

Question on Notice

No. 719

Asked on 22 May 2007

MS NOLAN asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS) –

QUESTION:

Will the Minister for Transport and Main Roads provide an update on what steps the Minister is taking to ensure an improvement in the quality of services provided to the people of Ipswich by Westside Bus Company?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for her question.

Westside Bus Company provides approximately 140,000 urban bus trips and 13,000 school trips per year. Since July 2004 there has been a 90% increase in services and a 97% increase in patronage in the Ipswich region.

TransLink advise there have been a number of factors contributing to Westside's service delivery performance:

- the rate of growth in services;
- difficulty in attracting and retaining sufficient bus drivers;
- impact of increased service operations on older vehicles;
- impact of major road projects and congestion for on-time running;
- operator performance.

Since July 2004 Westside has purchased additional 22 buses with additional 11 replacement buses. All additional buses are air-conditioned.

I am advised that the following service improvements have been implemented in the Ipswich region since July 2004 at a cost of \$4.4m.

31 July 2004	Ipswich network restructure stage 1 (routes 8 and 9)
29 November 2004	Network restructure stage 2 (routes 508, 509, 507, 517, 527, 504, 505)
18 April 2005	Network restructure stage 3 (routes 508, 509, 507, 517, 527, 504, 505, 506, 516, 502, 503, 510, 500, 511, 521, 530, 522, 483)
19 December 2005	Ipswich stage 4
27 February 2006	Ipswich stage 5 – routes 522 and 530
13-November-2006	Western region adjustments - stage 5 (Westside) Restructure services to improve on-time running and extend services into new developing areas
15 -19 March 2007	Western region adjustments - stage 6 (Westside) (515, 520, 523, 522, 530, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 516, 517, 527) Restructure services to improve on-time running and extend services into new developing areas

Westside is conducting a review of bus schedules to improve service reliability. The present bus schedules have insufficient layover time between trips to accommodate road construction projects and congestion, resulting in later trips.

The Government has approved additional funding for enhancements to bus maintenance which have been completed. Approval has also been given to accelerate the replacement of five buses this month.

Westside is also actively seeking new drivers and assistance has been provided by TransLink for promotional material and with sourcing of temporary drivers from other operators.

An assessment has also been conducted of Westside's overall performance under the contract. Westside's performance, particularly in areas of service reliability and complaints handling, was not considered to be meeting the contracted obligations.

TransLink has imposed financial penalties on Westside for performance breaches under the contract. Westside have also been instructed to:

- address service reliability issues;
- improve complaints handling processes;
- improve consultation with schools and the local community and its representatives;
- improve driver training.

Westside is implementing strategies such as:

- engaging additional staff to address complaints handling;
- engaging additional staff for driver training;
- sourcing assistance to review the service schedules with a view to improving service reliability; and
- reviewing community feedback processes and arrangements.

Westside's performance will continue to be closely monitored to assess progress.