

SCHOOL BUSES - DISTANCE AUDITS

**159. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:**

Further to question without notice-

**Hon Ljiljana Ravlich:** I miss Hon Barry House!

**Hon Barry House:** I miss the minister, too - like a really bad headache!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! This is question time. I do not think we should bring the decorum of the house into question with this sort of debate.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** Further to my question without notice 107 of Tuesday, 4 April about distance audits on school buses -

- (1) What was the cost of these audits in actual dollars?
- (2) Is there a right of appeal, or retest, for contractors who dispute the figures produced by the audit?
- (3) If not, why not?
- (4) If all students are transported safely from their homes to school, and return, by the contractor, is their contract not fulfilled satisfactorily?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

On behalf of the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The audit is being conducted by the school bus services branch within the Public Transport Authority. All administrative costs are absorbed within the school bus services branch wages budget allocation. Therefore, there is no additional cost to the PTA. Wage costs estimated and apportioned to this task are \$12 000 to date. The potential recoup based on the original discrepancies was estimated to be \$1.6 million.
- (2) The PTA will work with contractors to resolve issues based on their responses. The PTA will take a reasonable approach to issues raised before decisions are reached. All contractors have the right to appeal in accordance with normal administrative procedures.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) The PTA pays contractors the service charge for each school day in accordance with the contract. The contract requires contractors to submit route variations at the end of each school term where contractors have not always driven the approved school bus route. This could include incidents such as where a route spur is not driven due to the absence of a student, or having to drive an alternative route due to roadworks or environmental circumstances such as flooding. If a variation is not submitted, a contractor warrants that the approved school bus route was driven every day without any variations. The PTA has the right - and, indeed, the obligation - to review/audit its contracts to ensure that taxpayers' funds are being properly expended. We expect the opposition to support this process.