

PASSENGER TRANSPORT BRANCH GUIDELINES FOR RURAL SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

PROVISION OF NEW BUS SERVICE

PT515_2

This guideline relates to the provision of new rural school bus services and has been developed to maximise use of existing services and infrastructure to ensure cost-effective development of the public transport system.

A new bus service is classed as an “Unprovided Regular Passenger Service” under the *Passenger Transport Services Act 2011*. A new bus service can be requested by the community, a Bus Operator or the Department of State Growth.

Rural school bus services are services that operate wholly within a regional area and do not cross an urban boundary. Different guidelines apply to other service types.

In considering any request to provide a new rural school bus service, the Secretary of the Department of State Growth must give consideration to the following intent:

1. New contracted rural school bus services will not be introduced in areas where an existing government-funded Regular Passenger Service is already provided to the requested school or another school that can meet students’ educational needs, and those existing services are (or can be) timetabled to drop off/pick up students within 30 minutes before or after school.
2. For the purposes of (1) above, existing services may include a requirement for interchange (or multiple interchanges) with other government-funded Regular Passenger Services if the total waiting time across all interchanges is no longer than 30 minutes. Waiting time at interchanges does not include any waiting time at the originating bus stop (including the school for afternoon services).
3. A contract service will only be introduced in areas that are more than five (5) kilometres from the school.
4. A service may be introduced provided it will carry at least ten (10) full-time students on a regular basis (three or more return trips per student per week).
5. Only students who would board the bus at least three (3) kilometres from the school can be counted as part of the required minimum of ten (10).
6. New services will only be provided to the home area school (Primary School) as defined by the Department of Education, or the nearest college, or a school identified by the Department of Education as being a school for which the area is a defined “feeder” area (High School).
7. A Conveyance Allowance will be paid for eligible students (5 kilometres or more from nearest appropriate school or bus stop) who cannot be accommodated on a bus travelling to their appropriate school.
8. A bus service carrying less than ten (10) full-time students on a regular basis (three or more return trips per student per week) will be withdrawn.
9. Sections of bus services that carry fewer than eight (8) regular full-time students will be curtailed to a point at which at least eight (8) students would be collected.
10. Procurement of services is subject to the requirements of the *Passenger Transport Services Act 2011* which required, among other things, compliance with relevant Treasurer’s Instructions. This will typically require a competitive tender process for any new Regular Passenger Service contract.

11. Provided space is available, any student can travel on an existing contracted Regular Passenger Service to and from school. It is recommended that parents/guardians check with the Bus Operator about the likely availability of space before sending their children to travel on the bus at the start of each school year. Please note that a Bus Operator will not know exact numbers until services have already commenced at the beginning of a school year and that students may be required to stand.

12. The service will not be provided unless it is classified as a Regular Passenger Service under the *Passenger Transport Services Act 2011* and *Passenger Transport Services Regulations 2013*.

Note:

Where the above criteria are not met, a Bus Operator may choose to apply for authorisation to provide what is called a “non-core” service. If approved, the service will not receive government funding.

Students electing to use such a service may be charged a fare set by the Bus Operator. No concession passes are issued for travel on these services.

These guidelines may change, subject to changes in government policy on service provision and fares, and may be subject to external consultation requirements.