

Submission

No 4

INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL ZONE SAFETY

Organisation: Wyong Shire Council
Name: Mr Bob Burch
Position: Principal Transport Engineer
Date Received: 19/09/2011

The Department of Education and Training's policies need to be changed to bring them in line with Council requirements for Private Schools. These to include:

- Adequate provision of pedestrian crossings & traffic calming.
- Provision within school grounds for:
 - o Adequate parking for staff, parents and secondary students.
 - o Adequate parent setting down and picking up opportunities.
 - o Setting down and picking up of disabled students.
 - o Bus set down and pick up facilities.
- Pedestrian and cycleway paths to the schools.
- School staff participating in controlled vehicular pick up arrangements with student names being displayed on the sun shield of vehicles. There should be a continuous queue, formed only once all the children are out of class.
- Fencing off inappropriate locations where students are likely to cross roads.

The following is also suggested:

- Devices should be provided on all local roads to physically limit the speed of vehicles to the zoned speed of 40 kph.
- All "School Crossings" on local roads should be raised facilities.
- Each new student should be provided with a travel pack/travel plan to encourage use of public transport.

Response to Inquiry by the Staysafe (Road Safety) Committee into NSW school zones to determine whether current measures are effective and/or what else can be done to optimise safety for students and simplify school zones for motorists.

Wyong Shire Council, as with many other Council's throughout the State, have major concerns with the safety of students in the vicinity of schools. Council has recently (since January 2011) been involved with nine schools requesting improvements with safety and parking arrangements.

In the past, Council has not been successful in negotiating with the Department of Education and Training in regards to facilities being provided for new schools. The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has had to adjudicate on these matters, only for Council to be told that the Department of Education and Training provides schools and not road/traffic infrastructure that is required as part of the development.

The Local Traffic Committee and Council are therefore left to rectify the problems caused by these developments. In most instances, because of this lack of infrastructure and physical constraints, which accompany the development and in some instances are a result of bad planning (i.e. carpark isolated at one end of the school), the works carried out by the Local Traffic Committee and Council are only band aid treatments.

As just stated, the problems are caused by the current Department of Education and Training policy which does not permit parents and students to enter the school properties to set down, pick up or park, even with disabled students. This is completely the opposite to the private schools, where setting down, picking up, parent and student parking together with appropriate bus lay-bys are provided within the school grounds. Only if a Public School has public roads adjacent to every side of the school, is there any opportunity for there being adequate setting down, picking up or parking opportunities for parents and senior students. The State Government needs to accept its responsibility and change its policy to provide a safe environment for school students and their parents.

Some of the problems around schools include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of on site parking for staff
- No consideration given to parents or secondary students parking.
- Lack of adequate space for parents to set down and pick up.
- Inadequate and insufficient bus set down and pick up facilities.
- Drivers disobeying road rules, particularly in regards to parking and giving way at School and Pedestrian Crossings.
- Crossing provisions & traffic calming.
- Conflict between senior students and the neighbouring property owners over parking.
- Lack of provision of pedestrian and cycleway paths to schools.
- Lack of critical infrastructure resulting from the Department of Education and Training not contributing to Section 94 contributions for road & traffic infrastructure.

The recent Building the Education Revolution (BER) only exasperated safety around schools. With the authority to approve the development, taken away from the local Council, the following was experienced:

- Safety issues occurring both during and post construction eg. Construction traffic & construction staff parking (mixing with children & the school communities), and buildings being inappropriately sited creating safety issues.
- Removal of areas that may have provided overspill car parking for senior students.
- Additional classrooms built, without provision of additional parking to accommodate the additional students.
- Worsening relationships/conflict between senior students and the neighbouring property owners over parking.

The 10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney, in its presentation to Road Safety 2011 (Darling Harbour 9 March 2011) identified the significant move away from public transport, in particular, school travel by bus. The document also clearly identified that bus travel was significantly safer than walking or transport by the private car. More emphasis and encouragement is therefore required for students to use buses as their mode of transport in lieu of the private car.

It is necessary for the Department of Education and Training to work with Local Government to provide facilities & solutions to the issues identified above rather than deliberately creating them & then passing the problems onto the Local Traffic Committee and local Council to solve. Many of the problems could have easily been resolved during the initial development of the school.

The Department of Education and Training's policies need to be changed to bring them in line with the requirements that Councils are placing on Private Schools. These changes should include, but not be limited to:

- Adequate provision of pedestrian crossings & traffic calming.
- Provision within school grounds for:
 - Adequate parking for staff, parents and secondary students that drive.
 - Adequate parent setting down and picking up opportunities.
 - Setting down and picking up of disabled students. It is unsafe and/or uneconomical for this practice to occur on street.
 - Bus set down and pick up facilities.
- Pedestrian and cycleway paths to the schools.
- School staff participating in controlled vehicular pick up arrangements. Student names should be displayed on the sun shield of vehicles to maintain a continuity of the parents picking up the children. The queue should only be formed once all the children are out of class.
- Fencing off inappropriate locations where students are likely to cross roads.

In addition to the above, it is suggested that in order to improve safety around schools that the Staysafe Committee also give consideration to the following:

- Devices on all local roads should be provided to physically limit the speed of vehicles to the zoned speed of 40 kph. Enforcement should not be relied upon as the only means to control the speed limit as this rarely occurs. Drivers blatantly disobey the road rules in regards to school crossings. Fines should be increased for these infringements.

- It should be mandatory that all "School Crossings" on local roads should be raised facilities.
- Provide each new student at the school with a travel pack/travel plan to encourage use of public transport.

It is hoped that the Committee will take into account the above when considering what safety measures are required to improve safety for students and simplifying school zones for motorists.

Please contact Council's Principal Transport Engineer Mr Burch (Ph 43505455, or email Bob.burch@wyong.nsw.gov.au) if you require clarification on this submission. He has been involved with traffic and safety around schools within Wyong Shire for over 30 years.

Yours faithfully

Bob Burch

PRINCIPAL TRANSPORT ENGINEER