

National Travel to Learn & School Bus Summit

The NSW Urban & Regional Environment

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NSW School Student Transport Scheme - SSTS

The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) provides eligible school students with free or subsidised travel from home to school.

The scheme includes:

- Free travel to and from home and school on approved train, bus, ferry and light rail services during school term.
- Free travel on NSW TrainLink Regional services and long distance coach services for boarding school students.
- Subsidised travel to and from school in private vehicles in areas where there is no public transport available.
- Primary and secondary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a School Term Bus Pass which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

SSTS - Eligibility

School students and some TAFE students may be eligible for a free school travel pass to and from home and school/TAFE.

Eligibility criteria:

- Students from Kindergarten - Year 2
- Primary school students from Years 3-6
- Secondary school students from Years 7-12
- TAFE students
- Boarding school students
- Non-Australian residents and students temporarily in Australia

Pre-school children are not eligible for subsidised travel between home and school under the SSTS.

SSTS - Eligibility Criteria

Kindergarten to Year 2 are all eligible. No criteria other than resident of NSW

Primary school students from Years 3-6 are eligible if:

1. they are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education;
2. the straight line distance from their home address to school is more than 1.6 km; or
3. the walking distance from home to school is 2.3 km or further.

Secondary school students from Years 7-12 are eligible if:

1. they are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education;
2. the straight line distance from their home address to school is more than 2 km; or
3. the walking distance from home to school is 2.9 km or further.

SSTS Eligibility Criteria

Boarding school students:

- Eligible boarding school students may either have a pass for daily travel **or** for weekend/vacation travel using NSW TrainLink train services and coach network.
- Boarding school students who have opted for weekend/vacation travel can travel free of charge on regular timetabled bus services when space is available.
- Long distance coach travel is available to boarding school students who cannot access regular scheduled services on NSW TrainLink train services and coach network.
- A subsidy may be paid towards the cost of driving boarding school students to school if no public transport is available.

SSTS Eligibility Criteria

TAFE students are eligible if:

1. They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
2. They are under 18 years of age at 1 January of the year of application.
3. They are enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 16 hours per week.
4. They are not employed.
5. The walking distance from home to TAFE is 3.2 km or further.
6. They attend the closest TAFE where enrolment is available.

Non-Australian residents and students temporarily in Australia:

- Some students who are not Australian residents or who are temporarily in Australia are eligible for free or subsidised travel, depending on their visa subclass.
- Applicants will need to quote your visa subclass number and the name of the exchange program (if applicable) when applying for the SSTS, in addition to meeting the standard eligibility criteria.

How to Apply for a School Travel Pass

Applicants or their parent/guardians can apply online for all school travel passes, using a single application form for your complete journey
<https://apps.transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts/#/applyNow>

Boarding school students can apply for weekend and vacation travel by completing a [paper application form \(pdf 52KB\) opens in new window](#) for free travel and an application form for a [Boarder's Rail Pass \(pdf 24KB\)](#)



How to Apply for a School Travel Pass

(Sydney and Outer Sydney)

The Opal card system provides a smartcard tickets that the customer or student keeps, reloads and reuses to pay for travel on public transport.

Customers use the Opal card by tapping on and tapping off to pay their fare on trains, buses, ferries and light rail – anywhere within the Opal network for travel anywhere from the Blue Mountains to Bondi, or Goulburn to Scone.

School Opal card

The School Opal card gives eligible school students free or subsidised travel on public transport between home and school on trains, buses, ferries and light rail in the Opal network.

Eligible students need only to tap on when boarding a bus.



196/201 Days a Year – Boarding the Bus



Rural and Regional NSW - Overview

The NSW Government contracts private bus operators in Rural and Regional areas to provide public bus services.

TfNSW administers the contracts, which define the services the operators provide and the payments they receive.

Two types of services – ‘dedicated school services’ and ‘regular passenger services’. All types of customers can travel on either.

Typically, operators provide **dedicated school services only**, or a combination of both **dedicated school services** and **regular passenger services**.

The Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) determines the maximum fares for the regular passenger services only.

Rural and Regional NSW



Rural and Regional NSW - Contracts

- Rural and Regional Bus Service Contracts: 656
 - Rural and Regional Bus Operators: 576
 - Large - more than 40 bus fleet 7 (1%)
 - Medium - 16 to 40 bus fleet 33 (5%)
 - Small - 6 to 15 bus fleet 83 (13%)
 - Very Small - 5 or less bus fleet 533 (81%)
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- Procurement of 50M kilometres of bus services per annum.

