



# TABLE TALK

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## TOP TABLE TALK – V/LINE CRISIS

The V/Line passenger network was in major disarray from the middle of January.

The first indication was on 6 January 2016 with S. (Special Train Notice) 16/6004 scheduling a special 6-car VLOCITY trip from Southern Cross to the Bombardier Siding at Dandenong for 11 January. Commencing 14 January, V/Line cancelled many services because of a sudden and mysterious spate of wheel faults in its VLOCITY DMUs. It was feared that this could cause trains to derail. VLOCITIES operate the majority of V/Line services. About a quarter of the VLOCITY fleet was removed from service for repair, forcing V/Line to scramble to patch together a viable passenger service with replacement buses or by running shorter trains. On 15 January V/Line issued at overnight notice, S.16/6022 for a 3-car VLOCITY trip to Craigieburn for lathe-work on the wheels to be done on the Saturday afternoon, to return on Sunday "Accompanied by Pilot ex Lathe". Also issued on that day was S.16/6017, which scheduled a similar trip for 2 VL sets from Southern Cross to the lathe at Newport Workshops and S.16/6021 which scheduled another trip for another VL set to Bombardier for Monday morning. On 16 January S.16/7018 cancelled 85 VLOCITY-services per day, from 18 to 30 January.

The Transport Minister and V/Line managers held a "crisis" meeting on Sunday 17th January.

The heavy wear and tear on train wheels was first identified in December, but V/Line does not yet understand why it is happening, nor how long it will take to fix the problem. Actually, it probably started on the day the \$3.65 billion Regional Rail Link opened – 21-June-2015.

Experts from Monash University were recruited to help identify the source of the costly damage to carriages, some of which have been in service for only a few months. Wheel flanges are wearing away at an unusually rapid rate, thinning out the wheel profile and creating the risk that a train could derail if left unrepaired. One theory is that tight curves on and near the North Melbourne flyover may be causing the excessive wear. In fact, there is severely gouged rail on the sharp curves leading to the flyover. In effect, if this track cannot be currently used it would put the RRL tracks into platforms 1-8 out of use (for VLOCITIES in particular) unless rail lubrication or another

engineering solution can be found. Platforms 15 and 16 should be able to handle eight trains per hour minimum if V/Line got their act together. The maximum number of VLOCITY arrivals from the RRL in the peak is about 11 per hour, and given that platforms 15/16 have extended lengths, all VLOCITIES could and should be directed there. The long term solution is perhaps to realign the RRL tracks from Spion Kop to the up side of the flyover, ie, a substantial rebuild. There are also gouged rails at Sunshine and, to a lesser extent at Deer Park Junction.

V/Line chief executive Theo Taifalos said he had made the call to put the VLOCITY trains out of service, in the full knowledge this would disrupt many passengers. "I won't let safety be compromised, so I made the decision to pull the carriages out of service," he said.

The wear and tear is also evident on V/Line's older diesel carriages, but is not so serious that trains must be removed from service. Mr Taifalos said the problem had emerged only in the past 30 days. He said there was no prospect of pulling the entire VLOCITY fleet out of service.

Paul Westcott, regional spokesman for the Public Transport Users Association, said passengers would be frustrated but had to take it on good faith that V/Line had made the correct call. He said it was fortunate the problem emerged during mid-summer when many people were away.

By Friday 15 January, half of the VLOCITY fleet was out of service. During Friday, in a probably unrelated incident, a VLOCITY failed to trigger a level crossing near Dandenong. Metro Trains then banned VLOCITIES on its tracks. According to V/Line's website, Seymour trains were operating - presumably with Sprinter DMUs. However, Bendigo trains only operated between Bendigo and Sunbury. V/Line passengers had to make their own way to Sunbury on Metro suburban trains. Similarly, Gippsland trains only operated east of Pakenham, and passengers had to make their own there on Metro trains.

On Saturday afternoon 16 January V/Line issued a circular cancelling a large number of trains on the Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo lines, and to a lesser extent, the Traralgon line, on weekdays. This is to apply until the end of January. Large-scale bus replacements were arranged at short notice. V/Line

trains were withdrawn from their hire to Metro Trains for the Frankston-Stony Point line for use elsewhere on the V/Line system. Cancellations varied from time to time, but the following are the trains (all V/Locities) that were generally cancelled and replaced by buses:

0625 Southern Cross-Wyndham Vale  
0649 SC-Wyndham Vale  
0710 SC-South Geelong  
1030 SC-South Geelong  
1410 SC-Waurn Ponds  
1450 SC-Waurn Ponds  
1610 SC-Waurn Ponds  
1706 SC-Waurn Ponds  
1740 SC-South Geelong  
2315 SC-Waurn Ponds  
0432 Waurn Ponds-SC  
0716 Wyndham Vale-SC  
0651 Waurn Ponds-SC  
0710 Waurn Ponds-SC  
0804 South Geelong-SC  
0840 South Geelong-SC  
0855 Waurn Ponds-SC  
1201 South Geelong-SC  
1532 Waurn Ponds-SC  
1612 Waurn Ponds-SC  
1730 Waurn Ponds-SC  
0613 SC-Ballarat  
1117 SC-Wendouree  
1537 SC-Melton  
1602 SC-Wendouree  
1654 SC-Wendouree  
1753 SC-Wendouree  
1915 SC-Wendouree  
2225 SC-Wendouree (on Mon-Thurs only)  
0513 Wendouree-SC  
0638 Wendouree-SC  
0914 Wendouree-SC  
1414 Wendouree-SC  
1552 Ballarat-SC  
2110 Wendouree-SC  
0617 SC-Bendigo  
1625 SC-Eaglehawk  
1704 SC-Kyneton  
1731 SC-Epsom  
0507 Bendigo-SC  
0622 Eaglehawk-SC  
0721 Kyneton-SC  
2038 Bendigo-SC

All Gippsland line services - except that Bairnsdale trains, 0527 Traralgon-SC, 0637 Traralgon-SC, 1658 SC-Traralgon and 1737 SC-Traralgon are still trains. Metro Trains reportedly would not agree to a plan by V/Line for V/Line trains to operate east of Pakenham, with passengers transferring to Metro Trains at Pakenham.

