

# DESIGNATED TRANSPORT AREA REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Designated Transport Area Review Guidelines provide an operational process for establishing a new, or reviewing an existing, Designated Transport Area.

## WHAT IS A DESIGNATED TRANSPORT AREA?

Designated Transport Areas (DTAs) are geographic areas established around government specialist or integrated schools to ensure the efficient provision of transport services under the Students with Disabilities Transport Program (SDTP). Students who reside within a school's DTA and who meet other eligibility criteria may be eligible to receive transport assistance support under the SDTP.

DTAs are not enrolment zones. Parents/guardians may choose to enrol their child at any specialist or integrated school provided the child is eligible for enrolment and there is sufficient capacity at the school. However, only students residing in the DTA of the specialist or integrated school they attend are eligible for transport assistance under the SDTP.

## DTA DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The establishment of a new DTA and amendments to existing DTAs should be consistent with the following design principles:

- The DTA creation or amendment process must be consistent with the principle of school autonomy and local decision-making, and balance this with the need for state-wide consistency, the cost and travel time constraints of the SDTP and the need for a decision to be made in circumstances where there is no common agreement by all schools.
- DTAs are established or amended via a process overseen by the Student Transport Unit (STU) of DET. The process must include all affected specialist schools and the relevant DET regional office(s). The Director Student Transport and Family Allowances Branch and the relevant Regional Director(s) provide final approval of a DTA.
- DTAs must be consistent with the category of disability, which a specialist school supports. Dual or multi-mode specialist schools may have several DTAs – one for each category of disability.
- When changing a DTA, bus travel times must not exceed 120 minutes in either direction for any student. The Student Transport Unit (STU) can assist with this point.
- The DTA should be designed with the future in mind (i.e. a minimum of 5-10 years). Important data to be assessed includes future population growth, likely demographic changes and known or planned changes to specialist education provision in the area.
- The DTA to be drawn up must be as fair and equitable as possible for all surrounding schools offering education for the same primary disability.
- DTAs should not unnecessarily divide communities or suburbs. This means that DTA design should be sensitive to natural boundaries that local communities may see as barriers to moving around and across suburbs and towns including local government boundaries, major roads, highways and freeways, rivers, creeks, lakes, marshland, reservoirs, railway lines, industrial areas, parkland, green wedges and reserves.

- Changes to existing DTAs and the establishment of DTAs for new or relocated schools should be agreed and approved by the end of term 3 each year to take effect from the start of the next school year.
- If a DTA changes such that some students no longer reside in the attended school's DTA, these students will continue to receive support until they:
  - Move residential address; or
  - Move to another school; or
  - Complete their education.
- It needs to be recognised that there is no specific hierarchy of these design principles (apart from student travel time) and that the optimal design for any DTA can require a 'common sense' trade-off between the design principles.

### DTA REVIEW TRIGGERS

In normal circumstances, the following may trigger a DTA review:

- A new specialist or integrated school is established;
- The demographics of an area change significantly;
- The enrolment criteria of the abutting schools change;
- The principal of a specialist school requests a review of, or change to, their school's DTA;
- The Department requests a review of, or change to, a school's DTA;
- An existing specialist or integrated school is closed or re-located.

### DTA REVIEW PROCESS

**Diagram 1** below provides an overview of the DTA review process. Each step in the review process is set out in more detail in the subsequent sections.

#### Step 1.1 – STU advises schools and regional office(s) of process

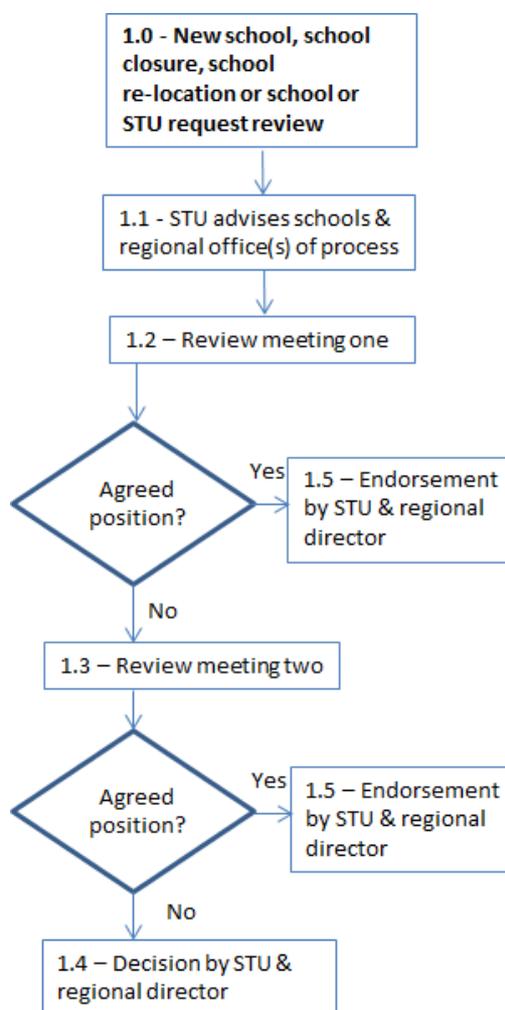
Once it has been established that there is a requirement to review existing or establish a new DTA, the STU will provide guidance on the review process to the affected schools and the relevant regional office(s). This includes:

- Providing a copy of this process document to all participants (i.e. the principals of all affected schools and regional office) to ensure that everyone understands how the process should work.
- Organising a venue for, and inviting participants to, Review Meeting One. The meeting should be held in the nearest regional office or at one of the participating schools.
- Distributing copies of the current approved DTA maps for each participating school to all participants ahead of Review Meeting One.
- Communicating the following points for all participants to note:
  - The timeliness of the review process is important, especially to support parents in making informed future enrolment decision.
  - All specialist schools potentially impacted by a DTA review should be invited to participate in the review process. All invited principals can determine if they will

participate in this process – if they choose not to then this should be taken as acceptance of any subsequently agreed and approved DTA variations.

