



# Crime soars as commuters jam rail network

## Train stations in crisis

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transport reporter

MORE than a third of Melbourne's train stations are at breaking point, with crime rising as thousands of commuters join the daily crush.

An internal report seen by the *Herald Sun* details the growth in patronage at some of the city's busiest unstaffed train stations.

The report lists West Footscray in the inner west and Hallam in the southeast as among the busiest and most dangerous unstaffed train stations in Melbourne.

Reports of assault and unruly behaviour, such as spitting, throwing rocks, offensive language and vandalism, have risen to dangerous levels as patronage soared 108 per cent

at West Footscray and 97 per cent at Hallam over the past six years.

Weekday passenger numbers are also up 92 per cent at Kananook near Frankston, 69 per cent at Thornbury and 56 per cent at North Richmond since 2001. All three stations are unstaffed.

Among the stations listed with the worst crimes was Patterson at Bentleigh, with reports of youths riding on train roofs and increased incidents of rocks and missiles thrown at trains.

The 56 unmanned and partly staffed stations identified by the Rail, Tram and Bus Union as needing urgent attention have been sites of drug and alcohol abuse, vandalism, offensive language,

graffiti and rock throwing.

The state's peak rail union is now demanding the State Government put full-time staff on at least 56 Melbourne stations to protect and help commuters in the crowd crush.

Twenty of the busiest stations identified in the report only have staff working for four hours in the morning peak on weekdays.

The other 36 stations are not staffed.

Only 72 of Melbourne's 211 stations are listed as premium, with staff from the first train to the last as well as a customer service centre.

RTBU state secretary Trevor Dobbyn said the system was falling apart.

"The existing staff are overwhelmed by the patronage growth, they just can't cope,"

Mr Dobbyn said.

"The Government has had eight years to get it done and they've sat on their hands."

Mr Dobbyn said passengers have also been holding doors open as they tried to board packed trains.

He said staff could help speed up trains by getting passengers on and off more quickly and would also be able to help the disabled.

Victorian Council of Social Service chief executive officer Cath Smith said the council strongly backed the call for more staffed stations.

"There is strong evidence that staff at stations gives a better sense of security," Ms Smith said.

### Top 10 stations which have recorded most increases in customers from 2000-01 to 2006-07

Rank	Station average weekday validations	2000-01	2006-07	% increase
1	West Footscray (unstaffed)	525	1090	108
2	Hoppers Crossing*	1235	2523	104
3	Hallam (unstaffed)	743	1463	97
4	Kananook (unstaffed)	280	538	92
5	Moreland (unstaffed)	392	749	91
6	Jewell (unstaffed)	361	664	84
7	Balaclava*	1499	2679	79
8	Huntingdale*	1888	3365	78
9	Albion*	1318	2340	76
10	Bonbeach (unstaffed)	297	519	75

\* Only has staff working for four hours in the morning peak on weekdays

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