

To Whom It May Concern,

We are a farming family with four children in the Shire of Dumbleyung, located 285 kilometres South-East of Perth.

Our four children are under the age of [REDACTED], with three of them currently attending Kukerin Primary School.

We are fortunate enough that the Shire of Dumbleyung has two towns and two primary schools. However due to living less than 3kms closer to Dumbleyung, we are considered complimentary passengers on the Kukerin school bus. Thus means we are not afforded the opportunity to have our children collected and dropped off at our drive way, rather we have to wait at a busy truck stop located on the main highway.

We have five farms in the Shire of Dumbleyung; unfortunately for us, the one with our family home, main workshop, shearing shed and machinery sheds is situated less than 3kms closer to Dumbleyung. The location of our four remaining farms, which don't have adequate infrastructure, would however make us eligible for the bus to collect and drop our four children to the driveway.

As we are considered complimentary passengers, we are required to travel less than 7kms to the nearest bus stop, located at a busy truck stop on the main highway. As I'm sure you can imagine it takes more time to get all four children in the car than it does to drive to the stop.

I understand there needs to be a limit for distance a bus will travel to collect children but some people's driveways are longer than the distance we are from our current stop.

Like many other farming family my husband often leaves before the children are awake and is home after dinner, therefore it puts an enormous amount of strain on myself to ensure the kids are at the bus stop on time. I am often required to assist my husband with farming operations during the day and being required to drive less than 7kms can hinder my ability to assist him.

I strongly believe the rules and decision making tools used to decide if a child is eligible to be collected by the bus from their driveway are outdated and unfair. The farming industry as a whole has moved towards bigger farming enterprises, which means there are greater distances between farms owners. I believe the bus services needs to recognise this shift in the industry and allow for the greater distances between farms.

We unlike our city counterparts don't have the luxury to be able to relocate easily to suit schooling preferences and it's unfair we are penalised for choosing between schools in the same Shire.

Our country towns due to this shift into bigger enterprises are decreasing in size and this is just another unnecessary difficulty facing parents when trying to provide the best education they can with the options available to them.

I'd also like to bring to the panel's attention, another issue we've encountered with the bus services and that's the lack of accessibility to child care services. In our Shire like many others we are fortunate to have several child care facilities and options available to working parents. However due

to a lack of seats available on the buses that drive directly past child care facilities, parents are unable to access these services for after school care.

This makes it incredibly hard to find a workplace flexible enough even on farm, to ensure you can leave work with enough travel time to collect your child from the bus stop or school. As a result local businesses are suffering and the services providing the care are losing out on business, as they can't cater to the parent's needs.

The assessment system used to decide if a child is eligible for a permanent seat on the school buses is out of date and costings local farming communities greatly.

I ask you to look at increasing the distance between bus stops and the distance from schools for eligibility of passengers. While also considering a way local child care services can offer parents in need of after school options to assist them in working.

Every situation is different and there should be a flexible policy that can cater to the needs of our country families and assist them in providing easy, safe and workable options for their children's travel to and from school. Our communities are small enough, we don't need these extra pressures to encourage families to relocate to bigger towns and locations as it's easier.