

Kylea Garnett
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

25th August, 2021

With reference to your submission regarding review of country school bus services I would like the following information to be considered.

I live approx. 23 kms West from the town of Toodyay along [REDACTED] (Toodyay Shire). My children have both travelled on the orange school bus to Toodyay District High School for their younger years. I applied for both my children to catch the orange bus to Northam to attend 1. St Josephs – Northam (Year 4) in 2020 & 2. Northam Senior High School (Year 11) commencing 2021.

1. **Application for travel to St Joseph's Northam** – declined due to not being the nearest appropriate Catholic school.
 - a. Having lived in this shire and community for a considerable time, I am aware of what schools are available and upon close investigation and scrutiny deemed the closer school (Immaculate Heart Chittering) to be unsuitable for the following reasons.
 - i. very little established infrastructure (e.g. pools, indoor sporting facilities etc),
 - ii. no immediate hospitals and emergency services,
 - iii. Independent Catholic School
 - iv. and was and is still under construction.

As a parent I was looking for an established school with a proven record, close to established facilities and hospitals etc that followed the approved teachings of the WA Catholic Church.

- b. I wrote to several ministers with regard to the response from SBS (refer attached correspondence) and despite providing a letter from the School Improvement Advisor who defined the difference between the approved teachings of the Catholic Church vs an Independent Catholic School, was essentially advised that the policy did not discriminate on the basis of religion and that my child would not be eligible for the bus.
 - i. I must question what the response would be should I choose to send my child to a Islamic school where the teachings of the Koran vary between the approved teachings vs another school that is located closer that teaches Sharia Law.

Through my investigations I find that there are students who attend Immaculate Heart and live closer to Toodyay and therefore closer to Northam that are remunerated via a convoluted process through their school for driving their children to and from school despite the provision of a private bus (invoiced to parents) and arranged by the school.

I had advised on my SBS applications that I was willing to drive my child the 8km to the orange school bus pickup point that goes to Northam and that bus usage would be every school day.

However, the bus is heavily subscribed and due to an apparent long waiting list and essentially due to my location my child will never get to the top of the list for availability as she is considered complimentary.

2. **Application for travel to Northam Senior High School for Year 11 student – declined due to not being the nearest appropriate school.**
 - a. My daughter had attended Toodyay District High School up to Year 10 (School is K to year 10 only) where she had well established peers, school captain and worked on the Gifted and Talented program for the 4 years of high school.
 - b. I contacted SBS to determine how the decision was arrived at and was advised that I needed to send my child to Bullsbrook High School in order to be eligible for SBS – even though there was currently no bus available from my location to Bullsbrook.
 - c. This child is now attending boarding school at considerable cost which negates the need for SBS.

If I resided in the City my children would be eligible to catch public transport to travel to a school that was considered out of zone. Unfortunately, there is no public transport available in rural areas and therefore it is down to private transport.

I would also note the following:

- Parents are completing SBS applications stating their child will travel on the bus every day, as ticking the box stating otherwise will result in a declined application. This is resulting in absentia on the bus, leaving unused seats that could be utilised by students with a genuine need for the service.
- Some parents have taken the step of registering their child from a town address (relative or such) that they are not living at in order to be eligible for the service.
- Finally, there are parents that have gone as far as arranging medical appointments for their children to secure documentation sighting mental health reasons in order to maintain their seat on the service.

As a result of SBS's determination I am no longer able to earn an income as I have a commitment to transport my child to and from school so she can receive an appropriate education. Currently the SBS policy in rural areas seems to be making it difficult for parents to educate children in the way that they see most appropriate.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss anything further. I look forward to hearing the determinations from the review and sincerely hope that some sensible decisions arise as a result.

Kind Regards

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted address line 1]

[Redacted address line 2]

[Redacted address line 3]

Mrs Kylea Garnett
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

15th September, 2020

Mr Shane Love
PO Box 216
GONGARA WA 6525

RE: SCHOOL BUS AVAILABILITY SHIRE OF TOODYAY TO NORTHAM

Dear Mr Love,

I have recently enrolled my 9 year old daughter [REDACTED] at St Josephs school in Northam. The enrollment has been accepted and my child will be commencing at the school at the beginning of Term 4, 2020. As part of the process I have also made an application to School Bus Services and am currently awaiting a response to my application [REDACTED].

