



School Transport Assistance Scheme

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Contents

Part 1: Eligibility and assistance types 6

1.1 General conditions 6

1.1.1	Approved school	6
1.1.2	Off-campus locations	6
1.1.3	Programs approved by the Department of Education and Training	6
1.1.4	Non-state schools	6
1.1.5	Guardianship	6
1.1.6	Address for eligibility and assistance	7
1.1.7	Alternative addresses	7
1.1.8	Shortest trafficable route	7
1.1.9	Residency	7
1.1.10	Age of student	7
1.1.11	Frequency of travel	7
1.1.12	Types of bus services that qualify for STAS funding	7
1.1.13	Designated bus service	8
1.1.14	Bus passes	8
1.1.15	Code of conduct for school students travelling on buses	8
1.1.16	Change of circumstances	8
1.1.17	Withdrawal of assistance	8

1.2 Students who do not qualify for assistance under STAS 8

1.2.1	Pre-prep and kindergarten students	8
1.2.2	Work experience students	8
1.2.3	Mature age students	8
1.2.4	Overseas, interstate and exchange students	8
1.2.5	TAFE students	8
1.2.6	Distance education students	8
1.2.7	Students at centres of continuing secondary education	9
1.2.8	Tertiary students	9

1.3 Types of assistance available 9

1.3.1	Bus transport assistance	9
1.3.1.1	Distance eligible students	9
1.3.1.2	Safety-net eligible students	9
1.3.1.3	Other types of students	10
1.3.2	Conveyance allowance	10
1.3.2.1	Eligibility	10
1.3.2.2	Types of conveyance allowance	11
1.3.2.3	Payment of conveyance allowance	12
1.3.3	Rail travel	12
1.3.3.1	Queensland Rail City Network	12
1.3.3.2	Gold Coast Light Rail System (G:Link)	12
1.3.3.3	English as a Second Language students	13
1.3.3.4	Students with a disability	13
1.3.4	Assistance for isolated students	13
1.3.4.1	Eligibility	13
1.3.4.2	Types of assistance for isolated students	15

1.4 Types of school bus services and their conditions of operation 16

1.4.1	Kilometre-based school bus services	16
1.4.1.1	Conditions of travel	16
1.4.1.2	Safety-net assistance	17
1.4.1.3	Fare-paying passengers	17
1.4.1.4	Fares	17
1.4.2	Fares-based school bus services	18
1.4.2.1	Conditions of travel	18
1.4.2.2	Safety-net assistance	18

1.4.2.3	Travel by escorts for students with a disability	18
1.4.2.4	Fares	18

1.5 Application procedures 19

1.5.1	Distance eligible students	19
1.5.2	Safety-net students	19
1.5.3	Safety-net students travelling on Brisbane City Council (Brisbane Transport) buses	19
1.5.4	Conveyance allowance	20
1.5.5	Rail travel	21
1.5.6	Assistance for isolated students	21

Part 2: Fares-based school bus service 22

2.1 Introduction 22

2.2 Conditions of operation 22

2.2.1	Authority	22
2.2.1.1	Restrictions to authority	22
2.2.2	Instituting services in new areas	22
2.2.3	Extensions to services or additional services	22
2.2.4	School closures	22
2.2.5	Service provisions	23
2.2.5.1	Bus operator responsibility	23
2.2.5.2	Vehicle breakdowns/other emergency circumstances – Use of Relief Vehicles	23
2.2.5.3	Adverse weather conditions	23
2.2.5.4	Road conditions	23
2.2.5.5	Change of school hours	23
2.2.6	Bus passes	23

2.3 Administrative arrangements 24

2.3.1	Applications for assistance	24
2.3.1.1	Distance eligible students	24
2.3.1.2	Safety-net eligible students	24
2.3.2	Verification reports for bus operators	24
2.3.3	Verification reports for schools	25
2.3.4	Deletion notification form	25
2.3.5	Days that school services must operate	25
2.3.6	Forms used in school transport administration	25

2.4 Standards 26

2.4.1	Operators	26
2.4.2	Drivers	26
2.4.3	Service	26
2.4.4	Vehicles	26
2.4.5	Operation	26
2.4.6	Operational safety	26
2.4.7	Bus seating	27
2.4.8	Incident management plan	27

