



AUSTRALIAN TIMETABLE ASSOCIATION

# TABLE TALK

AUSTRALASIAN TIMETABLE NEWS

No. 369, May 2023

Published by the Australian Timetable Association

RRP \$4.95

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Rail and Tram News  | Page 2  |
| Bus and Coach News  | Page 4  |
| Ferry and Ship News | Page 7  |
| Talking In-Depth    | Page 7  |
| About Table Talk    | Page 12 |

## YL Free Shuttle Service

Effective: November 6, 2022 - May 2023

### DC SHUTTLES (Weekday Rush Hour Only)

#### VA-DC Shuttle 1: Crystal City - L'Enfant

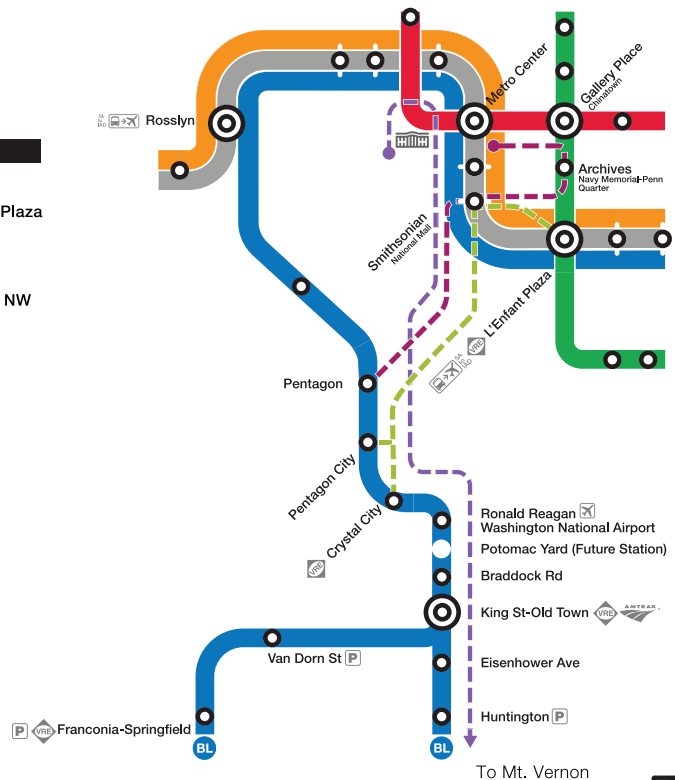
Between Crystal City, Pentagon City, Smithsonian, & L'Enfant Plaza

#### VA-DC Shuttle 2: Pentagon - Archives

Between Pentagon, Smithsonian, Archives, & 11th & F Streets NW (near Metro Center)

#### VA-DC Shuttle 3: Mt. Vernon - Potomac Park (11Y Route)

Between Mt. Vernon, Alexandria, & Potomac Park (Peak Direction Only)



 Station Open |  Transfer Station | No  YL service



# RAIL & TRAM NEWS

## NEW SOUTH WALES



### Bankstown line closedown

The T3 Bankstown line had a closedown in April, although with a smaller time-frame of four days.

On **Thursday 20 and Friday 21 April**, buses replaced trains Sydenham-Bankstown and Bankstown-Lidcombe, while shuttle train services operated City Circle-Sydenham stopping at all stations, and trains also operated between City Circle and Liverpool via Strathfield to an altered limited stops pattern (ex Liverpool, all stations to Lidcombe, Strathfield, Burwood, Ashfield, Lewisham, all stations to Newtown, Redfern then City Circle).

On the weekend of **22-23 April**, buses replaced trains Sydenham-Bankstown, Bankstown-Lidcombe, and Bankstown-Cabramatta (14T3 All stops, 15T3 Express). Due to other planned track maintenance on the weekend, buses also replaced trains between Fairfield and Macarthur, with T2 services operating to shuttle services between Strathfield and Fairfield, while T8 services operated between the City Circle and Leppington via Airport. T1 and T9 services made additional stops in lieu of T2 services between Lidcombe/Strathfield and Redfern. **SYDNEY TRAINS**

## VICTORIA



### Yarra Trams: Timetable update

Selected Melbourne tram routes have had their timetables updated, effective from Sunday 16 April. According to PTV, timing adjustments have been made to routes running along the Williams, Flinders and Collins Street corridors to improve reliability and punctuality.

New timetables have been issued for routes **11, 12, 35, 48, 58, 70, 75** and **109**, with reported minor timing adjustments affecting routes **58, 70** and **75**.

Source supplied by **ROSS MORRISON**

Source **PUBLIC TRANSPORT VICTORIA**

### V/Line: Weekend additional services extended

In light of additional patronage from the state

government's low cap on regional transport fares across the state, as reported in last month's *Table Talk*, V/Line again ran the extra Geelong line services on the weekend of 29-30 April, while also running the extra Ballarat line service on Saturday 29 April only.

Coaches were operating on 15-16 and 22-23 April on the Geelong and Ballarat lines due to Deer Park level crossing removal and general maintenance works. **LEN REGAN, V/LINE**

### Melbourne: Australian Grand Prix

The Australian Formula One Grand Prix was held in Melbourne's Albert Park between 30 March and 2 April. Arrangements were as follows:

#### Thursday 30 and Friday 31 March

Metro Trains/V/Line/Buses/Coaches: No additional regular services ran with services operating to their normal daily timetable.

Yarra Trams: Shuttle trams were free for event ticket holders.

05:30 to 20:00 Thurs/22:00 Fri - **S1** shuttle trams ran between Stop 122 Southern Cross station (SX) and Middle Park.

05:30 to 20:00 (both days) - **S2** shuttle trams ran between Stop 122 SX and Gate 3 (express service). Swanston Street/St Kilda Road trams run normally, with all routes except 1 for travel to gates 5, 8, 9 and 10. Express buses ran from Crown Casino to Gates 1, 2 and 3 via Clarendon Street and Canterbury Road.

From first to last service, route **11** trams ran a shortened service between Docklands and Stop 12 St Vincents Plaza. Buses replaced trams between Stop 12 and West Preston. Route **30** and **35** trams did not operate. La Trobe Street passengers can connect to diverting Route **12** trams. Buses replaced all Route **82** trams.

From first tram to 22:00, route **96** trams ran a shortened service between East Brunswick and Stop 1 SX. Buses replaced route 96 trams between a temporary stop near Stop 3 William/Bourke Streets and Stop 138 Luna Park, diverting via King and Collins Streets. Route 96 replacement buses operated from Stop 122 SX (Collins St) to Luna Park, with extra peak buses to Stop 134 Park Street. Stop 139 Acland Street had no service.