My current residence is located at [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Western Australia in the Shire of Toodyay. This location is 51 km from St Josephs school at 1 Lance Street, Northam. As at the date of this letter a School Bus Service is provided from the corner of Julimar Road and Parkland Drive to St Josephs Northam (and return). Parkland Drive is a distance of 9 km from my residential address. I am more than willing to drive my daughter the 9 km to the Parkland Drive rendezvous however have been given an indication of the following:

- All students currently patronizing this bus route and who reside past Dreyer Road, (15 km from my residence toward Toodyay) are now considered complimentary and therefore will no longer be eligible for the transport if there are more students closer to the location of Toodyay registered for the service.
- It is my understanding that there are approximately 18 students who are currently unable to catch the bus as it has reached maximum capacity. These students are on a waiting list and are currently being driven to school by private vehicles.
- It is also my understanding that there are an estimated 18 students who will be new to the bus run in 2021 for St Josephs school alone.
- There will be a further intake for year 11 and 12 leaving Toodyay District High School and attending Northam Senior High School or St Josephs that will register for bus services.
- Additionally I have been verbally advised and am waiting on written confirmation that my daughter is not eligible to be on the St Josephs school bus run as the Immaculate Heart College Catholic School in Chittering is located closer to my residence, being some 31km drive.
- Although seats have been allocated to children on the Toodyay/Northam bus route, they are regularly vacant resulting in a bus only partially filled which precludes people that would use

the bus consistently, from benefitting from the service. Perhaps bus services needs to monitor usage and have seats allocated on a consistent usage basis.

I have elected to enroll my daughter at St Josephs school for the following reasons:

- 1) St Josephs School in Northam is a Mainstream school that currently accepts students from within the shire of Toodyay. The School is future focused by embracing new ideas, technologies and initiatives whilst valuing and building good citizens through Catholic teachings. The primary focus is academic education rather than religious pursuits.
- 2) Immaculate Heart Catholic College is NOT a Mainstream school and has a primary focus on the teachings of the old school Catholic faith which appears a primary focus rather than academic education.
- 3) The Immaculate Heart Bus is a private vehicle belonging to the college that is invoiced to parents.
- 4) St Josephs School has a proven record over a period of time which has produced a high standard of education for its students right through to Year 12 along with a broad spectrum of subject selection for those students progressing toward ATAR.
- 5) Immaculate Heart as at 2020 has not yet produced any Year 12 students in which to measure academic success through ATAR. It is also unknown but reasonable to accept that the diversity of subject selection may be limited.
- 6) The religious ideology of Immaculate Heart does not align with my families beliefs.
- 7) Immaculate Heart is lacking in sporting and recreation facilities including a swimming pool. The school whilst having some permanent buildings is still under construction and has been for several years.

The current bus situation is extremely frustrating and as a result of the unavailability of a bus service I will be travelling to Northam twice a day (over 200km) which will also preclude me from working in my role as a Cert IV Education Assistant (special needs) at the local school in Toodyay. I would very much appreciate your help in getting an amenable solution for not only myself but the large number of parents/guardians having to privately transport their children in order to educate them at the school or their choice.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted contact information]

[Redacted contact information]

[Redacted contact information]

30th June 2020

SBS Metro Central

To whom it may concern

I write in support of XXXXXXXXXXXX desire for her children to use the school bus service for transport to St Joseph's School in Northam. Whilst the School Bus Service may consider attendance at Immaculate Heart College to be an alternative for the XXXXXXXXX family, please note that Immaculate Heart College (IHC) is not recognised as a Catholic school in Western Australia. Whilst the IHC website suggests that they are an independent school teaching the Catholic faith, the Bishops of Western Australia do not recognise schools as Catholic schools unless they teach the formal Religious Education curriculum approved by the Bishops. Immaculate Heart College and one other school in the southern suburbs of Perth are the only two such schools in this category.

Whilst the IHC website does purport to teach theology, this is not the same as the formal Religious Education programme that is taught in the 163 Catholic schools in this State. I refer you to the Catholic Education WA website (cewa.edu.au) which lists each of our schools under the main menu item 'Schools/School Directory'. You will note the absence of Immaculate Heart College from this list of 163 schools. I further understand that it is the wish of the XXXXXXXXXXXX family for their children to have a Catholic school experience that includes the formal Religious Education curriculum that is mandated for all our Catholic schools and is approved by the Bishops of WA. St Joseph's School in Northam is such a school and Immaculate Heart College in Chittering is not. It is not my intention to disparage IHC and their educational practices, rather to confirm that the Catholic Bishops of WA do not recognise IHC as a Catholic school and the XXXXXXXXXXXX family wish to exercise their choice and desire for a Catholic education and Religious Education curriculum as mandated by the Bishops.

