

SCHOOL BUS SERVICES — COMPOSITE RATE MODEL CONTRACTS REVIEW

Statement by Minister for Transport

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Transport) [3.03 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house that on Friday, at the annual general meeting of the Transport Forum Passenger Services School Bus Division, I announced the establishment of an independent review into school bus services composite rate model contracts. Composite rate model contracts were established and signed in December 2003 and January 2004, and replaced the former standard rate model contracts. Since 2003, the industry has raised a number of issues with the CRM contracts, contending that they are unfair and fail to properly remunerate school bus contractors. This announcement fulfils an election commitment of the Liberal–National government, and the review will allow stakeholders in the school bus industry and other interested parties to have their concerns reviewed and addressed.

The review will be chaired by Mr Haydn Lowe, a senior public servant for nearly 20 years working in the fields of disability services, environment and Aboriginal affairs, and who has been involved in previous transport-related studies. Joining him will be Mr Neil Smith and Professor Martin West. Mr Smith has more than 40 years' experience in the transport industry. He is a director of the Transit System Group, which operates passenger services in Perth, Adelaide and Queensland. Professor West is the co-director of the School of Information Systems at Curtin Business School. He has previously undertaken review work for both the Public Transport Authority and the Department of Transport.

Of the 824 contracts the Public Transport Authority has with private operators all over the state, 692—about 84 per cent—are CRM contracts introduced in 2004. These contractors have all been sent a copy of the “School Bus Services (Orange Bus) Contracts: Issues for Resolution” document discussing the issues that the school bus industry has raised with government. In addition, a series of public consultations will be held with details to be published soon on the website of the PTA's school bus services branch. Submissions must be lodged in writing by 30 November. The panel will review all the submissions, engage with key stakeholders and present recommendations for resolving the issues for consideration in February next year. My parliamentary colleagues will also receive a copy of the paper and will have the opportunity to engage with contractors in their electorates, assisting them by coordinating joint submissions or by hosting a public consultation. Finally, I look forward to continuing to work with the school bus industry to ensure that this vital service is appropriately supported by government.

Consideration of the statement made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Ed Dermer**.