2.5 Part passes 27

2.5.1	Distance eligible students	27
2.5.2	Safety-net eligible students	28

2.6 Cash fares 30

2.7 Fare evasion 30

2.8 Code of Conduct For School Students Travelling on Buses 30

2.8.1	Surveillance equipment and CCTV on school buses	30
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3.1 Introduction	31	3.7 Administrative arrangements	41
3.2 Conditions of operation	31	3.7.1 Incident management plan	41
3.2.1 Institution of a new service	31	3.7.2 Applications for assistance	41
3.2.2 Base school	31	3.7.2.1 Distance eligible students	41
3.2.3 Contract	31	3.7.2.2 Safety-net eligible students	41
3.2.4 Bus route	31	3.7.3 Verification reports for bus operators	42
Part 3: Kilometre-based school bus services	31	3.7.4 Verification reports for schools	42
3.2.5 Extensions to a service	32	3.7.5 Certification of exception report	42
3.2.5.1 Extensions to other than the nearest state school	32	3.7.6 Schools not operating on certain days	42
3.2.5.2 Extensions for fare-paying passengers	32	3.7.7 Payment procedures	42
3.2.6 Deletion of part of service	33	3.7.8 Forms used in school transport administration	43
3.2.7 Review of service	33	3.7.9 Days that school services must operate	43
3.2.8 Service arrangements resulting from significant passenger variations	33	3.7.10 Change of school hours	44
3.2.8.1 Increase in the number of students	33	3.8 Operational review	44
3.2.8.2 Decrease in the number of students	33	3.8.1 Background	44
3.2.9 School closures	34	3.8.2 Objectives	44
3.2.10 Feeder service	34	3.8.3 Methodology	44
3.2.11 Re-runs	34	Distance eligible students flow chart	45
3.2.12 Bus stop areas	34	Safety-net eligible students flow chart	46
3.2.13 Road signs	34		
3.2.14 Timetables	34		
3.2.15 Bus passes	34		
3.3 Role of the conveyance committee	34		
3.3.1 Background	34		
3.3.2 Formation of conveyance committee	35		
3.3.3 Model constitution	35		
3.3.4 Queensland Government Indemnity and Queensland Government Insurance Fund	36		
3.4 Role of bus operators	37		
3.4.1 Contract obligations	37		
3.4.2 Bus operator responsibility	37		
3.4.3 Operator restrictions	37		
3.4.4 Drivers	37		
3.4.5 Conveying passengers on kilometre-based services	37		
3.4.6 Charging of fares	38		
3.4.7 Fares	38		
3.4.8 Priority for travel	38		
3.4.9 Conditions for safety-net students	38		
3.5 Code Of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses	39		
3.5.1 Surveillance equipment and closed circuit television (CCTV) on school buses	39		
3.6 Standards	39		
3.6.1 Operators	39		
3.6.2 Drivers	39		
3.6.3 Service	39		
3.6.4 Vehicles	39		
3.6.5 Operation	40		
3.6.6 Operational safety	40		
3.6.7 Bus seating	40		
3.6.8 Change of vehicle notification	40		
3.6.9 Use of other vehicles in emergency circumstances	40		
3.6.10 Relief or temporary vehicles	40		
3.6.11 Use of private vehicles	41		

What is the School Transport Assistance Scheme?

The Queensland Government has provided transport assistance for over 100 years to help students travel to and from school. From its beginnings in 1906 when rail travel for students attending grammar schools was introduced, the School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS) has grown to be one of the largest assistance programs provided by the Queensland Government.

STAS now provides assistance to eligible students on rail, bus and ferry services and through the payment of conveyance allowance to parents as a contribution towards the cost of transporting their children to and from school. It aims to help parents meet their legal obligation of ensuring their children are enrolled in and attending an approved educational facility.

STAS has been designed as a scheme for those students who do not have a school close to their residence. It has undergone considerable change over the years to also include assistance to the most disadvantaged students in the state, with specific assistance targeted at isolated students and low income families.

