



Your Ref: Inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy Framework

Our Ref: ES.1 / DS.1



25 October 2021

Parliament of Western Australia
Level 1, 11 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

lapac@parliament.wa.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

INQUIRY INTO THE STUDENT TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy Framework.

The Shire of Kondinin has two primary schools located in its municipality namely Kondinin and Hyden. The primary schools are located 60km apart and do not draw on the same students to attend the schools. The focus of this submission relates to Kondinin Primary School.

This submission responds to the following sections of the Committee's Terms of Reference as follows.

a) The Eligibility Criteria for Students to Qualify for Transport Assistance.

There are currently two bus services that take children from the Kondinin town site, one of which takes students to Kulin District High School and the other Narembeen District High School. Whilst this provides choice for students attending High School, it also enables primary school children to attend both these District High Schools, the latter of which has serious social, community, economic and financial implications on both Kondinin Primary School itself, and the Kondinin community as a whole.

In terms of the 'nearest appropriate school' criteria, the Shire would like this criteria to be tightened in that primary school aged students who have access to Kondinin Primary School are not able to simply attend a school outside of the town in which they reside based on no tangible reason as to why Kondinin Primary School is not an 'appropriate school'. The Policy review should consider introducing criteria that put equal accountability and restrictions on both School Bus Services and the Education Department accepting these primary school enrolments knowing that the children are attending their school by bus from another town that has an excellent Primary School.

Kondinin is a well serviced town with a shire office, a hospital, quality recreation facilities, a post office, a community resource centre, a western power depot, an aged care lodge, a medical centre and various local businesses. The school however is the heart of the community, and without a bus to enable farm students with ready access to the school and government policy in place that readily

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allows primary school aged children to attend schools in neighbouring towns, this further impounds the sustainability of the school and the town more generally. In turn these families are more likely to play sport and attend events in the neighbouring towns, parents to shop in the neighbouring towns, parents to volunteer in community and sporting groups in neighbouring towns, and then in the next generation to come these children are not going to identify as being from Kondinin and therefore have no connection to the school or the local community. The school also provides a place of employment, and with less numbers at a school there is less opportunity to attract new staff to the school and retain existing staff, which again places further social and economic implications on the community.

f) The contractual arrangements with services providers, including the appropriateness of current bus contracts, and payment arrangements, and previous contract arrangements in the manner in which they were created.

A Narembeen bus contractor works at Kondinin Primary School and parks the bus at Kondinin Primary School, giving the appearance that the bus parked out the front of the school for most days of the week is in fact that of the schools, when it is in fact not. It seems strange how a Narembeen School Bus has a start and end point in Kondinin and that the contractor also works at the Kondinin Primary School. It is recommended that this type of scenario is taken into consideration when taking on new contracts.

Kondinin Primary School does not have a Kondinin specific bus that brings children into the school. Children have to catch the Kulin/Hyden bus into town. This bus is designed for secondary students who wish to travel to Kulin from Hyden/Karlgarin/Kondinin to Kulin District High School. Whilst this situation has enabled some primary school aged children who live on farms on the Kulin / Hyden bus route, the Kondinin Primary School have no control on this situation as the bus is not set up for Kondinin Primary School and it has no sway in the consideration of amending this route to capture more Kondinin farm children to attend Kondinin Primary School.

The Shire of Kondinin is committed to providing support to the Kondinin Primary School as outlined in the following extract from the Shire's Community Strategic Plan 2016 – 2026.

"2.3 Encourage and promote a culture of education, career development, job creation and employment.

2.3.1 Work with the local Community Resource Centres and government, industry, education, employment and community groups to develop sub regional partnerships and investment in education and training

Our Actions

Support the Kondinin Primary School and Hyden Primary School with educating young people in the Shire and ensure a whole of community approach to sustaining and growing student numbers at the Kondinin Primary School. "

For the various reasons outlined above, the Shire requests your consideration in looking at the broader implications when setting criteria listed in the Student Transport Assistance Policy and the impact that it places on the livelihood and sustainability of country towns and the operations of the wonderful country primary schools in them and what they offer to our communities.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Burton', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

David Burton
Chief Executive Officer