I would be more than happy to clarify any of the above or provide further information as required.

Yours sincerely

John Aldous
School Improvement Advisor (St Joseph's School is one of 29 Catholic schools that come under my umbrella)
Catholic Education WA Ltd

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████████████████████



17 July 2020

Mr John Aldous
School Improvement Advisor
Catholic Education WA
PO Box 198
LEEDERVILLE WA 6903

Dear Mr Aldous

Transport Assistance Policy Framework - Eligibility

Thank you for your letter dated 30 June 2020 notifying the Public Transport Authority (PTA) that Catholic Education WA does not recognise Immaculate Heart College (IHC) as their religious curriculum has not been approved by the Bishops.

By way of background, the current Student Transport Assistance Policy provides for a reasonable level of transport assistance to the nearest appropriate government school, or non-Government school of religious denomination or ethos, that offers the year of study for the student.

To be eligible for transport assistance, students must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be enrolled at their nearest appropriate school;
- Be enrolled in a pre-compulsory or compulsory education period;
- Regularly use the school bus;
- Reside more than 4.5km from their school; and
- Reside outside a designated Public Transport Area.

The level of education and curricula offered at individual schools is the province of the Department of Education or various independent school associations such as Catholic Education WA, and has no bearing when determining transport assistance eligibility.

The policy of providing transport assistance to government and non-government schools has been for many years limited to a student's nearest appropriate school. Hence, appropriate school has never been determined on the basis of special programs e.g. International Baccalaureate, or the perceived lack of opportunities in education when determining transport assistance eligibility.

As non-Government schools will often attract enrolments from outside of traditional catchment areas because of the programmes and pastoral care they offer, this is often used as a point of difference for the purposes of attracting enrolments.

In most instances non-Government schools will sight this point of difference as the school's 'ethos' to highlight this. It has never been the Government's (nor the PTA's intention) to start breaking religious faiths or non-denomination schools down to a specific approved religious education or programs, thereby introducing school of choice.

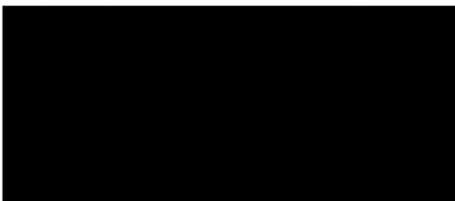
To maintain equity with the public school system, the PTA does not differentiate between schools that are of the same Christian faith. Eligibility is based on which school of the relevant faith (IHC is an independent school teaching the Catholic faith) i.e. is the nearest to a family's residence. This is covered in the Operational Policy Manual located on our website www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au .

As mentioned above, if non-Government schools can attract enrolments from outside of traditional catchment areas; these school will need to offer their own chartered school bus services as part of the transport mix to cover short falls where there is no eligibility to transport assistance by Government.

While school of choice possess many different transport scenarios, any decision to alter the current policy for the provision of transport assistance for all students in Western Australia by allowing school of choice would be cost prohibitive. The Government has to manage a balance between a reasonable level of student transport service to the community whilst operating within budget constraints.

Thank you for raising this issue with me.

Yours sincerely

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OPERATIONS MANAGER



Minister for Transport; Planning

Our ref: 72-30248

Hon Mia Davies MLA
Member for Central Wheatbelt
Email: Mia.Davies@mp.wa.gov.au

Dear Ms Davies

REQUEST FOR A SCHOOL BUS SERVICE TO NORTHAM

Thank you for your email dated 3 December 2020 on behalf of Julimar parents who are requesting consideration be given for a school bus service for students attending St Joseph's School in Northam.

The Student Transport Policy framework provides transport assistance to eligible students to their nearest appropriate Government school, or non-Government school of religious denomination or school of ethos that offers the relevant year of study for the student.

The policy of providing transport assistance to Government and non-Government schools has been, for many years, limited to a student's nearest appropriate school. The level of education and curricula offered at individual schools is the province of the Department of Education, Catholic Education Office or Independent Schools Association. Hence, appropriate school has never been determined on the basis of special programs (eg International Baccalaureate) or the perceived lack of opportunities in education when determining transport assistance eligibility.