From 23:00 Fri 31 March to 08:00 Sat 1 April, route 67 trams ran a shortened service between Carnegie and Stop 30 St Kilda Junction. For gates 1 and 2, passengers arriving at SX could use the S1 shuttle tram from Stop 122 on Spencer Street, or for gate 3 use the S2 shuttle from the same stop. For gates 5, 8, 9 and 10, passengers arriving at SX could travel to Flinders Street station by train then use a St Kilda Road tram (excluding Route 1) from Stop 13 Federation Square/Swanston St.

#### Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 April

Metro Trains/V/Line/Buses/Coaches: No additional regular services ran with services operating to their normal daily timetable.

Yarra Trams: Shuttle trams were free for event ticket holders.

05:30 to 22:00 - **S1** shuttle trams ran between Stop 122 Southern Cross station (SX) and Middle Park

(express service to gates 1 and 2). For gates 5, 8, 9 and 10, **S3** shuttle trams ran between Flinders St station and Stop 138 Luna Park via Fitzroy Street, while **S4** shuttle trams ran between Melbourne Central Station and Stop 32 Chapel St/Windsor station.

05:30 to 20:00 - **S2** shuttle trams ran between Stop 122 SX and Gate 3 Albert Rd (express service). Normal route 12 was available for all stops except 124a, 124, and 125. Express buses ran from Crown Casino to gates 1, 2, and 3 via Clarendon St and Canterbury Rd.

From first to last tram, route **11** trams ran a shortened service between Docklands and Stop 12 St Vincents Plaza, with replacement buses running between Stop 12 and West Preston. Route **30** and **35** trams did not operate. Buses replaced route **82** trams along the full route. Route **5** trams ran between Malvern and Stop 38 Orrong Road, connecting with Route 64 trams travelling to St Kilda Junction. Route **58** trams ran a shortened service between Stop 116 City Rd and West Coburg, with replacement buses between Stop 115 Casino and Toorak.

From first tram to 22:00, route **1** trams ran in two sections, with no trams between Stop 7 RMIT University and Stop 17 Sturt St. Route **3a** and **16** trams ran a shortened service between East Malvern/Kew and Stop 138 Luna Park. Route **6** trams ran in two sections with no trams between Stop 7 RMIT University and a temporary stop in High St/St Kilda Rd. Route **12** trams ran a shortened service between St Kilda and Stop 12 St Vincent's Plaza, running express between Stop 1 SX and City Rd. Route **64a** trams ran a shortened service between East Brighton and Stop 30 St Kilda Junction. Route **72a** trams ran a shortened service between Camberwell and a temporary stop in Commercial Rd/St Kilda Rd.

From 05:00 to 22:00, route **86** trams ran a shortened service between Bundoora RMIT and Stop 1 SX at Bourke St. Route **96** trams ran a shortened service between East Brunswick and Stop 1, while buses replaced route 96 trams between Stop 3 William St and Stop 138 Luna Park. Stop 139 Acland Street had no service. Route **109** trams ran express between Stop 1 and Stop 125A Southbank Tram Depot.

Meanwhile, from 23:00 Fri-08:00 Sat & 20:00 Sat-08:00 Sun, route **67** trams ran a shortened service between Carnegie and Stop 30 St Kilda Junction. For gates 1 and 2, passengers arriving at SX could use the S1 shuttle tram from Stop 122 on Spencer Street, or for gate 3 use the S2 shuttle from the same stop. For gates 5, 8, 9 and 10, passengers arriving at SX could travel to Flinders Street station by train then use the S3 shuttle from Stop 13 Federation Square/Swanston St.

### Service disruptions during the event period

Belgrave, Lilydale, Frankston and Hurstbridge lines: Buses replaced trains.

Cranbourne and Pakenham lines: Buses replaced trains (Fri-Sun only).

Hurstbridge and Mernda lines: No City Loop trains.

Bairnsdale and Traralgon lines: Coaches replaced some evening trains.

Ballarat line: Coaches replaced evening trains.

Seymour and Shepparton lines: Coaches replaced trains.

Source supplied by **ROSS MORRISON**

Source **PUBLIC TRANSPORT VICTORIA**



## Adelaide's trains and trams de-privatised

In July 2020, Torrens Connect, a joint-venture between John Holland, UGL and Torrens Transit, commenced operating and maintaining Adelaide's tram line under a minimum eight-year contract, while in January 2021, Keolis Downer commenced operating and maintaining Adelaide's suburban rail network under a minimum eight-year contract with the then-Liberal state government.

Consistent with its pre-election commitment, the Labor state government announced on 3 April that it had negotiated and finalised terms with Keolis Downer to transfer the operation of the heavy rail network back to the state government in January 2025, while an agreement has been reached with Torrens Connect to transfer the tram operation back to the state government from July 2025.

Despite the tram line being part of the North South bus contract, suitable agreement has been reached that will see Torrens Connect continue to operate the bus services under that contract as scheduled, while it has also secured an extended tram infrastructure and maintenance contract to run until 2035. Similarly, Keolis Downer has secured an extended maintenance contract for Adelaide's rail infrastructure and train fleet until 2035. Keolis Downer will also keep its rail customer service and security management functions until June 2027.

Additionally, over the next two years, the state government has agreed to pump \$30 million to cover business costs for recruitment, training, and the purchase of private assets which the government will use after the transfer has been completed. A further \$3 million will be spent on "transitional arrangements for the tram services". Premier Peter Malinauskas said these costs would be required even if the contracts were run out prior to transfer back into government control. *PAUL BROWN, SA PREMIER'S OFFICE, ABC NEWS*

## INTERNATIONAL

### US: Washington, DC Metro update

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) announced on 12 April that the final phase of its "Return to Service" plan for its 7,000-series trains will now occur following agreement from the local safety regulator. This will mean more of the trains will be available for service each day.

The agency has been scrambling to deliver appropriate service levels for over a year since issues were found with the trains which forced a sudden withdrawal of the train type and a reduction in the timetabled services that they were able to deliver on its lines.

According to WMATA, it continues to work with the local regulator to “advance use of the Automated Wayside (Drive-Thru) Inspection System and increase the wheelset interference fit and press tonnage plan, both of which will require Safety Certification”.