Assistance available under STAS covers the journey between home and school and school and home. For this reason, the distance between an applicant's principal place of residence and nearest state school is the main criterion used for establishing eligibility under STAS. As well as meeting general eligibility criteria, applicants must meet the specific criteria that apply to the type of assistance sought.

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

This document is the policy of STAS. It is divided into three sections:

Part 1 – Eligibility and assistance types

Part 2 – Fares-based school bus services

Part 3 – Kilometre-based school bus services.

Part 1 includes the general conditions of the scheme. It outlines the types of assistance available under STAS and their eligibility criteria.

Parts 2 and 3 contain more specific information about the administrative and operational arrangements as they relate to school bus operators.

Part 3 also contains information on the roles and responsibilities of conveyance committees.

The policy relating to operator payments is contained in the document School Transport Assistance Scheme – Operator Payments. This document provides detailed information for operators on the payment systems applicable under STAS.

Further information or clarification can be obtained by contacting the Department of Transport and Main Roads. The information contained in this document was correct at the time of publication. However, the document may be subject to change. The latest version of the School Transport Assistance Scheme is available at: www.translink.com.au/schooltransport.

Part 1: Eligibility and assistance types

1.1 General conditions

The Queensland Government understands that education is essential for Queensland's development and accepts a responsibility for the provision of education facilities within the state.

It is the responsibility of parents to make suitable travel arrangements for their children to attend school. For many years the state government has provided assistance with school transport costs for eligible students in certain circumstances.

This assistance is provided under the School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS) which recognises the needs of students in areas with limited student populations where facilities cannot be justified. It is in these areas that school transport assistance is provided to enable students to attend education facilities.

A number of general conditions apply to the scheme. These general conditions relate to all forms of STAS assistance and are explained below. Unless stated otherwise, students must satisfy these conditions to be eligible to receive school transport assistance.

1.1.1 Approved school

To be eligible for school transport assistance, students must attend an approved school in Queensland. Queensland residents who live close to the Queensland/New South Wales border and who attend school in New South Wales may also be eligible. Non-state schools must be approved by the Department of Education and Training.

Approved schools are defined as follows:

- A primary school is any state or non-state school in receipt of subsidy from the Department of Education and Training, with students from prep year to year 6.
- A special school or special education unit/class is a Department of Education and Training facility that provides special education to students with a disability.
- A secondary school is any state high school, state secondary department or non-state secondary school in receipt of subsidy from the Department of Education and Training, with students from years 7 to 12.

The nearest school with the required year level is used to determine eligibility, even if the student is unable to access that school.

1.1.2 Off-campus locations

Students who, under the Education, Training and Employment Reforms for the Future, undertake education and/or training at other schools or outside the normal school setting, continue to be assessed as per the current policy and guidelines, with assistance based on the distance to the nearest state school.

A student must attend an approved school in Queensland to be eligible for STAS. For students who do qualify for assistance, no additional assistance can be given for the journey to the off-campus location or beyond the nearest state school.

1.1.3 Programs approved by the Department of Education and Training

A student attending an alternative educational program approved by the Department of Education and Training may be considered for assistance. Only programs offering an equivalent level of years 10, 11 and 12 are approved by the Department of Transport and Main Roads for the purposes of school transport assistance. Other programs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

A student will need to meet the general conditions of eligibility before assistance can be approved. Assistance will be based on the nearest state high school offering the equivalent year level. Written confirmation of a student's enrolment in an approved course may be required.

1.1.4 Non-state schools

For students who attend non-state schools, the following schools are considered to be of the same type for STAS:

- all catholic schools
- all grammar schools established under the *Grammar Schools Act 1975*
- all schools run by the same religious denomination or the same school governing body
- all Australian Technical Colleges (approved for year 11 and year 12).

If a student is attending a gender specific school and there is a closer co-educational school of the same type, the co-educational facility is considered 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 student is of the same gender, the gender specific school is considered the nearest school of the type attended.

A gender specific school of the opposite gender type is not considered when determining the nearest school of type.

The nearest school of type is used to determine eligibility, even if the student is denied access to that school.

1.1.5 Guardianship

As the purpose of school transport assistance is to assist parents/guardians with the cost of transporting students to and from school, eligibility for assistance is based on the address of the parent/guardian.

