

RESPONSES TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

1. The Committee has received evidence regarding confusion over the eligibility of kindergarten students to receive transport assistance. Could kindergarten students previously only access transport assistance as 'complimentary' students? When was eligibility extended to kindergarten students?

The change in policy occurred in December 2011 when the Department of Education extended kindergarten hours from 11 hours to 15 hours from the start of the 2012 school year and standardised the school day into 2 and 3 day block school weeks.

Prior to the change kindergarten was not compulsory and schools ran different contact hour routines. Hence, this cohort previously received complimentary access only.

2. To be eligible to receive transport assistance, students attending education support facilities must 'not be able or competent to make their own way to their facility safely'.

a. How is competency assessed?

Competency is not assessed. School Bus Services accepts that if a child is enrolled in an Education Support Centre or School then they are not able or competent to make their way independently to school.

b. Does the Department of Education have a role in determining competency?

See sub paragraph a).

c. If yes, and the Department of Education determines competency or otherwise, is this determination accepted by SBS or can SBS 'overrule' it?

N/A.

3. According to School Bus Services' website, to be eligible to receive transport assistance students attending education support facilities must attend the 'closest appropriate government (including an LDC) or non-government facility to a student's residence'. a. How is the 'appropriateness' of a facility determined?

Noting that the current policy framework focusses on providing a reasonable level of transport assistance ie shortest distance to the closest facility, this is how eligibility is determined. This is also how catchment areas are developed for school bus runs to operate efficiently.

b. Does the Department of Education, including school staff, have a role in determine which facility is appropriate for a child requesting transport assistance?

The advice from the Department of Education is that all schools are funded to provide individual programs for all Education Support School or Centres. As a result the department does not have a role as such in determining nearest appropriate school in most cases.

The department does become involved in individual cases where a school is full and a family wishes to bypass to another school, or where individual circumstances require a child to attend a school that is not their nearest appropriate school.

In most cases, these out of policy approvals, will be the payment of a conveyance allowance as the school is usually outside the catchment area of the bus service.

c. If yes, and the Department of Education determines a particular facility is appropriate for a child requesting transport assistance, is this determination accepted by SBS or can SBS 'overrule' it?

School Bus Services does not overrule decisions made in support of out of policy requests where the Department of Education provides correspondence and supporting evidence to an application.

The reverse is also true that the Department of Education will not support a school of choice decision where their programs at a student's nearest appropriate school are the same as a school of choice request by a parent.

4. Was School Bus Services' budget for provision of transport assistance reduced when it stopped providing transport assistance to Education Support Units due to the Department of Education's adoption of an 'inclusive' schooling policy¹?

In 2008, the Department of Education implemented their 'inclusive' schooling policy resulted in the integration of Education Support Units with mainstream schools and centres.

School Bus Services did not have any school bus services dedicated only to transporting children to a unit. Therefore, the change in policy had no impact on the operational budget.

5. In the 2020/21 financial year, how much of School Bus Services' budget was spent on the provision of transport assistance for students attending non-government schools?

The PTA estimates that \$32.7 million was spent on contracted school bus transport assistance to non-government schools. This is based on contract expenditures of \$120.8 million in F/Y 2020-21 (excluding administration and on-costs) divided by 25,878 students multiplied by an average 7,011 non-government students.

To estimate the cost of conveyance allowance to non-governments schools, the profile implies that 27% of students are non-government related. Total conveyance allowance expenditures were \$1.7 million in F/Y 2020-21 and the prorated cost for non-government school is \$446K.

Administration and on-costs were \$7.2 million in F/Y 2020-21 and the apportioned cost based on 27% support for non-government students, this equates to \$1.9 million.

The estimated total cost of transport assistance for non-government students in F/Y 2020-21 was \$35.0 million.

6. During the 2020/21 financial year, SBS also administered conveyance allowance payments for 2,010 students, at a cost of \$1.7 million in conveyance payments, for 1,413 students to be transport to and from school, and 597 students who meet a school bus at a point on route. This is an average cost of \$845 per student, although it would vary from student to student. By comparison, SBS provided transport assistance to 25,878 students attending mainstream schools and education support facilities, at a cost of, on average, \$4,216 per mainstream student, and \$9,429 per education support student.

a. What is the current rate of conveyance allowance per kilometre?