Rural and Regional NSW - Contracts

- In 2015 TfNSW negotiated new contracts with the bus operators already providing rural and regional services - not a competitive tender process.
- The new contracts commenced in April 2016 or June 2016.
- Each contract specifies the services the operator is to provide and the payments they receive. Fare box revenue is retained by the operator.
- The new contracts were based on the same routes and timetables as the previous ones.
- Operators may use a dedicated bus for each route, use several buses on the same route across the day, or use the same bus to service multiple routes across the day.

Rural and Regional NSW - Contracts

- Under the current contracts and levels of patronage, the costs per regular passenger journey are high and levels of cost recovery are low.
- Current cost of providing rural and regional bus services ~\$414 million a year. IPART estimated that around 51% (or \$211 million) of these costs are for operators providing school only services.
- Around 204,956 Rural and Regional students receive an SSTS entitlement or 35% of the 579,364 active SSTS students in NSW.



Rural and Regional NSW - Contracts

- The contract funding covers both the operating and capital costs of delivering the services.
- Operating costs include day-to-day costs such as driver salaries and wages; fuel costs; bus-related costs including registration, insurance, repairs and maintenance; overheads and administration costs (such as depot rent, accountancy/legal fees, non-bus insurance and utility costs).
- Capital costs include largely bus fleet costs and other equipment (such as ticketing and IT).

Rural and Regional NSW - Contracts

| Frequency of Contract Reporting | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Report required | Small & Very Small | Medium | Large |
| Operational Report (OR) | Yearly | Half Yearly | Quarterly |
| Performance Report (PR) | Yearly | Half Yearly | Quarterly |
| Commercial Report (CR) | - | Half Yearly | Quarterly |
| Ad Hoc Report (AHR) | - | As required | As required |

Rural and Regional NSW – Bus Fleet

- Operators purchase buses from a prequalification scheme or panel of approved vehicle makes and models.
- The buses fall into four categories – Category 1 to 4 – based on seating capacity.
- Operators receive contract payments over the maximum service life of the buses.
- The maximum service lives are specified in the contract and range from 15 years (Cat 1 & 2) to 25 years (Cat 3 & 4).
- The contracts require operators to obtain TfNSW's approval prior to acquiring a new bus.
- If an operator's contract is not renewed, the contract allows for all buses to be transferred to the new operator or to TfNSW.

Rural and Regional NSW – Bus Fleet

| Bus Category | Authorised Adult Seating Capacity (excluding Driver) |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | 8-14 |
| 2 | 15-28 |
| 3 | 29-43 |
| 4 | 44+ |

Rural and Regional NSW – Bus Fleet



Rural and Regional NSW - Safety

Rural & Regional Seat Belt Retrofit Program

- The Independent Inquiry into School Bus Safety in Rural & Regional NSW included a suite of recommendations including the installation of seat belts.
- On 30 July 2013, the NSW Government announced that seatbelts would be mandatory, and standing would be phased out, on school buses operated in Rural & Regional areas within 10 years.
- In June 2017, the Government made a second announcement:
 - Under the revised program all buses in Rural & Regional NSW would be seat belted through a combination of replacement and retrofitting.

Rural and Regional Seatbelts



Rural and Regional NSW – Seat belts

- All school route buses with seat belts by the end of 2019 and all non-school and school route buses by the end of 2021.
- Good progress towards achieving these objectives by implementing a replacement program for school buses nearing the end of their service life.
- To date more than 660 buses have been replaced with new buses equipped with seat belts.
- The replacement program alone will not result in all Rural and Regional buses being equipped with seat belts by 2021.
- TfNSW has undertake a project to retro-fit ADR 68 compliant seats to around 2,000 buses over the next four years.

Rural and Regional NSW – Bus Stops



There are thousands of “informal school bus stops” used for picking up or setting down school children on rural school bus routes across NSW:

- generally agreed between bus operators and parents, and
- are not sign posted or developed as formal bus stops.

Rural and Regional - Bus Stops

Safety around school buses on rural bus routes is a complex issue involving road and roadside conditions, pedestrian behaviour, motorist behaviour and travel speed, and carer behaviour and supervision.

- **Advice for choosing locations of informal school bus stops**
 - Centre for Road Safety, December 2016
- **The Advice provided:**
 - procedure to assess locations, including sight distance & vehicle speed;
 - parent responsibilities; and
 - Contract Holder Student Pick-up and Drop-off Protocol

