

Guide to the School Transport Assistance Scheme

Fares-Based School Bus Services



Queensland Government
Queensland Transport

Version 3

The information contained in this document may be subject to change without notice. Clarification of any information in this document may be obtained from the Queensland Transport offices listed.

ISBN 0 7345 2504 4

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1 Foreword

The Queensland Government acknowledges the necessity for the education of students and accepts a responsibility for the provision of education facilities within the state.

It is, however, the responsibility of parents to make suitable travel arrangements for their children to attend these facilities. For many years, successive state governments have provided assistance with school transport costs for eligible students in some circumstances where no state school facilities are provided. This assistance is provided under the School Transport Assistance Scheme. In providing such assistance, the government has been careful not to intrude unnecessarily on the individual parent's responsibility to arrange for the child's education. The scheme should therefore be looked upon as a form of assistance only and not as the complete removal of responsibility from parents.

This booklet is intended to provide an overview of the role and responsibilities of bus operators who provide services under the School Transport Assistance Scheme.

If after reading this booklet you wish to obtain further information or to discuss any particular individual circumstances not covered by this booklet, please contact your local Queensland Transport office as shown on Page 54.

2 Description

There are two types of fares-based services:

- Fares-based school bus services
- Commercial contract services

These fare paying services usually operate in the larger provincial cities throughout the state and provide transport for students for the payment of individual student fares.

Once a student has been approved for travel on these services, Queensland Transport pays the required fare direct to the transport operator concerned.

The authority to make arrangements for transport of students to and from school is contained in Section 144(1) of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994*.

3 Conditions of Operation

3.1 Authority

Bus companies are issued with a service contract under the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994*. In the majority of cases this enables them to also carry adults and fare paying students who are not eligible for free transport.

Services usually operate to both state and non-state schools within the bus company's approved service areas as demand dictates. Where students attend schools (state or non-state) other than the nearest, the government may provide assistance for part of the journey.

3.2 New services

It is the responsibility of the bus operator to respond to any increased need for services in their area. Where the need occurs for a new service for school students, the bus operator should consider factors such as:

- number of students/families to benefit
- safety/suitability of roads
- cost
- service delivery for eligible students
 - timetable
 - overall travelling times
- impact on existing services and viability
- future development of and planning for
 - population growth
 - new schools
 - road network changes
- overall public interest
 - passenger transport demand from ineligible student and non-student sections of the community in the area
 - other transport options

3.3 Extensions to a service

The bus operator may be required to extend existing services into an area (within its existing contract area) where there is demonstrated student demand.

The bus operator should be aware, however, that an extension may not necessarily be recognised for the payment of fares for school students.

In assessing any proposal for payment of fares for school students, consideration will be given to the location of schools and other transport services, particularly contract school bus services.

3.4 Service provisions

3.4.1 Bus operator responsibility

A bus operator is to ensure the well being and safety of students travelling on the service.

3.4.2 Vehicle breakdowns/other emergent circumstances

Where mechanical breakdown or other emergent circumstances prevents the provision of a normal service, the bus operator must make all reasonable efforts to arrange for alternative transport for the students. This would normally mean that an alternative vehicle, which is suitable to provide a continuity of service delivery for the safe transport of the students, is available.

In all these situations the bus operator should ensure that all schools are notified immediately of any alternative arrangements to be provided.

3.4.3 Seasonal weather/adverse conditions

Seasonal weather or adverse conditions may prevent the provision of a normal service. In these instances, the bus operator is to ensure that satisfactory alternative arrangements are made for the transport of the students.

The operator should ensure that all schools affected are immediately notified of alternative arrangements.

3.4.4 Road conditions

The road over which a public passenger service operates must be regarded as suitable and safe under normal conditions by the relevant road authority. The bus operator should inform Queensland Transport immediately if road conditions deteriorate to a level which could affect its suitability as a school route.

3.5 Bus Passes

The government accepts the responsibility for the payment of fares for all approved eligible school students.

It is essential that this assistance is provided as soon as practicable after the student commences travel. It is therefore necessary for bus companies to make an interim assessment of eligibility as soon as travel commences. Interim approval, issued by a bus operator, is subject to final approval of student status by Queensland Transport.

Under no circumstances is an operator permitted to deny transport to an approved eligible student or charge an additional fare for the component of travel for which Queensland Transport makes payment.

Where a student applies to travel AM or PM only i.e. 2-5 trips per week AM only or 2-5 trips per week PM only, the operator shall make arrangements to identify the student as an AM or PM traveller. The operator may charge the appropriate fare for travel outside the period for which the pass has been issued.

Operators are required to implement a system that ensures that eligible students are able to receive the assistance being provided by Queensland Transport.

Where an operator chooses to implement a bus pass for eligible students the following guidelines will apply:

1. The initial bus pass must be issued to the student at no cost. Operators may charge a reasonable deposit for an electronic bus pass provided the deposit is refunded upon return of the pass in good order and condition.
2. A reasonable fee may be charged for replacement passes that are lost, misused or abused. Operators can not charge a replacement fee where a pass is defective.
3. Bus passes should be made to last a reasonable time, given normal wear and tear. For example, passes should be laminated or made of plastic.
4. Queensland Transport may request operators to justify the fee charged for a deposit or replacement. It is expected that a fee would not exceed the cost of the actual pass and the administrative cost of producing the pass.
5. Bus passes must be reissued at the commencement of every school year at no cost to the student.
6. Bus passes must comply with Queensland Transport's privacy scheme. Personal information printed on the pass should be limited to a student's name, school attended and year level.

The above guidelines do not apply to passes issued by TransLink. TransLink has separate guidelines for the issue of passes to school students.

4 Passengers

In general terms there are three categories of passengers on fares-based services. These are:

- Students eligible under distance criteria (distance eligible) and eligible students with disabilities
- Students eligible under the provision of the safety-net arrangements (safety-net eligible)
- Fare paying passengers

4.1 Distance eligible students

4.1.1 Preschool students

Preschool students are not eligible for free travel on fares-based services.

4.1.2 Primary school students

Primary school students must live more than 3.2 kilometres by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state primary school. Non-state school students must live more than 3.2 kilometres from both their nearest state school and the nearest non-state school of the type which they attend. Some students within this distance may qualify under the safety-net provisions (see 4.2 'Safety-net eligible students', page 12).

4.1.3 Secondary school students

Secondary school students must live more than 4.8 kilometres by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state secondary school. Non-state students must live more than 4.8 kilometres from both the nearest state school and the nearest non-state school of the type which they attend. Some students within this distance may qualify under the safety-net provisions (see 4.2 'Safety-net eligible students', page 12).

4.1.4 Non-state school students

Students who attend a non-state school in a centre to which a fares-based service operates may use the service under the conditions of eligibility applicable to state school students. The level of assistance provided is limited to the following:

- (a) the cost of fares relating to the journeys to and from the nearest state school; or

- (b) the cost of fares relating to the journeys to and from the nearest approved non-state school of the type attended;

whichever is the lesser.

Note: A parent/guardian cannot receive assistance that is greater than the value of bus fares in travelling to and from the school attended.

4.1.5 Senior College students

Senior college students undertaking year 11 and 12 studies in a course and college approved by Queensland Transport may be eligible. These students must reside more than 4.8 kilometres by the shortest trafficable route from both the nearest state secondary school and the nearest approved senior college offering year 11 and 12 levels.

4.1.6 College of TAFE students

TAFE students are not eligible for free travel on fares-based services.

4.1.7 Students with disabilities

The Department of Education and the Arts is responsible for assessing the eligibility of students with disabilities for transport assistance and for authorising Queensland Transport to provide transport assistance.

All enquiries about transport assistance for students with disabilities should be directed to the school attended or the relevant Department of Education and the Arts district office.

4.1.8 Kindergarten students

Students attending kindergarten are not eligible for free travel on fares-based services.

4.1.9 Work experience students

Students on official work experience programs are not eligible for transport assistance on other than their regular bus service.

4.1.10 Mature age students

The student must not have attained the age of 19 years. However, a student 19 years or older may be eligible for transport assistance provided they are in full time secondary study which commenced prior to their 19th birthday.

4.1.11 Overseas, interstate and exchange students

Students from overseas or interstate are not eligible for transport assistance. It is a requirement that the parent or guardian of each student be resident in the state of Queensland and, if not an Australian citizen, should hold residential status with a visa type approved by Queensland Transport as eligible to receive school transport assistance. Exchange students are also not eligible for transport assistance.

4.1.12 English as a Second Language students

Students who are enrolled full-time in an ESL (English as a Second Language) course are eligible for transport assistance to the nearest ESL facility irrespective of the distance from their residence. This assistance is limited to a maximum period of twelve months from the initial date of enrolment in that course.

4.1.13 Kilometre-based school bus services

Students living within 3.2 kilometres of a kilometre-based school bus service are not eligible for assistance on fares-based services, unless otherwise determined by Queensland Transport.

4.1.14 Level of assistance for distance eligible students

Queensland Transport will pay a STAS fare directly to bus operators for distance eligible students. The STAS fare paid to an operator is based on the section/zone distance to:

- (a) the nearest state school; or
- (b) the nearest school of the type attended for students who attend a non-state school;

whichever is the lesser.

However, in some limited instances (usually in rural areas) operators may be paid a STAS fare for distance eligible students based on the journey to another state school if:

- (i) no services (kilometre or fares) operate in their area to the nearest state school; and
- (ii) approval is given by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport having regard to all relevant local circumstances.

4.2 Safety-net eligible students

The School Transport Assistance Scheme includes safety-net assistance measures for financially disadvantaged students residing close to their nearest school.

4.2.1 Eligibility

To be eligible for safety-net assistance a student must be listed on a:

- Health Care Card issued by Centrelink, or
 - Pensioner Concession Card issued by Centrelink, or
 - Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card;
- OR
- be a student placed under a Care and Protection Order by the Department of Child Safety.

The student must not be in receipt of any other assistance from the School Transport Assistance Scheme.

4.2.2 Preschool students

Preschool students are not eligible to receive safety-net assistance.

4.2.3 State primary school students

A primary school student must live 3.2 kilometres or less by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state primary school.

4.2.4 State secondary school students

A secondary school student must live 4.8 kilometres or less by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state secondary school.

4.2.5 Non-state primary school students

A non-state primary school student must live 3.2 kilometres or less by the shortest trafficable route from either the nearest state primary school or the nearest non-state primary school of the type attended.

For Example: A student who resides more than 3.2 kilometres from the nearest non-state school of the type attended but is 3.2 kilometres or less from the nearest state school, may qualify for assistance.

