

Question on Notice

No. 762

Asked on 15 June 2021

MR S MINNIKIN ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide the list of actions (together with the completion dates) developed by the Directors-General of the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Department of Education to address the safety of children on buses following death of a three-year old boy on a childcare bus service in Edmonton in 2020?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Chatsworth for the question.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) regulates the overall provision of public passenger transport services in Queensland by placing safety obligations on operators and drivers, establishing safety and other requirements for vehicles and entering into service contracts and agreements with certain public passenger transport providers.

The transport service involved in the tragic death of a three-year-old was not a service contracted by TMR. TMR understands that the service was a transport service provided by a private early childhood education and care (ECEC) provider, regulated under the National Quality Framework.

Following the tragic event, the Department of Education (DoE) established and led the Safe Transportation of Children project, which commenced in May 2020. TMR was a stakeholder in the project and provided advice in relation to legislative and contractual requirements applicable to providers of public passenger transport services. The project did not result in the implementation of any actions by TMR.

It is important to note that transport providers contracted by TMR—to provide dedicated school services under a prescribed school service contract—are required to ensure drivers undertake a thorough check of the vehicle, to ensure that no passengers have remained on board at the end of each service. The transport provider must obtain written confirmation that these checks have occurred.

In response to the tragic incident, DoE launched and ran the Look Before You Lock campaign on 8 September to 5 October 2020. An additional round of advertising recently occurred from 17 May to 28 June 2021 to again promote the important safety message.

A key element of the campaign was to raise awareness with the ECEC sector as well as awareness with schools, school transport providers and parents about the importance of checking all children have exited the vehicle before locking and leaving it unattended. The communication campaign was also a means for ensuring approved providers of ECEC services were aware of their obligations under national legislative changes.

Amendments were made to the Education and Care National Law which came into effect 1 October 2020 to mandate requirements on approved providers that transport children. Mandated requirements include having a written policy and procedure for the transportation of children and that these procedures are regularly practised.

To support approved providers, DoE produced and promoted detailed guidance material on the legislative requirements, which is available through the department's ECEC website. In addition, the Regulatory Authority conducts targeted monitoring of services to ensure safe transport practices are in place.