



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

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SCHOOL BUSES

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (7.12 p.m.): The Queensland government has officially cancelled its bus run to Mount Mee State Primary School, which serviced families living in the Oceanview-Mount Mee South area. It was cancelled because, according to the current buffer zones and kilometre system, the number of eligible students had dropped to four. In addition to the four eligible students relying on this bus service to attend school, there were a further nine non-eligible students catching the bus. Four of these nine live closer to the school than 3.2 kilometres and therefore are classed as ineligible. The other five live out of the Mount Mee school bus zone but their parents have chosen to send them to the school in order that they may benefit from the small school experience.

It is the current Education Department's policy to encourage families to send their children to the school of their choice. However, its policy on transport to schools is contradictory to this and therefore would seem to be outdated. If a family is eligible to catch one bus to a school, they should be able to choose to send their children to another school and remain eligible. This policy also discriminates against people living in country areas, who are forced to follow a kilometre system of eligibility rather than the fare-based system applied in suburban areas.

At present, all 13 students who travel on the Oceanview-Mount Mee South bus live closer to Mount Mee State Primary School than to the Dayboro school, based on the distance they travel from their driveways. I believe it is reasonable to be encouraging families to choose to travel to their closest school and be provided with a bus service they are eligible for. That would certainly be the case if this school were situated in the suburbs of Brisbane.

The Queensland government's policy on school bus runs, Nos 3.06.02 and 3.01, states that a bus service will be cancelled if the number of eligible students drops below six. To restart the bus the numbers must increase to 12, with an average of nine. This policy does not make sense and discriminates against small rural schools such as the one at Mount Mee, where it is highly unlikely in the current circumstances that numbers will get to 12 at any stage in the future.

The answer to the Queensland Transport FAQ 'How safe are my children on a school bus?' states that a bus is the safest form of transport to school and that being driven by parents is the least safe. Statistics show that bus travel is seven times safer. Based on these statistics, providing a bus service for travel to any school should be a priority.

Transport is a major issue for any parent of a school child but it is particularly so for the parents of students of Mount Mee school who have just had their bus run cancelled. There are no pedestrian footpaths or crossings at or near the school for the children to use. The number of trucks and cars travelling along the Mount Mee Road tourist drive makes it dangerous for pedestrians and local traffic alike. Since the cancellation of the bus run at the end of term, all the parents involved have made a group decision to divide the cost of the bus run between them in order to keep it going. They have all made a commitment to pay more than a fair amount of money for travel in term 2 until the Education and Transport Departments can offer something more acceptable.
