

28 October 2021

Legislative Assembly of Western Australia

STUDENT TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE POLICY FRAMEWORK INQUIRY

To the Public Accounts Committee,

We are writing to you about your inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework, more specifically the nearest appropriate school parameters.

A bus service extending to the Darkan and Duranillin towns from Collie Senior High School has been in place since 2012. However, currently the bus service does not have the number of seats available for children leaving year 6 at Darkan Primary wanting to go to school at Collie SHS in years 7-12 both now and into the projected future.

With the current STA policy, families in the Darkan school community (West Arthur Shire) are expected to travel to the nearest district high school. Geographically our school community is to be dispersed to 5 different towns with district high schools in years 7-10 (Wagin DHS, Boddington DHS, Boyup Brook DHS, Kojonup DHS and Collie SHS); and then to a senior high school in Collie or Narrogin in year 11 and 12.

As a P & C we are extremely concerned about the continuity of education of our children. The high school years are particularly important in setting up for ATAR and other pathways, constantly moving schools; for example, from Darkan Primary to a district high school and then to a senior high school, disadvantages our children over those that are able to transition straight from a primary school to the senior high school where they will be finishing their tertiary education.

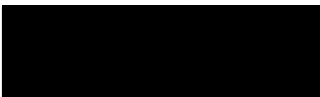
We are also deeply concerned that families in our Darkan community are separated by vast distances as they will potentially have children in different towns for education. An example is a family living 2 km on the east of Darkan would have a child at Darkan Primary, a child at Wagin District High School and another child in the opposite direction at Collie Senior High School. In essence, fractured family units split between towns.

This is already forcing families to leave the district. We have families feeling forced to board children from year 7, people having to forgo employment to drive children to an alternative bus to Collie SHS, and children simply not getting to school. We fear that this is causing difficulty attracting employees and business owners to the area which impacts on our local businesses and the agricultural industries.

The Darkan Primary School P & C would like the following recommendations to be considered

1. Amend the STA policy so that the nearest appropriate school for children leaving a primary school in a town that **does not** have a high school is a **Senior High school not a District High School**.
2. Alternatively, a transition program be allowed where a Primary School is able to elect its nearest **Senior High School** and that every child that has attend the Primary School in year 6, be given a permanent seat on the bus to that school.

Yours faithfully



Katie Hulse

President of the Darkan Primary School P&C

