

School Bus Program

FAQ – Schools

January 2016

1. What are the responsibilities of coordinating schools?

Coordinating schools manage the school bus services for their school and bus network. They assess all applications to travel (including applications from client schools), approve bus operator payment claims, monitor bus services, coordinate emergency management and forward collected bus fares to DET.

Refer to Section 3 of the *School Bus Program Policy and Procedures*.

2. What are the responsibilities of client schools?

Client schools are required to assist coordinating schools to correctly administer the School Bus Program and provide accurate information to families about school bus services. Client schools are also responsible for invoicing families and collecting the bus fares of their fare paying students and forwarding collected fares to their coordinating school.

Refer to Section 3 of the *School Bus Program Policy and Procedures*.

3. What information do we need to give to parents/guardians when they enquire about the School Bus Program and when an application is approved?

Schools are responsible for ensuring that parents/guardians are fully informed about their child's eligibility, the conditions of travel and their obligations under the conditions of travel. Parents/guardians must be given application forms appropriate to their child's eligibility status.

Schools must advise parents/guardians of the outcome of their application to travel in a timely

manner. DET, in conjunction with PTV, have developed a brochure that will assist parents/guardians in determining their child's eligibility for the School Bus Program.

The brochure can be downloaded at **www.education.vic.gov.au/studenttransport**. Refer to Section 3 of the *School Bus Program Policy and Procedures*.

4. Why can schools only use DET-supplied school bus travel application forms and not ones that schools have created?

All schools must use the forms that accompany the *School Bus Program Policy and Procedures*. The DET-issued forms include parent/guardian obligations under the policy. Parents/guardians are required to sign application forms stating they have read, understood and agree to comply with the conditions of travel. DET's forms include this information whereas school-developed application forms, often, do not. The use of non-departmental forms can become problematic if students and/or parents/guardians challenge the conditions of travel.

During PTV school bus network reviews, application forms are used as evidence that eligibility is being correctly assessed and families are being informed of their obligations. Failure to use the correct forms may have an adverse effect on the outcome of a school bus network's review.

Using the correct forms creates consistency, fairness and ensures all families are aware of their obligations under the program. School Bus Program travel application forms can be downloaded at **www.education.vic.gov.au/studenttransport**



5. What is the role of DET regional offices in administering or advising on the school bus policy and who do we contact?

In most situations a regional office's administration manager should be the first point of contact for schools. The administration manager can provide advice on student transport matters and assist with applications for special case consideration, extension of bus routes or the review of a bus stop.

6. Fares have recently been updated for 2016. What happens if a parent has already paid a higher fare?

Please discuss with the parent and offer reimbursement of the overpaid amount or retain as a fares credit for subsequent term(s).

If you have already submitted fares to the Student Transport Unit, please contact on 9637 2200 for further assistance.

7. Why are schools required to collect bus fares?

Parents/guardians are primarily responsible for getting their children to and from school and the School Bus Program assists parents/guardians in rural and regional Victoria with transport to their child's closest school. The payment of a fare is recognition that parents/guardians have chosen to send their child to a school other than their closest and helps offset the cost of administering the program.

8. What is the result of not collecting bus fares?

PTV and DET work together to ensure the School Bus Program operates as effectively and efficiently as possible. When fare collection is not occurring in an area, it indicates to PTV that a network review should be undertaken. During a review, PTV looks at the number of ineligible students who have not paid a fare and this helps with decisions around the retention, addition, discontinuance, extension or reduction of school bus services.

9. Where do I find out more about fare collection policy and procedures, including where to send collected bus fares?

Refer to Section 3 of the *School Bus Program Policy and Procedures*.

10. Are we expected to keep student application forms and if so, for how long?

Schools are required to keep accurate records of all students travelling on school buses. During a PTV school bus network review, schools are required to provide PTV with application forms, which demonstrates schools are correctly assessing student eligibility and informing parents/guardians of their obligations under the program. It is also in schools' interest to maintain records of application forms in case a student or parent/guardian challenges the conditions of travel.

Schools are required to keep applications to travel on file until the student ceases to travel or no longer attends the school.

11. Why do we have to have annual loadings in by October?

PTV undertakes the anticipated loading surveys at the end of Term 3 each year to monitor and determine the service and infrastructure requirements of the School Bus Program for the coming school year. The large amount of data received from schools needs time to be analysed and operational decisions made.

PTV and DET are aware schools may not have accurate details by October and the survey is only indicative of the coming year's loadings. It also enables schools to advise parents/guardians in a timely manner of the outcome of their child's application to travel.

12. Why are we expected to keep accurate records of our bus rolls?

Accurate and up-to-date bus rolls are critical for managing emergencies that involve school buses. Principals have a duty-of-care to ensure all students travelling on school buses can be accounted for in an emergency. In an emergency DET regional offices or emergency services may request student passenger information from schools.

Emergency Management

Refer to the *School Bus Program Emergency Management Operational Guidelines* or go to **www.education.vic.gov.au/studenttransport** to download the guidelines.

Further information

Schools will find further information and policy documents;
www.education.vic.gov.au/studenttransport