4.2.6 Non-state secondary school students

A non-state secondary school student must live 4.8 kilometres or less by the shortest trafficable route from either the nearest state secondary school or the nearest non-state secondary school of the type attended.

For Example: A student who resides more than 4.8 kilometres from the nearest non-state secondary school of the type attended but is 4.8 kilometres or less from the nearest state secondary school, may qualify for assistance.

4.2.7 Overseas, interstate and exchange students

Students from overseas or interstate are not eligible for transport assistance. It is a requirement that the parent or guardian of each student be resident in the state of Queensland and, if not an Australian citizen, should hold residential status with a visa type approved by Queensland Transport as eligible to receive school transport assistance. Exchange students are also not eligible for transport assistance.

4.2.8 Mature age students

The student must not have attained the age of 19 years. However, a student 19 years or older may be eligible for transport assistance provided they are in full time secondary study which commenced prior to their 19th birthday.

4.2.9 Levels of safety-net assistance

- **Privately operated bus services**

Queensland Transport will pay an amount directly to bus operators for students eligible under the bus safety-net guidelines travelling on privately operated fare paying services (see 5.1 'Approved fares-based service types for which school transport assistance is payable', page 15).

The approved rates of assistance are reviewed each year. These amounts can be obtained from your local Queensland Transport office.

- **TransLink Services**

- Brisbane Transport

- Safety-net eligible primary and secondary students resident in the area defined as the local authority of Brisbane City Council or any other area that is part of Brisbane Transport's TransLink contract area, and who travel on Brisbane Transport bus services, will receive a 1 zone fare pass towards the cost of travel.

- Parents/students are responsible for the payment of any excess travel beyond 1 zone.

Private bus operators

Safety-net eligible primary and secondary students resident in a TransLink contract area and who travel on private bus operator TransLink bus services, will receive a safety-net travel benefit that covers the shortest trafficable distance from a student's residence to a maximum of 3.2 km for primary and 4.8 km for a secondary student.

Where the distance by the shortest trafficable route to the school attended is greater than these distances, parents/students will be required to pay a top-up fare direct to the TransLink operator for the extra distance involved.

4.3

Fare paying passengers

In general terms, ineligible students and adults are permitted to travel on fares-based services upon payment of the approved fare.

5 General Conditions

5.1 Approved fares-based service types for which school transport assistance is payable

Effective 31 January 2000, School Transport Assistance Scheme funding is only available to the holders of commercial service contracts or school service contracts on the following approved fares-based service types:

- Subject to *Note 1* below, the holders of commercial service contracts and fares-based school service contracts will be eligible in respect of STAS payments (distance-based and safety-net fares) for the carriage of all eligible students who reside in their contract area or in a designated area serviced by the contract route and travel:
 - (a) to any school within the contract area or upon the contract route.
 - (b) on services from the contract area or route to all schools referred to in the contract outside the contract area.
 - (c) subject to *Note 1* below, to other schools serviced by the contractor outside the contract area. Responsibility for these services in terms of institution, timetable and other operational matters rests with the operator, not Queensland Transport. Such provisions as vehicle standards and code of conduct would, however, apply as they do to all school services.

* *Notes:*

1. In limited instances, the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport may grant access to STAS payments for two operators in a given area.
 - (i) In areas where no declaration has been made, provisions in each operator's contract will limit STAS payments to services provided to specific schools.
 - (ii) In areas or on routes which are subject to a declaration, there are some instances where the provision of certain road-based scheduled passenger services have been excluded from the commercial service contract and are required to be provided under another service contract.

Where this situation exists, STAS payments to this other service contract holder will be limited to the schools specified in the contract. Inclusion of additional schools under this service contract must be negotiated with Queensland Transport and approved by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport for STAS purposes.

2. Distance-based and safety-net fares payments can only be made to the contract holder. STAS payments will not be made to sub-contractors unless the sub-contract arrangements, including payment to the sub-contractor are specifically approved by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport.
3. There are also a limited number of ferry services throughout Queensland which operate on a fares basis and approved by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport for STAS purposes. STAS fares paid on these services will be as agreed with the Chief Executive from time to time.
4. Students approved in 1999 and who travel on services which would now be ineligible for assistance under these guidelines, will continue to receive benefits until:
 - the student changes school; or
 - the student changes from primary to secondary level (i.e. from year 7 to year 8, even if at the same school); or
 - the student changes residential address,

provided subsequent investigations do not reveal that the student was in the first instance incorrectly approved as eligible for assistance.

STAS (distance-based and safety-net fares) will not be paid in the following circumstances:

- For school passengers who reside in the contract area of another operator.
- For school passengers whose journeys originate in contract areas of other operators.
- Services which carry students who reside in an area which is non-contracted or not serviced by a contract route and the service travels from that area to a school located in a particular operator's contract area. (Approval may be granted for exemption from this provision where the contract operator used is the provider of the service to the nearest school).
- Students who reside in an area which is non-contracted or not serviced by a contract route for that area and who travel to school on a service originating in a particular operator's contract area. (Approval may be granted for exemption from this provision where the contract operator used is the provider of the service to the nearest school).
- For school passengers whose journeys start and finish in an area which is non-contracted or not serviced by a contract route for that area. (Exemptions may not be made unless specifically approved by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport).

- For fares paid by students on kilometre-based school bus services.
- For fares paid on extensions to kilometre-based school bus services.
- For travel on fares-based services where students reside in an area serviced by a kilometre-based school bus service, unless otherwise determined by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport.
- For fares paid on services subject to funding arrangements under Section 143(b) of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994*.
- Services outside a contract area or line of route which were offered by an operator and accepted by Queensland Transport as additional benefits under a contract unless the service has been specifically approved for a STAS payment type by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport as an amendment or inclusion in the contract.
- For fares paid on a service provided by an operator who has written permission from the contract holder to operate in a declared area. (Such permission is only an authority to operate the service. It does not authorise the transfer of STAS payments by the contractor to the other operator).
- For new applications on any non-contracted service previously under a licence/permit, which is being phased out after 7 November 1999.

5.2 Eligibility distance measurement

Eligibility distance is measured by the shortest trafficable route, over roads open for public use, between

- the entrance to the nearest state school which is closest to the catchment area involved, and
- the property alignment at the vehicle access point to the residential property nearest to the school.

No measurements are made on private property.

In calculating this distance, the single journey is used. However, in cases where the distance to and from school varies because of different routes (e.g.. one way roads), the average distance is taken.

5.3 Frequency of travel

In assessing eligibility of students the minimum frequency of travel is 20% (i.e. 2 trips per week).

5.4 Approved school

The student must attend an approved school in Queensland or New South Wales on a full-time basis. Non-state schools must be approved by Education Queensland. Students at centres of continuing secondary education are ineligible to receive assistance.

Approved schools are defined as follows:

- (a) A primary school is any state or non-state school in receipt of subsidy from Education Queensland, with students from Years 1-7.
- (b) A special school or special education unit/class is a facility conducted by Education Queensland for students with disabilities.
- (c) A secondary school is any state high school or secondary department; any other non-state secondary school in receipt of subsidy from Education Queensland.

5.5 Non-State school of type

For the purpose of transport assistance, the following non-state schools are regarded as of the same type:

- All Catholic schools; or
- All Grammar schools as defined in the *Grammar Schools Act 1975*; or
- All schools conducted by the same religious denomination or the same school governing body.

If a student is attending a gender specific school and there is a closer co-educational school of the same type, the co-educational school is regarded as the nearest school of the type attended. Alternatively, if a gender specific school is closer than a co-educational school of the same type, and the applicant is of the same gender, the gender specific school is regarded as the nearest school of the type attended. However, a gender specific school is not used to assess the nearest school for a student of the opposite gender.

Eligibility is determined by proximity to the nearest school of the type attended, even in the case where a student is denied access to that school.

5.6 Address for eligibility and assistance

School transport eligibility and assistance is based on the principal place of residence of the student's parent or guardian.

“Principal place of residence” means the one place of residence that is usually occupied for residential purposes by the parent/guardian (applicant). An applicant may be required to provide documentary evidence that verifies the address on the application form is the principal place of residence. Documentary evidence may include but is not limited to the address on the electoral roll, drivers licence and motor vehicle registration.

5.7 Alternative Addresses

Transport assistance is not available for travel to alternative addresses, or for travel to more than one school facility.

5.8 Part Passes

In some circumstances, eligible students who do not attend their nearest school may receive assistance to the value of travel to the nearest State school. Parents are then responsible for payment of any excess fares.

5.9 Withdrawal of assistance

The Chief Executive, Queensland Transport may withdraw transport assistance if audit investigations determine that students involved are ineligible.

6 Code of Conduct for School Children Travelling on Buses

6.1 Introduction

A significant number of school students in Queensland travel on buses to attend school each day. The behaviour of some school students travelling on public transport is of concern to those involved in the administration and operation of public transport.

To address this issue, Queensland Transport has developed a framework, "The Code of Conduct for School Children Travelling on Buses", to assist bus operators in the management of situations where students misbehave on buses. It also outlines the roles of students' parents/carers, conveyance committees (where kilometre-based school bus services operate), school principals and Queensland Transport. The framework identifies categories of misbehaviour and establishes periods where bus operators may refuse travel in response to breaches of the code of conduct.

This framework was developed in cooperation with Education Queensland, Queensland Police Service, Brisbane City Council, Catholic Education Commission, Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc., Bus & Coach Association (Qld), Bus Operators Association (Qld), Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations and the Federation of Parents and Friends Associations Qld.

This framework was approved by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport as a code of conduct applying in relation to school children travelling on buses, in accordance with section 62A of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 1994*. The code applies to all students attending primary and secondary schools in Queensland who use buses either to travel to and from school or for other school related activities. In this code, 'buses' means any forward control passenger vehicle, off-road passenger vehicle, light bus or heavy bus as defined in Schedule 7 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 1994*.

The specific requirements of students with disabilities means that the application of the code of conduct may not be appropriate for this group of students. Liaison between bus operators, schools and parents/carers should occur on an individual case management basis for these students.

Queensland Transport will support actions taken in line with the procedures outlined in this document.

6.2 Current Arrangements

In many areas across the state, effective arrangements are already in place between bus operators, conveyance committees and school principals to ensure cases of misbehaviour on school buses are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

These arrangements for the management of misbehaviour may continue provided they are consistent with the principles of these guidelines.

6.3 The safe travel of students to and from school: Who is involved? What are their roles and responsibilities in managing cases of student misbehaviour on buses?

6.3.1 Parents/carers

The behaviour of students is primarily the responsibility of parents/carers. Accordingly, parents/carers should ensure their children are aware of the code of conduct for travel on buses.

