

Inquiry into the privatisation of bus services

NSW Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 6

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**Prepared by: Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations
of New South Wales**

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Introduction

Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales (P&C Federation) is thankful to the NSW Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 6 (the Committee) for this opportunity to contribute to the Planning and delivery of school infrastructure in New South Wales (the Inquiry). P&C Federation supports the position of individual educational and developmental needs met by a range of differential services expressed through appropriate and well-planned curricula, programs and environments conducted by sensitive and well-trained personnel in conjunction with parents¹ and families.

The core belief of P&C Federation is that the education of our children and youth is the most fundamental means of ensuring individual and collective success and, as a result, our greatest national resource. We also support the concept that it is primarily the responsibility of governments to ensure education is well rounded and fully funded.

P&C Federation is a representative voice for public education in NSW. With over 1800 member associations, our understanding of the issues within education is broad and carries with it the voice of a substantial body of parents and carers.

Submission

While the majority of the Inquiry's terms of reference are not directly within P&C Federation's remit, there are potential impacts that the privatisation of bus services may have on public school families which we would ask the Committee to consider.

1. **Impact on reliability.** There is some risk that privatising bus services may compromise their reliability, in terms of punctuality and the number of services available. At least one report of the NSW Auditor-General noted that in the first year of privatised bus services, Newcastle bus services were the only services in NSW operating below the target punctuality.² Reduced services and punctuality would impact families who rely on bus services to deliver their children to school. Any privatisation must involve a guarantee that the number of available services will not be reduced, and measures ensuring punctuality standards will not be worsened.
2. **Free School Opal cards.** P&C Federation has advocated for allowing access to the free School Opal card from Year 3 up to Year 5 with no minimum distance restriction. Regardless of whether Sydney buses are privatised, we would reiterate our call on the NSW Government to provide this service for free school Opal Cards.

¹ "Parent" refers to anyone with legal care of a child, such as a parent, carer or legal guardian

² NSW Audit Office. *Transport 2018*. 28 November 2018, page 23