

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

Susan Webster

Organisation Name:
Your position or role:

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:
My submission is attached.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:
File2:
File3:

Signature:
Susan Webster

Email: schoolbusesinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

The Secretary
Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

26 June 2021

Dear Madam / Sir

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE USE OF SCHOOL BUSES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL VICTORIA FROM U3A NETWORK VICTORIA

Background

- U3A in Victoria is a volunteer-run organisation of around 38,000 members, all being retired or semi-retired Victorians
- There are 104 U3As across Victoria providing courses and activities run by their members for their members
- U3As provide thousands of courses and activities weekly that provide social interaction, learning, and activity for seniors
- Surveys indicate that on average Victorian U3A members attend activities two days per week maintaining their connection to their local community
- Members indicate that taking part in U3A activities maintains their physical, social and psychological wellbeing and mitigates against social isolation

Survey Findings and Position

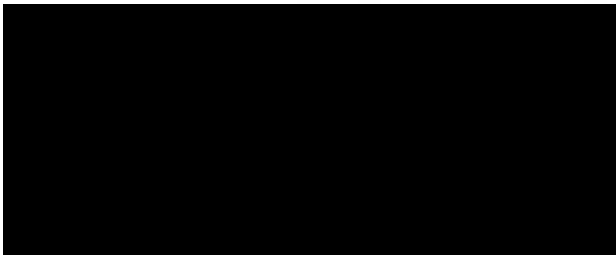
U3A Network Victoria invited 55 U3As located in regional and rural Victoria to complete a survey exploring their use of public transport to attend community activities such as U3A classes, shopping, socialising and religious services. Replies were received from U3As from 15 different Shires. More than half of the respondents were located 20 or more kilometres from their nearest main centre. A copy of the survey is included as an attachment to this submission, and the response data is available on request.

The majority of respondents travel to their nearest main centre by car, either as a passenger or as a driver. However, this means they often rely on others being available to transport them. A small number use buses, but for most, public transport is not a convenient option. This is because it is not available in their area, or because of the time taken to get to their destination. Personal safety and wheelchair access were also cited as barriers. A significant number indicated the lack of reliable transport meant they could not attend community activities. In addition, the

vast majority would do so if it was reliable and safe and would use this service mainly during weekdays from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm.

U3A Network supports the extension of school bus services to supplement existing public transport options in rural and regional areas. This would have a positive impact on seniors' independence as they could access essential services and community activities without having to rely on others for transport. Access to convenient, cost effective and reliable local bus services would enable seniors to attend more community activities. Accessibility needs must be taken into consideration to ensure seniors are able to safely use school buses. It is likely a service running between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm Monday to Friday would be popular, and the use of school buses during school holidays and weekends for ad-hoc day trips would also be supported.

Yours sincerely



Susan Webster