Parents/carers may be responsible for the payment of the costs of repair of damage caused by their children.

Parents/carers should cooperate with the bus operator, conveyance committee (where kilometre-based school bus services operate), and the school principal in the management of student behaviour.

In reported cases of misbehaviour, consultation about the behaviour and its consequences will normally occur. The involvement of parents/carers in this consultation will be essential to ensure a positive resolution.

6.3.2 Students

Each bus service conveying school students has a set of rules or code of conduct that all school students are expected to adhere to. To make clear to students the standards of behaviour expected of them when travelling on buses, Queensland Transport has developed in consultation with bus operators, school organisations and parent groups, a code of conduct. This code of conduct will apply to all students travelling on buses throughout Queensland. Inappropriate behaviour by a student at a bus interchange may also be regarded as a breach to the code of conduct.

Code of behaviour for students

BEHAVIOUR	EXAMPLES OF HOW TO MEET THE CODE
Respect other people and property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat other people and their possessions with respect. • Follow the bus driver's directions without argument. • Do not interfere with bus property, equipment, shelters and signs by marking or damaging them in any way.
Wait for the bus in an orderly manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait well back from the bus until it stops and allow other passengers to leave the bus first. • Stand quietly without calling out or shouting. • Do not push other people in the line.
Whilst on the bus, conduct yourself in an orderly manner	<p>Students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • always follow instructions from the driver about safety on the bus • show their bus pass, ticket or ID upon request • sit properly on a seat if one is available (in an allocated seat if directed by the driver) • if standing, remain in the area designated by the driver • store school bags under the seat or in appropriate luggage areas • speak quietly and not create unnecessary noise <p>Students must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bully other students • place feet on the seats • fight, spit or use offensive language • throw any article around or from the bus • consume food or drink, or play music without permission of the driver • smoke (prohibited on all buses) • allow any portion of their body to protrude out of the bus windows • stand forward of the front seat
Use designated stops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the responsibility of students to disembark at their correct designated stop.
When alighting from the bus, do so in an orderly manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait until the bus stops before standing to get off. • Alight from the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion. • Never cross the road in front of the bus, wait until the bus has moved away and it is safe to do so. • Use crossings or traffic lights if available.
In case of an emergency or a breakdown, follow the driver's direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait until the bus stops before standing to get off. • Leave the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion. • Wait in the area indicated by the driver.

As part of the process following a breach of the code of conduct, students may be refused travel for a temporary period or in some cases permanently.

6.3.3 Bus operators

A bus operator is a person (including a company, local authority or other organisation) carrying on the business of providing a public transport service. Bus operators are responsible for providing their drivers with training in managing the behaviour of children on buses and for ensuring they know of the policies and procedures to be followed when a student breaches the code of conduct. Where a bus driver reports a breach of the code of conduct, the responsibility for follow-up with the parents/carers, school principal, and conveyance committee (if applicable) lies with the bus operator. Bus operators have the authority to refuse a student travel when this is done in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6 of this document.

Serious cases of failure by bus operators to comply with guidelines in this code of conduct may lead to operator accreditation being suspended or cancelled.

6.3.4 Drivers

Drivers of buses have the important role of driving the bus in a safe manner as well as ensuring the safety and security of all passengers. Drivers are also required to issue directions to ensure the safety of all passengers. Consequently, it is important that all passengers respect the authority of drivers while they are in control of a vehicle.

Bus drivers are responsible for the day to day management of the behaviour of students travelling to and from school. In cases where a student breaches the code of conduct the driver will be responsible for following procedures as outlined in Sections 4 and 6. Depending on the nature of the breach, this may involve simply cautioning the student or recording the breach as part of the driver's own record, or reporting the incident to the bus operator for follow-up.

In addition, drivers whilst in charge of a bus must:

- hold appropriate driver authorisation;
- not use abusive or offensive language;
- not leave the bus while students are being carried except in cases of emergency or when the bus is stopped (engine off with key removed and handbrake on);
- maintain a written record of student misconduct and report to the bus operator as required in accordance with the operator's quality assurance system;
- generally maintain personal standards of behaviour in keeping with other professionals who are responsible for the care of children;
- advise dangerous occurrences to appropriate agencies, e.g. Police.

Serious cases of failure by drivers to comply with guidelines in this code of conduct may lead to driver authorisation being suspended or cancelled.

6.3.5 School Principals

School principals play a key role in advising their students of the code of conduct and the consequences of breaching the code. School principals may provide valuable assistance in suggesting approaches to managing breaches of the code of conduct in consultation with the operator, parents/carers and conveyance committee (if applicable).

6.3.6 Conveyance Committees

Conveyance committees have an important role in the administration of kilometre-based school bus services. Their role in assisting bus operators in maintaining the discipline of students on services is essential to the effective management of these services.

Conveyance committees should cooperate with the bus operator and school principal to ensure that appropriate behaviour standards are maintained on the service.

6.3.7 Queensland Transport

Queensland Transport has overall administrative responsibility for public transport in Queensland. Queensland Transport has responsibility for developing, in consultation with school organisations, transport operators and parent groups, both the code of conduct for students travelling on public transport and the broad framework for managing instances of misbehaviour on buses.

Queensland Transport is also responsible for:

- the investigation of complaints concerning operators and/or drivers who have not acted in accordance with the code of conduct guidelines.
- monitoring and reviewing bus operators' compliance with the code of conduct as part of the regular quality and contract review processes.

6.4 Responding to breaches of the code of conduct

6.4.1 Working with the procedures and refusing travel to a student - principles for drivers and operators to observe

The procedures for responding to breaches of the code of conduct provide a framework within which operators should act to manage cases of misbehaviour on buses. In all cases, consultation with parents/carers must take place. School principals and conveyance committees (if applicable) must also be consulted in determining the approach to be taken by bus operators in managing breaches of the code of conduct.

The response in each case of misbehaviour must include consideration of the circumstances surrounding the event, and in particular the extent to which the safety, security and well being of other passengers and the driver are threatened by the behaviour.

When the code of conduct has been breached action may range from a caution to refusal of the student's future travel on the bus. Where an operator considers some other arrangement would be the most appropriate course, as opposed to refusing travel, the parent/carer must be fully consulted and in agreement with any arrangement concerning their child. While other such arrangements may be an alternative to refusing a student travel, operators can only make such arrangements after the parent/carer has given written agreement to the operator.

Specific factors to consider as part of determining the appropriate response to a breach of the code of conduct include:

- the threat to the safety of passengers on the bus and the nature of the incident
- the age of the student
- whether the breach was a first or one of a series of repeated incidents about which the student has been previously cautioned
- the extent to which the breach distracted the driver

For example, it would be expected that a more serious response would be required where students are throwing articles from or around the bus than would be required if students were eating on the bus.

The decision by a bus driver to refer a breach to the operator for further action will finally depend on the driver determining that such action is required to ensure the ongoing safe operation of the bus and the wellbeing and security of other passengers. This may mean, for example, that repeated attempts by the driver to control the behaviour have been unsuccessful or the nature of a single breach of the code has been severe enough to warrant further action.

Bus operators should ensure that they retain a record of actions taken when a breach of the code of conduct is referred by a driver for further action.

Only bus operator management will make the final decision to refuse travel to a student. This will be done only after the matter has been discussed with the school principal, parents/carers and conveyance committee (if applicable). It may be considered, following such discussion, that some form of action other than refusal of travel is appropriate.

A student may be refused travel from:

- (a) the individual bus service on which the student was a passenger at the time of the misbehaviour; or
- (b) all bus services operated by the same bus operator.

A decision to refuse travel on all bus services operated by the same bus operator can only be made by the operator after consultation with the parent/carer, school principal and conveyance committee (if applicable). Refusal of travel is normally limited to scheduled bus services (i.e. services to and from school and general services). A student can not be refused travel on journeys directly involving school excursions, sport, etc., if:

1. The student is not currently being refused travel because of a previous breach to the code of conduct on a similar type of journey; and
2. The school can provide adequate close supervision of the student during the journey. In most cases, this will require that the student sits next to the teacher or supervising adult.

The operator must notify the parents/carers before refusing travel so that alternative travel arrangements can be made. Any verbal advice to parents/carers must be followed in writing by the bus operator. The school principal should be advised of the details. The local office of Queensland Transport is also to be notified in cases where students eligible for transport assistance are refused travel.

6.5 Categories of breaches of the code of conduct

To promote consistency in responding to breaches of the code of conduct, behaviour problems have been divided into four categories.

Should a parent/carer have any question about decisions taken by an operator, in responding to breaches of the code of conduct, they should take the matter to the operator concerned. If a parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the operator's decision they may contact the nearest Queensland Transport Office as shown on page 54. (See 6.7 'Complaint Process for Students Refused Travel', page 32 for details of the process for complaints).

