

## INFORMAL SCHOOL BUS STOP SAFETY

2 February 2017

### Introduction

On 8 August 2016, a school bus stopped near the township of Coolagolite on the far south coast of NSW, to allow two school children to alight on a country road. After the bus had departed one of these children, a ten year old boy, was struck by a car as he attempted to cross the road and was fatally injured. The section of road where the fatality occurred was adjacent to a crest and had a 100 km/h speed limit.

The Office of Transport Safety Investigations (OTSI) investigated the accident, and in January 2017 released its report. The report makes a number of recommendations designed to improve the safety of students at “non-designated bus pick-up and drop-off points” (now referred to as informal school bus stops). These included a recommendation that the NSW Centre for Road Safety (CfRS) develop guidance on selecting suitable locations for non-designated bus pick-up and drop-off points, and that Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) incorporate this guidance into the Bus Operator Accreditation Scheme (BOAS). Both these recommendations have been adopted and implemented.

### OTSI Recommendations

OTSI also made a number of recommendations for the NSW bus industry. These were that bus operators and the industry:

1. Implement the revised BOAS requirements when available.
2. Seek a broader body of knowledge, such as advice from authorities and the Local Traffic Committee, in their risk assessment activities.
3. Review the contributing factors of previous bus industry incidents to continuously inform their risk management framework.
4. Explore opportunities for children to embark and disembark on the same roadside, and close to their residence. This can be achieved by children staying on a bus for the entire loop route and remove the need to cross a road.
5. When this option is not practical, bus operators in consultation with the road authority and the community, shall apply a robust risk-based assessment considering parameters such as road speed, safe sighting distances, vehicle braking distances and child human factors when assessing non-designated bus pick-up and drop-off points where children will be required to cross the road.



# Member Information

## Bus Industry Action

In response to the OTSI Report BusNSW has implemented a range of activities:

- BusNSW has worked closely with the CfRS in developing a specific publication entitled “*Advice for choosing locations of informal school bus stops*” (intended for bus operators, drivers, parents and other stakeholders). This publication was completed in January 2017 and a link to the publication is available via the “R & R School Bus Safety” section of the BusNSW website [www.busnsw.com.au](http://www.busnsw.com.au) (under Transport for NSW).
- BusNSW also worked in close consultation with RMS Bus Safety Officers to amend BOAS documentation to reflect the OTSI recommendations. In particular, Element 3 (“Risk Management”) of the Safety Management System Guidelines and Handbook has been amended to include “school children getting on/off bus”, “roads with high speed limits” and “steep or windy roads” as common bus industry hazards to be considered by bus operators as part of their risk assessment process.
- The “location of rural bus stops” has been included as a potential hazard in the “Sample Risk Register” in the SMS Handbook, which incorporates examples of the types of control that a bus operator and driver can implement to eliminate/reduce the risk of this hazard.
- BusNSW has similarly worked with the Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies (ITLS) at the University of Sydney to update the BOAS Training Course to include non-designated bus pick-up and drop-off points as a particular hazard which needs to be assessed and controlled by rural and regional school bus operators. (The ITLS course is a mandatory training program which must be completed by each new bus operator as part of their accreditation conditions).
- BusNSW has also updated its own documentation, in particular the February 2017 Guide entitled “*School Bus Safety Risk Management for Bus Operators*”. This Guide now includes bus routes (“narrow winding roads, poor visibility and high speed limits”) as hazards which need to be assessed, and includes the “Location of School Bus Stops” in the document’s “Sample Risk Register” with recommended controls including:
  - Bus operator liaising with parents re location of stop prior to school term;
  - Bus driver alerting operator of any stop with poor visibility or other hazards;
  - Operator liaising with Council or RMS re suitable traffic/road controls for stops.

A copy of this document can be downloaded from the BusNSW website.



# Member Information

- In addition to this guidance material, BusNSW will include specific information and guidance on the location of informal school bus stops at its March Rural and Regional seminars. These seminars take place in Ballina, Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Dubbo, Cowra, Griffith, Wagga, Canberra, Merimbula and Ulladulla and are attended by approximately 550 rural and regional bus operators.
- BusNSW also publishes specific articles on safety at “non-designated bus pick-up and drop-off points” in the BusNSW Bulletin. This publication is distributed to around 650 members including the majority of rural and regional bus operators.

## Conclusion

The safety of bus passengers and public is the number one priority for NSW bus operators and the industry. Consequently, BusNSW and the industry have been prompt and comprehensive in their response to the OTSI report’s recommendations.

BusNSW acknowledges that bus operators are only one of a number of stakeholders included in the OTSI recommendations. It therefore encourages other stakeholders, including RMS, CfRS, Local Councils and parents’ associations to take similarly prompt action to ensure that the risks associated with this hazard can be minimised to the maximum extent possible.

## Further Action

Following this recent tragic accident, bus operators who pick students up at “informal” school bus stops need to:

1. Read and understand the changes to the SMS material mentioned above;
2. Read and understand the guidance issued for locating informal school bus stops;
3. Regularly review and update their Risk Register and, if needed, train and educate staff, particularly drivers;
4. If in doubt, contact BusNSW on 02 8839 9500.

Member Information Developed: 1 February 2017 V1

*This Members Information sheet has been prepared by BusNSW for Bus Operators to assist with understanding of relevant issues. BusNSW shall not be liable for any matter contained herein or any loss suffered by an Operator due to reliance on this information. Contact BusNSW on (02) 8839 9500 for assistance.*