Elsewhere, the Yellow line will reopen on 7 May after months of construction works for tunnel and Potomac River bridge repairs. From this date, Yellow line services will only operate between Huntington and Mt Vernon Square stations, with trips between Mt Vernon Square and Greenbelt to be made using Green line services. Potomac Yard station is due to open on Friday 19 May. A network map with the impacted Yellow line and surrounding services is provided right. Three fare-free shuttle services were provided on weekday peak-periods during the construction period (see our Front Cover).

Meanwhile, the approval of the operating agency’s Budget for the 2024 financial year includes a number of changes for passengers.

Passenger fares will be simplified with implementation to occur around 1 July this year. Maximum fares will be reduced, with MetroAccess capped at \$4 and Metrorail capped at \$6 (weekdays) or \$2 (late night and weekends) and the elimination of peak/off-peak fare differentiation. Low-income passengers enrolled in “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program” will also be eligible for a 50 per cent fare discount on their trips.

Selected train timetables will also be enhanced with extra services so that 75 per cent of rail passenger trips will occur where the service frequency is six minutes or better. The Budget also includes investment in corridor improvements for the Blue, Orange and Silver lines.

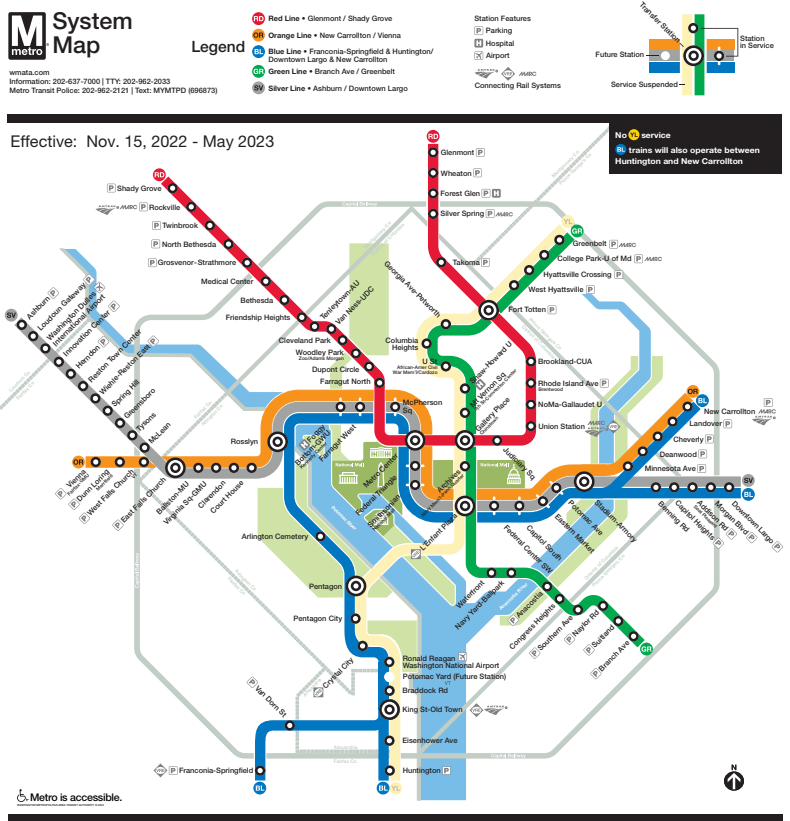
The agency’s bus services will also be enhanced, with the frequent bus network expanding to 21 lines providing a “frequent all-day service”, reaching half of all bus users, and therefore supporting the agency’s Better Bus Network redesign.

Further bus enhancements announced include route **B2** frequency upped to a bus every 12 minutes all day; **A12** route will be restructured and extended into two routes connecting to the Downtown Largo and New Carrollton stations, both operating every 20 minutes; new **16M** will operate every 12 minutes all day (replacing routes 16G and 16H) to connect Skyline City to National Landing along Columbia Pike; and 11C will be replaced by a reinstated **11Y**, charging Express fare, with service every 24 minutes during peak periods. *WMATA*

**“The FY 2024 budget focuses on optimising Metro services while continuing to invest in long-term infrastructure and sustainability projects.”**

*Randy Clarke, Metro General Manager and CEO*

**ENDS**



- No Smoking
- No Eating or Drinking
- No Animals (except service animals)
- No Audio (without earphones)
- No Littering or Spitting
- No Dangerous or Offensive Items

## BUS & COACH NEWS

### QUEENSLAND

#### Minor adjustments at UQ Lakes

Station upgrade works related to the Brisbane Metro bus project are occurring at UQ Lakes (University of Queensland) station. In its announcement, Translink says that from Monday 24 April (for an unspecified period) some services have been temporarily altered.

Route **169**'s last weekday trip now departs UQ Lakes 12 minutes earlier (at 20:55). *Many 169 trips on Translink's Trip Planner are treated as a loop service Eight Mile Plains-UQ Lakes-Eight Mile Plains, causing some initial confusion for the Editor in researching the changes.*

Comparing the timetable dated 20 September 2021 to Trip Planner post-24 April:

Route **28** trips towards UQ Lakes arrive there 3 minutes earlier, and trips ex UQ Lakes depart 2 mins earlier to arrive at Langlands Park as per the 2021 timetable. The extra two minutes is

eaten up somewhere between Boggo Road station and Langlands Park.

Route **29** trips towards UQ Lakes arrive there 1 minute earlier, and trips depart UQ Lakes 2 mins earlier, with again the extra 2 mins eaten up somewhere between Boggo Road and Woolloongabba.

Route **139** trips ex UQ Lakes depart up to five mins later than the 2021 timetable, and commence from Dutton Park Busway 1 minute earlier than the new departure time at UQ Lakes. Inbound trips arrive at UQ Lakes 1 min earlier and extend to Dutton Park Busway.

Similar adjustments impact routes **66**, **192** and **209**. **TRANSLINK**

## Bus stop and paper timetables

Word is that Translink is progressively withdrawing paper bus stop timetables.

TransLink has completed its statewide rollout of its Near Field Communication (NFC). 15,000 urban bus stops have been fitted with a tag which allows intending passengers to tap their smart phones which takes them straight to a website page for that bus stop on the TransLink website and provides stop, route, timetable and real time information.

Haven't heard of any complaints about the withdrawal of traditional timetables such is the ongoing acceptance of new technology.

