

## **Inquiry into the Use of School Buses in Rural and Regional Victoria**

Ms Kelly Lewis

**Organisation Name:** Hepburn Shire Council

**Your position or role:** Directorate Executive Assistant

### **YOUR SUBMISSION**

**Submission:**

I have uploaded our submission

### **FILE ATTACHMENTS**

**File1:**

**File2:**

**File3:**

**Signature:**

Kelly Lewis



25 June 2021

School Bus Program Inquiry  
Committee Secretariat  
Legislative Assembly, Economic and Infrastructure Committee  
Parliament of Victoria  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Via Email: [eic.assembly@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:eic.assembly@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretariat

## **INQUIRY SUBMISSION INTO THE USE OF SCHOOL BUSES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL VICTORIA**

Hepburn Shire Council wishes to provide a submission to the 'Parliamentary Inquiry into the use of School Buses in Rural and Regional Victoria' detailing our community's experiences with public transport, the school bus and transport disadvantage.

Hepburn Shire is a small rural Council within the Central Highlands region with proximity to the regional centres of Ballarat and Bendigo, and close links to the city with Melbourne just over 100km away. Hepburn estimated residential population (ERP 2019) is 15,975. Based on the ABS 2016, 36% of the population live outside of the major townships within the Shire and are reliant on vehicles for their daily transport needs because of the lack of public transport options, including the School Bus Program. These limited options further exacerbate vulnerabilities to poverty for families and the elderly and young people unable to drive may experience isolation without transport options to increase social connection and participation.

In 2019 Council completed the Hepburn Shire Local Transport Benchmarking Study which reports on local transport services and the issues, gaps and opportunities that currently exist within the Shire (copy attached). The Study identified that:

*Key Finding 6 – “Further communication is required about school zoning and the DET School Bus Program Policy that guide the service provision of school bus services from Ballan and Creswick to Daylesford College. Development of a local transport solution could support students to attend Daylesford College from these locations in addition to the School Bus Program.”*

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► HEPBURN SHIRE COUNCIL

ABN: 76 845 763 535  
PO Box 21 Daylesford 3460  
[shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au)  
[hepburn.vic.gov.au](http://hepburn.vic.gov.au)

► DAYLESFORD

76 Vincent Street  
Daylesford  
03 5348 2306  
Corner Duke  
& Albert Streets  
Daylesford  
03 5348 1577

► CRESWICK

68 Albert Street  
Creswick  
03 5345 8399

► CLUNES

The Warehouse  
36 Fraser Street  
Clunes  
03 5345 3359

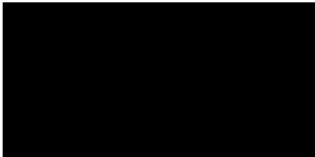
The Study identified issues with the current school bus program with bus routes based on school zoning. Students who live in certain school zones/district will have strong school bus connections to the schools in their zones (e.g. students in Clunes to Maryborough, students in Creswick to Ballarat). Students do have the choice outside of their designated neighbourhood zone and the school may accept this enrolment as long as it has enough space. However, this choice doesn't extend to access to the School Bus Program.

This is the case for Creswick students enrolled at Daylesford Secondary College, where the designated school bus to Daylesford does not pick up students in the Creswick Township, but rather 2km out of Creswick at a remote stop on the highway. This remote pick-up and drop-off point mean that they are not within usual walking distance to their homes and requires further transportation home. If Students do not have access to other transport, they are faced with walking into Creswick along the busy dual lane Midland Highway which has no pedestrian path. Extending the Bus Route an extra 2 km would resolve this issue.

Hepburn Shire Council strongly advocates for the provision of school bus services based on local needs, rather than the school zone system. This would include allowing bus routes to be developed by student needs rather than geographical school boundaries that fall short on providing safe, reliable and cost effective transport for school students.

If you have any queries in relation to the above, please do not hesitate to contact me via telephone on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely,



**Bradley Thomas**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Attachment: Hepburn Shire Local Transport Benchmarking Study**

**Cc:**

**The Hon. Mary Anne Thomas, Member for Macedon**  
**Ms Louise Staley, Member for Ripon**  
**The Hon. Jaala Pulford, Member for Western Victoria**