

Bus stop, but no buses: tyranny of distance out Jacka way

Kiara Angelini

BRENDA Colson says that the lack of a key public transport service in Jacka has left children vulnerable.

And after a frightening interaction between her son and a male stranger, Ms Colson now escorts her 14-year-old to and from the nearby bus stop in Bonner, about two kilometres away.

On the final day of term, Ms Colson said her son took light rail and a bus home from school. Alone, walking from the bus stop, he was approached by an unknown male and asked if he needed a lift.

She was thankful her son declined the offer and made it home safely, but is concerned children could be targeted on their walk home.

In a newly established suburb, not having a bus service means children and vulnerable residents are walking long, exposed distances because the network stops short of where families live, Ms Colson said.

"Historically, if kids get into a car, they often never come back home and their ending is tragic," she said.

Ms Colson has always enjoyed using public transport but after moving to Canberra's stage 1B estate in Jacka, she feels "disconnected from the city".

Transport Canberra installed bus stops in the new suburb more than a year ago. They poured the concrete, they put up the signage and then didn't send a bus.

There are already 712 residents who live in the estate, and another 57 social and affordable houses are under construction.

When she bought into the estate about two months ago, she saw there was a bus stop and assumed there would be a bus service in the future. Ms Colson questions if the estate's current plans are

equipped to provide new residents with safe access to transport.

When the A1 estate was established in 2024, residents were offered a rebate from the Suburban Land Agency worth up to \$14,000 for building an all electric home and planting a climate-wise front garden.

"Even though they are giv-

ing you an energy rebate you still have to get in your petrol car if you've got one and drive," Ms Colson said.

Shops and GPs are not connected via public transport, with the closest GP in Casey, around a one hour walk to reach.

An ACT government spokesperson said Jacka was included in Transport

Canberra's "forward planning program".

Ms Colson also contacted Transport Canberra in June, which confirmed the timeline had not been finalised for an introduction to the bus service in Jacka. Minister Steel's letter to Ms Colson in June, said: "Transport Canberra will continue to assess what options may be possible for Jacka".

They also noted that there was currently no additional public transport services that could be introduced without it impacting the delivery of services elsewhere.

Ms Colson said, "You cannot install bus stops and simultaneously tell residents the service is still being 'assessed'. The assessment is literally standing on the street corner."

"I'm asking the only questions that matter: what's the threshold, when did we pass it, and what's the date the bus will start," she said.

Ms Colson said Opposition Leader Mark Parton and Yerrabi independent Leanne Castley told her they would put the questions to Mr Steel at the budget estimates hearing on transport.



Brenda Colson feels "disconnected from the city". Picture by Keegan Carroll

Reports of gambling harm incidents up

Lucy Arundell

THE number of gambling harm incident reports made to the ACT's industry regulator has doubled in two years, a parliamentary hearing has been told.

Staff managing the territory's poker machines made more than 70,000 reports of gambling harm incidents in the past financial year, the highest figure in the past five years.

In 2025-26, there were 72,647 gambling harm incidents reported to the regulator, an increase of 53.5 per cent from 47,337 in 2024-25 and more than double the number of reports made in 2023-24 of 32,095.

Officials from the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission fronted an ACT budget

estimates hearing on Monday.

Commission chief executive Giuseppe Mangeruca said money seeking, where customers make multiple cash withdrawals, and playing at high intensity, which can include gambling for long periods without a break and spending more than \$300 in a session, made up the "vast majority" of incident reports.

"Reporting is on the rise... which is not a bad thing," Mr Mangeruca said. "There is not one particular thing that anyone should be looking for ... in the circumstances, does it appear that that person is suffering from gambling harm, and that is something we would suggest is reported in the register."

ACT venues operating poker machines are

required to report incidents where a customer shows signs of having a gambling problem.

In 2025-26, there were 376 self-exclusions reported, an increase on 295 in the previous financial year.

Canberra Liberals leader Mark Parton asked officials whether the number of incident reports was equivalent to the number of individual people experiencing gambling harm, and for the number of actual individuals represented in the reporting figures.

"Anything that gets reported in those incident registers is a good thing," Mr Mangeruca said. "There may be incidents which correlate to one of the indicators of gambling harm, where in isolation might actually not mean that that person has a problem gam-

bling incident. But a failure to report incidents means that ... you might not be actually picking up someone that truly is."

Later on Monday, Minister for Gambling Reform Marisa Patterson said she viewed the increase in reports as a result of her advocacy for uptake of the gambling incident register.

"This was very much on the agenda for me as minister to see [licensed venues] reporting improve, because what we were seeing previously was one particular club that was producing most of the reporting and most of the other clubs not producing any," she said. "I'm very happy to see the reporting potentially reflect a more accurate picture of where clubs are seeing harm and seeing incidents on gaming floors."

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