Meanwhile, over in the ACT, ATA member Agnes Boskovitz recently had a failed attempt to obtain hard copy timetables in Canberra. Agnes writes:

*It appears that that Transport Canberra is no longer producing hard copy booklet timetables, which they used to produce for each Canberra region. After the new timetable started in late January 2023, I tried to obtain the booklet timetables for a nine-year-old friend who was taking an interest. After failing to obtain them in several visits to the unstaffed City Interchange information office, I phoned and asked for a full set of booklet timetables, as Transport Canberra/ ACTION has in my experience always been willing to post them. However, in due course, I received some PDF printouts of timetables for buses near my home - that is all. It seems that this is all they could do. A bus driver friend has confirmed that there are now no hard copy booklet timetables. ROBERT THOMSON, AGNES BOSKOVITZ*

## NEW SOUTH WALES



## Bus Priority Improvement Program

Updating *Table Talk's* March 2021 article (page 11) on the state government's Bus Priority Improvement Program to improve bus priority

and operations.

The **Pacific Highway, Hornsby** works reported in the March 2021 article were completed in April 2021.

The bus stop rationalisation works at **Taren Point, Caringbah, Sans Souci and Ramsgate** also reported in the article to benefit 476, 477 and 478 route buses were reportedly completed in March 2022.

The \$1.6 billion realignment/upgrade of **Northern Road between Narellan and South Penrith** for the future Western Sydney Airport, which was completed between 2016 and 2022 across six stages included numerous bus lanes around traffic light intersections, indented bus bays and at intersections north of Bradley Street, Glenmore Park the installation of bus priority measures. Likewise, the above measures were also provided with the nearby Bringelly Road upgrade.

The **Mona Vale Road** upgrade between Mona Vale and Ingleside from 2019 to 2022 (last update was March 2022 where the project was not marked as completed) included the installation of bus priority measures. The second stage of the Mona Vale Road upgrade between Ingleside and Terrey Hills is awaiting funding for construction, but is slated to include new/re-routed local bus services along Tumburra Street and an extended Harvey Road to be constructed between Bungendore Street and Mona Vale Road to serve planned residential growth around Ingleside.

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) says that **Blacktown Bus Interchange**, located next to Blacktown railway station has now exceeded its capacity, so to support the growth of local bus services, since September 2022, a new bus layover space is being constructed at the intersection of Sunnyholt Road and Gordon Street, located approximately one kilometre from the interchange. The space will have capacity for 11 buses and includes a driver lunchroom and bathroom facility. Works were due to be finished by the end of March.

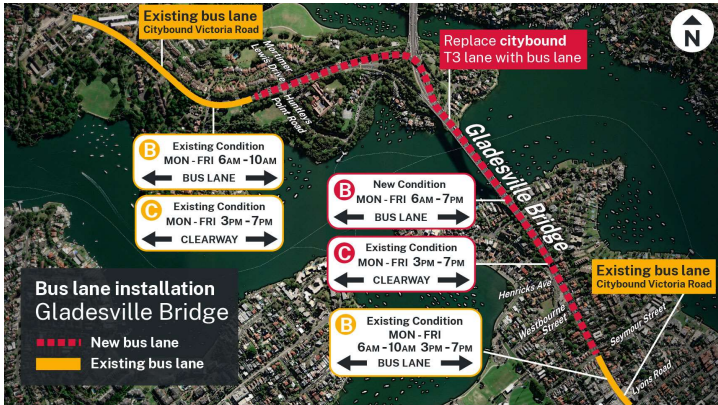


The **Mulgoa Road** upgrade underway near Penrith includes the inclusion of bus priority lanes at the Wolseley Road and Glenbrook Street intersections (the reports refer to these lanes as "bus queue jump lanes"), and some relocated bus stops which would be DDA (Disability Discrimination Act 1993) compliant. These bus priority works are slated for April and May this year.

A further section of **Mulgoa Road, Penrith** also upgraded between 2018 and at least late 2022

(the latest update is from November 2022) included bus priority at the High Street intersection, located near Penrith railway station.

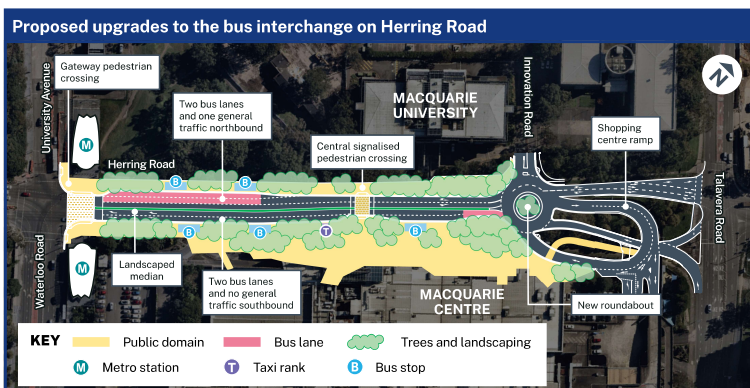
Works are ongoing on **Victoria Road, Gladesville** to improve city-bound bus trips, including replacing a section of T3 traffic lane with a continuous bus lane between Huntleys Point Road and Westbourne Street (which goes across Gladesville Bridge), as outlined in the image below.



In **Memorial Avenue, Kellyville** upgrade includes the installation of bus priority capability at traffic lights and indented bus bays at Arnold Avenue and Severn Vale Drive intersections. The overall road upgrade project is expected to be completed in mid-2024.

The **Parramatta Road corridor** between Burwood and Railway Square is also planned to contain future bus priority measures including the extension of existing bus lanes at Ashfield and Leichhardt, and the commencement of rapid bus services to connect with major transport hubs. Progress is dependent on future funding.

At **Macquarie Park**, construction finally commenced in the second half of 2022 for a dedicated northbound bus lane along Herring Road, and a dedicated right-turn bus lane on Waterloo Road for traffic onto Lane Cove South. These works are continuing throughout 2023. Nearby, bus layover is planned to be moved from Herring Road to a purpose-built facility on Talavera Road next to the M2 Motorway with capacity for 20 buses, and would include a driver break facility. This forms part of the Macquarie Park Bus Interchange upgrade which has been in the pipeline for a number of years. This section of Herring Road would also only be open to general traffic in one direction, see image below. The Review of Environmental Factors Submissions Report for the Interchange upgrade was published in December. **TRANSPORT FOR NSW**



## Kilmore Link Bus trip adjustment

From Monday 24 April, the 11:37 weekday trip ex Kilmore East instead departs at 11:44. PTV says the adjustment has been made to ensure a connection from the incoming rail service. **PTV**

## Enhanced Box Hill services implemented

Enhanced services for routes 733 and 767 that were reported in January's *Table Talk* (page 14) will come into effect from Sunday 30 April. According to Public Transport Victoria (PTV), this provides an additional 154 weekly trips on 733 and an additional 71 weekly trips on 767. **PTV**

