

Bid to stop bus 'tours'

A Bill intended to plug a loophole whereby public omnibus services are being provided in the guise of "tour services," received its first and second readings today.

Moving the Public Omnibus Services (Amendment) Bill, the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Derek Jones, said that last year a private bus service was established ostensibly as a tour service to take fare-paying passengers from one location on so-called "tours" to other locations and back.

He said the service was in fact mainly to carry commuters, most of whom used it regularly.

Legal proceedings were instituted against the operators for running a public omnibus service without a franchise, he said, but the case was dismissed by the courts because it was held to fall within the definition of a "tour service" in the ordinance.

Mr Jones said the service in question was now no longer in operation but in the light of the court ruling, it was proposed to replace the definition of "tour service" in the principal ordinance with a new one.

"This is a tighter definition which includes the criteria used in the United Kingdom Road Traffic legislation," he said.

The present definition of "tour service" had proved to be defective mainly because it did not provide that all passengers must be carried for the greater part of the tour's route.

"Nor does it prohibit the carrying of passengers who use the service frequently, or as a matter of routine," Mr Jones said.