The rate of conveyance is 22.04 cents per kilometre.

b. How is the rate of conveyance allowance determined?

The historical benchmark rate of conveyance was based on the Car Running Cost Schedule published by the RAC on 30 June 2002. The running costs used by the RAC factored in expenses for fuel, tyres, repairs & maintenance.

The conveyance allowance rate is adjusted in line with the movement in the Consumer Price Index - Transportation Group (Perth). It is important to note that the rate of conveyance is not reduced when there is a contraction in the CPI, the rate remains unchanged until future CPI movements record a positive outcome.

c. How regularly is the rate of conveyance allowance reviewed?

The conveyance allowance rate is reviewed annually at the commencement of the financial year.

d. By how much, in actual and percentage terms, has the rate of conveyance allowance per kilometre increased per year in the past 10 years?

Since July 2011, conveyance allowance has increased by 11.8% ie from 19.89 cents to 22.04 cents.

In actual terms, the annual increase has ranged from nil to 0.77 cents per km.

e. What is the rationale for the conveyance allowance being capped at 50km one way?

This 50 km rule was introduced for two reasons. Firstly, to mirror similar average maximum travelling time constraints for contracted 'orange' school buses on students, noting cars travel at higher speeds and do not frequently stop during the journey for additional passengers.

Secondly, for safety reasons and noting that the Government's policy framework is designed to provide a reasonable level of transport assistance, the limiting of kms also avoids burdening families with excessive travelling times.

Thirdly, with the exception of twenty or so cases, all claims were 50 kms or less per one way journey.

f. What is the maximum amount of conveyance allowance payable for a single student in a financial year?

At 50 kilometres (one way multiplied by four legs), the maximum conveyance allowance payable in a financial year would currently equate to \$8,600 pa.

7. The PTA previously advised the Committee that, if it required a contractor to retrofit a vehicle to provide wheelchair access, the PTA would reimburse the cost of the retrofit to the contractor through the contract.

Is this reimbursement a one off payment at the time of the retrofit, or would the contractor be reimbursed in a series of payments over the duration of the contact/life of the bus?

The method of reimbursement is assessed on a case by case basis considering the age of bus and other contractor specific financial circumstances. Generally, the reimbursement would be amortized over the remaining life of the bus.

8. What regular communication occurs between School Bus Services and the Department of Education regarding the provision of transport assistance in both rural and education support settings?

PTA and the Department of Education will meet as required to discuss new school commissioning or school closures.

Communications occur when dealing with nearest appropriate school issues concerning Education Support students, Approved Specialist Programs issues, and any issues from principals within the scope of eligibility of students, out of policy considerations, access to buses etc. Telephone conversations between SBS and Education for general business are very regular.

9. Who is responsible for providing school bus drivers and aides with education and training around the enforcement of the Behaviour Management Guidelines and Code of Conduct?

School Bus Services provides educational material for behaviour management issues for school bus operators to use. School bus operators are responsible for training their drivers in understanding the policy framework and implementation of behaviour standards and lodging incident reports.

10. What advice has the Public Transport Authority received regarding the risk associated with using private property, with the approval of the property owner, for a bus turnaround?

The PTA has not sought legal advice on this issue from State Solicitor's Office. An opinion was provided by the PTA Legal Officer some years ago, PTA could have insurance issues if an accident occurred on private property and not on a government gazetted road.

11. Has the Public Transport Authority done any modelling around the budgetary implications of reducing the 90-minute time limit for both or either rural or education support students?

a. If yes, what would the budgetary implications be?

The PTA had previously indicated that some 492 services could be impacted if the policy setting reduced travel time to 60 mins per one way journey. Reducing the time limit would alter existing services and typically result in the need for additional contracts that would duplicate existing services either fully or partially.

High level modelling estimated the impact on the budget would be approximately \$72 million and incorporates the full cost of service duplication option. For example, this would envisage running express services carrying smaller numbers of students in outlying areas, and existing services adjusted to transporting students located closer to school. This would also require replacing larger buses on existing services with smaller vehicles.