## Bulleen adjustments

Effective from Sunday 30 April, with the opening of the Bulleen Park & Ride (P&R) facility, there have been some changes made to local bus routes, as follows:

- **200:** A bus stop change on Thompsons Road adjacent to the Bulleen P&R, while the departure time of some trips here varies by one minute. In the PDF timetable document, PTV has also removed sections for Easter public holidays and Labour Day, but added Kings Birthday.
- **305:** The weekday peak trips that operate to/from the City now run via Bulleen P&R with adjusted trip times, while their end-to-end journey times are now 4 minutes longer ex City and 2 mins longer ex Doncaster East. All other trips that only operate Doncaster-Doncaster East have had no reported changes.
- **309:** Trips now operate via Bulleen P&R instead of Doncaster P&R. Most intrapeak trips (total nine per weekday) have been withdrawn, however an extra trip is now scheduled to depart City (Collins Street) at 18:15. The peak Doncaster East-Donvale route extensions are also withdrawn.
- **905:** Trips now operate via the Bulleen P&R facility, with adjusted trip times not wholly related to this adjustment. End-to-end journey times are now 4 minutes longer ex City and 2 mins longer ex Doncaster East, except for Night Network trips (trips post-midnight) that have no changes to trip times in both directions despite the Bulleen P&R adjustment.

The above routes each have newly issued timetables from PTV.

Bulleen Park & Ride will form part of the North East Link busway which is due for completion in late 2027. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT VICTORIA, BIG BUILD**

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA



### Service reductions

As per previous reports, dozens of Adelaide bus routes continue to operate with reduced services with a check of random notifications not finding any major adjustments since February. **ADELAIDE METRO**

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA



### Route 233: Minor adjustments

From Monday 24 April, route **233** services operate with adjusted peak-period timings in an effort to "improve service reliability and on-time performance". Transperth advises that some school students may need to change their journey habits to get to school on-time. **TRANSPERTH**

---

ENDS

## FERRY & SHIP NEWS

## QUEENSLAND



### South Bank ferry terminal

Translink advises that from Monday 17 April, South Bank Ferry Terminals 1 and 2 commenced being referred to as the same stop, with no changes to timetabled CityCat and CityHopper trips. **TRANSLINK**

## NEW SOUTH WALES



### Lane Cove timetable update

The extra service promised under the new contract as reported in *March's Table Talk* (page 14) has been added in the afternoon peak, with an updated timetable commencing from Monday 3 April.

Effective from Monday 24 April, Captain Cook Cruises advises that it has made an adjustment, with the 18:30 trip ex Hunters Hill now departs Longueville, Northwood & Greenwich 10 minutes earlier (now 18:35, 18:40 and 18:43 respectively). There is no change to the departure times at Hunters Hill and Circular Quay wharves. **PAUL BROWN, CAPTAIN COOK CRUISES**

---

ENDS

## TALKING IN-DEPTH

### NSW Bus Privatisation Inquiry

A New South Wales legislative council committee published a report in 2022 scathing the then-Coalition state government's (voted out March 2023) privatisation-mindset of State Transit Authority (STA)'s commuter bus service regions. The report called the transfer of the government agency's remaining bus regions to private operation a failure due to service quality decline and higher commuter costs. *(It is the opinion of the Editor that the report needs to be critically reviewed by readers for political and ideological inferences that may not be accurate.)*

For decades, STA and its predecessors operated bus services around inner metropolitan Sydney and Newcastle. In Newcastle, STA also operated the Stockton ferry service until mid-2017 when, together with local buses and the new light rail line, a multi-modal "Newcastle Transport" contract commenced with multinational Keolis Downer. From 2003 to 2013, STA's Sydney operations included the Parramatta to Liverpool Transitway (T80), until its inclusion in the local region 3 bus contract with Transit Systems. Sydney's region 6 (covering inner-west Sydney) transferred to Transit Systems in June 2018, region 8 (covering Sydney's northern beaches) to Keolis Downer in October 2021, region 7 (covering inner-northwest Sydney) to Busways in January 2022, and region 9 (covering Eastern Suburbs) to a new joint-venture operator, Transdev John Holland, in April 2022.

Coogee Labor MP, Marjorie O'Neill, whose local eastern suburbs bus services were awarded to Transdev John Holland, said that the local

transfer to a private operator had been an “abject failure”. She said a Labor win in the then-upcoming state election in March 2023 would see a taskforce formed to explore STA’s ability to compete in future tender processes (note: STA ceased operating bus services outright on 2 April 2022).

Last year’s parliamentary report provided six key findings:

- The transition to wholly-private operation has not resulted in competition past the initial tender phase of the contracts which it describes as a oligopoly. It ideologises that under public operation, benefits from such an operation can be passed on to passengers through lower fares, increased service provision and direct accountability.
- The transition from public to private incentivised private operators to sacrifice needs of vulnerable people to cut costs while appealing to a “wide enough user base” to meet contractual requirements with Transport for NSW.
- The transition has resulted in more limited service delivery, higher passenger costs and worse pay & conditions for drivers.
- Recent changes in location of bus stops, service frequencies, and routes have at times occurred without “comprehensive” community consultation.
- Smaller, family-owned services, like Red Bus Services, have been a success driven by not just profit but customer and staff satisfaction.
- The recent transition of remaining regions has resulted in a two-tier class of workers who do the same job and tasks.

The report wrapped up with 11 recommendations, which the Editor has condensed due to repetition:

- The state government ‘**consider reverting the five previous State Transit regions** back to public operation.
- **Contractual penalties for non-compliance with indicators resulting from “understaffing”**, with the government to ‘ensure adequate staffing and retention rates’.
- The government to “ensure that **every community in NSW has access to reliable and accessible bus services to and from essential public infrastructure and services.**
- Four separate recommendations about **supporting and accelerating zero emissions bus deployment**, including consultation with local councils and “advocacy groups”.
- The private operating contracts should include **“quality of service” Key Performance Indicators** that would “avoid rationalisation and reduction in services to meet patronage and on-time running targets”.
- The state government partner with unions and private operators to introduce an **industry-wide enterprise agreement** -

something that major union bodies have been working to secure in the industrial relations systems federally following the May 2022 election of the national Labor government, which is reportedly making its way through the parliament.

- **Industry-wide minimum pay and condition levels**, an issue that some New Zealand councils and transport agencies were specifically working on throughout 2022.