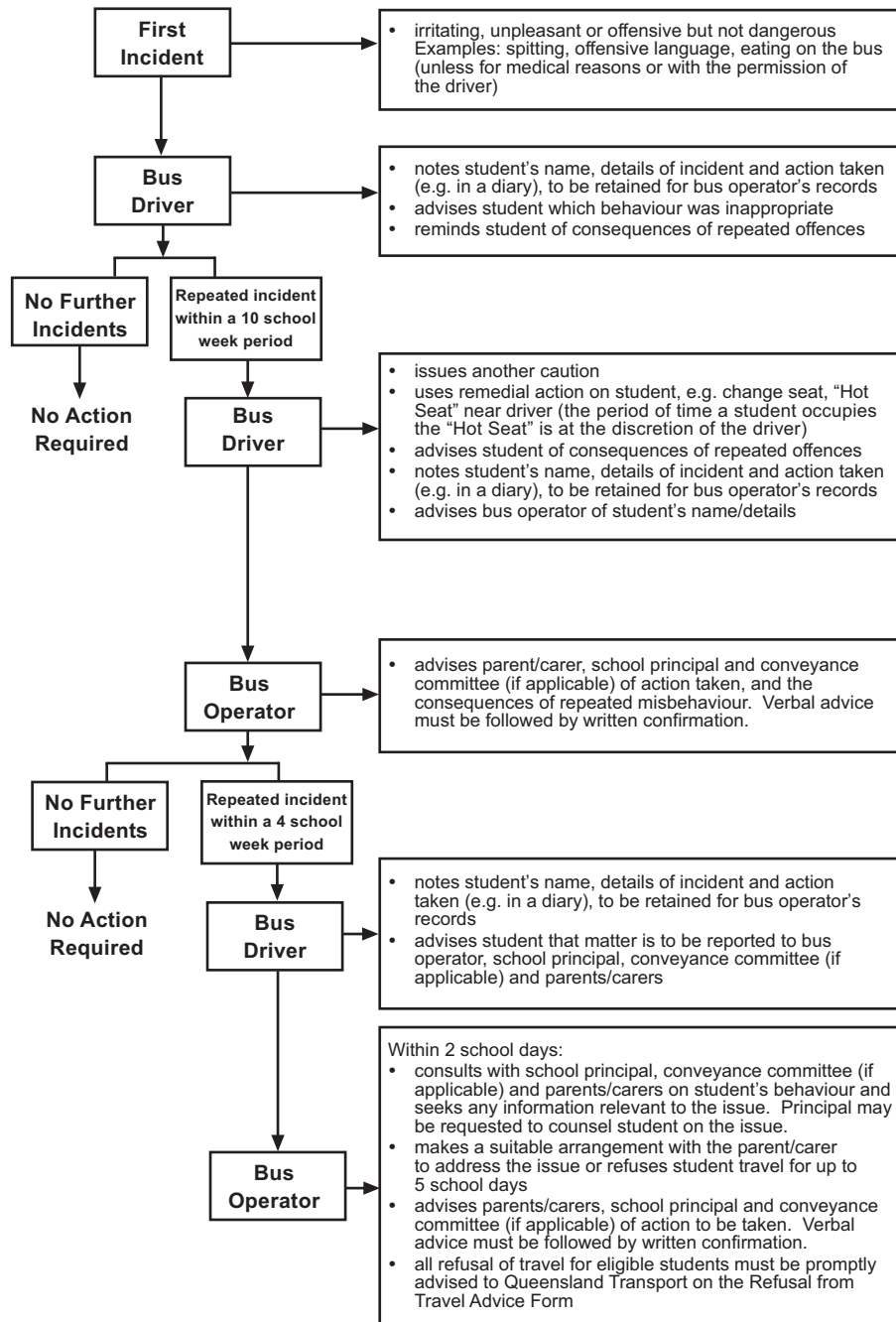
Operators should note that Queensland Transport may issue an instruction that an operator's decision to refuse travel to a student be delayed while the matter is being investigated. The bus operator and/or driver must follow this instruction.

- (1) **Nuisance and Offensive Behaviour** - This includes behaviours which may be irritating, unpleasant but not physically dangerous behaviours.
- failing to show a bus pass where required
 - eating on the bus (unless for medical reasons or with the permission of the driver)
 - spitting
 - using offensive language
- (2) **Dangerous Behaviour** - This category includes behaviours where there may be some physical danger to individuals.
- distracting the driver by persistent noise
 - allowing any part of their body to protrude from the bus
 - grabbing trees through the windows
 - harassing and bullying other passengers
 - stopping others from disembarking at their stop
 - verbally threatening the driver
 - standing on steps
 - pressing the stop button continually
 - swinging on bus handrails
- (3) **Very Destructive and Dangerous Behaviour** - This category includes behaviours which are very dangerous to individuals, or very destructive.
- throwing objects that have the potential to cause harm or damage
 - fighting
 - marking or damaging bus property (breaking windows, slashing seats, etc.)
 - repeated occurrences of dangerous behaviour
- (4) **Highly Dangerous Life Threatening Behaviour** - This includes highly dangerous behaviours.
- physically attacking the driver or other passengers
 - pushing students out through the doors or windows
 - lighting a fire on the bus
 - interfering with the safe mechanical operation of the bus
 - threatening physical harm with a dangerous weapon.