The PTA anticipates that the budget impact would be less following more detailed planning and analysis of affected areas and if the process was staged over time, but will still be significant as 492 services represents more than 50% of the school bus fleet.

12. The Student Transport Assistance Policy states there needs to be a minimum of 8 students for a bus service to operate, or 4 for a shuttle service. During the hearing on 23 February 2022, Mr Bailly referred to the termination of services if passenger numbers fell to three or less, and that a threshold of eight needed to be met for the commissioning of a new service.

a. Is it accurate to say that an existing service may continue to operate with fewer than the minimum number of passengers, but where no service exists a new service will require 8 students to be commissioned?

Yes

b. How many bus routes are currently at risk of being cut due to low passenger numbers?

The PTA has identified 12 services where passenger numbers are four or less.

Geographically, these services are in the following regions.

Region	Low Passenger Services
Goldfields	1
Great Southern	1
Mid-West	5
Wheatbelt	5

c. Has the Public Transport Authority done any modelling around the budgetary implications of reducing the minimum number of students required for a bus to be commissioned?

No.

d. How does the Public Transport Authority take into account projected passenger numbers when determining whether to cut a service due to low passenger numbers?

The PTA will take into account projected passenger numbers for eligible students only. As part of determining student numbers the PTA will consult with the school bus contractor and schools to determine if there are any potential enrolments in the next year or two.

Services are usually terminated to coincide with the end of school year, or end of a specific term if the termination is linked to an amalgamation.

13. In its supplementary submission, the Public Transport Authority advised the Committee of the criteria that must be met for 'rural school bus stops' to be approved. Is this information circulated to local government authorities?

Approval is sought from the local shire for the placement of new school bus stops prior to the stop being used and on occasion to seek a re-assessment of stop at the request of families/contractors.

The Location and Design of Bus Stops and Turnarounds Guidelines were created in 2008, with the guidelines supported by a request/approval form that includes routes and stops approvals.

The Guidelines were reviewed in early 2022 following a request from Main Roads for the inclusion of a specific mapping reference point. These guidelines are available to Main Roads /local government authorises as required.

14. What is the process/communication between School Bus Services and local government for the approval of a new bus stop?

Communication of a new bus stop is via email and documented through a request and approval form. Where the requested location is not suitable the shire is requested to identify a suitable stop location.

15. Who is responsible for the cost of constructing and maintaining bus stops and turnarounds? Has this been communicated to the responsible entities?

The responsibility for the cost of constructing and maintaining bus stops is either Main Roads WA (for national highways) or local government authorities.

16. How does the Public Transport Authority ensure that Restricted Access Vehicles are not permitted to operate on roads when a school bus is operating, particularly in the event of a route variation?

In addition to the bus stops and routes approved by local government all school bus services (routes and stops) are available via the Shared Location Information Platform (SLIP).

[Shared Location Information Platform \(SLIP\)](#)

Information on SLIP is accessible by Main Roads, local government and other registered parties and is used by those parties to determine applications for Restricted Access Vehicles (RAVs) on routes. RAV access is a Main Roads function in consultation with the local

government/region who ensure there is deconfliction when application is submitted. WALGA and Main Roads have published guidelines for RAV route assessment.

17. Does the Public Transport Authority have a coordinated communication plan in place, including relevant dates and methods of communication, to reach parents who may wish to apply for transport assistance?

Advertising for Student Transport Assistance Application occurs as follows:

- **Website.** Public Transport Authority/School Bus Service Website all year round. In October each year a message is placed on the website advising the public to submit their applications prior to the end of November, applications received after this date may be delayed which may affect access to a bus in time for the commencement of Term 1.
- **Schools.** All metropolitan Education Support Schools and larger mainstream schools in regional locations receive an email in October each year encouraging them to communicate to families to apply for Student Transport Assistance for the following school year. An electronic flyer is provided that can be used in the newsletters, email, internet or social media advice.
- **Media Statement.** The PTA release a Media Statement each year in October to communicate to families to apply for Student Transport Assistance.
- **Email.** All families with a registered email address that have students in years 6 are sent an email in October encouraging them to submit application for secondary (Year7) as they will have been exited from the passenger list coinciding with the end of primary school.

