

**d) The assessment process when evaluating the safety of bus stops and routes**

We would like to express our concern about the manner/criteria in which School Bus Services (SBS) uses to alter bus routes.

We had an experience with SBS where they chose to ignore the advice of a shire Works Manager, us the contractor and our driver when we all told them the roads they wanted to propose a route change on were definitely not up to standard for a school bus to travel on twice a day. SBS went ahead and instructed us to use the sub standard roads.

Mid August we emailed SBS to let them know that the roads had deteriorated to such a degree, we could no longer use them. The shire Works Manager told SBS that the roads should never have been part of a school bus route.

We feel that the safety of our driver and the students on board was compromised by SBS making poor decisions – not to mention the wear and tear on our bus.

Safety should always come first when determining bus routes and we feel that this did not occur. Our recommendation would be for SBS to **LISTEN** to the advice of the people who know and use the roads instead of ignoring them.

We are expected to provide a safe working environment for our driver and fulfil our contractual obligations transporting students to and from school every day and we feel we were not supported by SBS.

We queried SBS as to why they made the decision and stated that someone should be held accountable for ignoring advice from people who know the roads.

SBS responded by stating that the person who made the decision doesn't work here anymore and that **they acted on the best advice at the time**. We understood the best advice at the time was not to use the roads.....

The assessment process is flawed as in our example just mentioned. Ignoring the advice from the people who know the roads is dangerous, irresponsible and could have been catastrophic.

**Bus Stops**

Common sense would have school buses picking up and dropping off students at their farm driveways – provided it is safe to do so. Quick consultation with the local shire and contractor/driver would soon ascertain this. So why do SBS insist on making the bus stop 100 – 300 metres down the road from the driveway at the nearest intersection?

It is far safer for the students to be picked up and dropped off at their driveway where they can walk or ride to the stop rather than along a busy road – usually resulting in a car trip to get to the stop for safety reasons.

Once again, **consultation** with the people who are familiar with the roads/driveways is the key to safer outcomes.

**g) The resourcing of the School Bus Services Division with the Public Transport Authority;**

The School Bus Services (SBS) Division appears to be severely understaffed. Many times when you need to contact your Contract Officer, they are either on leave or have left. There also seems to be a high turn over of staff which results in requests not being actioned as promptly as they should.

We have been operating school buses since 1976 and over that time have observed the deterioration of rapport between contractors and the staff at SBS. As bigger companies purchase/tender more contracts, the owner operator contractors are diminishing. Yet it is these contractors who perform their contractual obligations dutifully and safely – and should be acknowledged for their role in providing a safe and efficient transport system.

In summary, it would be detrimental if a lack of proper resourcing in the SBS Division resulted in poor choices being made in regard to student safety, work place conditions and vehicle standards to name a few.