- o Participating principals are expected to consult with their school council and community throughout the DTA review process so that they can reflect their school's view(s) in the discussions.
- o Where available, the regional office(s) will provide all participating schools with their current and future estimated enrolments.

**Diagram 1: DTA Review Process**



### Step 1.2 – Review Meeting One

The STU representative will chair the meeting and will begin the meeting by:

- Providing clarity about the purpose of the DTA review (e.g. to develop a DTA for a new multi-mode specialist school due to be open at the start of the 2020 school year).

- Setting out the DTA review process to be followed (i.e. the process contained in this document).
- Advising all parties of the DTA design principles (refer to earlier section in this document).

The substantive agenda item for the first meeting next item is for all participants to consider relevant data and based on this propose DTA amendments. This process may include the following:

- Each school (including the new school if relevant) presents data and analysis on current and forecast enrolment growth within their DTA and likely enrolment capacity for the same period. Schools should also share any other useful information, which might assist the review process (such as student travel time pressures for existing bus services).
- The regional office should discuss any specialist or integrated education provision planning for the next ten years, which may affect the DTAs of schools involved in the review process.
- Participants should share any information and analysis about relevant population and demographic forecasts and trends.
- Each participant proposes possible DTA variations and together participants assess these proposed amendments against the DTA design principles.

If all parties (i.e. the schools, regional offices and the STU) reach an agreed position on DTA amendments, the next step is *Step 1.5 - Endorsement by STU and Regional Director*.

If an agreed position is not reached, the next step is *Step 1.3 - Review Meeting Two*.

### **Step 1.3 Review Meeting Two**

This meeting occurs if an agreed position has not been reached at Review Meeting One. Two weeks prior to Review Meeting Two, the STU will provide a report from Review Meeting One to all participants. This report should include:

- names, roles and school/regional office of those who participated in the meeting
- summary of the information provided by each participant
- summary of each proposed DTA variation discussed and reasons why it was/was not supported
- the agreed date for completion of the DTA review process
- any agreed actions.

During the two-week lead up to the second review meeting, the participants should consult with their school councils, regional managers etc. and develop and discuss other options with any or all of the participants.

The STU will chair Review Meeting Two. Any further information, analysis and proposed DTA variations should be presented, discussed and assessed against the DTA design principles by participants.

It may be that some variations can be agreed upon (e.g. a change to the western end of a DTA) whilst others cannot (e.g. a change to the eastern end of a DTA). These developments should be recorded.

If all parties (i.e. the schools, regional offices and the STU) reach an agreed position on DTA amendments, the next step is *Step 1.5 - Endorsement by STU and Regional Director*.

If an agreed position is not reached, the next step is *Step 1.4 - Decision by STU and Regional Director*.

### **Step 1.4 - Decision by STU and Regional Director**

This step is necessary if participants cannot reach agreement on DTA amendments after two review meetings.

It is important that this step be completed in time to ensure that the agreed completion date for the DTA review process is met.

The Student Transport Officer and the relevant officer(s) in the regional office(s) should prepare a report to the Director of the STU and the Regional Director(s). The report should provide:

- Advice on the participants involved (and any who chose not to be involved)
- The process followed (i.e. two review meetings)
- A summary of population, demographic, student enrolment, school capacity and specialist education provision plans for the coming ten years
- Any DTA variations agreed to by all participants
- Recommendations for DTA variations for those parts of the DTA(s) where no agreement has been reached
- Assessment of these recommended variations against the DTA design principles.

The Director of the STU and the Regional Director(s) should ensure their decision on the DTA variations is finalised before the agreed completion date.

Following the decision, the STU will send advice to each participant. That advice should include maps showing the new DTA boundaries and advice of 'grandfathering' arrangements.

### **Step 1.5 - Endorsement by STU and Regional Director**

This occurs when all participants have reached agreement after one or two review meetings.

It is important that this step be completed in time to ensure that the agreed completion date for the DTA review process is met.

The Student Transport Officer and the relevant officer(s) in the regional office(s) should prepare a report to the Director of the STU and the Regional Director(s). The report should provide:

- Advice on the participants involved (and any who chose not to be involved)
- The process followed (i.e. two review meetings)
- A summary of population, demographic, student enrolment, school capacity and specialist education provision plans for the coming ten years
- The DTA variations agreed to by all participants
- Assessment of these variations against the DTA design principles.

The Director of the STU and the Regional Director(s) should ensure their endorsement of the DTA variations is finalised before the agreed completion date.

Following the endorsement, the STU will send advice to each participant. That advice should include maps showing the new DTA boundaries and advice of 'grandfathering' arrangements.