In addition, the appropriate empty trains associated with the above were cancelled. Also, some other trains operated with reduced formations. Consequently, the 1744 and 1830 Southern Cross-Waurn Ponds are operating with "Banker Road Coaches" – this is phrase inherited from Victorian Railways days meaning supplementary buses.

V/Line issued S circulars on a day-to-day basis confirming or varying some of the above list.

On 18 January the Minister issued an unusually strongly worded statement. She said she had been advised of V/Line's failure to adequately prepare for increased regional services – including a failure to plan for additional track-greasing – which has led to an escalated rate of wearing on the wheels of V/Locity carriages. This lack of preparation has led to the cancellation of train services across the network – an unacceptable and avoidable situation that has frustrated thousands of regional commuters. She said these issues are being addressed through additional maintenance and the replacement of wheels, and that services will progressively resume over the coming week. On the separate issue of a boom gate activation failure, restrictions imposed by Metro had now been lifted on the Bendigo and Seymour lines. This freed up additional non-V/Locality carriages to run on the Gippsland line, while testing on the V/Locality fleet continues to allow the Gippsland line restrictions to be lifted. These restrictions were expected to be lifted by late January. The Government instructed PTV to accelerate the rollout of axle counters across metropolitan lines used by V/Line services facilitate safety at level crossings, at a cost of \$23 million on axle counters to. These will take three to six months to install.

To compensate for the mess, free travel was provided on V/Line from 23 until 31 January. On 28 January, this was extended for a further week until 7 February. Towards the end of January, as some V/Locities were fitted with newly ordered wheels, some of the cancelled trains were restored. But now, the free travel caused a significant increase in patronage. So, there was still a need for a large number of replacement buses.

One question not covered anywhere on any V/Line, PT> or Government website is the question of first class travel in loco-hauled long-distance trains. Enquiries at Geelong RS elicited the following information: The first people to book on any specific long-distance train are placed in the ACN (first class) car and when that is filled, the BN, BRN, etc (economy cars) are utilised. The irony of this is that because of heavy bookings in the ACN, the first class car changes from being the quietest and most commodious car on the train to being the noisiest and busiest.

On 27 January, Theo Taifalos, the chief executive of V/Line, resigned. Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan said she was furious about the wheel wear problems. She said the current disruptions were "totally unacceptable. V/Line passengers are furious – and so is the Government. What has happened is not good enough. On behalf of the Government I apologise for the disruption and the inconvenience it has, and will continue to, cause." She said she had been given false advice in the preceding week that a solution to the issue was imminent and that services would begin to return to normal by the end of the following week. "I was given inconsistent and unreliable advice on that issue," she said.

The Minister announced that Gary Liddle will be the interim CEO of V/Line. He is currently CEO of Public

Transport Victoria and is the former CEO of VicRoads. He will be an experienced and steady hand to guide V/Line through this difficult period.

After the boom-gate fault at a level crossing near Dandenong, the National Safety Regulator advised that safety measures must be carried out on all 21 affected crossings on the Pakenham line. While this work is undertaken V/Line trains cannot run between Traralgon and Melbourne and will be replaced by buses. The Government is investigating using other train models to boost services. This aspect of the disruption is expected to continue for at least six weeks.

The Government has ordered a review of V/Line operations, and the technical investigations into the wheel wear and boom-gate issues are continuing. A Cabinet Committee will be overseeing this issue until it is resolved.

It will be months before normal services resume in full.

At this point, the story was dominating Victorian news media. Despite the Minister very publicly blasting part of her own portfolio, the large, front-page headline in

Australia's biggest selling daily newspaper, the *Herald Sun*, on 29 January was "Minister, You are Next!". The *Age's* main front page headline was "Dangerous curves" above a picture of a V/Line on the sharply curved tracks of the North Melbourne flyover.

The planned V/Line timetable upgrade, due to start on 31 January has been deferred until further notice. Ms Allan said she did not have confidence the change would go smoothly given V/Line's deep problems. (Details of the now deferred timetable were in January *Table Talk*, pages 4-5), The main alteration was to have been one extra train each way to/from Bendigo – Ms Allan's electorate. Deferred are:

- Bendigo line upgrades
- Ballarat and Geelong lines minor changes
- Gisborne – Gisborne station bus routes 473 and 474
- Swan Hill – Tooleybuc via Nyah West bus, and
- Cowes – Wonthaggi via Anderson bus.

Still going ahead on 31 January/1 February are timetable changes for the Wyndham, Geelong and Lara bus networks.

**Thanks** to Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Geoff Mann, Albert Isaacs, *Age* and *Herald Sun* for Top Table Talk.

### SUMMARY OF VLINE CANCELLATIONS AND BUS REPLACEMENTS 18 JAN TO 5 FEB Referred to in S-Notices

| S.Notice | Start Day | Finish Day | Weekdays   | Total | Cancelled | Altered | Other | Coach Replacements | Not replaced | Empty Cars | Passenger |
|----------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|-----------|---------|-------|--------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| 7018     | 18-       | 30-Jan     | Mon-Sat(2) | 108   | 85        | 13      | 10    | 37                 | 48           | 30         | 78        |
| 7026     | 23-       | na         | Sat        | 50    | 7         | 44      | 0     | 3                  | 4            | 13         | 37        |
| 7028     | 24-       | na         | Sun        | 31    | 7         | 24      | 0     | 6                  | 1            | 9          | 22        |
| 7030     | 25-       | na         | Mon        | 112   | 85        | 23      | 4     | 41                 | 44           | 33         | 79        |
| 7031     | 27-       | 29-Jan     | Wed-Fri    | 122   | 85        | 30      | 7     | 39                 | 46           | 33         | 89        |
| 7033     | 26-       | na         | Tue        | 53    | 8         | 3       | 42    | 3                  | 5            | 15         | 38        |
| 7038     | 30-       | na         | Sat        | 40    | 7         | 36      | 0     | 1                  | 6            | 10         | 30        |
| 7039     | 31-       | na         | Sun        | 28    | 7         | 19      | 2     | 4                  | 3            | 11         | 17        |
| 7040     | 1-        | 5-Feb      | Mon-Fri    | 119   | 85        | 30      | 4     | 43                 | 42           | 31         | 88        |

# RAIL AND TRAM NEWS

## Aurizon freight

The good news: Aurizon has signed a two-year contract with Syntech Resources for the haulage of coal from the Cameby Downs mine to the port of Brisbane. It will see Aurizon haul up to 1.7 million tonnes per annum of coal from 1 February 2016, and includes the option of an additional two-year extension. It replaces an existing 1.4mtpa agreement that commenced in 2011 and will expire at the end of January.