6.6 Procedures for Bus Drivers and Operators for Dealing with Breaches of the Code of Conduct

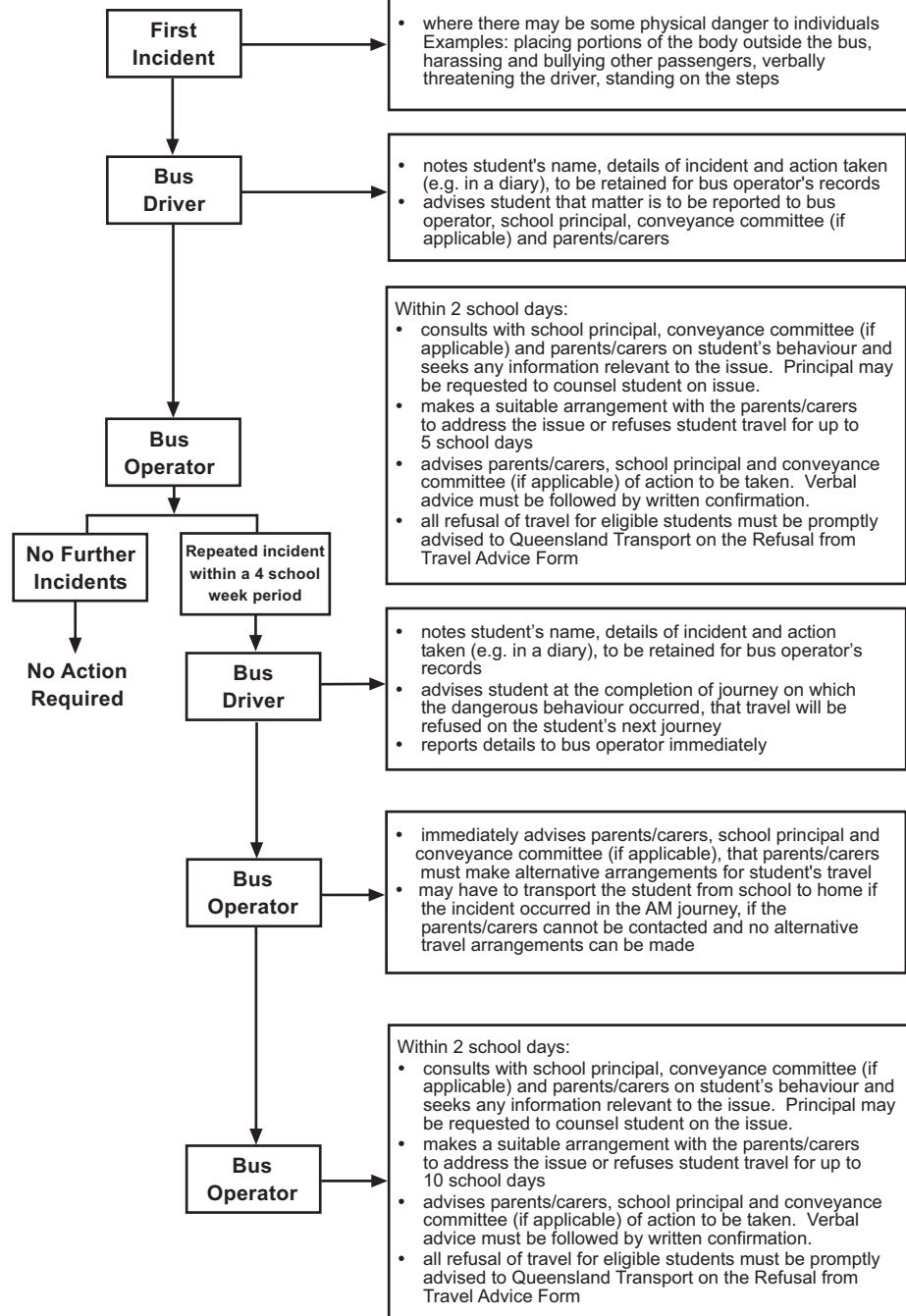
Category 1

Nuisance and Offensive Behaviour

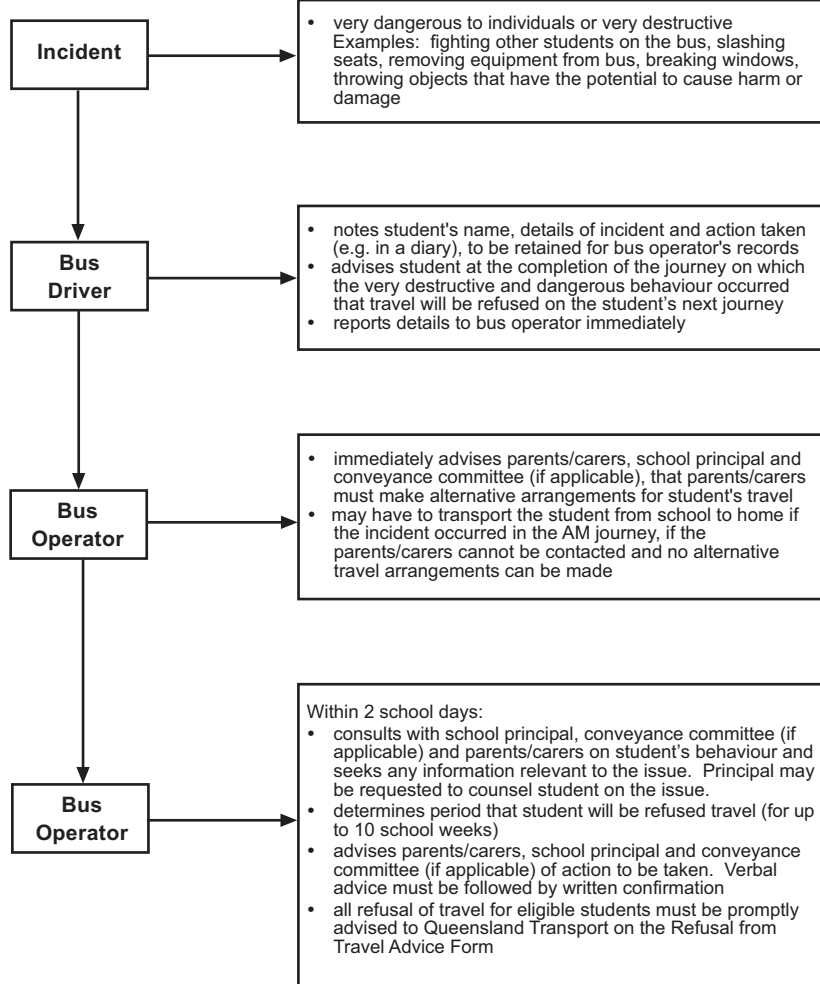


Category 2

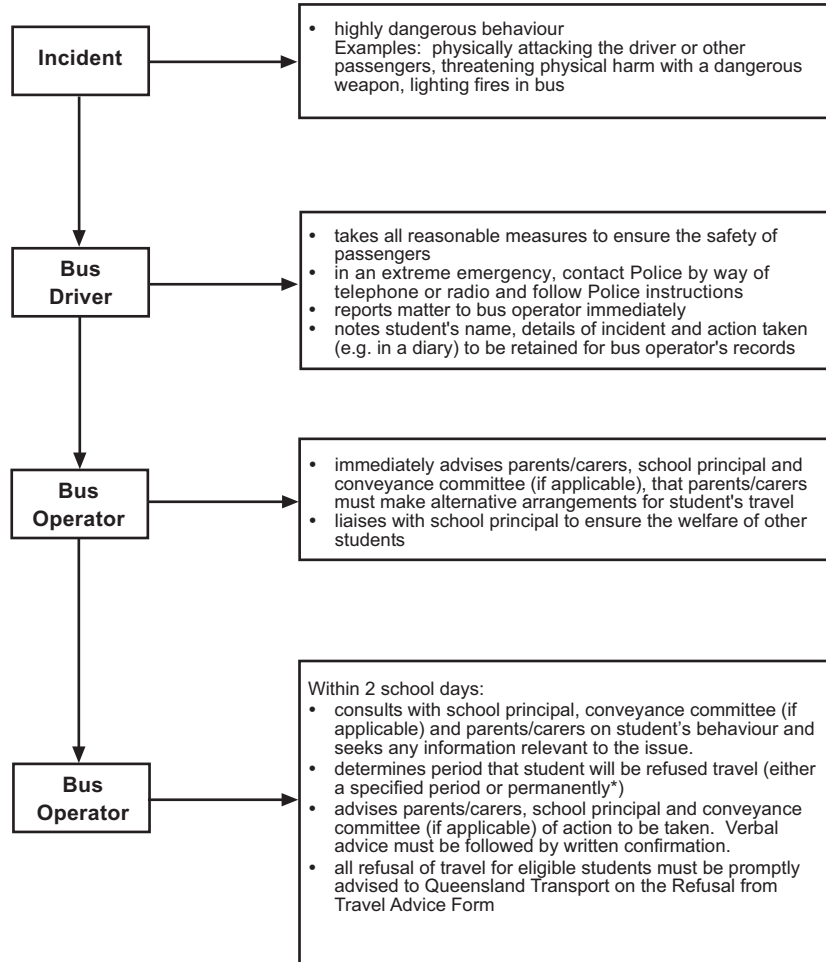
Dangerous Behaviour



Category 3 Very Destructive and Dangerous Behaviour

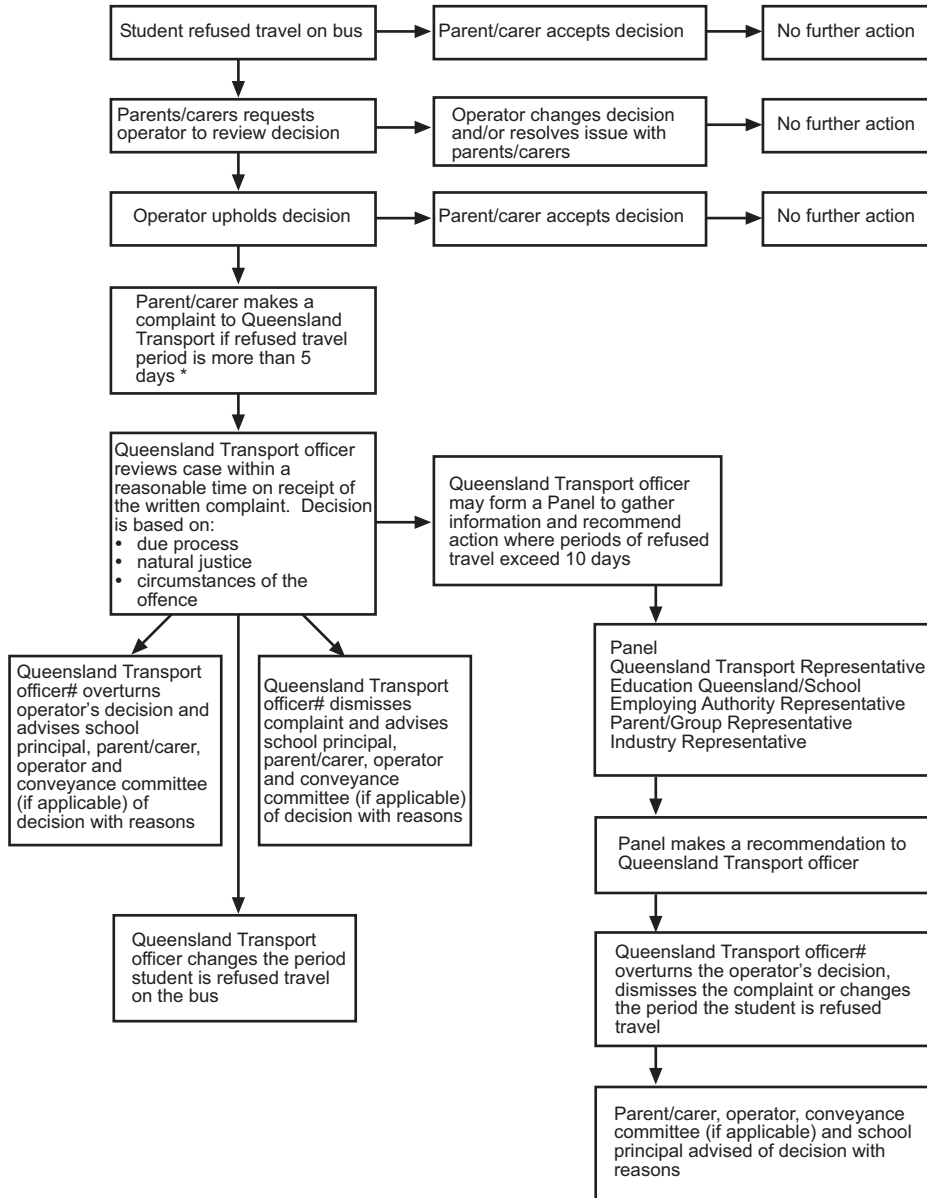


Category 4 Highly Dangerous, Life Threatening Behaviour



* **NOTE:** Where a student has been permanently refused travel on a bus and there is a subsequent change in behavioural circumstances the parents/carers may request that the decision be reviewed by the operator. The operator may uphold the original decision or may impose special conditions on the student's return to travel on the bus.

6.7 Complaint Process for Students Refused Travel



* may be less than 5 days in exceptional circumstances

The Queensland Transport officer does not have the power to vary the policy or guidelines of the School Transport Assistance Scheme or other approved government policies, which include transferring eligibility to alternative bus services.

7 Administrative Arrangements

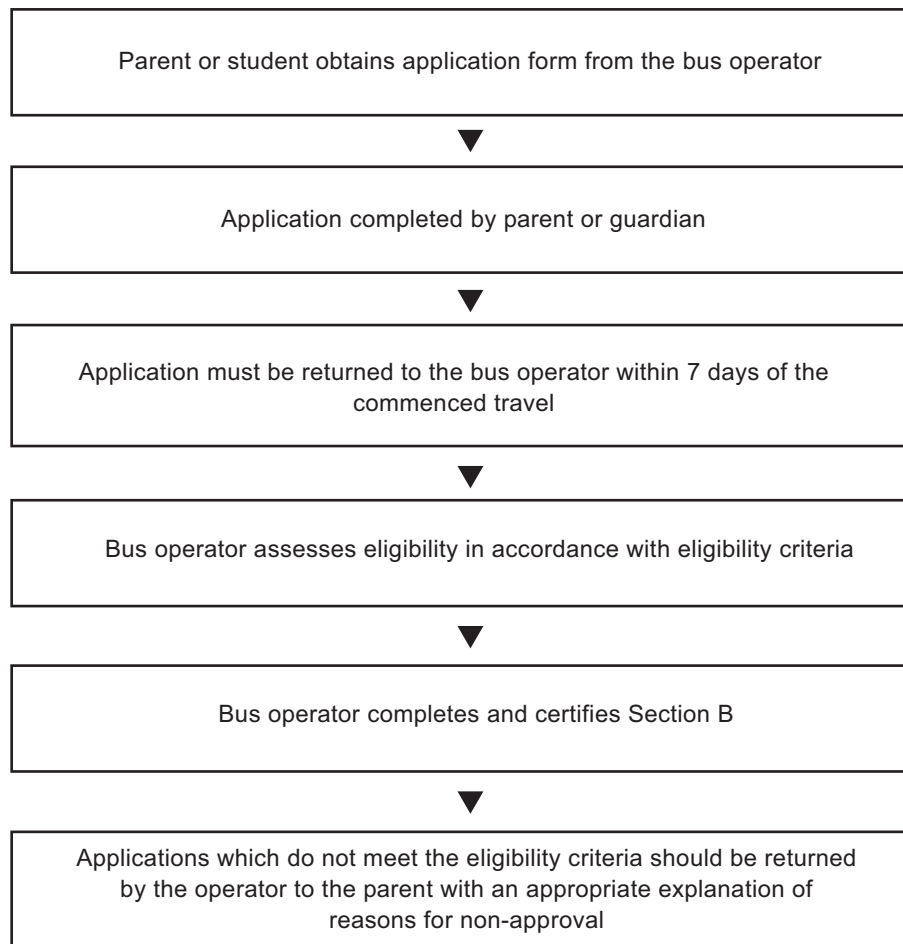
The School Transport Information Management System (STIMS) database has been developed to administer the School Transport Assistance Scheme. The database is used for the day to day functions associated with processing of application forms and payments to bus companies for the provision of transport services.