18. Does the Public Transport Authority monitor complaints and appeals and their outcomes?
a. What would an effective appeals process look like?

The PTA has a comprehensive complaints management system known as Infoline. All complaints submitted through this system are tracked until conclusion, with a random independent audit process to gauge the customer's level of satisfaction.

Appeals are generally raised with the Team Leader, or Operations Manager and can be escalated to the Manager, School Bus Services, or Executive Director of the Division. A final appeal could be made to the Minister of Transport.

Complaints made directly to a Contract Officer (the most common approach) are generally dealt with at the source and not separately recorded.

19. How often are complaints escalated above contract officer level?

Complaints received via Ministerial Correspondence or via the PTA complaints process are well documented.

Internal complaints if not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant may escalate to Team Leaders, Operations Manager or the SBS Manager. The intent is to resolve all complaints at the lowest level possible.

The vast majority of complaints are generally related to school of choice matters where parents are seeking to access transport assistance outside the policy framework.

20. During the 23 February 2022 hearing Mr Bailly spoke about the five-year review process for the Evergreen Contract Model. He noted that the process allows for variation to clauses, but contentious clause variations would be unlikely to be agreed to unanimously and are

therefore less likely to get through. During the most recent contract negotiations, what were some of the contentious clause variations suggested that were not agreed to?

During the 2017/2018 Evergreen Contract negotiations the PTA did not raise any contentious clauses to be reviewed.

The only matters that were not completed during the negotiation period was the Depreciation Component formula to increase the residual value from 10% to 15% for Class A & D buses, and 5% to 7.5% for Class B & C buses for current vehicles and future vehicles. As this issue was raised by the PTA and not supported by the Contractor Representatives, the matter was escalated to the Minister for Transport for resolution in accordance with the review principles.

The other issue which was raised in the negotiations was extending the life of school bus by two years for all new buses after 1 Jul 18. The point of difference has been whether this should be in lieu of increasing the residual value in depreciation (industry view) or both should apply (PTA view).

As part of the contract review process (Schedule 5) where the parties do not agree on a reviewable cost issue, the Minister for Transport will make the final decision. The Minister for Transport reviewed both issues and approved the increase in residual value for existing buses and future buses forthwith. For new school buses commissioned from 1 July 2018, the service life would be increased by two years for Class A, B, C, and D buses.

21. Other than the costs and duration, are there any significant differences in terms between Evergreen Contract Model and Tendered Contract Model contracts. For example, Key Performance Indicators?

Both contract types have KPIs.

Noting that Evergreen contracts are 'rolled over' every five years, the Key Performance Indicators are linked to a Demerit Point system designed to cover performance and compliance standards which are not ordinarily covered in a normal commercial contract. The Demerit Point System was designed and negotiated in this fashion because these contracts are bought and sold over time and not awarded through a tender process. Demerit points reset to zero every five years.

Due to the longevity of Evergreen Contracts the compliance KPIs provide a record of contract management. Contractors can earn demerit points for failing to meet a range of operational and administration requirements.

Tendered Contract Model contracts have no compliance KPIs as it tends to follow the more traditional contract model where compliance is auditable and poor performance issues are addressed formally via a default process which can range from a default, serious default to termination.

Compliance issues stay on file until the contract period ends.

22. Can Tendered Contract Model contracts be sold by the contractor?

Tendered Contract Model contracts are generally not sold as they have little goodwill with any value limited to the remaining contract period before the service is retendered.

23. Has the transition away from Evergreen Contract Model contracts led to fewer contracts being awarded to smaller and/or local businesses?

In F/Y 2020-21, there were a total of 185 Tendered Cost Model, Fixed and Short-Term contracts in operation. The Authority estimates that approximately 44% of those contracts were awarded to small business operators.

The below table details the calculations and assumptions used.