Aurizon has signed a two-year agreement with Wilmar Sugar to haul approximately 245,000 tonnes per annum of bulk sugar from the Proserpine Mill to Queensland Sugar Ltd at Mackay Harbour and 60,000 tonnes of molasses from the Burdekin mills to Port of Townsville from January 2016. The new agreement is in addition to the existing 1.2 million tonnes of bulk sugar contract Aurizon has with Wilmar in North Queensland's Burdekin region.

The Townsville-Mt Isa line re-opened on 12 January, following building of a deviation around the site of a large derailment of wagons carrying sulfuric acid on 27 December.

The bad news: On 18 January Clive Palmer's Queensland Nickel at Townsville went into receivership. Its biggest debt is \$20 million to Aurizon.

Aurizon has announced 480 job cuts in Queensland, because of the downturn in the resources, especially coal, sector.

## Genesee & Wyoming freight

The good news: G&W has signed a contract with Cu-River Mining for the haulage of iron ore from Rankin Dam (near Coober Pedy) to Outer Harbor. Up to six trains a week will operate from February/March.

The bad news: With the worldwide downturn in iron ore prices, traffic ceased from Wirrida to Whyalla, SA and from Mukaty to Darwin, NT, late last year.

## Pacific National freight

Pacific National will make 65 drivers redundant because of the downturn in the coal sector – 45 in the Hunter Valley, 10 at Werris Creek and 10 at Port Kembla.

## Trams for Brisbane?

Labor's Brisbane Lord Mayoral candidate Rod Harding has announced that he was investigating light rail as part of his plan to tackle Brisbane traffic congestion. He said no final decision had been made on a so-far un-costed project but he believed light rail would help "energise" Brisbane while "driving a new public transport culture in our city".

## Newcastle Trams

On 21 January the NSW Department of Transport invited expressions of interest for contracts to design and construct the light rail line in Newcastle from the existing heavy rail station at Wickham with Pacific Park in the Newcastle city centre. The closing date is 12 February with the infrastructure contract due to be

awarded in mid-2016. Costings and funding options have yet to be confirmed.

The Labor Party would not reinstall the heavy rail line to Newcastle station if it was voted in at the next state election, Lake Macquarie MP and then Shadow Minister for the Hunter Jodie Harrison said. "The fight has been lost" to keep heavy rail into the city, and the party was focusing its attention on making sure the state government followed through on its commitments on light rail. There is no point spending our time and energy on trying to achieve something that we actually can't do. The rail is gone, and we need to make sure we get the best outcome for Newcastle now," she said.

## Sydney Trams

A surge in passengers on Sydney's inner-west light rail line over the past year has prompted the provision of up to 90 extra services a week to cope with demand during peak travel periods. The number of passengers using the trams rose almost 60% to 6.1 million last financial year due in large part to the opening of the 5.6-km extension to Dulwich Hill in early 2014, government figures show. The patronage statistics will not be a surprise to commuters who are increasingly finding carriages packed. Most of the extra peak-hour services will begin from Monday 25 January, while the remainder will be put on by the middle of the year. In total, tram services will rise from 197 to 215 on weekdays. This will result in services every eight minutes during peak travel periods on weekdays, instead of every 10 minutes at present. The afternoon peak travel period will be extended by an hour to 1900 on weekdays, with a service every 10 minutes.

## Sydney Trains: Working Timetable 6 March

A Working Timetable, Books 1 (weekdays) and 2 (weekends), will be take effect from Sunday 6 March 2016 - Version 5.15. A number of changes to the content and format have been incorporated:

- Passenger time alterations for the majority of South Coast services
- Altered train numbering, stabling arrangements, and revised train rosters for some South Coast services
- Additional dividing service in the afternoon at Wollongong
- Improved platform consistency on the single line sections between Kiama and Wollongong
- Increased use of "clock face" operating patterns on the South Coast line
- Oscars on South Coast will run to high speed signs
- Revised sectional running times on South Coast resulting in minor alterations
- Guards will be located in the 5th position compartment for the entire journey on South Coast, and
- Mechanised Track Patrol has been extended to Nowra.

## Sydney Trains: Network Rules and Procedures

A new amendment pack for the Network Rules & Network Procedures has been issued. The amendments include:

- Aspects that have proven to provide a safety benefit
- Improvements to work on track documentation
- Removal or update of obsolete references e.g. RailCorp
- Restructuring of the documents to re-order content to improve readability
- Assigning specific tasks to the correct role and updating roles post reform name changes
- Where possible, information that was regularly published.

## Transport for NSW: Epping -Thornleigh third track

The overhead electrification over the new down relief line from Epping to Thornleigh (6 km) is expected to be energised from 14 February. The new line will come into operation soon. It is expected to facilitate, in particular, down freight train working on the heavy grades in this area.

## Travelling to Sydney? Sharpen your bureaucratic skills

From 1 January 2016 paper tickets for Pensioners and Seniors were abolished in the Greater Sydney area, and replaced by electronic Opal cards. As per the Australia-wide intergovernmental agreement, non-NSW Pensioners and Seniors remain eligible for concession travel. However, the procedure has been made unbelievably complex and bureaucratic. It seems to be designed to discourage applications.

