



COMMON SENSE FINALLY PREVAILS

20 February 2003

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold was pleased that common sense has finally prevailed regarding the Warramboos school bus route. She welcomed the decision by the Education Minister Trish White to eventually accept the compromised bus route put up by parents that will be a win win for children travelling to Wudinna Area School.

Warramboos Primary School closed at the end of last year and since then the parents of students, now attending Wudinna Area School, have been negotiating for a solution to the unacceptable distances that their children were being forced to endure. The parents of one young family were having to travel 90 kilometers daily just getting to and from the bus stop.

"My congratulations and appreciation go to the parents who worked creatively, patiently, cooperatively and very hard to present alternative routes to the Minister for consideration" she said.

The Transport Section of the Education Department had been difficult to convince, however the Minister finally agreed to review the situation and accepted the recommendations that families put to her.

"Now we have resolution on the distance, air conditioning these buses must now be undertaken as a matter of social justice" Mrs Penfold said.

WARRAMBOOS SCHOOL BUS DILEMMA CONTINUES

29 January 2003

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said Education Minister Trish White's reply to the Warramboos school bus issue was late, inadequate and unacceptable.

"I am most unhappy about the way the whole matter has been handled and the way parents and children are being treated.

"The Labor government considers that the saving of a few dollars is of greater importance than kids who live on farms," she said.

Warramboos Primary School closed in December 2002 and the bus route to transport children to Wudinna Area School has been in contention for some time prior to the closure.

The parents suggested a revenue neutral alternative to the Department's proposal but this has been ignored.

Mrs Penfold said Wudinna Area School was advised on Tuesday morning this week (28th January) of the Minister's recommendations for change but these were unacceptable. The reply also came too late to implement the changes for at least a week.

Mrs Penfold said the parents' original submission of a feeder bus to connect with the larger bus on the bitumen highway would have been cost neutral or cheaper, a judgment based on the 2002 costs associated with bus travel to Warrambo Primary School and Wudinna Area School.

"This proposal was a win/win for all families associated with Wudinna and the former Warrambo schools.

"It kept travel times at a reasonable level; kept local employment for the feeder bus owner; provided transport for isolated families; and most important of all added NO additional bus costs to those previously associated with the Warrambo Primary School run," she said.

Mrs Penfold said the families formerly associated with Warrambo school have been doubly disadvantaged through losing their school and now losing the bus service that they had.

She said the suggested change disadvantages all families picked up south of Nantina Road by adding 20 minutes to their travel time. Children from one family would be picked up at 7.20 am. Another family would have the daily distance to travel to and from the bus pick-up reduced from 90kms to 48 kms, but another 60 kms to and from Wudinna would be added on.

"The Government is not only making savings on the closure of Warrambo school but is attempting to make further savings at the expense of country children.

"The issue clearly demonstrates the Government's callous disregard for those who live beyond the Gepps Cross boundary," she said.

NO REPLY TO WARRAMBOO SCHOOL BUS DILEMMA

21 January 2003

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said Warrambo residents have not only lost their school but have also lost reasonable access to education for their children.

She slammed the Minister of Education's lack of concern and action.

"The bus route to collect former Warrambo School students to take them to Wudinna has left five families isolated. One family has to travel 90km a day to get to and from the proposed bus stop.

"Education Minister Trish White was advised of this matter early in December, along with possible solutions that were said to be revenue neutral.

"School starts next Tuesday and the affected families are still waiting for a reply."

Mrs Penfold said she contacted the Minister's office on Monday, only to be told that the Minister has been on leave, and that her education adviser is still on leave.

Mrs Penfold said parents had been told by the Transport Section that the economic rationale they are forced to work under means they exclude just about every child except for those who live on the bitumen road when school bus routes are considered.

"The Rann Government says they are maintaining services to rural South Australia but the reality is just the opposite.

“The same government has appointed a Minister for Social Justice so where is she now when social justice is an issue?” Mrs Penfold asked.

Mrs Penfold said some families may be forced to relocate to the city if the Labor Government refuses to act.

“The economic viability of some farms is under threat because mothers who currently have jobs will be compelled to resign so that they can be at home to collect their children from the bus stop on the bitumen.

“Again, this contradicts public statements by the Rann Labor Government that it wants to promote women in the country.”

She said the president of the South Australian Isolated Children’s Parents Association, Ms Jane Gloster, supported the Warramboos parents.