely to see the orbital network split into several shorter routes (see January *Table Talk*).

The format remains the same as previous editions - sections of the route split up into "Sections A+B", "C+D" & "E" covering a different portion of each route (e.g. Ringwood - Epping) but with times for a selected few locations on the rest of the route.

The 903 booklet no longer includes "soft-point" locations that are not listed on driver's shift bats such as Wattle Park or Eastern Freeway Bridge. Instead, Sunshine & Essendon DFO are now included within the timetable pages for all sections. It is worth noting that these soft-points were not displayed as major stops on the PDFs timetables available on the PTV website.

Milleara Mall is now a designated timepoint – Ventura previously omitted this key location from driver shift bats, despite a 15km gap between Sunshine & Essendon, with peak trips often taking over 40 mins cover this section.

Shortworkings that only serve one major stop, such as shorts between Mordialloc & Oakleigh or Dandenong & Chisholm TAFE (Dandenong campus) now feature on pages for other sections, not just the section these trips cover (i.e. previously Mordialloc - Oakleigh trips would only be shown on section E pages). Footnotes have been added to indicate where they start/end. This approach is only done for shorts where a trip would otherwise only have a time in one row - for example, they are not included for trips originating at Altona or Heidelberg that terminate at Oakleigh, Centre Rd or Mentone.

The introduction pages include a blurb about the changes to fare prices from 1 January, with Zone 1 prices now covering the entire metropolitan area.

Pride March 2015

Afternoon Route 606 (Port Melbourne – Elsternwick) services on Sunday 1 February were truncated to operate between Port Melbourne & St Kilda only, as Melbourne's gay community marched through St Kilda for the annual Pride March. Routes 600, 922 & 923 to Southland were also diverted away from the usual terminus in Fitzroy.

St Kilda Festival 2015

Additional bus services for the St Kilda Festival on Sunday 8 February were less substantial than in previous years.

Transdev Route 246 ran in two halves during the afternoon to conquer traffic congestion on Barkly St, although the transfer point was at Union St rather than Alma Road on the opposite side of St Kilda Junction. Normal Sunday services ran on Routes 600, 922 & 923 from Southland, instead of the Saturday timetable previously provided. With Transdev's proposed Greenfields changes, this may well be the last year a connection is offered to the festival from the southern Bayside suburbs.

CDC Melbourne's Route 606 was again truncated at St Kilda all day, with passengers for Elwood and Elsternwick advised

to make alternative arrangements. Route 623 ran a special late night trip to Glen Waverley at 2245 (2 hours later than usual), although for previous festivals buses were extended as late as 0045.

Passenger information on bus services was scarce and contradictory, with the St Kilda festival website providing information from previous years, no information about the late night 623 service on the PTV's website while the CDC website failed to advise of the disruption to 606.

White Night 2015

For just the second time, Doncaster Area Rapid Transit routes 905, 906, 907, 908 provided an all night service, this time catering for crowds attending the White Night cultural festival in the CBD from 7pm Saturday 21 February until 7am Sunday 22 February, which attracts around half a million people. Services departed every half-hour, with Route 908 extended into the City to avoid over-crowding along the Eastern Freeway to Doncaster Park+Ride. The overnight buses complemented all-night train and tram services along with regular NightRider buses.

During the several CBD streets being closed, buses, including NightRider services, were forced to depart from two special terminals. A western terminal on Queen St near Collins St catered for Routes 200, 207, 216, 219, 220, 232, 250, 251, 942, 944, 954, 956 & 970, while Routes 302, 304, 905, 906, 907, 908, 958, 961, 966, 968 & 980 departed from the Eastern Public Transport Hub on Spring St outside Parliament Station. No doubt some Route 200 & 207 passengers were confused as to why their route had changed hubs from 2014, with the change largely due to the extension to Queen St.

La Trobe Glider launch

On 16 February, La Trobe University re-commenced the internal campus bus around their Bundoora campus, now branded as La Trobe Glider. It is operated with a midi bus wearing a special all-over wrap. The service was introduced during International Student Registration Week, ahead of O-week, and two weeks before classes resumed.

The route has been streamlined, taking advantage of a newly constructed internal access road, rather than

operating pass Charles La Trobe College on Kingsbury Drive.

Services now depart every 20 minutes rather than half-hourly, with the midday lunch break eliminated and evening services introduced until after 2100.

The service, free to students, staff and the La Trobe University community, continues to be operated by Dysons. The previous contract was originally awarded to Midland Tours (Reservoir Bus Company) who were later purchased in 2013.

Monash Uni campus bus boost

Monash University have added a third bus to their popular shuttle service linking the Clayton & Caulfield campuses, allowing frequencies to be boosted from every 25 minutes to an impossible to remember 16-17 minute headway. The service provides a trip around 5 – 10 minutes faster than the alternatives of the 900 SmartBus or travelling via train to Huntingdale and the high-frequency 601 bus

The third bus is a 57-seater coach, and the online timetable footnotes these trips as such due to the lower capacity than the low floor buses (which allow standees).

Monash's Inter-campus bus network resumed on 23 February, although hourly services linked the Clayton and Caulfield campus from 2 February.

Route 303 via Park+Ride

In addition to the additional unadvertised peak stand-by trips added along the Eastern Freeway in late January catering for an expected increase in demand from commuters following the reduction of Zone 1+2 fares to match Zone 1 prices, Transdev amended outbound Route 303 services to set-down at Doncaster Park+Ride effective 9 February to provide additional capacity.

Sightings of the late 1980s M.A.N. SL200, Ansair Mk2 vehicles along Eastern Freeway services have continued during February.

Thanks to: Jason Blackman, Peter Parker, Lourie Smit & various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board*

AIR NEWS

International

Townsville Airport was granted International status from 1 March. Queensland Airports Ltd, which owns Townsville Airport (as well as Gold Coast, Mt Isa and Longreach) has commenced talks to secure the first international air services to Townsville.

Qantas will return to Vancouver with an extended seasonal schedule in 2015-16 following a trial in December 2014-January 2015. It will operate 13 return services between Sydney and Vancouver in June/July, and 20 return services from mid-December to late January 2016. From August, Qantas will increase its Brisbane-Tokyo (Narita) service from four to seven return flights a week.

Domestic

Newcastle based **Air Pelican** will commence Newcastle-Canberra services from 27 April with two return flights

Mondays to Fridays and a return flight on Sunday afternoons. These will be first direct flights between these cities since Brindabella Airlines went bankrupt in late 2013.

JetGo discontinued its Sydney-Gladstone service from 8 February due to lack of patronage. Its proposed Sydney-Roma service was never started. It will now commence a Tamworth-Brisbane service from March.

From 27 June, **Qantas** will introduce a twice weekly return service between Melbourne and Hamilton Island – taking over the route from Jetstar. In turn, **Jetstar** will start operating a direct thrice weekly service between Melbourne and the Whitsunday Coast Airport (Proserpine) from 25 June.

Thanks to Tony Bailey, ABC radio and the *Australian* for Air news.

ODD SPOT

As noted above in the item “Not full time”, the Cumberland line does not operate on weekends. Yet the Sydney Trains website consistently records “good service” for this line on weekends and public holidays! Is this some sort of record?

About Table Talk

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

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