Interstate Pensioners may obtain an Opal card as simply as NSW people. However, interstate Seniors cardholders are required to download a form from the Transport for NSW website, fill in their personal details, copy both sides of their concession card, and submit all of this by email or post to Transport for NSW. The application may not be submitted more than two weeks before the Opal card is required. The Opal card must be topped up on arrival in Sydney. The Opal card is then only valid for 60 days – after which time your credit is lost, or has to be specially applied for. After 60 days, a new application (including copies, back and front, of the concession card) must be submitted and the process repeated.

In late January, there was a backlog of applications. As a trial, 30 day Opal cards were supplied to Central station which were provided upon application and presentation of a valid Seniors card – but not at the Airport stations or anywhere else.

## Metro Trains Melbourne: Public timetables

A full set of Metro Train public timetable booklets was re-issued from 1 January 2016, The main change is the inclusion of all-night trains on Friday and Saturday nights. They now have bright illustrations on the front cover, unique to each booklet, as follows, although sometimes the connection seems tenuous:

Werribee & Williamstown: Sailing boat  
Sunbury: Asian soup bowl  
Craigieburn & Upfield: Koala (for the zoo)

Sandringham: Beach changing hut  
Pakenham & Cranbourne: Flower & bowl (for markets?)

Frankston: Pelican  
Glen Waverley: Croissant on dish  
Belgrave & Lilydale: Cockatoo, plus Puffing Billy  
Alamein: Possum  
Hurstbridge: Rowing boat  
South Morang: Shopping bag.

## Portland-Hamilton minerals trains

The new freight trains between Portland and Iluka Siding (7 km south of Hamilton), Victoria, that commenced in January (mentioned in January *Table Talk* page 2) transport mineral sands from Ceduna, SA. The sand is shipped to Portland, railed to the Iluka plant for refining, then trucked (not railed) back to Portland for export. The refinery also processes mineral sands from northern Victoria, railed from Hopetoun.

## South Gippsland Railway closes

The membership of the South Gippsland Railways has voted to close the tourist railway after 21 years of operation. Passenger services had ceased in late November due to safety issues, although this was reportedly only part of a much bigger problem, which included an "unsustainable" number of active volunteers and insufficient financial resources to maintain the railway's infrastructure and rollingstock, as well as a struggle with vandalism and theft.

**Comment:** Once there seemed to be railfan railways and museums every few kilometres. Gradually, one by one, most have closed for various reasons and there are now few left. The great metropolis of Sydney has, in effect, got very little. Most of the survivors that still operate regularly are in Victoria. These are Puffing Billy (Melbourne), Mornington, Daylesford, Castlemaine, Walhalla (infrequent), Bellarine Peninsula. Elsewhere, operating survivors are: Steam Ranger (SA South Coast), Pichi Richi (SA north), Hotham Valley (WA), Pemberton (SW WA), Don River (NW Tasmania - very short length.), West Coast (Tasmania - remote), Canberra (infrequent), Thirlmere (NSW) and Rosewood (SE Qld - infrequent).

## Adelaide Metro

**Timetable changes 26 January:** A major change took place on the Glenelg tram line with the withdrawal of the City Shuttle between West Terrace and South Terrace. All trams now travel the full route from the Entertainment Centre to Glenelg thus overcoming the problem of passengers inadvertently catching a shuttle tram. This will improve services over the whole line to a ten minute headway. However, there is a reduction in service through the CBD from the former 7/8 headway there.

**Extension Tonsley to Flinders:** On 20 December the SA and Federal Governments announced "in principle agreement" to extend the Tonsley branch 700 metres to Flinders University and Medical Centre. At a cost of \$85 million, this will take two years to complete.

**New Year's Eve:** Additional services operated (except on the Tonsley line) with free travel between 1800 and dawn. (In previous years free travel was only provided

after midnight.) Details were available on the website but no printed material was available. The main centres of the celebrations affecting public transport were at Elder Park in the City and the foreshore at Glenelg. The Glenelg tram line was truncated at Brighton Road stop 15 as in previous years from 1800 to about 0400. In addition a supplementary bus service was scheduled between the City (North Terrace) and Glenelg from 2000 to 0500. In many cases buses operated on an hourly service up to about 0300-0400 depending on the routes.

**Reduced services 29, 30 and 31 December:** Details were posted on the website but no printed matter was available. In a number of cases a modified Saturday service was operated.

**Trains slower than 25 years ago:** The Liberal Opposition claims that a comparison with the 1988-9 timetable shows that travel times on the Outer Harbor, Noarlunga and Gawler lines have increased by three minutes, and by one minute on the Belair line.

### TranzScenic

Departures and arrivals of KiwiRail's Northern Explorer thrice-weekly Auckland-Wellington passenger train moved from Auckland Britomart station (the central station used by suburban trains) to Auckland Strand station (the old main station), about 3 km away, from Monday 21 December (as foreshadowed in January *Table Talk* page 6).

### Auckland City centre tunnel

NZ Prime Minister John Key said on 27 January that strong growth in rail patronage warrants an early start for the \$NZ 2.5 billion Auckland City Rail Link, the proposed 3.4 km underground link from Britomart, through the CBD to the Western line at Mt Eden.

"A couple of years ago, I said the Government was committed to a joint business plan for the Rail Link with Auckland Council in 2017," he said. "We agreed to provide a share of funding for construction to start in 2020, and we were prepared to consider an earlier start if Auckland's rail patronage and CBD employment hit certain thresholds committed to by the Auckland Council. While CBD employment levels are still some way from the 25% growth threshold, strong growth in rail patronage since 2013 means it will reach the 20 million annual trip threshold well before 2020. It's become clear that we need to provide certainty for other planned CBD developments affected by the Rail Link. This means we see merit in starting the project sooner." A funding commitment from 2020 may allow work to start in 2018, at least two years earlier than planned.

