



**School bus crisis continues
31 July 2006**

“On Friday Minister Conlon announced a \$10million tramline extension in Adelaide to replace a free bus service, while the Port Lincoln school bus crisis continues with more than 50 children estimated to be without any bus transport.

“Some children are sitting on the floor of their bus because of over crowding and it’s just not good enough,” Mrs Penfold said today.

A concerned parent spent four hours doorknocking 9 streets at the Lincoln cove Marina on Thursday and collected the names of at least 50 children and estimates there are even more children in other areas of the marina.

Liz Penfold, Shadow Minister for Regional Development has again written to Patrick Conlon requesting the Port Lincoln school bus service be fully reinstated.

“Mr Conlon continues to avoid the issue and pass the blame onto Local Government instead of accepting providing Port Lincoln families with the safe and adequate bus service they deserve.” Mrs Penfold said.

Mr Conlon downplayed the need for a bus to service the Lincoln Cove Marina, stating that only 20 children are affected by the bus services being cut from that area.

Mrs Penfold said “fifty or more children without a bus service to take them to and from school is a disgrace. The State Government needs to take action and put their hands in their pockets to help these families”.

Ends

The following letter was sent to Minister Conlon 31st July 2006.

Hon Patrick Conlon MP
Minister for Transport
GPO Box 2969
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Patrick

Further to my previous letters I write once again regarding the Port Lincoln School Bus service crisis.

Enclosed is a list of families that live at the marina and require a school bus service for their children. Your statement that only 20 children would use a service to the marina was drastically underestimated, these forms alone indicate that at least 50 children would use the service – and these names were collected over a space of only four hours, with only 9 streets of the marina door knocked. There are many more streets that have not yet been checked.

Two school bus routes in a town the size of Port Lincoln is not an option. With the dangerous overcrowding of the two current buses, and the many children who do not even have access to a bus, it is obvious we actually need four bus routes as I previously suggested.

I call on your immediate action to reinstate the full three school bus routes that were in place before the end of the second term, as a matter of urgency and assess the need for a fourth bus or three larger buses to accommodate the children safely. The school bus is a State Government responsibility, not Local Government as you suggested to the Port Lincoln Times, and it is time you fulfilled your obligation as the Minister for Transport.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Liz Penfold MP

Martin Hamilton Smith, Shadow Minister for Transport

**School bus chaos leaves Port Lincoln kids walking
26 July 2006**

Back-to-school week in Port Lincoln has seen school bus services degenerate into chaos with children abandoned in the marina precinct and dangerous overcrowding on other routes

Shadow Minister for Transport Martin Hamilton-Smith said he had also been told that up to fifteen students had been forced to sit on the floor of one overcrowded bus – a situation he described as dangerous and unacceptable.

“After weeks of uncertainty Port Lincoln school bus routes have been sliced with up to 20 children from the marina attending six different Port Lincoln schools left to find their own way to and from school,” Mr Hamilton-Smith said. “Families claim they were not notified of the cut.

“On the existing Happy Valley road and New West road parents have reported that *‘fifteen kids had to sit on the floor due to the bus being full’*. Parents have called the office of local MP Liz Penfold expressing dire concerns about safety and asking that the matter be referred urgently to Transport Minister Pat Conlon.

“Parents and grandparents have also called in complaining that changes to routing are resulting in kids being picked up in one location but dropped in another which is often too far from home.

“One grandparent said that *‘the Government is crap, ... the kids should be dropped off at the same area’*. The grandparent said the changes meant he might as well drop the children off at school in the mornings now as he seems to have to pick them up from the altered bus drop off point.

“Parents are reporting having to take time off work each morning and afternoon to pick up kids previously serviced by the bus route with one parent claiming that *‘from a political party which espouses equality, we are once again witness to the inequality shown to the taxpaying regional residents of the City of Port Lincoln’*.

“This matter has been raised with Minister Conlon by local member Liz Penfold again and again. What we need now is some action.

“These bus routes are also used by kids after school to attend sporting activities including swimming classes. How difficult is it to run adequate bus services on time?

“Once again kids and families in regional South Australia are left to walk, while we spend \$21 million on trams down King William Street in the Labor held seat of Adelaide.

"The Government must immediately reinstate the marina school bus route and sort out the timetabling schedule and safe loading arrangements on the other routes.

"The school term has begun. The school buses are needed now. Fix it this week Mr Conlon!"

Ends

The following letter was sent to Minister Conlon 17th July 2006

Hon Patrick Conlon MP
Minister for Transport
GPO Box 2969
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Patrick

Following my previous letter dated 7th July 2006, regarding the Port Lincoln City school bus route changes I now write on behalf of the many families that reside at the Lincoln Cove Marina who have also had their bus route removed.

