

## RESPONSE TO PETITION

**Petition Number:** 596  
**Petition Sponsored by:** David Ettershank MP  
**Directed to:** Minister for Public and Active Transport  
**Tabled on:** 14/10/2024

**Petition Grievance:**

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the inadequacy of bus services in Melbourne's western suburbs.

The Victorian Government can show it cares for local communities in Melbourne's west, who are currently facing social isolation and shouldering the costs of running extra cars, by taking bold action to reimagine Melbourne's broken bus system into a fast, frequent, and connected network of clean electric buses.

**Petition Action:**

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Victorian Government to commit at least \$100 million additional annual operational funding in the next budget cycle, as well as a capital investment of at least \$100 million, to reform the bus network across the western metropolitan area into a fast, frequent, and connected grid, serviced by clean, electric buses before the 2026 election.

**Reply:**

I thank the Member for Western Metropolitan Region for tabling this petition on behalf of his constituents, and I thank his constituents for raising their concerns.

The Allan Labor Government recognises the important role buses play in meeting the travel needs of people living in Melbourne's growing suburbs. Buses are a vital part of Victoria's integrated transport system, with around 400 regular bus routes servicing metropolitan Melbourne, and local bus networks operating in regional towns and cities.

In June 2021, we released Victoria's Bus Plan which sets out how we will start to deliver a modern, productive, environmentally sustainable bus network that increases the number of people choosing to take the bus by delivering simple, safe, reliable, and comfortable journeys. It notes important opportunities for the bus network including leveraging connectivity with the rail network and making the most of investment in infrastructure.

We are continuing to improve the state's bus network in line with Victoria's Bus Plan to better meet demand, improve accessibility and performance, and deliver value for money. This includes creating a simpler, faster, and more reliable network.

Nearly 20,000 additional bus services have been added since 2014 and more than 200 bus routes have either been improved or added to Victoria's bus network since the launch of Victoria's Bus Plan in 2021, adding thousands more services to the network.

The Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution Program will help fund essential infrastructure to create resilient and liveable communities in Melbourne's fastest growing suburbs in the seven major growth area councils of Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Whittlesea and Wyndham. In the west, new bus routes will be delivered linking Harpley Estate and Cornerstone Estate communities to Wyndham Vale Station, and Tarneit North residents to Tarneit and Laverton stations running through the employment area in Laverton North. Work to plan and deliver the new bus services is underway. More details will become available closer to implementation and will be communicated with the public.

Melton, Point Cook and Mt Atkinson will also benefit from new or improved school bus services. With a focus on Melbourne's growing west, students in Mt Atkinson and Deanside will benefit from six new school specials servicing Mt Atkinson Estate, Grandview Estate, Olivia Estate and Deanside to be introduced in January 2025. These will support students attending Rockbank Primary, Brookside P-9, Yarrabing Secondary College, Lakeview Senior College, Deanside Primary School and Springside West Secondary College.

Melton students attending Staughton College will also benefit from six new school specials, with two school specials linking students in Weir Views with the College being introduced from Term 1, and another four services connecting students in Brookfield, Cobblebank and Strathtulloh with Staughton College being rolled out in Term 2.

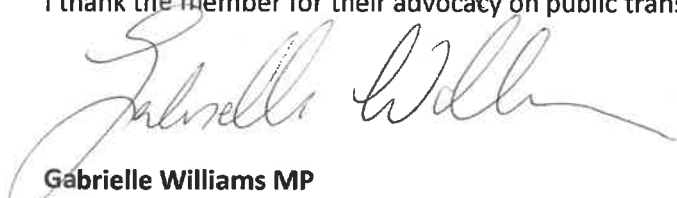
Also in the west, Point Cook students will get a new school special in Term 2 giving Sanctuary Lakes students more public transport options to Homestead Senior Secondary College, Alamanda K-9 College and Saltwater P-9 College. Changes to an existing school service will also provide more travel options for students in Wyndham Harbour.

These latest improvements are part of a \$25 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* to introduce, modify and extend school bus services across the state, initially focused on growth areas, which is already delivering better services for thousands of Victorian students.

Recent improvements to bus services include:

- In December 2024, a new bus service between Eynesbury Township and Melton Station travelling via Weir Views was introduced. The new Route 452 runs seven days a week with weekday services every 15 – 30 minutes during busy periods and up to 40 minutes at other times. On weekends, Route 452 runs every 60 minutes, providing Eynesbury residents access to public transport for the first time, with a direct service to Melton Station. This new service will also make it easier for Eynesbury and Weir Views residents to access trains, other bus services, and key destinations like Opalia Plaza, Woodgrove Shopping Centre and Melton Town Centre.
- In March 2024, a new bus service commenced running between Sunbury and Diggers Rest stations. Route 475 Sunbury Station - Diggers Rest Station improves bus coverage, connecting new estates to the bus network to better support Sunbury and Diggers Rest's growth. Route 475 provides easy access to local employment and shopping centres. Diggers Rest residents have better access to Sunbury Downs College which is their zoned secondary school.
- In December 2023, a new bus interchange opened at the new Deer Park Station. The new interchange allows for easy interchange and provides greatly improved amenity for bus passengers. The new station was built as part of the level crossing removal at Mt Derrimut Road.
- In November 2023, we opened a new bus interchange at Tarneit Station which allows for more bus services to run more often. The new Tarneit Station bus interchange in the southern car park improves accessibility – better connecting the community to local schools, shops and employment, and providing a comfortable shelter for commuters year-round. The new bus interchange is funded through the Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution fund.
- In October 2023 additional trips were added to Route 215 reducing waiting times and giving residents more travel options between Caroline Springs and Highpoint.

I thank the member for their advocacy on public transport and hope the above information is of assistance.



**Gabrielle Williams MP**  
Minister for Public and Active Transport