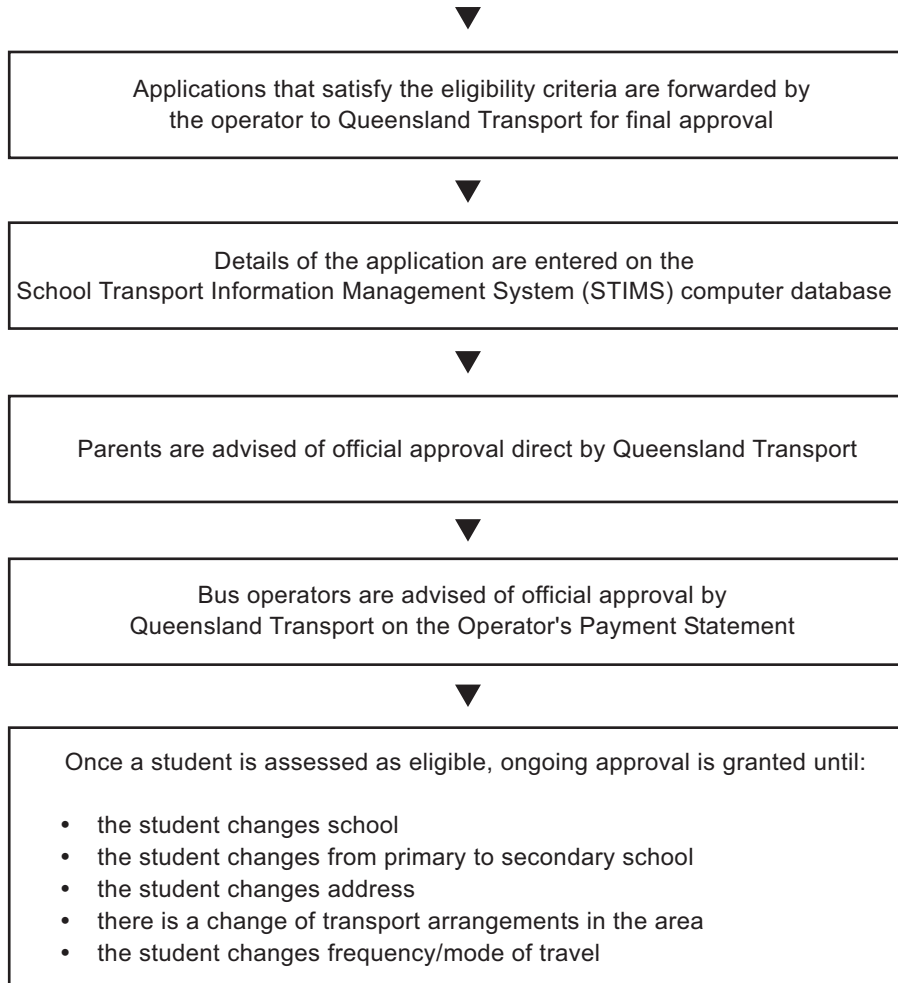
7.1 Bus travel assistance applications

All operators are issued with "Bus Travel Assistance Application" and "Bus Travel Assistance Safety-Net Application" forms which are to be completed in full by the parent. Applications can only be accepted for the current school year.

7.2 Distance eligible students

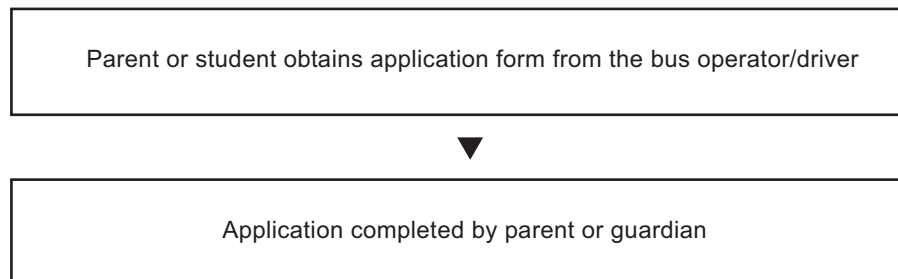
A brief outline of the approval procedure for distance eligible students is shown below:

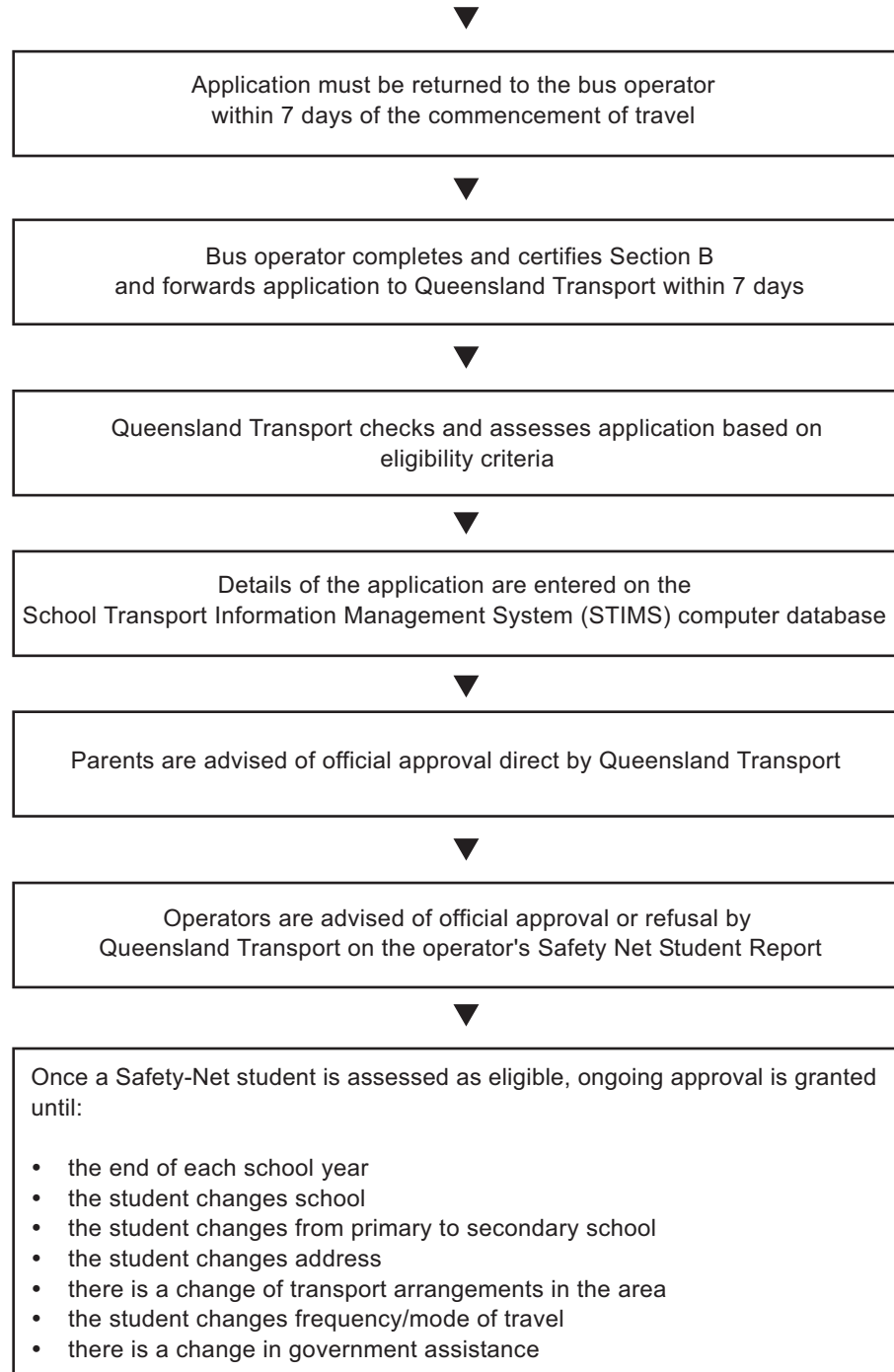




7.3 Safety-net eligible students

A brief outline of the approval procedure for safety-net eligible students is shown below:





7.4 Verification reports for bus operators

To ensure the accuracy of student numbers on buses, operator verification reports are forwarded to bus operators on a regular basis.

Bus companies should check these reports for accuracy, ensuring that:

- all details are correct
- applications have been submitted for all students who do not appear on the report
- all students who no longer use the service have been deleted

After checking and noting, bus companies should sign and return the verification report to the local Queensland Transport Office. Under audit requirements further payments may be suspended if operator verification reports are not returned by the due date.

7.5 Verification reports for schools

A similar verification report is forwarded to schools each term to enable them to confirm and update details for each student. This ongoing process enables STIMS data to be maintained in an accurate form.

7.6 Deletion notification form

A School Transport Assistance Scheme Deletion Notification Form should be forwarded by the bus operator to the local Queensland Transport Office for students who no longer use the service.

7.7 Basis of payment

Parents/guardians are required to lodge their application form with the bus operator within seven days of the student commencing use of the bus service. However, Queensland Transport will accept application forms from bus operators for eligible students at any stage during the year in which the student commenced travel. Payment for travel in the current school year will be made provided the operator has not previously received a fare or other consideration in respect of that travel.

If an application form is received for a student that commenced travel prior to the current school year Queensland Transport will only make payments for the student from the first school day of the current school year.

Where a student has ceased travel in the current school year Queensland Transport will recover any payments made to the operator in respect of the student after the date that the student ceased travel.

Payment to bus operators is made strictly in accordance with the STAS Fare Schedule issued by Queensland Transport.

Payment systems for bus operators are modified to a formula basis to reflect average travel patterns of students travelling to school.

This process involves a percentage formula adjustment of 10% to the weekly STAS fare (that is, a maximum payment of nine single fares). This adjustment is to reflect non-usage of services by students and eliminates the necessity for operators and schools to undertake detailed individual check of student attendance.

Queensland Transport will only make payment to an operator for school days that services must operate, as outlined in section 7.14.

7.8 Payment Calculation for Frequency of Travel

7.8.1 Distance Eligible Students

Payment is calculated on the following basis:

Frequency of Travel	Method of Calculation
2 - 5 trips (20% to 50% travel)	Operators will be paid five times the single STAS fare
6 - 10 trips (60% to 100% travel)	Weekly STAS fare 10 trips x single fare, less the formula adjustment of 10%

The above formula payment method also applies to the small number of operators where STAS fares do not apply eg. ferry services.

7.8.2 Safety-net eligible students

Safety-Net provides assistance towards the actual costs of travel for students. Operators will be paid the maximum safety-net benefit for all safety-net eligible students.

7.9 Payment Procedures

In general terms, the School Transport Information Management System will produce payment details for each operator on a regular basis. The dates on which payment is generated are specified by Queensland Transport each year.

Payment can be deposited directly into an operator's bank account through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

The bus operator will receive the following documentation:

- Cheque (one cheque covers all routes) for those operators choosing not to use EFT
- Fares-Based Operator Statement
- Fares-Based Recipient Created Tax Invoice
- Fares-Based Exception Report

This documentation is forwarded to the operator early in the week after the pay period closes.

Upon receipt of the documentation, the operator should check all details on the Fares-Based Operator Statement and ensure that all transactions are correct. The Statement itemises transactions and provides a brief explanation of each adjustment category.

If any irregularities are found in the payment following checking of all documentation, the operator should note these on the Exception Report provided.

The operator should sign the Recipient Created Tax Invoice and Exception Report and return these forms to the local Queensland Transport Office.

Under audit requirements, further payments cannot be made until the Fares-Based Recipient Created Tax Invoice is returned to Queensland Transport.

7.10 Adjustments

The majority of adjustments are made as a result of information provided by parents/carers and schools, direct to Queensland Transport.