The chairperson of the parliamentary committee, Greens MP Abigail Boyd, said that the privatisation of the city’s patchwork of bus networks had led to service degradation. The inquiry committee was also made up of Mark Banasiak (Shooters & Fishers), Mark Buttigieg and Daniel Mookhey (both Labor), Wes Fang (Nationals), Shayne Mallard and Chris Rath (both Liberal).

### Inquiry submissions

Over 400 separate submissions were sent in the inquiry. Here is a selection of points from key stakeholders:

**BusNSW**, the state’s industry body representing the bus operators, submitted that it “is not aware of any direct correlation between ‘privatisation’ and a loss of bus stops and services. Network reviews are undertaken for all metropolitan contract regions from time to time, which can involve changes to routes, service frequency and coverage, connections and the positioning of bus stops. BusNSW understands that in parts of Sydney, the community and media have linked the review of public transport networks to ‘privatisation’. It notes that significant changes were due to eastern suburbs services in region nine regardless because of the opening of the CBD South East Light Rail line.

**Parramatta City Council** provided one example of an alternative experience where the 2019 contract re-award to Transdev soon after led to a proposed route restructure of Parramatta River services (*Table Talk*, Jan 2020, p. 9). Council said it was surprised by the scale of the changes, and eventually opposed elements of the plan. After being withdrawn by Transport for NSW, Council said the restructure was a missed opportunity for early and open consultation to find service improvements with broad support. Council also provided the example of the timing of the abolition of route M52 (express Metrobus service Parramatta-Sydney CBD) with the operator change in Region 7 to Busways, which it says to it and members of the community was service degradation.

**Randwick City Council** noted a 2022 media article highlighting Transit Systems’ inability to reach 95 per cent on-time running in region 6 since it took over from STA in 2018, while **Inner West Council** said its experience of the region’s on-time running dropping from 93.5 to 90.5 per cent and the ‘bus stops reductions on some key routes by 20-30 per cent’ were further proof of degradation. Inner West Council said that it was “concerned that performance may be jeopardised by privatisation”, however the Council’s report also continuously refers to “operators” reducing and ‘less likely to introduce’ services, when it is Transport for NSW that has the ultimate planning



and decision-making capabilities.

**Waverley Council** submitted that regions 6 and 9 are historically “are historically the lowest performing regions” in Sydney, with improvements in 2020 and 2021 “likely related to reduced patronage due to the pandemic restrictions” on people movements. An on-time running (OTR) data table shows that while Transit Systems’ region 6 operation indeed had many months of missing the 95 per cent OTR target in its first twelve months (July 2018-June 2019), this was not different from STA’s final 12 months of operation in the region with a numerous months also hovering between 87 and 92 per cent. As an aside, the Council also submitted that “frequent” and “local” routes should possibly have different OTR targets because local routes are indirect and buses disperse onto local roads to deliver breadth of coverage, and therefore should have a lower OTR target. It theorises this “could alleviate the need to reduce service provision on local routes” to, say, 90 per cent.

**Willoughby City Council** submitted that prior to Busways commencing in region 7, “it is understood that services along Willoughby Road were reduced. Many local residents believe this was to increase services on the Northern Beaches”, while bemoaning lack of direct access to Sydney’s Eastern Suburbs, only two direct routes to beaches (160X and 144) and the bus interchange at Chatswood railway station being at capacity.

The **Physical Disability Council of NSW** submitted its concerns over private company drivers not being aware of or honouring all disability-related concession discounts, and provided an example of veterans with disability being eligible for free travel.

**Charlestown Member of Parliament** Jodie Harrison submitted that her office had been “inundated” with complaints following bus network changes within the first 27 months of privatisation/franchising of the Newcastle contract. Complaints included people having to use multiple buses, missed links between those services, and impacts from late-running services. Of particular reference were the June 2019 changes which saw a halving of off-peak services on routes 41, 43 and 48 from hourly to two-hourly, which it said were the only routes providing direct services between certain suburbs. Keolis Downer pointed concerns to the availability of its On Demand service. She further submitted that the On Demand service has caused a degradation of service because it finishes operation at 16:00 weekdays, while “the arrival time and location of pick-up can vary which can leave passengers stranded if they do not have the mobile phone application to view the location of the bus in real-time”.

### **Franchising or Privatisation?**

Transport for NSW’s Chief Operations Officer, Howard Collins, attempted to set the record straight by calling the process “franchising” rather than “privatisation”, with his explanation that “existing assets are not sold”. He further said that “The existing bus fleet and depots in the regions previously operated by STA remain owned by NSW government and are provided

under a lease agreement to the private operators for the duration of those service contracts”. BusNSW echoed these sentiments.

From its December 2022 official response to the inquiry (henceforth referred to as ‘the Response’, however no date was provided anywhere on the document, which was labelled “Sensitive - NSW Cabinet”), the state government said Franchising leverages experience from private industry, whilst maintaining Government controls to ensure outcomes for commuters aren’t compromised”.

Julie Walton, convenor for Action for Public Transport, an organisation active in community advocacy for public transport, provided an observation that NSW appeared to have learnt from the Victorian model because in NSW the private operators do not own the bus assets and depots in these contracts.

The Unions NSW assistant secretary says that it is privatisation because “there is a private operator that is responsible for these operations who is not beholden to the policies and practices of government, like we see with other operations of public services, and that is something that cannot be described in any other way. You can use words like “franchising” and other things, but that is, in essence, the privatisation of a public service”.

### **Timetable changes**

In the Response, the state government said that Transport for NSW (TfNSW) controls timetables and routes in all Greater Sydney bus regions. However, each region’s operator can make requests for changes. These requests are submitted to, reviewed and endorsed by TfNSW through the BSAR (Bus Service Alteration Request) process before it can be implemented.

Network changes can include the creation, adjustment or removal of routes. Requests can be submitted by the region’s operator, or by TfNSW itself.

Keolis Downer and Red Bus both submitted to the inquiry that each operator uses proprietary tools and stakeholder consultation to analyse the network and includes a review on customer feedback to present ideas about where “services could be best placed” (last quote from Christian Porter, Keolis Downer’s Chief Commercial Officer).

Red Bus’ Leanne Griffiths said “when we do network reviews, we listen to the community and we ask them what they actually would like. You can’t always please all community members, but you do your best and you look at what type of community members require it the most as well. So you take into consideration that there are people out there who require our services to get to hospitals, shopping centres and universities. All that is taken into consideration and, ultimately, [TfNSW] makes the decision.”

