CRANBOURNE

Commuters face disruption

Megan Bailey

Work starts on extending 13 platforms to accommodate higher-capacity trains

TRAIN travellers will soon face disruptions as work starts on extensions at 13 platforms on the Cranbourne-Pakenham line.

The works will allow the platforms to cope with larger, high-capacity trains, adding to the construction of five new platforms and upgrades to signalling on what is Melbourne's busiest train line.

In the first period of disruptions, buses will replace trains between Dandenong and Pakenham from April 1-5.

Platforms will be extended at South Yarra, Caulfield, Malvern, Oakleigh, Westall, Springvale, Dandenong, Merinda Park, Cranbourne, Hallam, Berwick, Officer and Pakenham.

A new depot will also be built in Pakenham East that will house a maintenance facility, train simulators and stabling for up to 30 trains, creating 100 new and ongoing local jobs.

Public Transport Users Association spokesman Daniel Bowen said the group supported measures to increase capacity on the line, but the line still needed to be duplicated.

"Regular passengers will know that crowding is a daily problem and it's common to see people unable to squeeze on board trains, (to be) left behind on platforms," Mr Bowen said.

"The various upgrades – level crossing removal, signal and power upgrades – and the longer trains will all help the line cope with growing demand.

"But the major project missing in the plan is duplication of the Cranbourne line.

"The single track regularly causes delays to snowball, and is a barrier to more frequent, reliable services."

Premier Daniel Andrews said Melbourne's first high-capacity train line would create thousands of new construction jobs.

"Bigger trains, better stations and no level crossings will get tens of thousands of people in Melbourne's south-east home safer and sooner every day," he said.

How will you cope with the works? Tell us at facebook.com/cranbourne

Wildlife rescuers are urging people to stop using wide-holed netting on their fruit trees so flying foxes are not injured or killed. Picture: VALERIU CAMPAN

FLYING FOXES CAUGHT UP IN NASTY TREE NETS

NATIVE bats are dying at an alarming rate as keen Casey gardeners try to protect their produce during fruit season.

Wildlife rescuers are urging residents to steer clear of wide-holed nets on fruit trees because they can injure and kill flying foxes.

President of AWARE Wildlife Rescue Sharon Bondy said she had increasingly been called out to assist entangled bats, while Melbourne Zoo vet Dr Kate Bodley said entanglements were the most common reason for flying fox admissions into its hospitals.

"Always use readily-available fine-mesh netting ... and be sure to tie the netting securely around the tree trunk so wildlife does not get caught."

She said flying foxes played a key role in the environment, and that fewer bats meant reduced pollination.

Ms Bondy said people who tried to free flying foxes also risked contracting a virus.

Anybody who spots a trapped animal should call a rescue service.

AWARE's around the clock Wildlife Rescue Hotline number is 0412 433 727.

For more information about netting and animals, visit wildlifefriendlyfencing.com

Fatal crash

Major Collision Investigation Unit detectives are keen to hear from witnesses after a two-car, head-on collision in **Lysterfield South** on Monday, February 20. Police were told a Toyota Hilux ute, travelling west on Churchill Park Drive, crossed on to the wrong side of the road and collided with an eastbound Ford ute just after 8.30am. The male driver of the Ford died at the scene and the other driver was taken to hospital as a precaution. Witnesses should contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Police appeal

Police are seeking public help in relation to a man and a woman wanted for questioning over "concerning behaviour" at the **Cranbourne** Park shopping centre. Narre Warren CIU detective Acting Sergeant Mark Wiederhold said the pair went to a shop, which police would not name, at the centre at 1pm on Tuesday, February 7. Staff called police after seeing their unusual behaviour. Sgt Wiederhold said he was not able to elaborate on what the pair were doing. "I cannot say what it is (the pair is alleged to have done) but that it was very odd. People would have seen them around the centre before," Sgt Wiederhold said. Anyone with information can phone 9705 3174 or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

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