

**SUBMISSION CONCERNING AN INQUIRY INTO ACTION BUSES**  
**BY**  
**THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ACT**  
**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**Date of closure for submissions: 18 May 2007**

**Date of submission: 17<sup>th</sup> May 2007**

**From:**

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**Context:**

This submission has been prompted primarily as a result of school closures brought about by the ACT Government as part of their 2020 proposal in late 2006 to take effect 2007.

When Weston Creek Primary schools (and presumably the other schools) were closed, the ACT Government assured concerned parents that bus services would be made available to students forced to relocate to schools further away from their homes. In fact there is no bus service for Arawang, which received at least 47 students from schools that were closed at the end of 2006 including Weston Creek Primary, Rivett Primary and Mount Neighbour Primary Schools.

Arawang Primary School (Arawang) is located at Nemarang Crescent Waramanga, and is now the public "feeder" primary school for residents of Waramanga, Fisher, Stirling, Weston and also has a number of students from Rivett, Holder, Duffy and Kambah.

### **Current Situation:**

There is no school bus that directly services Arawang.

The ACTION website School Bus Route Finder states that:

*“there is no direct route from **Waramanga/(Weston/Duffy/Fisher)** to **Arawang Primary**. You may need to go via an interchange. Use our Route Finder and choose the closest Interchange to your location. The main Interchanges are City (Civic), Belconnen, Tuggeranong, and Woden.”*

If you select the option “View all routes passing school” and enter Arawang Primary school you get route 507 which in fact is only an afternoon service and departs from Stromlo High. A phone call to the ACTION call centre 131710 on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007 confirmed that there is no morning service to Arawang, and that this afternoon service in fact involved a pick up of Arawang students at Stromlo High School only.

However, on entering Stromlo High in the Route Finder the website indicates that there are currently existing school bus services (numbers 501 in the mornings and 503,505, 506 and 507 in the afternoons) which apparently service students who live in the Weston Creek area and attend Stromlo High School (which is behind Arawang, across two large ovals). Some of these buses also provide set down and pick up services for students at St John Vianney’s Catholic Primary School which it passes on route to its termination point at Stromlo High School on Badimara Street, Waramanga.

According to the ACTION website, Arawang students are to be “set down” and “picked up” at Stromlo High. In fact, I (Jacqui Retford) have been advised by ACTION that these services are not available to Arawang students (although thankfully the bus drivers have been allowing them on these buses). I was told that my children (aged 7 and 10) should get on a public bus from a bus stop in Duffy to Cooleman Court and then change there to get another bus that goes past the school at Arawang- I would have thought this option would be obviously unacceptable for a primary school student wanting to catch a bus to a neighbourhood school!

By failing to provide a school bus service for Arawang, ACTION is failing to meet the needs of Arawang students and their families and consequently the Government is failing in its commitment to provide a bus service for which there is a clear demand. It is inequitable that a bus service is provided for the neighbouring Catholic Primary school (St John Vianney) without providing a comparable service for Arawang- a Public Primary School! Also note that the other two public primary schools in Weston Creek- Chapman and Duffy- don't even appear on the ACTION website route finder.

**Terms of Reference:**

This submission therefore addresses the first of the Terms of Reference of the inquiry into Action buses:

*(a) examining how well it (ACTION) meets the needs of different segments of the community, while recognising that ACTION's role is a mass transport provider*

This will be considered in relation to how the needs of parents of primary aged students at Arawang Primary School are addressed by existing bus services.

**What are the needs of this segment of the community?**

In order to provide the Inquiry with factual rather than anecdotal evidence, a survey was conducted of parents at Arawang in May 2007. The following sets out relevant survey results.

### Survey Results:

- 275 surveys were distributed to families of the 388 children at Arawang
- 43 completed surveys were received representing 67 children- 17% of the school population
- **65.2%** of parents said they **would** use a bus service if there was one available within a *reasonable* distance of their home direct to and from Arawang. Of these,
  - **65%** of the children who would use the service live in the Weston Creek area (ie. Weston, Rivett, Holder, Duffy)
  - **46%** would use the service 5 days a week
  - **82%** would use the service in both mornings and afternoons
  - In relation to the question “would you be happy with the bus being used by other commuters?”
    - **100%** said Yes to other primary school students
    - **44%** said Yes to High School students (parents commented on their concerns that the smaller children would be bullied by the High School students. Anecdotally this has already occurred.)
    - **36%** said Yes to general public
- Of those received, **34.8%** said they **would not** use a bus service if there was one available within a *reasonable* distance of their home direct to and from Arawang. The reasons given were:
  - Live close enough for child/ren to walk or ride
  - Parents work school hours close by so drop off or pick up on the way to work
  - Too expensive
  - Child/ren too small to travel by themselves

**Summary:**

***There are NO School Bus services directly servicing Arawang Primary School yet there is a clear demand for such a service***

1. A commitment was made by Minister Andrew Barr that a bus service would be available to students affected by local school closures in 2006. The Government has failed to deliver on that commitment in respect of Arawang which has received 47 students from closed schools.
2. There are sufficient numbers of Arawang students who live in the Weston Creek area who would use a school bus to warrant a school bus that directly services Arawang.

**Recommendations and Suggestions:**

1. An additional school bus be introduced to service the suburbs (ie. Weston, Holder, Duffy, Chapman, Rivett, Stirling, Fisher, Waramanga) and primary schools in the Weston Creek area (Arawang, Chapman and Duffy)). This option is preferred as it avoids the very real bullying and behavioural issues associated with mixing primary school with high school students.
2. In the short-term, extension of existing bus service/s to terminate at Arawang instead of Stromlo (this literally involves a short detour from Stromlo on the way back to the interchange).
3. In the short-term, extension of the existing bus service/s to commence at Arawang instead of Stromlo for the afternoon trip.