BusNSW’s Executive Director, Matt Threlkeld, said that on the basis of anecdotal evidence “it can be quite difficult to have a BSAR approved at times”. BusNSW also said that there was limited incentive for an operator to recommend changes, although the Editor opines that this may not necessarily be true, as some requests could benefit the operator through more efficient

running and/or rostering, which could deliver a reduction in bus operating costs, dead running (where a bus runs empty before the start of a trip, or after the completion of a trip), and/or headcount (the number of drivers required to operate the entire timetable).

Meanwhile, the state government acknowledged in its Response that the Newcastle Transport contract is a little different to the others because the operator (Keolis Downer) is responsible for the planning and delivery of network/service changes. This contract is also unique in that it is multi-modal - covering bus, light rail and ferry services across inner Newcastle. Keolis Downer says that it annually reviews community feedback and patronage data as part of its planning work for the region. The government however said that service reductions or rationalisation still need approval from TfNSW.

Once prospective operators have submitted their bids during the tender process, TfNSW says that it examines the service planning proposals of each bid "to confirm that current service levels and coverage are not diminished". Any proposed changes to the base service levels delivered by the pre-existing operator must meet TfNSW's minimum service specifications provided in TfNSW's Integrated Public Transport Service Planning Guidelines document, which also works to support operator network service planning activities over the short to medium term (up to 10 years). Once again, any service rationalisation or reductions need approval from TfNSW based on the circumstances of the change.

Red Bus disputed in its submission the theory that privately-run services need to incrementally reduce and rationalise services to stay competitive and profitable for three reasons. Firstly, the routes are determined by TfNSW, rather than the operator. Secondly, TfNSW pays operators based on kilometres and hours of service delivered on the agreed service plan. Finally, TfNSW keeps all farebox revenue, so changing the timetable by reducing services does not necessarily improve profit, as income is directly lost by not operating timetabled trips. Instead, Red Bus argues that operators generate better profitability by reducing dead running including layovers and repositioning moves. Red Bus operates Outer Metropolitan Region 7 services, with routes located south-east of Wyalong on the Central Coast.

### **Market-tested contract tendering**

The 2015 NSW Auditor General's report into the performance of Sydney Metropolitan Bus Contracts confirmed that the gross cost contracting regime had succeeded in reducing the expenditure borne by taxpayers. Under the 2013-14 contracts, eight of the then-ten private Sydney bus regions underwent competitive tendering, while the remaining two were directly negotiated. The report stated that a combined estimated \$64 million in annual savings was achieved in the first year across all ten privately-operated regions, compared with the previous 2005 contracts that had all been directly negotiated with pre-existing bus operators. The report said that market-testing of contract bids during the 2013-14 tenders provided increased savings to taxpayers.

Meanwhile, although independent benchmarking found that the two remaining directly negotiated contracts (Transdev regions 10 and 13) had delivered a reduction in payments per operating kilometre on the previous contracts, the rate of decrease was smaller than for the eight competitively-tendered contracts. This situation was a one-off as it provided TfNSW with "control of its bus fleet and depot assets". Transdev subsequently lost operation of both regions as part of the 2021-24 contracts.

While the first year of STA's directly negotiated 2013-14 contracts still had a substantially higher cost per kilometre of running (\$8.94 compared to the private operator average of \$5.43), the report attributed slow trips from congestion and governance costs from being a government agency as some reasons for STA's higher overall costs. The report also revealed that STA was not beholden to financial penalties for poor operating performance, unlike the private operators.

The Report did note that the savings benefits from competitive tendering may not be as fruitful in future for the eight private market-tested contracts, meaning that any cost decrease will likely be lower.

The 2015 Report also noted that while 9.5 million annual bus trips were made across all Sydney operators, State Transit's four regions accounted for around 5 million of these (equating to around 53 per cent). Meanwhile, of the total \$1.02 billion of estimated annual operator payments being made to Sydney's bus operators, State Transit accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the total, supporting the notion that efficiency savings could be possible by transferring these regions to private operation. Indeed, the government revealed in the 2022 privatisation inquiry report that the three remaining STA regions transferred to private operation under the 2021-24 contracts would net an average combined annual saving of around \$47 million a year throughout the life those contracts (Sydney's region 6 and Newcastle Transport not included, as they had been contracted out previously and thus not included in this round of re-tendering).

The 2015 report also reported that annual payments for each Sydney region at the time ranged between \$18 million and \$183 million, which is a wide differential from top to bottom. This is solidified by region patronage data over the past decade which confirms the variability between the city's smallest and largest bus contracts.

While the 2022 report stated that TfNSW has no direct control over the cost of the contracts for each region, this ignores the fact that TfNSW can exercise control through the parameters that it sets for the tender process, and ultimately which bidder it chooses to sign with. The report says that the private operators determine how much operating a region will cost them over the life of the contract before making their bid.

The 2015 audit report did not reference the Outer Metropolitan bus regions, as they were beyond its scope.

It has also been revealed that each bidder is required to provide a \$250,000 deposit for a bus region, while Red Bus said that a contract bid typically has 50-60 per cent of the total number allocated for direct labour costs.

### 2005

- > Bus routes organised & contracted as 15 regions
- > Contracts negotiated with pre-existing operators

### 2013-14

- > Competitive tendering for 8 of 10 private regions, negotiation for the remaining 2
  - > Two regions in southern Sydney consolidated, leaving 14 left

### 2021-24

- > For the first time, all regions, including those held by STA, underwent competitive tendering
- > A further 6 regions consolidated into 3, leaving 11 left

## Consolidation of Regions

The Transport Workers Union submitted its concern that Transport for NSW and the state government have a preference for national and multinational operators to win contracts over smaller, family-run businesses. It noted TfNSW's acceptance in the recent and ongoing new contract tendering processes for the 2021-24 contracts that bidders could combine particular regions together to form a larger bid for a combined contract. These were pre-determined by TfNSW for the tender process. The Union noted that of the four possible combinations, three involved a smaller, local bus operator.

In March 2023, with the awarding of the final tranche of new contracts, each of the three tranches has included the amalgamation of two regions.

Red Bus submitted to the 2022 Privatisation Inquiry that TfNSW's interest in region consolidation had placed additional pressure on the smaller operators to find a bidding partner that could provide the required level of equity to bid for both their existing contract region and the other region chosen for amalgamation, presumably seen as a requirement to 'stay in the game'.

Ms Griffiths also said that their company had been blindsided by the 2021 announcement that the two Central Coast contracts (part of the Outer Metropolitan regions), held currently by Red Bus and Busways would be next to be competitively tendered, although TfNSW has since delayed this until the conclusion of the recent Sydney contract processes. She confirmed that the two regions could be consolidated by a joint bid. On the question of what would happen to Red Bus if the business does not get a new contract, she said "there would be no more Red Bus, we're gone".

