

## Hon David Ridgway MLC

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council  
Shadow Minister for Police  
Shadow Minister for Urban Development and Planning  
Shadow Minister for the Northern and Southern Suburbs

Tuesday 18 October 2011

### On the buses

Upper House Liberal Leader David Ridgway wants an open Parliamentary Inquiry into the Labor Government's devastating new school bus contracts.

The Government has told local bus companies, many of which have had long and close personal connections with regional South Australia, that it has appointed new operators to take students to and from school.

"Labor simply hasn't calculated the impact on regional communities, with family business operators considering their future," Mr Ridgway said.

"The State Member for Goyder, my colleague Steven Griffiths, tells me that in Balaklava a Victorian contractor has taken over two runs from local firms, one of which has been operating for 26 years.

"Almost half the 100-odd contracts State-wide have gone over the border to the Victorian business.

"I want the Inquiry to investigate whether small South Australian operators have the ability to survive on private contract work. I suspect they might not."

Mr Ridgway said new contractors may not support small communities in the same way as current family bus company contractors.

"The Inquiry will also look at the sustainability of benchmarks used to determine tender applications," he said.

"There are serious questions about Labor Government subsidies, and the concession reimbursement scheme provided to some operators."

Mr Ridgway said the Legislative Council has authorised the Select Committee to disclose documents and evidence, and he has invited new contractors, existing bus operators, regional business and townspeople as well as parents and teachers to testify at the open hearings.

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