2020-21 Tendered Cost Model, Fixed & Short-Term Contracts			
Contract Range	Number of Contracts Awarded	Number of Contractors	Estimated Employees per Contractor
0 - 5	54	29	5
6 - 10	27	4	17
11 - 15	24	2	30
16 - 20	16	1	40
21 - 30	21	1	53
+30	43	1	108
	185	38	252

44%

* The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines a small business as a business employing fewer than 20 people.

* The above calculation assumes 2.5 FTE's per contract.

24. What actions does the Public Transport Authority take to ensure it is complying with the WA Government's Buy Local Policy 2020 when tendering for and awarding school bus contracts?

The PTA tender process apply the regional price preferences in accordance with the WA Government's Buy Local Policy 2020. Tenderers can either nominate a regional price preference or regional content preference. The other measure applied is the prescribed distance zones which is the maximum allowable radius from the contract point of delivery is located.

The PTA's Procurement Branch has overall responsibility to ensure compliance with the policy as part of awarding a school bus contract.

The tender directs tenderers to contact Local Content Advisers who work for the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation for advice on local content issues and how they should be addressed in the tender.

25. Have school bus contractors always been remunerated on the basis of cents per kilometre? Has consideration been given to any other basis of remuneration?

School bus contract costs have always been divided into fixed and variable costs. Variable costs are based on a cents per km rate as school bus routes change regularly overtime depending where eligible students reside.

Running costs (eg fuel consumption) and costs associated with wear and tear of an asset (eg Repairs and maintenance) should be commensurate with the number of kms travelled The more kms driven means higher variable costs.

Finally, for short term contracts where services are hired, it is not uncommon for an inclusive daily rate to be paid.

26. How much money does the Public Transport Authority save through the Temporary Distance Variation calculation in comparison to the cost of administering it?

In F/Y 2020-21, the Authority recouped \$1.8 million through the Temporary Distance Variation calculation process.

27. Are pupil free days the main distance variations captured by the Temporary Distance Variation calculation?

No.

Variations may also occur due other events including, driver availability (sickness), vehicle break down, school closures, students not attending because of sickness, road closures, and emergency notices such as fire, cyclone or flood risk.

It should be noted that the contractor can claim additional kilometres where this occurs.

28. How do bus contractors exclude charter work from the Temporary Distance Variation calculation?

The TDV Sheet includes an ability for contractors to simply record their odometer readings and enter any additional kilometres in the Charter column which would be deducted from the kilometres travelled for the day as they were not related to the delivery of the service.

29. Why do bus driver rates of remuneration vary significantly between Evergreen Contract Model and Tendered Contract Model contracts?

The wages entitlement under the Evergreen Contract Model (ECM) was a product of the School Bus Taskforce review of the Composite Rate Model (CRM). The wages decision overhauled all pre-existing arrangements and set the benchmark rate to the Path Transit Certified Agreement in 2002 and ongoing indexation of benchmark rate linked to ABS - Average Weekly Earnings. Over time this contracted rate far exceeds any industrial award.

Other measures modified at that time included a minimum split shift of four hours per day and the inclusion of a locality allowance which uplifts the hourly rate depending on the region a service operates.

When comparing the Evergreen Cost Model to the Tendered Cost Model, the TCM should at a minimum align to the Passenger Vehicle Transportation Award as the contracted wage rate is not set. Tenderers can pay a higher rate in rural towns to attract and retain drivers and this cost will form part of the overall tender price.

The Passenger Vehicle Transportation Award adopts a classification system for the type of activity being performed. For the school bus service industry, the best matched are:

- B.2 Classification - Grade 2 is a driver of a passenger vehicle with a carrying capacity of less than 25 school children to and/or from school: and
- B.2 Classification - Grade 3 is a driver of a passenger vehicle with a carrying capacity of more than 25 school children to and/or from school.

The 2020-21 wage comparison for the ECM when compared to the Passenger Vehicle Transportation Award as the minimum rate of pay are as follow:

Evergreen Contract Model	Passenger Vehicle Transportation Award	% Difference
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<u>Drivers Wages - Under 25 seats</u> Drivers Wages Base Rate per hour	\$33.82	\$28.02	+21%
<u>Drivers Wages - Over 25 seats</u> Drivers Wages Base Rate per hour	\$34.68	\$29.69	+17%

30. The Committee has heard anecdotal evidence of buses not having a safety audit for lengthy periods of time. How does the Public Transport Authority ensure the safety audits are carried out at regular intervals across all buses?