Operators are also encouraged to establish procedures on a local basis to enable prompt notification by students of changes in transport arrangements. These procedures could take the form of regular contact with schools for early advice of students who leave, as well as incentives for students to hand in their passes when they cease to travel.

7.11 Payment Dates

Payment to bus companies involved in the transport of school students is made strictly in accordance with the dates specified by Queensland Transport.

The dates on which payment is made for particular claim periods will be notified to all bus operators each year.

7.12 Pro Forma

The following standard pro forma to be used are available from Queensland Transport offices:

- Bus Travel Assistance Application Form
- Bus Travel Assistance Safety-Net Application
- Operator Verification Report
- Fares-Based Recipient Created Tax Invoice
- Fares-Based Operator Statement
- School Transport Assistance Scheme Deletion Notification
- Fares-Based Exception Report

7.13 Tax implications for operator payments

As a result of the implementation of the Commonwealth Government's Tax Reform Package operators are required to supply Queensland Transport with certain tax related information.

- Australian Business Number (ABN)

All operators who have registered for and acquired an ABN should provide details of this number to Queensland Transport.

Operators who do not provide Queensland Transport with an ABN will have withholding tax withheld from their payment. This tax is remitted to the Australian Tax Office by Queensland Transport.

- Registration for GST

All operators who are registered for GST should provide their ABN and GST registration details to Queensland Transport.

Operators will only be paid the GST amount by Queensland Transport for services they supply if they are GST registered.

This information will ensure that the Department continues to make school transport payments correctly as quickly as possible. A pro forma to complete and advise Queensland Transport of these details is available from the local Queensland Transport office.

7.14 Days that school services must operate

An operator is required to provide contract services on all "school days". Queensland Transport will only make payments to an operator for "school days" that a service must operate, as outlined in this section.

A “school day” is:

- i) a day of the school year numbered on the School Calendar published by the Department of Education and the Arts for the current school year and includes a gazetted local show holiday and a Ministerial special holiday for students, and
- ii) a day occurring a date set and published by the Department of Education and the Arts for the current school year as a student-free day that occurs within the gazetted summer vacation (December/January) school holidays.

*This information can be found on the link to the School Calendar for the current year on the webpage located on the Department of Education and the Arts’ website at
http://education.qld.gov.au/public_media/calendar/holidays.html*

An operator may provide a reduced level of service on any “school day” on which:

- i) at least one of the schools serviced directly or indirectly by a Contract Service is not open for instruction of the students of that school.
- ii) all students in at least one year level will not attend a school that is serviced directly or indirectly by a Contract Service.

On any school day on which (i) or (ii) applies, the operator must provide a level of service sufficient to transport those eligible students:

- (i) who regularly travel on Contract Services; and
- (ii) who require, or would be expected to require, transport to or from school on that school day.

Under this requirement operators must operate an appropriate level of service:

- To provide transport for non-state school students whose school is open on a school day when state school students do not attend.
- Provide transport for the students of any school that is open on a school day when some or all other schools serviced by the operator are closed.

Examples

A reduced level of service can occur on a school day for:

- The local gazetted show holiday (different dates all over the state) eg. some services cross shire/city boundaries to schools in each location but which have different shows gazetted on different dates.
- The ministerial special holiday (date on which this is taken is at the discretion of each individual school).
- State schools in the north/west that finish early and have an extra week school vacation at the end of the year.
- Year levels eg. 10/11 or 12 that finish earlier at end of year.
- Non-state schools taking extra school vacation holidays at the end of the year and/or during the year.
- Student free days. Some non-state schools will be open on these days when state schools are closed and instead may close for a student free day on a different school day when state schools are open.

8 Power-train retarder guidelines

8.1 Introduction

From 1 July 2003, a single payment to reimburse operators for the additional costs incurred with the retrofitting of a power-train retarder (driveline retarder or engine brakes) replaces the periodic payment of the mountainous terrain allowance. The aim of this payment is to encourage operators to provide buses that are fitted with a power-train retarder on services carrying STAS eligible school students over the designated mountainous terrain.

Operators should note that many newer buses have power-train retarders fitted as standard equipment. Because this manufacturing trend is expected to continue, this payment should only be regarded as a transitional arrangement and may be reviewed or discontinued in time.

8.2 Conditions

For an operator to be eligible for the payment, the following conditions apply:

- The bus must be used only or primarily for the transport of eligible school students.
- The bus must operate over a road or section of road which has the geometry which would qualify it for categorisation as a long steep downgrade or a very steep downgrade and has been notified by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport, under the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2000* as not allowing the carriage of standing passengers. A list of these roads can be obtained from your local Queensland Transport office.
- The bus must be retrofitted (see note below) with a power-train retarder.
- The operator must ensure that all drivers who operate vehicles over this terrain are fully trained in the operation of the power-train retarder.

Note: A new bus fitted with a power-train retarder as standard equipment or a secondhand bus already fitted with a power-train retarder does not qualify for this payment.

8.3 Determining if a road or section of a road is a long steep downgrade or a very steep downgrade

Operators who are unsure if the road or section of road meets the criteria for a long steep downgrade or very steep downgrade should contact their local Queensland Transport office. Queensland Transport staff will liaise with the relevant road authority to check if the road qualifies under the guidelines for long steep downgrade or very steep downgrade.

8.4 Application for a road or section of a road to be notified as not allowing for the carriage of standing passengers

Operators will need to apply to the local Queensland Transport office for a road or section of a road to be notified as not allowing for the carriage of standing passengers.

Before a road or section of a road is notified as not allowing for standing passengers, a number of factors are considered.

Officers from the local Queensland Transport office will liaise with engineers from the relevant road authority (Main Roads or local government) before submitting the operator's application to Queensland Transport (Passenger Transport Division) for consideration.

8.5 Approved power-train retarders

To be eligible for the payment the vehicle must be fitted with either:

- (a) engine brakes (often referred to as jake brakes), or
- (b) a driveline retarder

There are two types of approved driveline retarders, hydraulic (hydrodynamic) retarders and electric or electromagnetic retarders (also referred to as an eddy current brake).

A power-train retarder must be sized to keep the speed of the vehicle as controlled by the power-train retarder, or by the power-train retarder and minor use of the service brake, at or under:

- (i) the speed limit, and
- (ii) where an advisory speed sign is installed on the road, the speed displayed on that sign.

Please note exhaust brakes do **not** qualify. This is because driveline retarders and engine brakes are considered to be the most appropriate auxiliary braking systems for vehicles operating over a long steep downgrade or a very steep downgrade.

8.6 How do operators apply for reimbursement?

A School Bus Power-Train Retarder Retrofitting Cost Refund Application Form is available from operators' local Queensland Transport office. The completed application form must be forwarded to the local Queensland Transport office and be approved by Queensland Transport prior to the purchase of the bus or prior to the retrofitting of a power-train retarded to an existing bus in their fleet. An

itemised costing or quote for the supply and fitting of the power-train retarder is to be included with the application.

If the bus is to be purchased under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme (SchoolBUS), Queensland Transport will ask the operator to supply the costing details of the power-train retarder during the SchoolBUS approval process (where the power-train retarder is a retrofit).

8.7 Funding Limitations

The funding provided by Queensland Transport for the retrofitting of a power-train retarder is limited by the following:

- if the bus (less than 5 years old*) is purchased under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme (SchoolBUS), it is a condition of that scheme that the bus operate on the nominated route for the period of its economic life (15 years for a heavy bus or 12 years for a light bus*), or
- for buses that are not purchased under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme (SchoolBUS), the bus operates on the nominated route for 10 years from the date of retrofitting the power-train retarder to the bus

* from date of compliance plate

If the bus is replaced before the conclusion of the relevant period above, the cost of retrofitting a power-train retarder to the replacement bus will be discounted by the pro-rata unused portion of that period.

Buses purchased under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme (SchoolBUS)

The Chief Executive may limit the funding provided if it is considered that the combined cost of the bus and the retrofit of a power-train retarder is not economic when compared to the cost of vehicles that are available with power-train retarders as standard equipment.

Buses **not** purchased under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme (SchoolBUS)

Payments to fares-based operators will be limited to the number of vehicles required to transport distance eligible school students on the section of each route identified as being a long steep downgrade or a very steep downgrade.

The following are examples of how to determine the number of vehicles that may qualify for reimbursement of the costs of retrofitting a power-train retarder to buses used on fares based services.

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EXAMPLE A

Route	Vehicle	Category of Vehicle	Adult Seats	Number of Distance Eligible Students Transported on Vehicle	
				Primary	Secondary
S1234	1	C4	50	10	45
S1234	2	C4	50	8	28
S1234	3	C3	40	5	20
TOTALS			140	23	93
			Converted to Adult Seats (Allowing 3 for 2 seating for primary students)	109	

In example A on Route S1234 the operator may apply for reimbursement of the cost of retrofitting a power-train retarder to all three vehicles, because all three vehicles are required to transport the number of eligible students.

EXAMPLE B

Route	Vehicle	Category of Vehicle	Adult Seats	Number of Distance Eligible Students Transported on Vehicle	
				Primary	Secondary
S4321	1	C3	40	10	20
S4321	2	C3	40	5	20
S4321	3	C2	22	6	15
TOTALS			102	21	55
			Converted to Adult Seats (Allowing 3 for 2 seating for primary students)	69	

In Example B on Route S4321, the operator may only apply for reimbursement of the cost of retrofitting a power-train retarder to vehicles 1 and 2, because the total number of eligible students could be transported in these two vehicles.

The local Queensland Transport office will perform actual calculations for each individual route and operator.

9 Standards

Bus operators should ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2000.

9.1 Drivers

All drivers must hold current appropriate driver authorisation issued by Queensland Transport.

The purpose of driver authorisation is to ensure drivers of public passenger vehicles:

- (a) are capable of safely operating the relevant type of vehicle
- (b) are aware of their customer service responsibilities
- (c) conduct themselves appropriately.

9.2 Service

All drivers must be competent in providing customer service by:

- behaving courteously towards passengers and the public
- maintaining a high level of discipline amongst school student passengers
- advising the school principal promptly of any discipline problems
- following advertised routes and timetables.

9.3 Vehicles

All vehicles must be of a design and construction that makes them safe to provide a public passenger service.

They must comply with:

- Australian Design Rules at the date of manufacture, or
- Code of Practice Omnibus Licensing Evaluation S6 (buses manufactured before 20 May 1992).

9.4 Type and age

All vehicles must be of a type and age that is safe for the particular service being provided.