**Thanks** to David Cranney, Scott Ferris, Albert Isaacs, Victor Isaacs, Geoff Lambert, Geoff Mann, Len Regan, Jim Wells, Roger Wheaton, [www.railexpress.com.au](http://www.railexpress.com.au), [www.railpage.com.au](http://www.railpage.com.au), *Age*, *Catch Point*, (National Railway Museum), *Geelong Advertiser*, *Herald Sun*, *Portland Observer*, *Railway Digest* for Rail news.

## ODD SPOT

Is this the worst excuse yet for late trains? On 12 January Southeastern trains of Britain tweeted "Apologies we are having issues dispatching trains due to the strong sunshine this morning". Drivers were, it was said, required to leave their cabs and physically check the platforms as they were unable to view the monitors, delaying trains.

Jordan Cox travelled between Sheffield and his home in Essex by flying via Berlin because it was cheaper than taking the train. He also found similar anomalies for travelling London to Bristol via Dublin, London-Manchester via Milan and Bristol-Newcastle via Dublin. The original story is at <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals/deals-hunter/2016/01/26/flew-home-via-berlin-cheaper-than-train/>

The 31 January 2016 printed version of the Ararat, Victoria town bus service to Hopkins Correctional Centre (prison to you and me) shows a bus at 1050 on weekends – but no return journey. You can go, but you can never come back!

**Thanks** to David Cranney and Victor Isaacs for Odd Spot.

## AIR NEWS

### International

In a significant breakthrough, long sought by the ACT Government and organisations, the first international flights from Canberra were announced by **Singapore Airlines** on 20 January. Four flights weekly Singapore-Canberra-Wellington will operate from 20 September: Singapore dp 2300 Tues, Thurs, Sat, Sun, Canberra ar 0835 next day, dp 0950, Wellington ar 1505; Wellington dp 2015 Mon, Wed, Fri, Sun, Canberra ar 2205, dp 2330, Singapore ar 0550 next day.

Singapore Airlines will increase its flights from Brisbane from 21 to 24 weekly from late May.

New Chinese airlines servicing Sydney Airport are **Xiamen Airlines** with flights to Fuzhou thrice weekly from 30 November, and twice weekly to Xiamen; and

**Hainan Airlines** to Xian twice weekly from 24 December. This is in addition to Air China, China Eastern, China Southern, and Sichuan Airlines.

### Domestic

#### Airly – will it fly?

A company called **Airly** is proposing a high quality air service between Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. It proposes to be membership based. Members will pay a \$1000 joining fee and a \$2550 monthly fee for effectively unlimited flights between Sydney (Bankstown Airport), Melbourne (Essendon Airport) and Canberra on an eight-seater King Air 350 turboprop. It will offer an initial 54 flights a week, with plans to expand to Adelaide and Brisbane at a later date. The majority of the start-up funds will be raised

from the \$1000 joining fees, with the remainder coming from the founders and potential "angel" sources. Airly, which won't own the aircraft, calls itself a "sales and experience service" rather than an airline. The first of three King Air 350s has already been ordered from the US through an aircraft management company. They will be added to the air operator's certificate of an Australian company licensed for regular public transport and then leased.

Essendon Airport is closer to the Melbourne central business district than Tullamarine, but in Sydney, Bankstown Airport is farther from the CBD than Kingsford-Smith. Canberra was added to the initial destination list after the Airly founders discovered how

expensive last-minute flights to/from Canberra were from those markets, as well as the more limited schedule of the commercial airlines. In the air, the company hopes there will be a club atmosphere where like-minded executives are able to chat.

In California, Surf Air, which launched in early 2013 has more than 1000 members, has raised a \$US65 million and expanded its list of destinations now its business model has been proven. On the US east coast a new company called Beacon proposes to offer similar flights between New York and Boston.

**Thanks** to Tony Bailey, *Canberra Times* and the *Australian* for Air news.

## FERRY NEWS

Demand for **Sydney Ferries** on Sundays to destinations such as Taronga Zoo and stops along the Parramatta River has risen substantially since the \$2.50 Opal card limit was introduced several years ago. In response, the state's pricing regulator wants to increase ferry fares on Sunday to spread the demand. Many ferry services now experience their peak loads for the week on Sundays as travellers delay their trips to take advantage of the cheaper fares. Transport for NSW has told the state's pricing regulator that Harbour City Ferries is receiving "substantial amounts" to provide extra services on Sundays to cope with the demand. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal believes the \$2.50 cap on the cost of public transport on Sundays is "too low", especially for

ferries, and is a key reason for the spike in demand on Sundays.

Outbound ferries from central Sydney to stops in the eastern suburbs and along the Parramatta River operated at more than 100% of their maximum capacity on Sundays in May last year when a count was carried out by the Bureau of Transport Statistics.

The NSW Government awarded Harbour City Ferries – a consortium of ASX-listed Broadspectrum (formerly Transfield Services) and multinational Transdev – an \$800 million contract in 2012 to operate Sydney Ferries for seven years.

**Thanks** to the *Sydney Morning Herald* for Ferry news.

## BUS NEWS

### **South Australia** by Roger Wheaton

#### **Adelaide Metro timetable changes 26 January:**

Many of the bus timetables changed with some route changes, as well as fine-tuning to times. Having a major change effective from a mid-week public holiday is unusual. In reality the changes will take place from the following day – Wednesday 27 January.

### **Tasmania** by Ian Cooper

**Metro Hobart:** The proposed extension of services 614, 615 and 616 to Anchorage Circuit in Tranmere did not take place as planned. Field inspections revealed that there were no suitable roadways upon which a bus could be turned around.

The new timetables to Howrah and Tranmere (routes 614, 615 and 616) have created considerable puzzlement in some circles. Services to these suburbs operate in one direction only - on Saturdays and Sundays one side of the new timetable covers all departures for Tranmere via Howrah from the Hobart City Interchange. On Monday to Friday this service comprises routes 614, 615, 616, X15 and X16. However, on Saturday and Sunday departures from the City constitute buses on route 616 only with all buses travelling via Oceana Drive. Yes, that is correct – there is no service on route 616 to Hobart City. In Southern Howrah and Tranmere prospective passengers must walk to Howrah or Tranmere Roads

and catch a Route 615 bus for which there is no service from Hobart City to Tranmere at Weekends. The flip side of the timetable on Saturday and Sunday includes the timetable for route 615 only with all buses travelling via Tranmere and Howrah Roads.

