



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA
Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee – Legislative Council
MEDIA RELEASE

Report recommends no major changes to School Bus Program

A comprehensive analysis of Victoria's long-running School Bus Program has recommended no major changes be made to its operation in rural and regional Victoria.

The Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee has instead urged the State Government to look at ways to make it easier for the wider public to use school buses where capacity exists and implement further measures to enhance safety for children.

"Victoria's School Bus Program has safely transported generations of students to school across rural and regional Victoria since it started operating in 1944," Committee Chair Enver Erdogan said.

"And while young people, the elderly and low-income households experience transport disadvantage in rural and regional areas, further opening up the School Bus Program to the general public can only be a small part of the solution. The School Bus Program must remain first and foremost a service dedicated to school students.

"However, the general public already has some limited access to school bus services and we have determined that there are some small things we can do to improve access for the public while upholding high child safety standards.

"Despite an understandable level of concern about child safety, the Committee did not hear any evidence of student welfare being put at risk by the general public travelling on school buses in Victoria, or in the other states we examined.

"Nevertheless, we recognise the importance of maintaining this high degree of safety and have recommended some further measures to reassure parents and keep our kids safe."

The Committee wants to mandate the installation of CCTV cameras on new school buses as they join the School Bus Program. It has also urged the Government to ensure parents, school communities and young people have input in the formulation of Child Safe Policies.

To improve access for the public, the Committee has recommended the State Government roll out the online School Bus Management System statewide as a matter of urgency. It believes the booking system should also allow members of the public to find out if there is spare capacity on their preferred school bus route before they start an application.

"The Government must also explore options to better inform local communities about spare capacity on school buses before downsizing existing routes," Mr Erdogan said.

"And it needs to consider converting underutilised school buses to public transport in areas with high demand, as long as they comply with the relevant public transport disability standards."

The inquiry received 147 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders and interest groups and held four days of public hearings.

"Our Committee had the privilege to hear from dozens of witnesses throughout the course of our inquiry," Mr Erdogan said.

"We listened to people from the bus industry, social service providers, government departments, religious institutions and public policy academics. We also spoke with school representatives, parents' groups, local councils and advocates for public transport users, including the young and the elderly.

"I want to thank everyone who took part in this valuable review of our School Bus Program."

The report containing all 12 findings and nine recommendations is available to read in full on the Committee's [website](#).

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