A Contract Compliance and Safety System Audit Schedule has been developed by SBS. The schedule includes buses and contractors which are going to be audited every year and through the schedule, SBS are able to track which contractors and school buses are and are not audited.

The software program, iAuditor is used to facilitate all audits. This program is also used to confirm what audits have been completed. With the use of both iAuditor and the audit schedule, SBS are able to ensure audits are carried out on a regular basis for all SBS contractors.

The SBS Compliance Coordinator maintains the audit schedule and audit information in iAuditor which they use to track the audits that are completed and need to be completed throughout the year. The Compliance Coordinator oversees the audit schedule and makes sure audits are being completed and are on schedule.

School Bus Services works on an audit program of one audit every two years. Depending on the quality of the Safety Management Plan outcome, audit periods can be increased for poor results, and extended for very good/excellent outcomes. This helps with allocating staff resources appropriately.

31. Why was the use of roving safety inspectors phased out?

The School Bus Services small inspection team was set up by the Department of Education when the Coordinating School Principals managed operational outcomes. This small team was required to carry out two random inspections on every school bus over a calendar year. The standard was set during a time when the standard of vehicle quality and safety were not as developed as they are these days.

In 2012 the Department of Transport (DoT) undertook a survey of stakeholders concerning a proposal to create a consistent approach across the Transport portfolio for the examination of omnibuses. Of note was the fact that school bus contractors undertaking charter work were required to have three inspections over 12 months due to different licensing requirements. The idea of a change was supported by PTA as data provided did not show any real difference in vehicle road worthiness standards between PTA's two inspections per annum and other buses being inspected once per annum.

On completion of the survey review (where school bus operators wanted lest inspections) the policy was altered to reduce school bus inspections from two years to one year for buses running on bitumen or where unsealed road running was less than 30% of the total route from the start of 2014.

The small vehicle inspection team ceased operations at the end of 2016 as an efficiency provision based on school bus inspection pass rate of 99.8% which suggested that two

inspections per annum were deemed excessive and did not match the inspection regime for all other buses operating in WA.

Since the transfer to DoT's Authorised Inspection Stations inspection pass rates are similar.

32. What led to the increase in bus life from 10 to 12 years, and 15 to 17 years?

Most public transport and charter buses operating around the country will generally have an operational life between 17 to 25 years and will travel over a million kms. School buses historically had a much shorter operational life to ensure bus safety and maintenance standards were of a very high level.

The operational life of buses was set by the Department of Education in the 1970s and had not changed for many years. Noting that the quality and safety of bus builds over the decades have significantly improved, the operational life set in the 1970s did not correlate with the realities of the transport function performed today. By keeping the operational life of bus unchanged meant the WA Government was not getting full utilisation out of these assets before they were replaced.

As these assets were underutilised, the operational life was increased by two year to get a better return on the use of the asset while still maintaining a younger average life of fleet compared to other Australian jurisdictions.

a. What practical and financial impacts does this have on the provision of school buses?

The financial impact has been positive for Government. The increase of service life has meant the depreciation costs of the asset could be applied over a longer period thus reducing budgetary pressure by spreading costs. It also allows better utilisation of the asset by getting more serviceable life out of each asset.

The practical impact of the change still allows buses to be replaced for safety or maintenance reasons at an earlier age.

Noting that some school buses undertaken unsealed road running, School Bus Services in line with the changes introduced, reduced the service life of AWD chassis buses from 15 years to 10 years. In addition, School Bus Services will replace school buses earlier where a school bus contractor can show the unsealed road running conditions have had a detrimental effect on the vehicle safety, and maintenance costs have become excessive ie they exceed the Repairs & Maintenance payments made over the life of bus.

33. Can, and do, parents report poor bus condition to the Public Transport Authority? a. How does the Public Transport Authority follow up reports of buses in a poor condition?

