

SCHOOL BUSES - DISTANCE AUDITS

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

I refer to distance audits undertaken on school buses.

- (1) When were these audits undertaken?
- (2) Why were they conducted?
- (3) Who conducted them and what methodology was used?
- (4) What was the cost of these audits?

Hon ADELE FARINA replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(2) Over the past five years, the state government has been dedicated to providing more transparency and accountability in the delivery of school bus services. Auditing the distance travelled is an important part of that accountability for the expenditure of more than \$60 million. Audits of the distances travelled by school buses providing services under school bus contracts are in progress. The amount paid to contractors is based, in part, on the distances they are required to travel to provide the service. A predicted distance is assumed for the purposes of payment for the distance travelled and is based upon the distance of the approved school bus service route. To maintain the integrity of the payment system, the contract requires that at the end of each term, contractors submit route variations; that is, occasions when they have not driven the approved school bus route. This could include a route spur not being driven due to the absence of a student or having to drive an alternate route due to roadworks or environmental circumstances such as flooding. If a variation is not submitted, a contractor warrants the approved school bus route was driven every day without any variation.
- (3) The audit is being conducted by the school bus services branch within the Public Transport Authority. The methodology used compares the odometer readings for a specific time frame, which are compared with the paid standard daily kilometres travelled; that is, is the approved school bus route. An allowance of five per cent has been made for administration issues such as driving the bus to fill it up with fuel and taking the bus to a garage for servicing. Contractors who have been identified as having discrepancies beyond that tolerance have been written to and asked for an explanation. Some 23.7 per cent of contractors have been identified as having travelled fewer kilometres than they have been paid for and 17.2 per cent of contractors have travelled more kilometres than they have been paid for. The PTA will work with contractors to resolve issues based on their responses. There is no prohibition on travelling additional kilometres, but the responses will, for example, enable the PTA to check the accuracy of the approved school bus route.
- (4) All administrative costs are absorbed within the school bus services branch wages budget allocation.