

8.1. MM01: Cancellation of school bus services serving schools within the North Sydney LGA

On 18 September 2022, the NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Transport published a report on their Inquiry into the Privatisation of Bus Services. The Chair of the Committee wrote in the Introduction to the report:

Public transport is a public good. Its value extends beyond its direct profitability, and goes to the heart of what we value in our society. The people of New South Wales deserve accessible, affordable and reliable public bus services. They have a right to expect that the NSW Government will deliver this public service not just to make a profit, but because it's the right thing for government to do – to empower community mobility and equity.

Nothing could be truer when considering the role of dedicated school bus services and the role they play in taking students from kindergarten to Year 12, to and from education. Such services are a public good and ought to be promoted and preserved.

In March this year, Council considered a Mayoral Minute in relation to the impacts of bus privatisation and the experience of our community: commuters queueing for hundreds of metres at Cammeray and Neutral Bay with children late to school, commuters late for work, and traffic congestion increasing as residents sought alternative travel arrangements. Council lobbied the Minister for Transport to address these issues and earlier this year additional services (from the Northern Beaches) were added to help ease this issue.

Yet, here we are at the end of the year and school bus services serving schools within the North Sydney LGA are not only under threat, but to be cancelled altogether from 8 December 2025.

From 8 December 2025, school bus routes 640w, 642w, 644w, 645w, 646w, 648w, 650w, 652w, 662w, 776w, and 792w to the following North Sydney schools will be discontinued:

- Anzac Park Public School
- Cammeray Public School
- Cammeraygal High School (Junior and Senior Campuses)
- Loreto - Kirribilli (Junior and Middle Schools)
- Marist Catholic College (La Valla and St Mary's Campuses)
- Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College
- North Sydney Boys' High School
- North Sydney Girls' High School
- North Sydney Public School
- Shore School
- St Aloysius' College (Senior Campus)
- Wenona School

Transport for NSW and their operator, Busways, advise that these changes are required as part of "network simplification". Little notice has been given to affected schools and families

who rely upon these dedicated school bus services, particularly primary school children. Indeed, there appears to have been no community consultation at all.

As a result of the privatisation of bus services in 2021, many local bus routes have been lost, reduced, or become increasingly unreliable. Too many routes have been cancelled or scrapped altogether. Those routes that operate are full, late or, too often, cancelled, or buses just never turn up. Many families prefer that primary school students, in particular, travel on school buses rather than the general bus network to promote independence, ensure students' safety, and their arrival at school on time.

Given the unreliability of the general privatised bus network and the volume of students travelling to, from and within the North Sydney Local Government Area, the cancellation of dedicated school bus services is likely to have a significant adverse impact on students travelling to and from school, increase demand for space on existing bus services and congestion on local roads as families use alternative transport.

It does not appear that any consultation with affected communities or modelling has been undertaken to adjust the general bus network to meet the increased demand from high school students, let alone those travelling to primary schools.

I therefore recommend:

1. THAT Council write to the Minister for Transport seeking a review of the decision to cancel dedicated school bus services on routes 640w, 642w, 644w, 645w, 646w, 648w, 650w, 652w, 662w, 776w, and 792w, and reinstatement of those services in time for the commencement of the 2026 school year.

COUNCILLOR ZOË BAKER
MAYOR