Parents can report poor bus conditions to School Bus Services.

Complaints of this nature are rare; School Bus Services will follow up directly with the school bus contractor.

If issues of complaint are related to mechanical reliability/safety of a bus, School Bus Services can seek assistance from Transperth's vehicle inspectors to conduct an inspection.

34. Is it a requirement that bus drivers take attendance on every route?

No. The only services where attendance is taken every day is on Education Support services. This is done due to high rates of absenteeism due to underlying issues.

School bus operators can have seating plans on their services where they carry young children eg kindergarten age, or a child with medical issues to ensure they are close to the school bus driver. This usually forms part of risk assessments as part of maintaining a Safety Management Plan.

A seating plan can also be implemented to manage behaviour issues depending on the age of student eg primary and high school mix.

It should also be noted that every vehicle is fitted with a child check alarm where at the end of every school run the driver is required to walk down the aisle of the vehicle to dis-arm the alarm. This provides an additional check to ensure children are not left on the service in the event they have fallen asleep.

a. What happens to the attendance information?

Attendance records for Education Support Services are reviewed at the end of each month to identify students not travelling at all. School Bus Services uses the information to see whether waitlisted families currently being paid a conveyance allowance can access the service.

35. What incident or emergency managements plans, and protocols are in place for contract school buses?

Contractors are responsible for developing and implementing incident and emergency management plans and protocols for their school buses. School bus services are located throughout the state and therefore various contractors are presented with different risks. SBS have developed a range of emergency plan templates which contractors can utilise and change to meet the needs of their operations. If a contractor uses the SBS emergency templates, they are required to input specific information (e.g. contact numbers, assembly points) specific to the service. Emergency procedure guide templates which are available to contractors to use and have on their buses are:

- Student Medical Emergencies;
- Vehicle Incident and Accident Emergencies;
- Bush Fire Emergencies;
- Fire on Buses.

The above templates are considered the most likely type of risks that will be encountered by school bus operations. However, school bus contractors should risk assess their operations and if there are emergency events they believe require an emergency plan, then they are to develop a plan specific to their operations. Each school bus is to have emergency procedures located on the bus as is stated in the school bus contracts. When an audit is completed, SBS check to see if emergency plans are located on the bus and accessible to the driver.

In addition to the above templates, contractors have access to a Safety Management Plan (SMP) template. The SMP specifies an 'Emergency Management' procedure which states how are contractor can manage emergencies. For example, conduct drills, have emergency equipment accessible on the bus, and have emergency guides in the bus for the driver. There is also a emergency planning checklist which contractors can use to assist them in ensuring they have the correct protocols in place.

a. What are the roles and responsibilities of bus drivers, contractors, schools, parents and School Bus Services in the event of an incident or emergency involving a school bus?

Contractors. Are to ensure incident and emergency procedures and protocols are in place for their operations. They are to ensure drivers are appropriately trained in emergency procedures. During emergency events they are one of the first points of call for a driver to contact. The contractor can assist emergency services by providing relevant information to the service. The contractor is to inform SBS of any emergency event which has occurred. Drivers are instructed to call the contractor who can provide guidance on how to manage the incident by following the incident management procedures which must be in place. The contractor is also to relay information back to SBS when an incident occurs. In the SMP template, there is an incident management procedure template as well as incident report templates and flowcharts which contractors can use. Contractors must train school bus drivers in all relevant emergency procedures to ensure drivers know what to do in the event of an emergency event.

If an incident occurs, contractors are to complete incident report investigations to find root causes and implement corrective actions to prevent reoccurrences.

Drivers. Drivers are to be trained in the emergency procedures available to them on the bus which they are to follow. Critically (where possible) stop the bus in a safe location, ensure passengers are safe, and apply first aid. They are responsible for contacting emergency services, contractors and relevant stakeholders as per the contractor's emergency procedures. Drivers must also follow instructions from emergency services.

Schools. Schools are informed when an incident occurs and may be asked to assist by providing the assembly point for passengers.

Parents. Parents will be contacted in the event of an incident and may be required to collect their child from a nominated assembly point.