## Government response

Unsurprisingly, the state government's December 2022 official response to the inquiry did not support the recommendation to consider the reversion of bus services back into government operation (for the former State Transit regions). The state government said that the franchising model had seen direct service improvements for those affected communities. It provided the example of region 8, where the private operator (Keolis Downer) had introduced headway

technology to the B-Line service, with B-Line buses now having an on-board software platform and an operational control centre to increase service reliability and quality. The award of this contract to this operator also saw its previously successful Northern Beaches On Demand service (Keoride) permanently integrated into the general region 8 contract. It says that Keoride enjoys an average customer satisfaction rating of 98 per cent. Further, the state government reports that the franchising model has seen a combined \$375 million in savings for taxpayers with the new private operators servicing the region 7, 8 and 9 contracts over the life of those contracts.

The government did however note recommendations on improving Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the contracts for private operators, while saying that, as part of the process of private tendering, the operators have been provided with guidance on areas with historically low public transport coverage, and challenged them to propose innovative models like On Demand to increase breadth of coverage and options.

On community consultation, the Response outlined the "extensive consultation" that was conducted for the South Eastern Suburbs reorganisation which considered 8,800 pieces of feedback from the extended eight-week consultation period including through council and community group briefings. It said that themes raised had included service frequency, links to the new light rail line, and the maintenance of local links to key destinations. TfNSW also leads the management of customer-facing communications channels, such as the TransportInfo website, the 131 500 infoline and the social media handles, while operators are required to use a common "customer relationship management system" which ensures that all feedback is logged onto the same system, controlled by TfNSW.

On ensuring access for every community, TfNSW said that the current framework of government controls ensures that commuter outcomes are not compromised.

The Response also points to TfNSW's Future Transport Strategy which has a focus on connecting the "whole lives" of passengers, which it says it does by achieving the minimum service levels provided by the planning guidelines, while also aiming for most people accessing key destinations within 30 minutes through its Six Cities Regions (as per the 2022 NSW Future Transport Strategy report, available at [future.transport.nsw.gov.au](https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au)).

The recommendations on an industry-wide enterprise agreement as well as industry-wide minimum pay/conditions were not supported, in part, because the view is that both approaches are incompatible. The Response provides a number of pro-flexibility arguments.

The government supported in principle that it should be ensuring adequate staffing and employee retention, and said in its response that it undertook mitigation by including in recent tenders that bidders "propose strategies and approaches" to overcome the ongoing staff shortage issue. It also said that the industry "is developing a range of initiatives" such as traineeship programs leading to a national Certificate III driving qualification, supporting

female participation by offering learning and training across all roles to facilitate gainful employment, and an operator using its in-house training resources to deliver fully qualified bus drivers as well as information days in conjunction with a local employment agency. It also mentioned the existing use of sign-on and referral bonuses. Interestingly, the Response also said that TfNSW has been managing performance and driving outcomes by increasing the levels of incentives, such as performance payments and abatements, which it says are designed to encourage operators to meet service delivery targets.

The Response supported the four recommendations on the introduction of zero-emissions buses.

### March 2023 change of government

The incoming state Labor government has confirmed that it will be convening a bus industry taskforce to look at existing issues and works towards finding solutions. Post-state election, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union has been steadfast that reversing privatisation of service operation in the former STA regions would result in a reversal of the driver shortages being faced by operators.

The state government has also commissioned a number of other reviews, including on the various Sydney Metro projects which have experienced cost blowouts worth billions of dollars, and a review of the Sydney Trains "Infrastructure and Systems" which includes governance, accountability, asset management and planning as part of the review's scope which is reliability and resilience.

### Other jurisdictions

Most other major capital cities have bus services operated by private operators, with exceptions including Transport Canberra's bus network and Brisbane City Council's inner city-operated routes.

South Australia's previous state Liberal government had relatively recently privatised the maintenance and operation of its Adelaide train network to Keolis Downer. The operation of the rail network will soon return to public operation under the Labor government's April 2023 announcement that it had negotiated an arrangement with the operator that would see Keolis Downer secure an extended maintenance contract for the network.

Probably the country's biggest example of a failure in private operation goes back to 2002, when National Express walked away from its loss-making Melbourne suburban rail, regional rail and tram contract with around one week's notice, leaving the Victorian state government to pick up the pieces.

### Further discussion

On 12 April, *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article on ongoing service reductions based on internal briefings to the new Labor Transport Minister whereby operators have not been penalised for service cancellations once a monthly cap has been reached, which the minister said amounted to the contracts providing operators with "financial incentives to cancel bus services". The minister further said that there are incentives within the contracts whereby it is effectively cheaper to cancel a trip rather than run it late.

The article also cited government figures where a peak of 28,000 fully or partially cancelled bus trips occurred across metropolitan Sydney in August 2022.

*Story idea provided by LEN REGAN, story developed and written by the TABLE TALK EDITOR. Sources include SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, THE AGE, NSW PARLIAMENT documents, TRANSPORT FOR NSW, NSW STATE AUDIT OFFICE and the various inquiry submissions from interested parties on the matter.*

**Front Cover:** Washington, D.C. Special shuttle train services operated from November 2022 to May 2023 due to the Yellow line closedown. Item 'US: Washington, DC Metro update' starts page 3.

## About Table Talk

Print ISSN 1038-3697, Online ISSN 2209-718X.

**Table Talk** is a monthly publication produced by the Australian Timetable Association Inc. (ATA) (Registration No. A0043673H) as a journal of record covering timetable and other transport-related news. The ATA also publishes **The Times** covering timetable history and analysis. ABN 74248483468.

For ATA membership enquiries, contact our Membership Officer, Len Regan, at [membership@timetable.org.au](mailto:membership@timetable.org.au).

Back issues of *Table Talk* are available on our website, [www.timetable.org.au](http://www.timetable.org.au), two months after print publication.

**Editor for Rail, Tram, Air and Ferry & Ship:** Chris Pandilovski, [tabletalk@timetable.org.au](mailto:tabletalk@timetable.org.au).

**Editor for Bus:** Steven Haby, [busnews@timetable.org.au](mailto:busnews@timetable.org.au).

**Production and Mailout:** Steven Haby, David Hennell, Geoff Mann, Richard May, Katie Moss, Len Regan, Richard Talbot.

**Proofreaders:** Agnes Boskovitz, David Cranney, Geoff Hassall.

**Table Talk is a production of the Australian Timetable Association**