One could think that the new service has the prospects of becoming a loop route operating through the terminus at Oceana Drive, Tranmere. However, at present a bus on route 616 travels to the terminus and, after a layover of 27 minutes, becomes a route 615 back to the city via Tranmere and Howrah Roads. Hardly an inducement to encouraging residents to encourage residents to travel at weekends by bus. The reverse operation requires a similar changeover at the Tranmere terminus but the wait is only 12 minutes. But then again this correspondent believes that most drivers would not like the prospect of providing accommodation for waiting passengers on board the bus at the terminus for either 12 or 27 minutes.

Although some students of Hobart bus services are aware that Metro has attempted to spread, too thinly, its meagre resources over one "old" route (the 615) and one "new route" (the 616), one must contemplate that the continued operation of the 615 only may have been a more practical operation for the immediate future.

Metro has failed dismally to provide information to prospective passengers as to how one can use two

“one-way” bus routes on the Eastern Shore. Treatment of information at bus stops, while accurate, does little to assist passengers. At those stops to the south of Shoreline, references under the Timetable for

## Victoria by Craig Halsall

### Extra SkyBus stop at Melbourne Airport

In addition to the new undercover ‘transport hub’ constructed for the expanded T4 building, serving local buses and the SmartBus 901, a separate SkyBus stop opened in front of T4 for inbound services on 29 November, including a third staffed ticket counter.

Services now originate outside the T4 building as of 29 November after laying-over. Buses are timetabled to depart T4, then T3 four minutes later, and T1 eight minutes after T4. Previously buses departed T3 5 minutes before T1. Trips arriving the Airport continue to set down at T3 & T1 only.

Daily V/Line services to Barham (connecting to Barmah) and Echuca/Deliquin along with shuttle buses to outer suburbs and regional areas continue to depart from the existing bays between T1 & T2.

### New Uni shuttles for 2016

Three new express shuttle services promised by the Victorian Government will start with the 2016 academic year.

- 201 – between Deakin Uni & Box Hill, in addition to existing 281, 767 & 768
- 301 – between La Trobe Uni and Reservoir, in addition to existing 561
- 403 – offpeak shuttle between Melbourne Uni & Footscray, in addition to existing 402 (and 401 shuttle to North Melbourne)

201 will be operated Ventura, Dysons Subsidiary East-West will run the 301 and Sita has won the 403 contract. A modified PTV livery will be worn on the buses, with large route numbers on the side similar to what vehicles operating 401 and 601 wear.

### Concise information goes on holiday

A range of issues presented themselves to those wishing to catch a bus during the festive period, thanks to continual misinformation on the PTV website.

With Coles closed on Christmas Day, the poorly utilised East-West 560 between Pascoe Vale and Coburg North Village didn’t run, despite notes on stop timetables that it would operate a Sunday timetable.

Boxing Day fell on a Saturday this year, creating a new set of oddities. Most metropolitan operators treated it as a regular Saturday, with 6-day-a-week routes at CDCM, Cranbourne Transit, Dysons, East West & Moreland all running as normal, as did those routes at Ventura’s Ivanhoe and Lilydale depots, which normally don’t run public holidays. The PTV website however failed to display times for over two-dozen routes operating. Tullamarine Bus Lines failed to operate the 490, while Moonee Valley did not provide buses on 503 or 506. CDCM ran late night trips on 170, 180, 494 & 495, however these also failed to display online or on apps.

Saturday and Sunday simply states “No Service”. There is no reference to the existence of other services, even if access to the opposing service may require a walk of one or two kilometres.

Regionally, buses in Ballarat and Geelong ran to a normal Saturday timetable and in most other towns ran to a Sunday timetable or no service, depending on what normally operates on public holidays. McKenzies advised that their Elidon 684 service would run a normal Saturday timetable but the PTV website timetable showed the public holiday timetable, no doubt stranding people given the low frequency of services and vast differences between the two.

Operators treated the Boxing Day holiday on Monday 28 December as a standard public holiday, as they also did for New Year’s Day. This meant that many 6-day-a-week services failed to run, however a poor choice of words by PTV suggested otherwise. Your *Bus News* correspondent suggested to PTV that ‘*All services will operate to a normal Saturday timetable, however some routes may have alterations*’ was a very poor convoluted way of saying selected routes wouldn’t run, but they refused to change the word ‘all’ to ‘most’. Their information also failed to suggest that selected routes would conclude at different times than normal due to late night services not running. In case of 896, the late night “Cranbourne NightLife Shuttle” trips were incorrectly shown as operating.

For New Year’s Eve, Transdev operated all night services on DART routes 905, 906, 907 & 908 for a second year, however unlike in 2014, no inbound trips were rostered. Extra shuttle buses also operated to/from Doncaster Park+Ride. PTV failed to show the timetable online, although PDFs were provided on the Transdev website. Customers travelling from Doncaster Park+Ride were incorrectly advised on a handwritten notice services would depart every 50 mins, when services ran every half-hour until 0230 then dropped to hourly.

New Year’s Eve also saw the introduction of the new Night Network services across Melbourne, however Night Coach did not start to the following night, possibly as PTV was unable to forecast loadings.

Bus operators ran their standard (but complex!) public holiday timetable patterns on Australia Day.

To cater for summer loadings on the Mornington Peninsula, buses on 788 (Frankston – Portsea) once ran a 45 – 50 min weekend frequency from Boxing Day 26 December to Australia Day 26 January. Last year 788 incorrectly ran to the standard Saturday timetable on Australia Day, leaving your bus news correspondent stranded in Rye for almost an hour, and then late to a traditional BBQ lunch.

