

Deluge keeps KBL hopping

Southern Queensland's recent wet weather kept bus operations 'on the hop' late in January, forcing the suspension of school transport and the slow-down of new depot construction for noted regional operator Kangaroo Bus Lines.

"As of early December, we were on track for opening our new depot in early March, but the wet weather pushed that back a few weeks," Kangaroo Bus Lines General Manager Darren Webster says.

Webster says the original forecast was a 12-month build-time, which would see KBL's new depot at Burpengary north of Brisbane finished by March, and all seemed on track, with the build team picking up efficiencies along the way.

"We did get a bit ahead of schedule but, in a nutshell, we are still on target," Webster says.

The depot is, however, taking shape with the office and workshop going through its final fit-out.

The workshop pit and ancillary equipment is being installed by Brisbane firm Levanta, one of many local Queensland suppliers commissioned by Kangaroo Bus Lines, as part of the construction team.

"Where possible we have tried to keep the trade suppliers local," Webster says.

KBL took title of the 3.03-hectare industrial site at Burpengary, to Brisbane's north in the Moreton Bay regional shire, last February after a three-year approval process.

All up, the depot should come online just over four years from inception to delivery, and will relieve pressure on KBL's existing 'home' at suburban Morayfield, 5km to the west, and currently squeezed for space to garage the 93-vehicle fleet.

"We are looking to relocate staff and vehicles from Morayfield to Burpengary over the Easter holiday period in early April," Webster says.

He says KBL plans to take a two-fold approach to the relocation.

"We will move administration, operational staff and drivers over one weekend, and then the following week we will move workshop staff, equipment and spare parts."

At the time of relocation, the Burpengary workshop will be fitted and ready to go with a new pit, new oil tanks, and associated equipment, such as tyre storage racks.

"I think once we move and get settled our staff will be very happy," says Webster.

KBL employs a workforce of about 120 people, making it one of the region's largest private employers.

Through the construction phase, Webster and his team have been in regular contact with TransLink which contracts a large part of Kangaroo Bus Lines route service operations.

"And the Moreton Bay Regional Council

Kangaroo Bus Lines' Burpengary depot is nearing completion with staff and fleet relocation expected in early April

has been very understanding of our situation here at Morayfield," Webster adds.

Departure from a much smaller depot facility at Morayfield, adjacent to encroaching residential growth and a widening suburban road interchange, to a larger facility at Burpengary in a dedicated industrial park as anchor tenant reflects KBL's plans for growth.

"The infrastructure we are putting in at Burpengary matches the region's growth, and will help to improve local bus services," Webster says.

"Strategically we will be in a very good spot, with no flooding issues."

KBL's impending move to a relatively 'flood free' location, will be an additional welcome relief from the crowded Morayfield site which was 'rained-in' recently, where access was cut to school routes, as surrounding flood waters, reminiscent of the severe weather events of January 2011, returned to the district.

More than 250mm of rain fell in the region on Australia Day and into the Friday forcing KBL to cancel all of its 60 school service runs, for the first time in 34 years.

KBL's urban service network of 10 routes,



KBL's crowded Morayfield depot will soon be vacated for more expansive premises at Burnpengary on Brisbane's northern outskirts



Kangaroo Bus Lines General Manager Darren Webster has been kept busy fighting wet weather and bringing depot relocation logistics together

operated by 20 buses, was also closed, but re-opened by midday on the Friday, with school services remaining suspended until schools resumed on Monday, January 30.

Webster says most bus routes in the region were impassable.

"Many of our drivers couldn't get to work, and many of our buses couldn't get out of the depot to commence their runs because a local service road was flooded," he says.

"In the interests of everyone's safety, we made the decision to suspend services in cooperation with TransLink."

While the Morayfield depot wasn't itself flooded, the road network was choked — Morayfield and Lindsay Roads were cut, and Deception Bay Road (which is the main arterial for route and school services) was also cut. ■

KANGAROO LEAPS INTO MIDIS

For more on Kangaroo Bus Lines, turn to page 54 for ABC technical guru Gary Worrall's exclusive review and test drive of Denning's just released 39-seater, just weeks into service with KBL, and about to fill the niche for an all-Australian midi-coach.

MYKI ROLL-OUT CONTINUES

By the end of April, Victoria's commuting public transport will have access to 800 retail locations across Melbourne to top up Myki smartcards, as Metcard continues to be phased out.

Transport Ticketing Authority CEO Bernie Carolan says weekly and monthly Metcards would be phased out from March 26, and the gradual removal of Metcard ticket machines from Metro railway stations would be the first significant step in the wind-down of the Metcard system.

"Anyone who currently buys a weekly or monthly Metcard will find that a Myki pass is the best option for them, and that it offers more flexibility in the number of consecutive days that can be topped up," Carolan says.

To help passengers through the next stages of the rollout of Myki and phased Metcard withdrawal, the Transport Ticketing Authority is seeking up to 130 customer service people. Carolan says Myki customer service staff would help passengers and public transport operator staff during the transition to Myki and at key stages of the withdrawal of Metcard.

"I would encourage passengers who are cautious about taking up the smart card technology to speak to Myki customer service staff when they are on the system from around March," he says.

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