The families on Happy Valley Road and New West Road have an unconfirmed report that their roads have been put back on the bus routes. If this is correct they are most grateful. However the children at the marina will still be without a school bus service at the beginning of next week when the school term starts.

As stated in my previous letter, none of these parents were consulted or even given any notice of the changes in the bus routes that will affect their lives so dramatically until the day before the end of term in a note sent home from school.

Approximately 40 children who live at the marina will have to find alternate transport to get to school if you do not reinstate the marina bus route. These children attend a variety of the 6 different schools within Port Lincoln. The marina is too far from all of the town schools for any of these children to walk. I have advised you of the taxi situation and the overcrowding and lack of parking facilities particularly at the central city schools. The bus service is the only sensible option for these children.

Housing at the marina is increasing with even more young families moving to the area. The bus service is a vital link for the many children that live there and without it many of the parents will have to give up work or cut back on hours if permitted to do so by employers, to drop off and pick up their children.

In addition there are many children who travel to the marina after school on the bus to attend sporting activities including swimming classes who will also now miss out.

Even with all the media coverage in the local paper, local TV station and on radio there will be some parents who will not be aware of the changes until school resumes on Monday 24th July and their children are left waiting for a bus that doesn't come. This will be distressing for the parents and the children and not without risk to their safety.

I have been told that the subsidy for Adelaide buses is around \$150 million and that the subsidy for regional buses is about \$1 million. Would you confirm if this is the case? As regional South Australia has about 1/3 of the states population it would not appear to be unfair to spend a little more on regional buses and it certainly shouldn't be an additional cost to Local Government and rate payers.

Would you please confirm that the Happy Valley Road and New West Road routes have been reinstated and what is being done about the marina route before the start of the school term next Monday.

Would you also investigate claims that there is already severe overcrowding on some buses with children sitting 3 to a seat and sometimes on the floor in the aisle and that a fourth bus is necessary if children's safety is to be assured?

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Liz Penfold MP

**No town bus and now our school kids have no school bus!
7 July 2006**

In light of a new tender for the school bus route in Port Lincoln, children in the Happy Valley Road and New West Road areas will now be without school bus services thanks to a reduction in the current school bus routes.

The new bus routes have been decided without any consultation or reason given to parents. Parents were notified yesterday, the second to last day of term, that their children may or may not have a bus to catch when school resumes on Monday July 24th.

This leaves up to 42 children without a bus service, which in turn means parents will have to quit jobs, or alter working hours to be able to take their children to and from school. It is not an option for many of these children to walk the 4 or 5 kilometres to school, or catch a taxi as the taxi service in Port Lincoln is already under stress due to lack of drivers.

Mrs Penfold said "It is unbelievable that these routes have just been cut with no warning or consultation, leaving these families distressed and without a vital service for the start of the new term"

Ends

The following letter was sent to Minister Conlon 7th July 2006

Hon Patrick Conlon MP
Minister for Transport
GPO Box 2969
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Patrick

You have probably already heard from some of the angry parents from the Happy Valley Road and New West Road areas of Port Lincoln who have just found out that their school bus services will not cover their areas next term.

These parents were not consulted or even given any notice of the changes in the bus routes that will affect their lives so dramatically. Several have stated that they will no longer be able to work.

Twenty two children on Happy Valley Road and approximately another twenty on New West Road will be affected by this reduction in the school bus service. Unless you reinstate the service they will either have to walk the 4 or 5km's to school; catch a taxi which is expensive and unreliable because of the lack of drivers in Port Lincoln; or their parents/carers will have to take the children to the schools, which you may not be aware are already overcrowded and lacking in adequate parking.

One of these children has a chronic health problem requiring her to be on oxygen much of the time. Her mother states "When my daughter is sick, if there is no bus, that means I have no way of getting my son to school". The grandfather ensures the children are met at the bus stop in the evening and looked after, but their mother says he would not be able to safely negotiate the traffic around the schools to pick them up. "With all the congestion it is not good having an 80 year old driving around there."

Beside the safety and environmental issues, it is amazing to think that these areas of town, that have many new houses with young families in them, have been suddenly removed from a school bus service without consultation or reasons given. A notice sent home from school on the second to last day of term is totally unacceptable. Even with coverage in the local paper, there will be some parents who may not be aware of the change and after the school holidays children could be left waiting and vulnerable for a bus that will never come. School will start again on the 24th July and a solution must be in place well before then for the safety and security of these children and peace of mind for their parents. Some parents are feeling desperate about their future employment and financial position if they have to give up work because of this unfair decision.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Liz Penfold MP

Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Small Business, Consumer Affairs