SBS. If an emergency or incident occurs, the contractor can seek SBS assistance to notify parents/stakeholders. SBS will also communicate with relevant stakeholders, DoE, Ministers Office (depending upon the type and severity of the incident) As part of safety audits SBS check to make sure contractors and school buses have emergency management plans in place. If required SBS may undertake a separate investigation of the incident. SBS have developed templates to assist contractors in preparing and developing emergency and incident procedures including the following:

- EPG1 Student Medical Emergency
- EPG2 Vehicle Incident / Accident
- EPG3 Bush Fire
- EPG4 Fire on Bus
- Emergency Planning – Checklist
- Emergency Drill Summary Report
- Emergency Management Procedure
- Incident Reporting, Recording & Investigation
- Incident Report Form
- Incident Response and Reporting Process
- Injury & Illness Report Form and Package

b. How are these incident or emergency management plans and protocols communicated to stakeholders?

Contractors are expected to communicate with relevant stakeholders.

36. In what circumstances would the Public Transport Authority have a bus aide on a particular route?

Every dedicated Education Support bus will employ a bus aide. These buses essentially operate in metropolitan Perth or large regional towns eg Bunbury.

Mainstream services will employ a bus aide when an Education Support child requires assistance to attend their nearest appropriate rural school.

Please note, School Bus Services understands that the term bus aide is used by the school bus industry to refer to bus monitors employed for behaviour management. Bus monitors are very rarely used on services. School Bus Services' preferred option is to manage student behaviour from the onset to avoid long term disruption on services.

37. Does the Public Transport Authority have a customer service charter specifically in relation to the provision of student transport assistance?

Yes, the PTA does have a Customer Service Charter. The charter states:

The PTA is a customer service-oriented organisation, responsible for the delivery of efficient and sustainable passenger transport services to the public.

- We are committed to providing a quality passenger transport service to the public.
- Our bus, train and ferry staff and contractors are focussed on delivering safe and reliable services.
- Our staff and contractors will treat customers in a respectful and professional manner.
- Our buses, trains, ferries and facilities will be clean and well presented.
- Current information about all PTA services will be available from customer service staff, brochures, timetables, our call centres and our website.
- We will plan and review passenger transport services in consultation with the community to get the best results.
- We will plan and provide transport systems that respect the environment and improve sustainability.

38. How can stakeholders provide feedback about contract officers to more senior staff?

If the customer is unsatisfied with a decision or level of service received, the matter can be escalated to a Team Leader, the Operations Manager or the Manager, School Bus Services.

Any matter can be brought to the attention of School Bus Services management team via its website, which will direct parents to use the [REDACTED] email address, or Transperth's Infoline option.

39. Do Public Transport Authority staff have performance targets in relation to responding to emails, calls or other queries?

Contract Officers are required to respond or acknowledge emails within 48 hours. Other queries can take longer depending on the complexity of issue. Some issues require responses from contractors and can add to delay. Staff are encouraged to make initial contact to advise customers that there may be a delay.

40. If you are aware, can you please provide information on the terms and conditions of contracts other Australian jurisdictions operating similar student transport assistance programs use, including:

- a. are there similarities to the Evergreen Contract Model or the Tendered Rate Model?
- b. how long are contract terms?
- c. whether they incorporate Key Performance Indicators and a demerit points system?

41. If you are aware, can you please provide information on how other Australian jurisdictions operating similar student transport assistance programs:

- a. remunerate contractors?
- b. employ and remunerate bus drivers? For example, casually, permanently, paid by the hour etc.

42. If you are aware, can you please provide information on whether other Australian jurisdictions operating similar student transport assistance programs:

- a. have an equivalent to the temporary distance variation to vary kilometre based payments to contractors?
- b. reduce the proportion of fixed costs paid where a contractor receives income through charter work?
- c. have an equivalent to the return on investment payment and, if so, what rate is used for this calculation?
- d. conduct bus safety audits? If so, how regularly and where?
- e. relocate bus contracts and services if a route is no longer required in a particular area?
- f. allow for contracts to be sold, include goodwill?
- g. set minimum standards for buses?