CDCM ran their reduced peak timetable on 605 (City – Gardenvale) from 29 December until 22 January, however PTV initially showed the dates incorrectly as 20 December until 15 January. The latter set of dates were also wrongly used for the online timetable for Ventura’s 733 (Box Hill – Oakleigh). This meant that



passengers checking the timetable during the third week of January would have expected a 15 min peak service when buses only arrived every half-hour.

CDCM also suspended the 601 (Huntingdale – Monash Uni) shuttle from 29 to 31 December, however PTV continued to show times online. 601 normally would run a 12 min service during this time, however with even summer students enjoying a week off, the parallel 630 and 900 proved more than sufficient.

In the days prior to Christmas, Kastoria staff advised that buses on 476 (Moonee Ponds – Hillside) would follow a holiday timetable from 28 December until 15 January, similar to 475 (Moonee Ponds – Keillor) & 476 (Moonee Ponds – Niddrie), however no altered timetable was available online. Then, a week later, a holiday timetable did (incorrectly) appear on the PTV website, with the timetables from 2013-2014, the last year a holiday timetable was in use for 476, prior to changes to the route in Hillside. This incorrectly showed a 30 min all day service, whereas buses were running every 20 mins during peaks and 40 mins interpeak. A call to Kastoria advised that this was incorrect, and a school holiday timetable was in operation. The timetable vanished later in the week.

Moonee Valley Coaches ran a reduced timetable from 29 December to 15 January, but only times for 506 (Moonee Ponds – Westgarth) surfaced online, with no timetable published for the 503 (Essendon – East Brunswick).

Issues with PTV website database also surfaced for East-West 561 (Coburg – Macleod) and CDC Geelong 1 (Deakin Uni – North Shore) and 22 (Geelong – North Shore) with entire timetables in one direction missing for over a week at a time. Despite immediate feedback to PTV, their online timetable database is normally only updated weekly, and in some cases further technical hiccups preventing the issue being resolved for longer. Back-up information at the call centre provided non-existent, with staff members unable to assist passengers other than suggest they call the operators directly during business hours.

A “holiday shopping” timetable Route 10 (Lara – Corio Village) (see below) also failed to appear on the PTV website for over a week and a half after it commenced on 20 December (details below). Passengers could however check times using a PDF on the CDC Victoria website. A further issue emerged at the end of January when PTV failed to show the Corio Village trips operating on 31 January, after operators in Geelong were given permission to delay bus timetable changes by 1 day to fit in with staff rosters.

### **Kastoria enhancements**

24 January saw new Kastoria timetables for selected routes 460 & 462 (Caroline Springs – Watergardens) plus 476 (Moonee Ponds – Plumpton).

Peak services on 460 were boosted from 30 mins to 25 mins. Offpeak and weekend services now operate every 40 mins instead of hourly, and services now continue from 21:00 to 23:00 on Friday and Saturday

nights, complementing the 942 Night Bus along Gourlay Rd.

460 services now terminate on Caroline Springs Bvd rather than continue into the Caroline Springs Square carpark (215, 418 & 462 still depart here). It has been suggested the change will allow 460 to be extended 5km south to the new Caroline Springs Station mid-year when it finally opens.

476 now continues 1 km west from Hillside to the Aspire Estate in Plumpton. Other than expanded coverage, the change also prevents issues with the former loop around The Regency, which had seen passengers often miss their bus only for it to layup at the terminus. An irregular deviation has been added via Keilor Cemetery, saving visitors the 800m walk across a footbridge over Calder Freeway. Runtimes and span have also been amended. CDCM continue to offer a free bus to the cemetery once a month from St Albans as part of their support of the Brimbank Widows group.

462 updates address late running and extend span past 21:00 weeknights but still runs hourly which is insufficient for heavy loads at school times.

### **Wyndham revisions**

CDCM commenced new timetables on 31 January for Werribee Depot routes 150, 151, 160, 167, 180 & 192. Run times for 180 & 192 have been sped up by as much as 5 mins, while early morning services were moved on account of the now deferred changes to the Geelong line V/Line timetable (see *Rail News*).

Although times for the politically-sensitive 190 shuttle from Wyndham Vale to Werribee were not adjusted, Geelong – Werribee travel times remain the same, but connection times merely become up to 12 mins as trains are travelling from Geelong faster.

### **Keysborough South consultation**

Residents of Keysborough South in Melbourne's south-east are set to finally gain a bus service by mid 2016 after PTV undertook community consultation last month on a proposed bus service to the suburb which has gradually grown over the past decade, with over 7000 residents calling it home at the last census in 2011.

Option A would see a new route between Noble Park and Keysborough South before returning to Parkmore Shopping Centre, while Option B would see the existing 709 from Mordialloc extended to Noble Park but potentially no longer operating via residential streets in Waterways – a feature lake would see some residents having to walk over a kilometre to the buses on Springvale or Governor Roads. No changes are proposed to existing routes within Keysborough.

Daytime services are proposed to operate every 40 mins, with evening services until 9pm departing hourly.

### **Geelong consultation, holiday shopping & February changes**

A flaw of the new Geelong network introduced in June

was the deletion of a significant portion of services operating between Corio Village and the satellite suburb of Lara, with services cut from seven days a week to just a handful of peak services. Corio Village is an important hub for Lara, being the closest medium sized centre. A local campaign was started shortly after the changes, and by the end of July PTV undertook a brief round of consultation to confirm that residents wanted the link restored.

In December it was announced by the local member John Eren that Route 10 would again run to Corio Village seven days a week, initially with a "holiday shopping" timetable from 20 December to 30 January (later extended to include 31 January) before a more permanent solution was implemented. The "holiday shopping" timetable saw hourly services reinstated from 9am to 4pm each day, slotted in-between hourly Lara South shortworkings.

In order to rationalise resources, from 1 February interpeak services on 10 between Lara South & Lara as well on 11 (Lara – Lara East) were halved to hourly. Additional peak trips to/from Corio Village have also been added to the 10 timetable.

