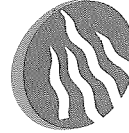




Hon John Mickel MP
Member for Logan



Queensland
Government

Our ref: MC36393

Your ref: Petitions

17 JUL 2008

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Streets
Brisbane Qld 4000

Minister for Transport, Trade,
Employment and Industrial Relations

LAID UPON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE	
No.:	5208T3120
	21 JUL 2008
MP:	Hon J Mickel
Clerk's Signature:	

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 1046-08 lodged with the Queensland Legislative Assembly by Ms Elizabeth Braddon on 17 April 2008 about children standing on school buses travelling 100 kilometres an hour. I apologise for the delay in responding.

A response to Ms Braddon from the Honourable Paul Lucas MP, former Minister for Transport and Main Roads on 29 November 2006 outlined safety initiatives and funding for school buses under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme (SchoolBUS) and the Steep Bus Upgrade Scheme (SteepBUS).

Details of these initiatives are now available on the Queensland Transport web site at www.transport.qld.gov.au. Select *Passenger & Public transport*, then *School transport* for detailed information. Queensland Transport's continued commitment to these initiatives includes ongoing funding of A\$3 million each financial year for SchoolBUS, with an additional A\$12 million for the SteepBUS program.

In previous correspondence Ms Braddon also raised issues about a specific service from North Bundaberg to Moore Park. Queensland Transport's Maryborough office, in conjunction with the operator examined that route and as a result it was reorganised to minimise the occurrence of standee passengers.

A recent enquiry by the department into how the new arrangements are working revealed that under routine circumstances each passenger on the route has a seat with some additional capacity for irregular users of the service.

In Queensland a bus can only carry standing passengers if it has been designed to do so. The number of standees in a bus must not exceed the vehicle's gross vehicle mass (GVM) and is limited by the number of suitable handholds (stanchions) fitted to the bus. Passenger numbers are calculated as one passenger per seat and two per stanchion.

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In Queensland, standing passengers are prohibited in buses on roads that have been assessed as 'long and steep' or 'very steep'. These buses are also required to be fitted with seatbelts. A similar rule applies throughout Australia with the exception of the Northern Territory.

The Queensland SchoolBUS program allows operators of contracted school buses in rural areas to apply for a subsidy towards the cost of fitting seatbelts to their school buses.

While these programs have safety benefits, the introduction of seatbelts does reduce the number of passengers able to be transported in any one trip. These are the same issues as experienced by the Northern Territory government for managing the transport of excess students. There are other issues about a number of existing buses which, for engineering reasons are not able to be fitted with seatbelts, therefore requiring replacement as well as the need for more drivers for these additional buses.

In developing the government's policy regarding standing passengers, Queensland Transport takes into account the crash statistics. Importantly bus occupant casualties accounted for only 0.44% of the Queensland road toll, and 1.26% of all road casualties during the period 2001 to 31 December 2005. Approximately half of bus occupant casualties occurred as a result in crashes that occurred within 60km per hour posted speed zones.

The *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2000* (the Standard) is the legislation which imposes the rules and obligations for the safety and customer service requirements in the provision of public passenger services.

The Standard must be reviewed and remade prior to 2010.

The proposed new Standard will be available for comment on two separate occasions during the review process prior to it being made law. These two consultation periods allow for industry and any other sector of the community to provide input into the final document. The comments of this petition are noted and will be considered in this process.

As well as conducting the required legislative reviews, Queensland Transport continually examines the scope for increasing the safety of bus travel where necessary in ways which are cost effective for all users.

Please table this response for tabling in the legislative assembly.

Yours sincerely



JOHN MICKEL MP
Minister for Transport, Trade,
Employment and Industrial Relations