For the purpose of STAS, guardian is considered the legal guardian or person who has financial responsibility for the student. If for some reason, the student is living with other relatives or friends to attend school, transport assistance is not available from that address.

In some instances, a student may claim independent status. These students will need to verify their independent status before STAS

can be approved. A form for this purpose can be obtained from the department. It requires the student to have their independent status verified by staff from Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

1.1.6 Address for eligibility and assistance

School transport assistance is available from only one address. This address must be the principal place of residence of the student's parent or guardian.

Principal place of residence means the one place that is usually occupied for residential purposes by the parent/guardian (applicant).

In cases of shared custody arrangements, the principal place of residence of only one parent/guardian can be nominated. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to determine which address will be used to assess eligibility for STAS.

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 shown on the electoral roll, driver's licence or motor vehicle registration.

1.1.7 Alternative addresses

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

1.1.8 Shortest trafficable route

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 residential property
- the property alignment at the vehicle access point to the residential property nearest to the school.

No measurements are taken on private property. (*Local Traffic Only* signs have no impact on measuring eligibility).

In calculating this distance, the single journey is used. However, in cases where the distance to and from school varies because of different routes, for example, one way roads, the average distance (distance from school to the residential property and return, divided by two) is taken.

1.1.9 Residency

It is a requirement that the parent/guardian of each student be a resident of Queensland.

1.1.10 Age of student

To be eligible for assistance, students 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.

1.1.11 Frequency of travel

To be eligible for assistance, students must make a minimum of two trips per week via the indicated transport mode.

1.1.12 Types of bus services that qualify for STAS funding

The Department of Transport and Main Roads determines the service on which an eligible student can receive bus travel assistance. Unless otherwise determined by the department in assessing the assistance available to a student, the following conditions apply:

- A student must travel on the designated bus service for their area.
- Generally, the designated bus service will have a defined catchment area which is determined by the department. This catchment area is known as the designated area for the service. Students must live within the designated area for that service to receive assistance.
- Where there are separate services provided for primary and secondary school students, the student must travel on the designated bus service for their year level.
- When determining the designated service for an area, the Department of Transport and Main Roads takes into account whether the area is:
 1. within a bus service contract area
 2. on or near the route of a service contract.
- In limited instances, the department may give approval for eligible students to receive STAS from two operators in a given area.
- If a student lives in an area which has not been allocated to a designated area for a service by the department, the designated service (subject to the note below and section 1.4.1.1) will be the service nearest to the student's residential property which provides transport to a school with the required year level.

The nearest service is measured by the shortest trafficable route, over roads open for public use, between:

- the property alignment at the vehicle access point to the residential property
- the nearest point on the route of the service (not the bus stop).

No measurements are taken on private property. (*Local Traffic Only* signs have no impact on measuring eligibility).

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

Note: a student does not have a designated bus service if the distance to the nearest bus service which transports eligible students for the required year level is further than the distance from the student's residential property to the nearest state school offering the required year level.

1.1.13 Designated bus service

For the purpose of STAS, a designated bus service can be provided only by:

- the urban service contract holder for the area
- the fares-based school service contract holder for the area
- the kilometre-based school service contract holder for the area.

Any other services are operated outside of the government contract framework. Students travelling on such services are ineligible to receive STAS funding.

1.1.14 Bus passes

The issuing of bus passes to eligible students is not mandatory. However, a majority of bus operators do make the commercial decision to issue passes. If bus passes are issued to students, these passes must be produced to the bus driver upon request. Bus passes are not transferable and may be used only by the eligible student named on the pass. A replacement fee will be charged for replacement passes. This amount is determined by the bus operator.

Operators may charge a reasonable deposit for an electronic bus pass, provided the deposit is refunded upon return of the pass in good condition.

Bus passes must be returned immediately to the bus company when a student stops travelling on the bus.

1.1.15 Code of conduct for school students travelling on buses

All school students travelling on buses are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses. This includes not only travel to and from school but any travel on buses, for example, excursions and sports. If students breach the code they may be refused travel for a period of time, or excluded from the bus service on a permanent basis.

