

Background:

Our school at Salmon Gums is considered rural remote, we are 107km north of Esperance, and service families up to 50km away from our school site in all directions. Our school families are multi generational farming families, and have local knowledge of the roads, road conditions, family needs, and student ages.

Our school is well supported by our community, with every student in the district attending our school as their local school, despite the availability of a bus to Esperance which supports the high school as well as a primary school in Esperance.

A couple of points:

1/ Families have been notified that they are not eligible for the bus as they are not within 5km of an existing stop. This may be reasonable in a semi rural / highly populated area - which we are not. It is not unreasonable for students to be on a longer spur given our context, if it still fits within the maximum allowable time frame - and if possible as a rural school community we will make this work with a little negotiating occasionally.

2/ Utilising the existing route when planning for the following year is not necessarily the best route for timeliness and flow. Flexibility is key for the service to work well in our context.

3/ While the SBS may simply take into account numbers, our community looks at how long the youngest child can expect to be on the bus, the change from kindy days to non-kindy days, and take this into account if possible when planning for future years.

4/ If the route is too long, we have the potential lose families from our rural community. In our context we are better off having smaller buses doing separate routes than one bus with one long bus run. Although this may be more expensive for SBS and PTA, it allows our small school to be viable for the long term.

5/ Our families all run businesses and understand time and money concepts. They also are tightly connected to similar small schools in the region, and they talk to each other! So if one school has three buses servicing 10 students, but another school with two buses servicing 15 students gets pushed to one bus, you can presume everyone knows about it.

6/ Generally the bus services employ local people, which create a better community for our students. This is a win-win, and has a greater benefit for our local economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Kind regards,

Janine