As you are aware, non-Government schools will often accept enrolments from outside their traditional catchment areas, citing the programs and pastoral care they offer as a point of difference for the purposes of attracting students.

In most instances, non-Government schools will refer to this point of difference as the school's ethos. It has never been the intention to start breaking religious faiths or non-denomination schools down to a specific ethos, independence or diocese, thereby introducing school of choice. Schools based on Christian faith are treated the same, with eligibility based on which school is the nearest to a family's residence. The Student Transport Policy is available on the School Bus Services website at www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au.

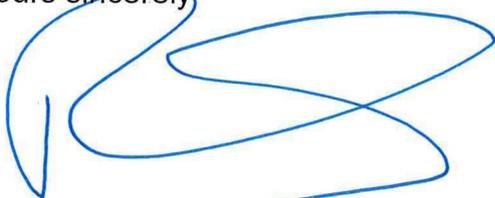
The Public Transport Authority (PTA) has advised that Julimar district students currently enrolled at St Joseph's School are assessed as 'complimentary' and are unlikely to gain access to an 'orange' school bus due to the number of eligible students enrolled for the 2021 school year. Affected families have already been notified that their children have been waitlisted. Once the final student numbers are known for 2021, consideration will be given to whether any of these students can be accommodated on the bus network.

As your email points out, there is a closer Catholic School for these children. As non-Government schools will often attract enrolments from outside their traditional catchment areas, the option exists for these schools to offer their own chartered school bus service where there is no eligibility to transport assistance provided on the 'orange' school bus network. This occurs in a number of cases.

Any decision to alter the current policy for the provision of transport assistance for all students in Western Australia, by allowing school of choice, would be cost prohibitive. The Government is required to manage a balance between a reasonable level of student transport assistance, while operating within budget constraints.

Thank you for taking the time to raise this matter.

Yours sincerely



**HON RITA SAFFIOTI MLA
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**

22 JAN 2021



Family ID No: [REDACTED]

Application No: [REDACTED]

27 January 2021

K Garnett
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Dear Kylea

Application for Transport Assistance – Ineligible

Thank you for your application for Transport Assistance for [REDACTED].

To be eligible for Transport Assistance, a rural student attending a mainstream school must, under normal circumstances:

- **Be enrolled at their nearest appropriate school,**
- Reside outside of a designated Public Transport Area,
- Be enrolled in a pre-compulsory or compulsory education period,
- Regularly use the approved school bus to attend their school, and
- Reside more than 4.5 km from their school.

Your application does not meet the eligibility criteria and therefore [REDACTED] is ineligible for Transport Assistance.

Your application does not meet the eligibility criteria of being enrolled at the nearest appropriate school which is Bullsbrook College. At the moment due to the closest bus service running at its passenger capacity we are unable to offer [REDACTED] a seat as a Complimentary passenger either.

I have placed [REDACTED] on a Wait list for this service and we will be in contact with you when a seat on the bus service becomes available, as you would already be aware there are already other students on the wait list.

Please refer to the School Bus Services website (www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au) for more information regarding Transport Assistance eligibility.

Should you have any queries please contact me on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Contract Officer



Family ID No: 1 [REDACTED]

Application No: [REDACTED]

07 October 2020

K Garnett
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Dear Kylea

Application for Transport Assistance

Thank you for your Application for Transport Assistance lodged with School Bus Services. Your application has been assessed in accordance with the policy criteria shown below.

Under current Government policy, to be eligible for Transport Assistance, a rural student attending a mainstream school must, under normal circumstances:

- ***Be enrolled at their nearest appropriate school,***
- *Reside outside of a designated Public Transport Area,*
- *Be enrolled in a pre-compulsory or compulsory education period,*
- *Regularly use the approved school bus to attend their school and,*
- *Reside more than 4.5 km from their school.*

It has been determined that your application does not meet the eligibility criteria and therefore is ineligible for Transport Assistance. Specifically, [REDACTED] is not attending her nearest Catholic school. It has been established that Immaculate Heart College is only 29.6kms from your residential address and St Joseph's School is more than 49kms.

At the moment due to the closest bus service running at near capacity we are unable to offer [REDACTED] a seat as a Complimentary passenger either. I have placed [REDACTED] on a Wait list for this service as we are in the process of reviewing it in preparation for 2021, however please do be aware that there are already other students on the Wait list for this bus service so there is no guarantee that a seat will be available after this review is conducted.

Should you have any queries or would like to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate in contacting me on ([REDACTED]).

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Contract Officer