

## Coordinator Quick Guides

# Student views on bus safety

Special thanks to Jodi Betts, road safety educator at Far North REAP for the answers in this guide.



*Kia ora, Tuska is my name, road safety is my game. I started at Te Hapua School, where it was really cool. We share the road with cars and dogs, and cows and horses and big fat hogs. Be safe, be seen before you cross, a vehicle might come, you will be tossed.*

- From the Diary of Tuska

### Student views on bus safety – what’s this about?

In the Far North District, most students travel to and from school by bus. Their journeys include winding gravel roads shared with tractors and trucks, varied speed limits and town streets. Safety challenges include other vehicles – data gathering by Far North REAP suggests few drivers comply with the law about driving at 20km/h or less past a stationary school bus.

This project provides students with engaging ways to share their perspectives and gain safety insights about the specifics of their daily school bus ride. It is led by the team of road safety educators working with local schools and a locally owned bus company.

### How do student views fit into a broader programme of school bus safety?

Far North REAP is contracted to deliver local road safety initiatives. We work closely with the bus company doing the school runs – a long-running proactive partnership – and with local schools as well as the general public.

So one part of what we do is create programmes specific to each school. The schools can look at the options we have and choose the best fit for their circumstances.

Another part is promotional work to the public through radio and print. We are encouraging our road users to be aware of school buses and the children getting on and off those buses.

### Who is Tuska the Pig and what’s his role?

Tuska is a Far North road safety mascot. We wanted something the kids up here could relate to, so he’s a knitted Kunekune pig who moved from school to school visiting Year 3 and 4 students.

He goes home with a student for the night. When he returns to school the student writes a story about what Tuska saw on the journey. We wanted the kids to tell us what the issues were around behaviour on school buses and it was really good for the kids to say what they see through their own eyes, but they didn't want to tell on anybody. Tuska was neutral, and he's also pretty cool – he's a bit of a toughie.

We collected student stories and published these in the local newspaper as the Diary of Tuska. Most schools were involved in the programme in 2016-17. We had a number of Tuskas out in different schools all at once, and he would sometimes come back a bit worse for wear – some of them had to retire.

One day he returned with Red Band gumboots knitted on. He went to a rugby game. He had a ride on a horse out near Pangaru. It showed such a variety of what the kids are experiencing on their journey to and from school.

Schools remember it, students remember it and they are asking for him to come back.

### **How have you used GoPro cameras and drones in bus safety?**

The idea here was using technology that engages students, to record their experiences and then use that footage as a launching pad for safety conversations in school.

We had a GoPro on the forehead of a student and one stuck to the windscreen of the bus to simulate what the driver sees ahead – the rural driving conditions that can include winding gravel roads, tractors and trucks and vehicle dust.

In one case, we edited a final video and gave it to the school. In another school, the footage was given to the school with the idea the senior students edit the video as part of their curriculum and show it to junior students. With that footage, the schools can have discussions with the kids about the behaviours.

We used the drone to take footage of the wider view of the roads the buses travel on. We also took footage of kids getting on and off at bus stops in town that the bus company had identified as high-risk areas. It gave a birds-eye view of how people behave. In one case, a child ran behind a school bus to cross the road. There was also an adult calling out to children to get them to cross near a corner in a 50 km/h speed limit zone.

### **What permissions are needed to use camera and drone footage?**

Far North REAP gained permission from the bus company and one school sent home forms to get parental permission. It was explained that the school would own the footage and we would not use it for promotional purposes. This was in order to safeguard the kids.

We checked online to get advice on operating drones from the Civil Aviation Authority website.

We also gained permission from the local council to film over local roads and received guidance from the NZ Transport Agency about filming above state highways, plus permission from the owner of a private property we needed to fly over.