

Scaddan Primary School P&C
Kendall Rd, Scaddan 6447

RE: STAP Inquiry

Dear STAP Committee,

This letter is being written on behalf of the Scaddan Primary School P&C, who have been very active in the space of making sure that our school bus needs are met. In the past, we have fought to have extra buses added to our route due to a neighbouring school closing down, we were successful in this endeavour, although, too much work had to be done by the parent body as the person in charge of our region was reluctant to listen and made us shoulder all the responsibility of researching and creating a submission.

In regards to the areas of the inquiry covered by the committee, most of our areas of concern are being addressed. The only area that is not being addressed is the role of the school. We understand that the school is a part of a different department and that it should not be asked to play a role in the everyday matters of bus services (Principal's in small schools have enough on their plate already!). We do feel that Principal's should be allowed to voice their concerns about the impact of student numbers due to poor bus runs through a formal channel. It also worries us that although the school is not allowed to have contact with School Bus Services (SBS), SBS regularly rings the school to enquire about a student's enrolment status, even for the next year. This is a grey area and we feel that strict protocols should be put in place for both departments.

Attached to this letter is a parent submission written to Peter Rundle's office earlier in the year and is based on their family experience and some of the changes that this family would hope to come from sharing their concerns.

We would like to acknowledge the efforts our local MP, Peter Rundle, has put into this area in allowing our voices to be heard, it has come as a relief to many of us parents that our ongoing battle with School Bus Services may be at an end.

Thank you again for this inquiry, it will make such a difference to so many families in the rural and remote regions of Western Australia.

Regards,

Scaddan Primary School Parents and Community Association

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
5th April 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my experiences with School Bus Services. My experiences for the most part have been negative ones.

My experience with School Bus Services (SBS) started in 2013. My son was denied a bus stop due to the length of the spur it would require. I understood that Kindy is a complimentary year and made adjustments to our own daily routine so that my son did not have sit on a bus for 70mins after sitting in a car for 20mins. This not only had a impact on my son's time in a vehicle, but his younger sister's as well.

In 2014, I once again applied for a stop closer to my house and was once again denied a closer stop. The bus driver at the time, worked out a different route that would cut down my drive time but after half a term of it working smoothly with no parent complaints, SBS decided that it was not good enough and the route returned to what it was in 2013. This meant my daughter sat in a car for 128kms daily for no other reason that to drop her brother off at the bus.

At this point, I decided that the process was unfair and something had to be done. I had many communications with the SBS representative in our region and they were for the most part unpleasant. The representative was short, rude and completely unempathetic to the situation I was in. I asked what the process would be to change the route or apply for a third bus run. I was told that I would have to

1. Get projected numbers across all communities that the bus runs would impact. I had to have names, date of birth, addresses
2. Put all families on a map
3. Create projected routes that were long enough to validate 3 buses.

I also got in touch with my local politician and other members of my community- our local Community Development Association, Scaddan Primary School P&C and the Principal of our school at the time wrote a letter explaining the impact of parents leaving the school community due to bus run troubles. School Bus Services were aware of my approach.

Once I gathered all the information requested of me, I contacted SBS and was put in touch with a new member, who was put in the position temporarily. The person was affable and made the experience a pleasant one, he was also surprised by the amount of work I had done and said to me 'you are doing my job for me'. He reviewed all the documentation and by Term 3 we had 3 buses and my son and daughter were no longer travelling 600kms from Monday – Friday to the bus stop and back.

I have really appreciated the closeness of this stop every year since. Our school community lost a bus run last year, which I can see the reasons for and have no complaints. And nor does our community, from what has been communicated to me when I asked for feedback. There may have been other communications that contradict that, but they are unknown to me.

I understand the role of SBS is a wide ranging and there are many different situations that need to be taken in to consideration. I would like to see change in how the SBS representatives deal with parents in regards to runs. I would like see more empathy and a greater understanding about how farming works and this be taken in to account when designing routes or adding in spurs.

I do feel strongly that the root of many of the problems that parents have with SBS lie within the policy that it is governed by. It is a policy that does not see the differences between city, rural and remote communities and does not have any scope to change as the majority of rural and remote communities are changing. A personal example of this is spur lengths. I was told that I would only get a 7km spur maximum to my stop for my first child and then 5km after that. One length of our farm is more than 7km. This means that if I had not fought for a complete route change my two children would never have been entitled to a stop anywhere near our home. When going through the change for the bus routes I found it frustrating that the Department of Education and SBS services have two completely different approaches to zoning. This is confusing for parents who are told that there is no zoning to schools unless the school is near capacity and needs to restrict intake for other suburbs so it can cater to its own zone's needs but when it comes SBS there are clear zones that are not able to be shifted even if it does not impact on bus capacity or route change. Policy is something that we, the parents and communities, can lobby our politicians to seek change in or give more funding to so that we can have more buses on our roads, serving the community and those children who are a risk when it comes to truancy in the primary and secondary years of schooling.

I do not want this to be an assignation on a particular person's character, but an opportunity to change how SBS is perceived in our farming region and to create policy that is long lasting and able to have some flexibility so that as our communities needs change their school bus needs can be met.

I hope that this letter and my experiences can be used to start the process of change.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]