16 March 2012

Dear Contractor

**Child Check Device Trial**

You will recall that I wrote to all contractors on 23 December 2011 concerning the two incidents in early December 2011 where young students were left on school buses. This led to a contract termination for the two operators involved. These incidents also led to further direction regarding the requirement for drivers to walk to the back of the bus after each run and a recommendation to seat smaller children toward the front of the bus.

While leaving a young child unattended on a school bus is viewed as a serious breach of contract, the Government has asked the Public Transport Authority (PTA) to look at possible safety systems that may assist operators in ensuring their drivers meet their obligations in respect to checking their bus at the completion of each school run.

While it is expected that all contractors will ensure that their drivers are adequately trained, and that their duties and responsibilities are continually reinforced, the PTA, in conjunction with the West Australian Road Transport Association (WARTA) has sought guidance on what safe guards are provided in other school bus jurisdictions. The PTA has identified that a number of school buses in the United States use what is called a ‘sleeping child check’ device that requires drivers to walk to the back of the bus after each run. In essence the device activates once the engine is turned off and the driver has a certain amount of time to walk to the rear of the bus and press a button to deactivate the device before an audible alarm (usually the vehicle horn) is set off.

With support from WARTA, the PTA is arranging to trial two different systems to gauge there effectiveness and to determine whether they should be installed on all ‘orange’ school buses. The trial will involve 12 buses operating in the Perth metropolitan fringe.

Six buses will trial a unit known as the Doran system, with fitting of the device to be arranged through Omnibus at their Cannington factory. The other system is made and installed (via a mobile van installation) by the Ashley Group in Malaga who have deployed similar units on prison transportation vehicles.

The PTA will shortly contact the 12 contractors selected for the trial. Those selected will be provided with specific details about the installation and associated administrative costs that the
PTA will meet.

The trial will start at the commencement of term 2, 2012 after the devices are fitted and will last 8 weeks so that patterns of behaviour can be properly established and assessed. The PTA will seek feedback at the four week mark and at the end of the trial. Information from the trial will then be used to determine the benefits of using either of devices across the Western Australian school bus fleet.

If you wish to discuss this matter further do not hesitate to call me on 9326 2654.

Yours sincerely

John Bailly
Manager, School Bus Services