



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment,
Planning, Transport and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the procurement and delivery of MyWay+

Submission number: 013

Submitter: ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

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ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

The parent voice on public education

Submission to the inquiry into the procurement and delivery of MyWay+

Introduction

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations (Council) is a non-profit, non-government representative organisation dedicated to fostering a quality public education system, providing support services for affiliate parent & citizens associations (P&Cs), and advocating to the government on behalf of parents and carers across all ACT public schools.

Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into the procurement and delivery of MyWay+. Our submission focuses on the impact of the MyWay+ launch on public school students and their families, particularly concerning public transport confidence and usage, the adequacy of testing and consultation, and the timing of the MyWay+ launch.

Council's key concerns include:

- The lack of comprehensive consultation and testing with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Not all key features of the system were operational from day one.
- Issues with the journey planning tool.
- Communication for new secondary school students.

Key Issues

Adequacy of testing and consultation

As the peak body representing public school parents, Council is a member of the Transport Canberra Schools Liaison Committee (SLC). The SLC is an advisory committee comprising Transport Canberra and City Services staff, along with parent and sector representatives from public, Catholic, and independent school sectors. The Committee provides an open, collaborative, and informative forum for discussing policy, planning, and operational matters relating to school travel.

The Committee's roles and responsibilities include:

- Providing advice and feedback on proposed changes to services or infrastructure that affect travel by school students.
- Acting as a channel for feedback from parents, schools, or other stakeholders to ACT Government agencies in relation to school travel-related matters.

While the Committee received updates on the rollout of MyWay+, Council believes that this group could have been better utilized to provide feedback on important features of the system, including the usability of the website and app. Enhanced engagement with stakeholders during the development phase is likely to have identified key issues earlier, leading to a smoother rollout.

We are the peak body for parent associations, representing over 60,000 parents in ACT public schools.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, work and learn, and pay our respects to elders past, present, and future.

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Operational Readiness of Key Features

Launching MyWay+ before all features were fully functional caused significant frustration and practical challenges for users, undermining confidence in the system. One key issue was the 'group account' feature, which allows parents to link their children's accounts to their main account. This functionality was not available at launch and remains unavailable, requiring parents to manage an interim process and later set up the group account separately - an unnecessary burden.

A more robust consultation process would have identified this as a critical feature and recommended delaying the rollout until all core functions were operational. Notably, the absence of group accounts was not the only shortfall - several other promised features were also unavailable at launch, limiting functionality and further compounding user dissatisfaction.

Journey Planning Tool Issues

The journey planning tool presents significant usability challenges. Given that users of the tool are on the MyWay+ site, it is reasonable to assume they are looking for the best public transport options. However, the tool prioritises the 'healthiest' routes, often listing walking as the first option regardless of distance. In some cases, walk times of over seven hours have appeared at the top of the results. This is completely impractical and ineffective. People using the journey planning tool are looking for public transport options.

Additionally, the tool frequently recommends travel by motorbike, an option irrelevant to most public transport users. Council believes the journey planning tool should be improved by:

- Listing public transport-only options first.
- Ensuring recommended routes are practical and do not require extensive walking or cycling to access public transport services.

These improvements would enhance usability and ensure the tool meets the needs of public transport users, particularly school students and their families.

Communication for New Secondary Students

Council has previously highlighted the need for targeted communications for Year 7 students as many in this group may be considering using public transport to get to and from school for the first time. However, this year the messaging around student concessions is problematic, especially for new secondary students.

The MyWay+ website states that secondary students must carry a student card as proof of concession. However, Year 7 students do not receive their student cards immediately, leaving them without the required proof from the first day of school. While Council assumes there is some flexibility in practice, this is not clearly communicated in official materials. This lack of clarity could discourage parents from allowing their children to use public transport, leading to increased reliance on car drop-offs and pick-ups. Once alternative travel arrangements are established, they often continue, reducing overall public transport usage.

Council recommends updating communication materials to explicitly state that new students will not be penalised for not having a student card in their first few weeks of school. Clearer messaging would help reassure parents and potentially encourage greater uptake of public transport among secondary students.

Conclusion

While Council acknowledges the potential benefits of MyWay+ features, such as group accounts, the rushed rollout failed to deliver a fully functional system, causing unnecessary frustration for users. A more comprehensive stakeholder consultation process, ensuring all key features were operational at launch, refining the journey planning tool, and improving communication for new secondary students could have mitigated many of these issues.

A delayed rollout may have been necessary to ensure confidence in the system and to better meet the needs of public-school students and their families. Moving forward, it is essential that future system updates and enhancements prioritise thorough testing, consultation, and clear communication to avoid similar issues.

Should you require clarification or more information about our submission please contact our office on 6241 5759 or via email: contact@actparents.org.au