

New South Wales Education

Driver shortage hits St Ives High School as bus queues 'become hazardous'

With three hours spent commuting and a crazy crowd crush on their buses, the students of a northern Sydney school are desperate for more public transport. But will their pleas fall on deaf ears?



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3 comments



The number of bus services for St Ives High School students hasn't kept up with the surge in enrolments, as schools across the city feel the pressure of bus driver shortages. Picture: John Grainger

Fed-up families in Northern Sydney say their kids are battling crowd crushes for school bus services and spend up to three hours commuting each day, with NSW's new transport minister laying the blame with bus privatisation and claiming an industry taskforce will tackle the growing problem.

St Ives High School parents have reached breaking point over inadequate public transport, undertaking their own research to find 36 per cent of families have resorted to driving their kids to school due to the unreliability or unavailability of services.

The surveyed parents cited late arrivals to class, lost sleep due to long commutes and anxiety-inducing overcrowding on the buses as reasons for driving instead.

Many St Ives students travel from suburbs as far flung as Mount Kuring-Gai and Mount Colah, taking trains and multiple buses which are frequently beset by delays and cancellations amid [an ongoing shortage of drivers](#).

Chan Boyden's son Sath has just started Year 7 at St Ives and is already exhausted by the daily struggle getting home to Hornsby in the afternoon.



Alex Boccanfuso, 15 and his 12-year-old brother James are among hundreds of St Ives High School students trying to squeeze onto buses at Gordon station each morning to avoid being late. Picture: John Grainger

“He decided not to do extracurriculars like band this year, that’s just the reality of it,” Ms Boyden said.

Veronica Boccanfuso’s sons, 12-year-old James and 15-year-old Alexander, must make walk to Asquith station, catch a train to Gordon, and then a bus from Gordon station to St Ives. It takes them up to an hour to get to school in the morning, and they often don’t get home until 5pm – 1 hour and 45 minutes after the bell rings.



Rush hour for St Ives students on the morning of Friday 31st March. Parents said this was a “good day”. Picture: John Grainger

Mrs Boccanfuso said the morning chaos at Gordon train station, where hundreds of students are vying for a spot on the handful of buses which will get them to school on time, is “extremely dangerous”. She believes it’s only a matter of time before a child is seriously injured.

“Every day, morning and afternoon I am fretting that I’m going to get a call from the hospital,” she said.

The increasingly dangerous situation has prompted line monitoring from the school principal, deputy principal, and representatives from Transport for NSW and private bus operator Transdev.

“With the growth of numbers at our school, bus lines have become very congested, and the student overflow has become hazardous,” deputy principal Nathalie Bodley wrote in a recent newsletter to parents.



Alisa Dundon's daughter Olivia, in Year 7 at St Ives High, fell and grazed her leg amid the Gordon bus stop chaos. Picture: Supplied



Chanrin Boyden with her 12-year-old son Sath Boyden. Picture: Richard Dobson

P&C President Sarah Gibbons said the situation at St Ives is not unique but it is “extreme”, with transport reliability a “systemic issue across NSW”.

“One little girl got her arm crushed in the door, and an official complaint was made to the bus company. They’re shoving kids onto buses to get them to school,” Mrs Gibbons said.

“We are so excited about the change in government, because it gives us hope that something might change.”

A Transdev spokesperson confirmed a third party had reported the incident unofficially, “however there were insufficient details”.

“We take all incidents seriously and conduct full investigations, including review of CCTV footage,” they said.

Incoming Transport Minister Jo Haylen said fixing school bus services is “a massive priority” for the new government.

“This is happening all over our state. Kids are being left on the side of the road. The Liberal government’s privatised bus model is failing,” she said.

“We’ve already announced a bus industry task force to look at returning services and addressing the driver shortage.”



Representatives from private operator Transdev have been brought in for crowd control. Picture: John Grainger

A Transport for NSW spokesperson confirmed the department has discussed the matter with the school principal, but no commitment has been made to further increase services beyond the nine already servicing the morning run.

“As part of their contract with Transport, bus operators are required to regularly engage with schools and confirm service arrangements and any changes that may be needed,” they said.

“In the past two years additional services have been introduced to improve access to and from the school.”

The Transdev spokesperson denied there was a need for extra services.

“Whilst students are required to stand on some services, they have not been regularly overcrowded and capacity remains,” they said.

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David • 13 hours ago

Over 200 short of drivers at Ryde depot. The eastern suburbs 120 short. North shore 70 short. Newcastle 55 short. The privatisation sure sent so many driving packing

3 • Reply

Derek • 14 hours ago

Surely many of these students can attend schools closer to home, particularly the brothers who travel to St Ives via Asquith. There is a perfectly good boy’s high school in Asquith. Same for the boy who travels from Hornsby to St Ives.

5 • Reply

Peter • 15 hours ago

Why arent they going to their local high schools?

4 • Reply

sg083 • 2 hours ago

PENDING

St Ives High is their “local” co-ed high school due to the catchment areas.