Services on 12 (Lara – Lara West) moved to a 40-20-40-20 pattern to better meet connecting trains. The Lara West loop now travels via Grand Lakes Way, Westlakes Bvd, Eastlakes Bvd, Canterbury Road West, Yoorok Dr, Eastlakes Bvd & Grand Lakes Way; instead of via Nankeen Av, Cape Barron Dr, Westlakes Bvd and Grand Lakes Way, expanding coverage in new pockets of the estate plus taking buses away from streets where residents had complained about buses being added in June.

At Waurn Ponds Station, Routes 40 & 41 now travel more directly via Bodega St rather than Monterey Dr.

McHarrys have also adjusted all their timetables for improved reliability and Geelong line train connections, although the train timetable update was delayed.

In late 2015 PTV also undertook consultation for minor route changes in Geelong to Route 41 to serve Francis St Belmont and Route 30 to serve Watsons Road in Newcomb, following community requests. These changes have not been fulfilled with the February updates.

#### **Other regional updates**

CDCB updated their 3 Creswick service on 31 January with minor changes.

Due to the delay in changes to the V/Line timetable, PTV have advised adjustments to the following routes have been deferred until further notice:

- 433, 434 & 435 Bacchus Marsh Town Services (Bacchus Marsh Coaches)
- 473 Gisborne – Gisborne Station (Sunshine Tours)
- Swan Hill – Tooleybuc (Swan Hill Bus Lines)
- Cowes – Wonthaggi (Phillip Island Bus Lines)

#### **Extra school services in the north-east**

To alleviate overcrowding on Dysons' 517 services passing Viewbank College, an additional school bus was added to Greensborough Station via Yallambie during term 3, with three buses now travelling this route after school. The school bus to/from Heidelberg Station also now picks up at Rosanna station to utilise spare capacity to reduce the strain on the 517 to/from Northland. These improvements meet an ALP Bus Plan commitment.

New school buses from Doreen to both Diamond Valley College and St Helena College were introduced at the start of the 2016 school year as a precursor to upcoming network changes currently under consultation.

#### **Pride March detours**

Due to the Gay and Lesbian Pride March in St Kilda on 31 January, services on 600, 606, 922 and 923 were diverted away from Fitzroy St from 1230 to 1630. The 606 was truncated at Park St with no services on to Elwood or Elsternwick during this time.

#### **Manningham Mover sub-contracting**

Mitsubishi Rosas from Crown Coaches have been hired by Transdev on an ad-hoc basis since at least 20 December after continual fleet shortages on the Manningham Mover 280 & 282 services. Rumours suggest one hot afternoon a few days earlier had seen changeover cars and even a ute operating the service prior to the arrangement taking effect!

Crown Coaches provide their own driver who is directed along the complex route by a Transdev employee. Although there are reports that portable myki readers are used, some instances passengers simply enjoy a free ride. A Toyota Coaster owned by Transdev had already made regular appearances on the route.

Ironically, the original idea for the Manningham Mover was born out of the Council's idea to run mini-bus community buses around the area for a \$1 fare after Ventura foreshadowed route changes in 2008 to the replace the 283 Bulleen Loop with a new service on to Heidelberg.

As previously reported, Crown Coaches operated 8 morning school runs on behalf of Transdev during 2015 after buses were required for extra 'unadvertised' Eastern Freeway commuter services following the reduction in Zone 1+2 fares to Zone 1 prices.

#### **Overnight connection buffer**

A staff guide issued for the new Night Network states that all Night Bus services connecting at suburban stations must wait to up to 30 mins for late running Night Train connections or rail replacement buses during trackworks or unplanned disruptions. This includes routes departing from the City passing stations such as Caulfield, Ringwood and South Morang.

On New Years Eve, despite more frequent services operating, drivers continued to observe this arrangement, even waiting for trains at Dandenong

when returning inbound towards Elsternwick. Two trips for Cranbourne departed Dandenong around 0230 with up to 40 passengers each, due to long gap between Cranbourne shuttle trains of over an hour.

### 15 years without change

Two suburban Melbourne bus timetables on the PTV website has now reached 15 years of operation:

- 531 (Upfield – North Coburg) dated 22 January 2001 (Broadmeadows Bus)
- 546 (Heidelberg – Melbourne Uni) dated 5 February 2001 (Dysons)

The effective date for 531 actually relates to when the

2000/1 holiday timetables concluded for Broadmeadows Bus for Route 530 & 532, and the timetable for this hourly weekday service has amazingly remained unchanged since the mid 1980s (a scan of the 1989 timetable can be found on the *ATA Facebook page*). Is there a metropolitan example anywhere else in Australia where a timetable has not changed for 15 or 30 years?

**Thanks to:** Jason Blackman, Andrew Fairhall, Craig Halsall, Matthew Gibbins, Jason Holmes, Peter Parker, Michael Presta, Alex Smith, Jack Wayman and various contributors on *Australian Transport Discussion Board* for Victorian Bus news.

## REVIEWS

### Recent publications of the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics:

#### Australian infrastructure statistics—Yearbook 2015 and Key Australian infrastructure statistics booklet 2015

The Australian infrastructure statistics yearbook provides a single comprehensive source of Australian infrastructure time series statistics for measures of transport, energy, communications and water infrastructure and the use of this infrastructure in Australia.

#### Australian Domestic Aviation Activity Monthly Publications

This report covers monthly domestic (including charter) aircraft and passenger movements, available seats, load factors, revenue passenger kilometres and available seat kilometres. Details are provided for the top competitive routes, the top ten domestic airports and the top fifty regional airports. Estimates of charter passengers and charter aircraft flights are included.

[http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/domestic\\_airline\\_activity-monthly\\_publications.aspx](http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/domestic_airline_activity-monthly_publications.aspx)

#### Airline On Time Performance Monthly Reports

This report covers monthly punctuality and reliability data of major domestic and regional airlines operating between Australian airports. Details are published for individual airlines on competitive routes and for airports on those routes.

[http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/airline\\_on\\_time\\_monthly.aspx](http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/airline_on_time_monthly.aspx)

## 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.

The **deadline for Table Talk** is the last weekend of the month, but contributions are welcome at all times.

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