They must comply with Queensland Transport Information Bulletins as issued from time to time. These include:

- Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Buses
- Cosmetic Standards (Urban, Minor, School & Long Distance Scheduled Services)
- Heavy Bus Service Life Extensions
- Maintenance of Public Passenger Vehicles
- OA Display on Passenger Transport Vehicles
- Public Passenger Vehicle Type, Age & Use Standards
- Safety Padding for Bus Handrails, Seats & Partitions
- School Bus Warning Lights & Signs
- Structural Inspection & Repair of Buses.

9.5 Operation

All vehicles must be in a safe condition to provide a public passenger service, and:

- comply with the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Legislation and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Legislation.
- have the appropriate current registration and third party insurance.

9.6 Operational safety

Vehicles must be operated safely and, in particular:

- must not be overloaded
- may carry persons who are standing only if:
 - the buses are specifically designed and constructed for the purpose
 - the persons standing travel for less than 20 km
- with the exception of primary and preschool students, vehicles must not carry more than one seated passenger per single seat.

9.7 Bus seating

Three primary or preschool children may be carried in a bench type bus seat designed for two adults if:

- the seat is not required to be fitted with seat belts; and
- the placement and construction of the seat allows; and
- the journey time of the third child in the seat is not longer than 90 minutes.

10 Fares

10.1 School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS) Fare Schedule

The STAS Fare Schedule has two (2) fare scales which are used by Queensland Transport for the bus travel assistance payment made to operators for distance eligible students. The Schedule only applies to fares-based school bus operators. It does not relate to cash fares.

The fare scale applied by Queensland Transport to an operator payment is determined by the following:

- Energy Grants Credits Scheme (EGCS)

Under the EGCS, the Australian Tax Office provides a grant to eligible transport operators on the price of diesel and alternative fuel purchased as part of their business.

The grant applies to on-road use of a vehicle with a GVM over 4.5 tonnes outside set geographical boundaries of the metropolitan areas of Sunshine Coast - Brisbane - Gold Coast defined by the Australian Tax Office.

As an operator's eligibility for the EGCS will reduce fuel costs, the STAS fare scale to apply will depend on whether or not the operator is eligible for the grant and is paid on the basis that all services are EGCS eligible or all services are not EGCS eligible.

It is recognised that, in a small number of cases, an operator will have services which are totally within the metropolitan boundaries, as well as services which are outside or cross the metropolitan boundaries. Where this occurs, the operator will have a mixture of services eligible and not eligible for the EGCS and is paid the lower fare scale for all services. To compensate for the proportion of STAS kilometres for distance eligible students which is not subject to a grant under the EGCS, the operator must apply to Queensland Transport for a top-up amount to be paid. This top-up amount is individually calculated for each operator.

The STAS fare schedule is issued from time to time by Queensland Transport, usually at the beginning of each calendar year.

The standard STAS fare schedule uses uniform cost increments to establish section or zonal fares for service contract areas or routes. These fare zones or sections are determined on the following basis:

- The fare calculation scale is based on standard 1.6 kilometre distance cost increments.

Note: This is not to be interpreted as a requirement for bus operators to adopt 1.6 kilometre zones/sections. The 1.6 kilometre distance increments are used to determine the distance cost which is representative of the average distance travelled for the students in the zone/section. Zone structures are to be negotiated between the operator and Queensland Transport.

- The fare payable for each student will be calculated by the shortest trafficable distance between the boarding point and the school which eligibility is based on, not necessarily aligned to the bus route.

Note: For bus services based on fare zones, an eligible student's boarding point is regarded as being the zone in which the student resides. For bus services based on fare sections the boarding point is regarded as being that point on the bus route closest to the student's residence by the shortest trafficable distance. The only cases where this would not apply is where the student nominates a boarding zone/section closer to the school than the residence.

- A maximum of nine single journeys per week will be paid to account for students not attending school due to factors such as absenteeism and public holidays.

10.2 Non-STAS fares

In some instances, distance eligible students may not be able to travel to school by bus and must use another form of travel, for example, a ferry service. The Chief Executive, Queensland Transport may recognise these types of services as approved services for the transport of distance eligible students. Where this occurs a fare scale appropriate to the operation of each individual service is approved by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport. Fares approved under these arrangements may be adjusted when the periodic review of other school transport assistance scheme fares is undertaken.

10.3 Safety-net fares

Queensland Transport will pay the appropriate level in safety-net assistance directly to the bus operator. The Safety-Net levels of payment for primary and secondary students are issued by Queensland Transport at the beginning of each calendar year.

Parents/students must pay any excess fare directly to the bus operator where the fare from the bus operator's cash fare schedule exceeds the safety-net level of payment.

10.4 Part passes

10.4.1 Distance eligible students

While there are a variety of methods used for the issue of part passes, the following must be observed when calculating the top-up fare amount.

- (a) Part pass top-ups are a cash fare. As such, they are subject to the same guidelines as cash fares (see Cash Fare section).
- (b) The maximum cash fare that an operator can charge for the top-up is taken from their cash fare levels that are authorised by Queensland Transport from time to time.
- (c) Where a top-up fare is charged, the operator must make arrangements for students to pay the top-up on a per trip or weekly basis.
- (d) The distance applicable should be calculated as follows:

Example

Shortest trafficable journey, boarding point to school attended	15 km
Shortest trafficable journey, boarding point* to closest state school	<u>10 km</u>
*as defined in section 10.1	5 km
High School single cash fare for 5 km	\$2.45 (in 2006)
Primary School single cash fare for 5 km	\$1.85 (in 2006)

Note 1: This is an example of the maximum part pass top-up fares. An operator may have current approved cash fare levels that are lower than the maximum. If so they can not charge more than their current approved cash fare levels. An operator may also choose to charge a lower amount.

Note 2: Where an operator has a weekly fare with no established single fare, the single fare should be set in accordance with the standard discount rate applied by the operator to other fares i.e. if on all other sections 8 single trips = weekly fare, then the single fare will be calculated as 1/8 of the weekly fare. Where the operator does not apply a standard discount rate then the single fare may not exceed 12.5% of the weekly fare.

- (e) Should the part pass top-ups charged by a bus operator be above the maximum levels permitted under this policy, they should remain frozen at their current level.

A maximum 10% increase each six months may be applied to the cash fares provided:

- The fare increase is approved by Queensland Transport and due notice is provided to customers.
 - The base fare which is to be increased must be the actual part pass fare charged. It cannot be advanced, for example by CPI, and then a further 10%.
 - The only exception to this rule is where an operator previously charged no top-up as a commercial decision. In the first instance, they can instigate a fare of any amount up to the maximum.
- (f) As with other cash fares there is no requirement to offer weekly discounts.

10.4.2 Safety-net eligible students

In circumstances where a student is required to pay a top-up for the fare in excess of the government's contribution, the operator shall make arrangements for the student to pay the top-up on a per trip or weekly basis.

Where a student elects to travel less than the full school week, they may apply for 5 trips per week AM travel only or 5 trips per week PM travel only. Where this occurs, the operator shall make arrangements to identify the student as an AM or PM traveller.

Safety-net is a benefit towards the actual costs of travel for students. STIMS will pay operators the safety-net benefit (see 7.8.2 'Safety-net eligible students, page 37 for more details).

The following examples, detail the method for calculation of the maximum safety-net top-up fares to charge. Bus operators may charge any lower amount if they choose.

Example 1 - Top up for weekly travel

Weekly fare (from operator's approved cash fare schedule) #	\$15.60
less safety-net benefit (paid by Queensland Transport) *	- \$5.30*
	<hr/>
Weekly top-up	\$10.30

Discounted, where offered. In this example, 8 x \$1.95 single fare = weekly fare

If, in this case, the student, elected to pay the top up on a per trip basis, the calculation would be:

Single Fare \$1.95 x 10	\$19.50
less Safety-Net benefit (paid by Queensland Transport) *	\$5.30*
	<hr/>
Balance	\$14.20
divide balance by 10	÷ 10
	<hr/>
per trip top-up	\$1.42
per trip top-up (rounded to nearest 5 cents)	\$ 1.40

Example 2 - Top-up for AM or PM travel

Single Fare \$2.10 (from operator's approved cash fare schedule) x 5	\$10.50
less Safety-Net benefit (paid by Queensland Transport) *	- \$5.30*
	<hr/>
Balance	\$5.20
Divide balance by 5 (AM or PM trips)	÷ 5
	<hr/>
per trip top-up	\$1.04
per trip top-up (rounded to nearest 5 cents)	\$1.05

* This is an example only. The Safety-Net Benefit is assistance towards the cost of travel undertaken during a week. This benefit may vary from year to year.

NOTE: Where there is no established single fare, the single fare should be set in accordance with the standard discount rate applied by this operator (i.e. if on all other sections 8 single trips = weekly fare then the single fare will be calculated as 1/8 of the weekly fare). Where the operator does not apply a standard discount rate then the single fare may not exceed 12.5% of the weekly fare.

10.5 Cash fares

The School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule is published from time to time, and is available from Queensland Transport. This schedule of fares applies to all school services provided under a service contract unless the contract prescribes that the department's fares policy applies.

The fare payable by a passenger is calculated by the shortest trafficable distance between the point where the passenger boards the bus and the destination point, not necessarily aligned to the bus route.

It should be noted that the School Transport Cash Fare Schedule is the maximum allowable and is not a mandatory fare schedule. Where an operator charges fares below this maximum fare schedule, these fares may only be increased by a maximum of 10% each six months, until the maximum fare is reached (with due notice to customers and notification of fares to Queensland Transport).

There are no restrictions on discounts or variations such as weekly, monthly or term tickets as long as the maximum approved single fare is not exceeded.

Queensland Transport Offices



Queensland Government

Queensland Transport

11 Queensland Transport Offices

Brisbane
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 156
Zillmere Qld 4034
Phone (07) 3863 9849

Cairns
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 6542
Cairns Qld 4870
Phone (07) 4040 6372

Gold Coast
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 10420
Southport BC Qld 4215
Phone (07) 5630 8857

Ipswich
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 631
Ipswich Qld 4305
Phone (07) 3813 8613

Mackay
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 62
Mackay Qld 4740
Phone (07) 4951 8313

Maryborough
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 371
Maryborough Qld 4650
Phone (07) 4121 8315

Rockhampton
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 5096
Central Qld Mail Centre Qld 4702
Phone (07) 4931 1536

Roma
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 126
Roma Qld 4455
Phone (07) 4622 9522

Sunshine Coast
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 111
Mooloolaba Qld 4557
Phone (07) 5477 8400

Toowoomba
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 645
Toowoomba Qld 4350
Phone (07) 4639 0896

Townsville
Public Transport Unit
PO Box 7466
Garbutt BC Qld 4814
Phone (07) 4758 7544

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