

# **Appendix 14**

## **Criteria for the Provision of a Rural School Bus Service**

# Proposed rural school bus criteria for use in the management of existing services and assessment of applications for new services

## Who may travel?

1. Only students within the following categories may be counted as part of the patronage numbers for a new service or extension to an existing rural school bus service, or considered for a conveyance allowance:
  - ❖ Kindergarten (subject to satisfaction of Kindergarten student criteria below);
  - ❖ Primary or Secondary School;
  - ❖ a Senior Secondary College, or full time secondary level courses; or
  - ❖ a Special Educational Service or Unit.
2. Only students falling within one of the above categories will be considered in determining bus capacity and route for any rural school bus service.
3. Children who are too young to attend kindergarten will not be carried on rural school buses or be eligible for payment of a conveyance allowance.

## Kindergarten student requirements

Kindergarten students must also satisfy the following additional criteria, for which a parent or guardian must sign acknowledgement that they have understood and will comply with:

- i. The student is capable of travelling as a bus passenger without assistance.
- ii. The student is able to get on and off the bus without assistance.
- iii. The student is capable of changing buses in the course of a journey, if required, without assistance.
- iv. The student must be fully toilet trained such that toilet needs will not pose any problems during bus travel.
- v. The student must be capable of getting from the bus drop off location at the school to the classroom in a safe manner.
- vi. A responsible person must accompany the student to the bus stop from which the student commences the journey to school and remain with the student until the student boards the bus.
- vii. A responsible person must be at the bus stop at which the student ends the journey from school to meet and collect the student.

Bus modifications including booster seats or other forms of postural support to assist in transporting students will only be made available for students with a disability.

The failure to comply with these conditions is grounds for the immediate removal of eligibility for that child to travel.

## Payment of conveyance allowance

1. To be eligible for a conveyance allowance the applicant must be a student who:
  - ❖ resides outside of the Metro zone; and
  - ❖ reside outside of the 60km/h zone/urban speed zone surrounding their nearest State school; and
  - ❖ must reside more than five kilometres from the nearest State school or bus route that can take the student to the nearest State school; or
  - ❖ live on a Bass Strait Island and have to travel to an educationally appropriate school on mainland Tasmania, or

- ❖ need to travel interstate to attend a recognised course not available in Tasmania; or
  - ❖ have a physical or intellectual disability which precludes travel on public transport.
2. The level of conveyance allowance will be determined on a kilometre basis equivalent to the cost transporting the child by a medium size, 4 cylinder car (or, for travel from the Bass Strait Islands, the standard economy air fare). Where more than one child in a family is eligible for a conveyance allowance, conveyance allowance will be paid for each child.
  3. The conveyance allowance payable is determined on the shorter of the distance to the closest educationally appropriate school or available bus service to transport the child to that school.

## Provision of rural school bus services

1. Rural school bus services will not be provided within the defined Metro area, or operate into or through the defined Metro Area.
2. A rural school bus service will not be provided where:
  - ❖ it would only service students living within a 5 kilometre radius of the school;
  - ❖ students can catch an existing general access route service to their school of choice within their home area without interchanging between services;
  - ❖ students can catch an existing general access route service to their school of choice outside of their home area, with no more than 1 interchange required between services; or
  - ❖ a general access route service, that meets the Access Principles for route services, can be provided at a cost to Government lower than the cost of providing the rural school bus service.
3. A rural school bus service will not be authorised if it would require the students first boarding that service to travel on the bus for more than 40 kilometres or 1 hour (where the average travel speed is greater than 40km/h) to school by the most direct route.
 

*This requirement does not apply if the nearest State school to that child's home is greater than 40 kilometres or 1 hour (where the average bus speed, based on the timetable, is lower than 40km/h) by the most direct route.*
4. Subject to 2, a service may be introduced where 15 or more students are registered who will use that service.
5. An approved service will be funded to operate to the point from which it is determined that no fewer than 8 registered students live at or beyond that point, or the nearest safe point for commencement of the service beyond that point as determined by DIER.
6. Only students who would board the bus between the first stop and the commencement of the 60km/h zone of the town in which the school is situated may be counted as part of the required student trips.

