

3/8/2021

Please find below a submission to the 'Inquiry into the Use of School Buses in Rural and Regional Victoria.'

I live in south west Victoria, 22kms from Hamilton, the nearest town and centre. The school bus is a critical part of allowing us to manage our school, farm and work life and saves us a lot of travel and time.

Our eldest child started primary school in 2020 and after some consideration of whether she would be safe we put her on the bus, the network of which involves going to a bus interchange waiting for some time, then changing to a second bus to complete the journey.

Our experience is that her school bus journey and the wait at the interchange is the least supervised part of her school experience. The bus driver's primary focus is on driving the bus safely as expected, rather than supervising or disciplining children. Based on this current limitation I cannot see how it would be possible for the bus driver to also pay close attention to the safety of children alongside adults.

Would adults using the network have working with children checks? What happens if they swear or behave inappropriately, who would be responsible for managing this? When children flout rules such as sitting in designated areas, what is to say that adults wouldn't?

I think an unfortunate consequence of this proposed change would be that parents would have much less confidence in the bus network and would be very reluctant to send primary school age children on the bus. Without knowing that the children would always be sufficiently supervised, or that the adults using the network alongside them were safe to be around children, it would be very challenging to continue to send small children on the school bus, which would have a big impact on them and on family life and work.

Fiona Whale