

## Submission

### ***Public Accounts Inquiry (Student Transport Assistance Policy Framework Inquiry) STAP***

*To whom it may concern,*

The Orange School Bus Service of Western Australia has in the past been recognised as "The Rolls Royce" of school bus services in Australia. For the last twenty years we have seen this great operation torn to pieces by successive governments leaving it in disarray not sure of what direction it should go!

***1. Security of contracts in my opinion was the secret to the past success of the Orange School Bus System and all contracts should be "Evergreen" for as long as the service is required. Why the temporary contracts need to be tendered out every few years does not make sense, an operator needs as long a term as possible to build up infrastructure (Garage/Workshop Wash Facilities etc) essential to operate a safe and reliable bus service.***

Each bus service is different, in some small towns the local garage or deli supplement their income with operating a school bus. On their own each business is not viable so need to be operated in conjunction with one another. However, what we have seen more recently is contracts finishing, put out to tender and being won by a large bus company operated remotely from a head office! Reliability of service and stability of a community or small town is compromised by this common occurrence these days. With many of the small operators that supplement another business by having a school bus, it has another benefit of a relief driver being available from an existing employee or family member. Many of the larger operators are finding it extremely hard to keep a relief driver available because there is not enough relief hours in a year to warrant the expense of maintaining a bus licence.

***2. Consider these factors when renewing a contract in a small community and better still make all contracts Evergreen as mentioned in number one submission so that the contractor has security of tenure and can keep both businesses viable supporting our smaller communities that are struggling these days with many small businesses closing leaving towns without many services.***

Many contracts become redundant for many reasons, usually because student numbers drop and remaining passengers can be relocated on another service close by. This can lead to a great deal of financial hardship with contractors left with a bus still to pay for but no income. Common sense should suggest to make use of these redundant buses on new contracts even in a different location to ease financial pressures on contractors finding themselves in this unpleasant situation rather than call tenders for a new operator and new bus.

***3. Make an offer to redundant bus service contractors that have current buses the opportunity to take on a new service at a similar rate that they were previously receiving rather than put a new service out to open tender!***

Today PTA make a big deal of the buses doing the exact amount of kilometres for the contract, deducting a percentage of fixed costs if more kilometres are recorded because it is assumed the bus is making money on charter. If the bus does less kilometres than the contract then a percentage of running costs are deducted. This creates more paper work for the operator and more work for PTA Administration, a totally negative activity.

***4. Why not take kilometres on an annual basis only, leaving fixed costs as is, enabling School Charters to be done at running costs and wages only! Schools benefit with discounted charter rates.***

I sincerely hope this review brings to light many other deficiencies that have crept into the system enabling the Orange School Bus Service to be brought back to its former glory.

