

■ 120 idle drivers paid a combined salary of \$6.3m

■ 1890 fewer train services each week

Left waiting for a train to drive

By SHARRI MARKSON

MORE than 100 train drivers with a combined salary of \$6.3 million a year are sitting idle after the State Government slashed train services to improve on-time running.

Documents obtained by *The Sunday Telegraph* reveal that some drivers are working a single shift in a fortnight because of an oversupply of staff.

One clocked in at 8am last week for an eight-hour shift but didn't spend a minute in the driver's seat.

About 1890 train services a week have been cut since the new timetable was introduced last September — while the number of train drivers is at the highest level in five years.

Another driver worked one shift of 8½ hours but drove for just 28 minutes on the 8.5km leg between Central Station and Circular Quay.

Rail, Tram and Bus Union divisional secretary Alex Claassens said estimates showed by the end of the year, there would be an oversupply of between 200 and 300 train drivers.

"They are sitting around doing nothing," he admitted. "They may only get to drive a train once a week or once a fortnight."

Mr Claassens said the cuts in services on the new timetable was partly to blame for the oversupply of train drivers.

"You are looking at 120 too many at the moment and there will be roughly 84 extra between now and the end of the year," he said.

"It's a reactionary timetable and one of the implications is that they have got too many train drivers."

Up to 12 drivers were placed on standby at Central Station for the fortnight beginning on May 14, but they were not rostered to drive on any of CityRail's routes.

Train drivers say the biggest oversupply of drivers is at the Central depot. About 110 holiday relief drivers are rostered when only 38 are needed. Flemington is overstaffed by 15 drivers, Campbelltown by 12 and Penrith by 11.

Waterfall and Cronulla are the only depots that are understaffed.

The Sunday Telegraph observed drivers having coffee and wandering around Central Station last week.

One railway worker, who did not wish to be named, said the cuts in



Ticket to nowhere: Drivers affected by timetable cuts on long breaks outside Central Station Picture: Dean Marzolla

train services meant there was not enough work to go around.

"They have an oversupply of drivers. They have been sitting on their backsides doing nothing," he said. "On Eddy Avenue [adjacent to Central], you'll find them sitting around having coffee. They could be sitting there for an eight-hour shift."

One driver, who asked not to be named, said he would prefer to drive on his shifts.

But he confirmed that there were not enough train services to accommodate all the drivers.

A RailCorp spokeswoman said the new timetable on the Illawarra line would require additional drivers.

She said while there are enough drivers for the current timetable, more would be recruited for future demands on driver numbers.

Train driver team leaders will also be introduced, following the

recommendations from the Waterfall Inquiry.

"Having an adequate number of drivers is crucial to maintaining the reliability of services," she said.

"The age profile of RailCorp drivers means we lose around eight drivers per month."

There are currently around 1400 train drivers and RailCorp said they would continue to recruit and train further drivers.



Invaded: Thieves' target

Bandits invade homes

By police writer MARNIE O'NEILL

A WOMAN was robbed at gunpoint and another had a knife held to her throat in two separate home invasions in Sydney's west on Friday.

The first incident happened in Canley Vale just before 7pm, when a woman was approached by a man in the front yard of her Derby St home.

He produced a handgun and pushed the 47-year-old onto the verandah, demanding cash and gold.

A visitor was also threatened with the gun when he tried to intervene. The robber was briefly distracted and the woman fled, calling police from her mobile phone.

When she returned about 20 minutes later, the gunman had gone.

The bandit was described as Asian in appearance, thin, aged in his mid-twenties and wearing a green beanie, grey jumper and grey trousers.

Three hours later, two balaclava-clad men broke into the bedroom of a 27-year-old woman in Acacia Gardens as she slept.

She awoke to find a man holding a knife to her throat about 9.15pm. He ordered her to hand over her car keys, causing a minor knife wound as he pressed the weapon against her neck.

A second man entered the room and took cash from a bedside drawer. Both men then left the Trevor Toms Drive house on foot.

Anyone with information about either incident can call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.



Distressing: An abusive text message

Schools get tough with bullies

By ELLEN CONNOLLY

SCHOOLS are issuing their own apprehended violence orders to students to try to control bullying.

The behavioural-management contracts, described as "being like an AVO", place various orders on children, forcing them not to communicate with a particular student and restricting their play area.

The students sign the contract, which can last from one term to an entire school year.

While the strategy has proved successful in some schools, the Parents and Citizens Federation is

concerned they are being used as punishment.

"We're monitoring the situation. We'd hate them to be introduced in a formalised manner," said federation spokeswoman Sharon-Roni Canty.

"Problems of bullying should be addressed before they get to this level."

Catholic Education child-protection officer Carolyn Hadley said the contracts had been tested successfully at several schools.

"Basically, they are an agreement (between) two students," she said.

"Often with bullying it can be two ways, so it's just better to separate them. Some

schools are able to do that so the kids have separate playground areas."

One Central Coast parent is considering issuing a court-ordered AVO against high-school students bullying her daughter.

"I've spoken to the police about getting one, but they've said it's very difficult to enforce in a school environment," mother Debbie James said.

"It's getting to the stage where we have to do something."

She said her daughter, Emily, was constantly bullied, either verbally or via text messages to her mobile phone.



Support: Emily with her mum Debbie