## Extensions and spurs to an existing service

1. An extension will only be provided from a point, which is greater than 3 kilometres from an existing route by the most direct route and there are 8 or more students registered beyond that point.
2. Subject to the limitation on total travel time and distance for a service, the maximum distance for an extension will be the point at which no fewer than 8 students are registered, or such further distance the Commission determines necessary for safe turning of the vehicle.

## **Addition of spurs**

1. A spur will only be provided from a point which is greater than 3 kilometres from an existing route by the most direct route and there are 8 or more students registered beyond that point.
2. A spur or spurs on an existing service must not increase the total journey length for the first student boarding the service by more than 50%.
3. The maximum distance for any single extension is the point at which no fewer than 8 students are registered, or such further distance the Commission determines necessary for safe turning of the vehicle.

## **Variation of services**

1. Sections of rural school bus services that have fewer than 8 students registered over 2 consecutive terms, or fewer than 5 students using the bus will, at a minimum, be curtailed to the point at which 8 students are registered, subject to any extension the Commission determines necessary for safe turning of the vehicle.
2. A bus operator may show cause as to why a bus service should not be curtailed..
3. At the discretion of the Commission, a rural school bus service may continue beyond the point at which 8 students are registered or five students regularly board the bus if:
  - ❖ it is necessary for reasons of safety;
  - ❖ it is demonstrated through school enrolment figures that additional students will be using the service; or
  - ❖ curtailment of the route would cause undue hardship to three or more families.

## **Withdrawal of service (or part of a service)**

1. Where a rural school bus service has fewer than 10 students registered over 2 consecutive school terms, a bus operator must show cause as to why the rural school bus service should not cease at the end of that school year in which the second of the consecutive terms falls.
2. A service that has fewer than 10 students registered over 2 consecutive school terms will only continue to operate if it can be positively demonstrated that there will be greater than ten students registered in the following year.
3. Where sufficient demand is demonstrated (by evidence of school enrolments or indications of increased frequency of use), the service will be reviewed at the end of the first term of the following year and must be withdrawn at that time if fewer than ten students are registered.
4. When a rural school bus service is to be withdrawn, DIER must review existing rural school bus services within the catchment to determine whether part or all of the withdrawn services students can be accommodated by modification of existing services.

## **Bus Capacity**

1. No single vehicle will be contracted to carry more than 65 students on a school bus service.
2. Any student living outside of the 60km/h of the town in which their school is located may travel a contract bus service to and from school, as of right.
3. If a bus is fitted with seatbelts, the capacity of that bus is restricted to the number of seat belted positions available.

4. Only students travelling more than 3 kilometres to school will be guaranteed a seat, which may be based on 3 for 2 seating for primary school students.
5. Students travelling less than 3 kilometres will be accommodated up to the legal capacity of the bus. A student who lives inside the 60km/h zone of the town in which their school is located may use an existing school bus service, but will not be guaranteed a seat on that service.

## **Interchanges**

Rural school bus services should be arranged so that:

- ❖ students are not required to interchange when travelling to a school within their home area; and
- ❖ students are not required to interchange more than once to travel to a school outside of their home area.

## **Service overlaps**

To be an overlap for the purposes of policy, there must be:

- ❖ 2 buses travelling on the same road prior to a point at which it is reasonable to expect services would converge on the same road to travel into a population centre; and
- ❖ an identical timetable or with such minor differences in timetable that no service benefit is derived from the difference.

No new service that creates an overlap will be authorised between services that are meeting the same age appropriate need.

## **For services between 2 origin/destination points**

1. Existing 'mirror' services between 2 population centres will be reduced to the edge of the home area boundary for primary school only services.
2. No applications for new services that would create a mirror service of an existing service, or part of an existing service may be approved.

## **For services departing to 2 separate destinations from, or near, a single population centre**

An application to extend a bus service, so that a contract school bus route overlaps with an existing subsidised service travelling in the opposite direction, will not be approved, but two services travelling in opposite directions may depart from a common starting point.

## **2 or more services from multiple destinations travelling into a single population centre**

1. It will be the role of DIER to identify key convergence points and use interchange policy to encourage better use of bus fleet in built up areas and minimise overlaps within population centres.
2. Consideration should be given to the use of interchanges where students on multiple buses are required to travel between 3 or more schools on their journey to and from school.