When this occurs, parents are responsible for the student's travel to and from school, including all costs.

The Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses is available at www.translink.com.au/buscode.

1.1.16 Change of circumstances

The circumstances surrounding a student's approval for STAS may change during their time at school.

Examples include, but are not limited to, a change of school, change of address, a new school built in an area, or a new road network constructed. In these circumstances eligibility for STAS must be reassessed.

1.1.7 Withdrawal of assistance

The Department of Transport and Main Roads may withdraw transport assistance and recover monies paid, if investigations determine that students involved are ineligible.

1.2 Students who do not qualify for assistance under STAS

Certain groups of students are not eligible for STAS assistance. These students may be able to travel as fare-paying passengers on their local bus service, provided that space exists on the bus. Some of these students may also be eligible for other state government concessions.

Information on these concessions is available from the local bus operator. Further information can also be obtained at www.translink.com.au or by calling 13 12 30.

1.2.1 Pre-prep and kindergarten students

Students attending pre-prep and kindergarten programs are not eligible for assistance under STAS. The transport of pre-prep and kindergarten children on a STAS contracted service is at the operator's discretion. If the operator believes that the safety and welfare of a young child would be at risk, they can advise the parents that transport is not available.

1.2.2 Work experience students

Students on official work experience programs are not eligible for transport assistance on other than their regular bus service. Work experience programs are only considered to be officially recognised for transport assistance during the school term dates of the student's year level. Students travelling on other than their regular bus service or outside of their actual school term dates for their year level may travel as fare-paying passengers.

1.2.3 Mature age students

Students aged 19 years or over are not eligible for assistance under STAS. Exclusions do apply. Please refer to Section 1.1.10 Age of student for full details.

1.2.4 Overseas, interstate and exchange students

Full fee paying overseas students and interstate students are not eligible for transport assistance. Exchange students are also not eligible for transport assistance.

1.2.5 TAFE students

Students attending TAFE colleges are generally not eligible for assistance under STAS. Such students may however qualify for concessional fares.

More information is available at www.translink.com.au.

1.2.6 Distance education students

Students enrolled in distance education are not eligible for assistance under STAS.

However, under certain conditions, transport assistance may be available to students who live in a designated isolated area of rural Queensland and do not have access to schools offering years 11 and 12. Please refer to Section 1.3.4 Assistance for isolated students.

1.2.7 Students at centres of continuing secondary education

Adult students at Centres of Continuing Secondary Education are not eligible for assistance under STAS, however students aged under 19 years of age may qualify if they meet all guidelines of the scheme.

1.2.8 Tertiary students

Students attending universities or other higher education facilities are not eligible for assistance under STAS. Such students may however qualify for concessional fares.

More information is available at www.translink.com.au.

1.3 Types of assistance available

Different types of transport assistance are available under STAS. The type of assistance that a student is eligible for depends on each student's individual circumstances. In addition to other factors, things that can influence what type of assistance a student is entitled to include how far a student resides from the nearest school, what mode of transport is used to get to and from school and what types of transport services operate in a student's local area.

The different types of assistance available and their conditions of eligibility are outlined below.

1.3.1 Bus transport assistance

In Queensland, students may qualify for school transport assistance on two main types of bus services. These are kilometre-based school bus services and fares-based school bus services. The difference between fares-based and kilometre-based services and their conditions of travel are outlined in Section 1.4 Types of school bus services and their conditions of operation.

There are two types of bus transport assistance available to eligible students.

The first is distance based assistance. To be eligible for distance based bus assistance, students must meet the distance criteria relevant to their circumstances, as well as satisfy all other conditions of the scheme.

The second form of school bus transport assistance is safety-net. This form of assistance is available to students who live within the distance criteria from their nearest school and who come from families that receive certain government benefits. Students must also meet the general conditions of the scheme to be eligible to receive government assistance under STAS.

1.3.1.1 Distance eligible students

The following distance based criteria are for students travelling on either kilometre-based or fares-based services and is applied statewide.

State primary school students

To be eligible for distance based assistance, primary school students must live more than 3.2km by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state primary school. Some students within this distance may qualify for safety-net assistance.

Non-state primary school students

To be eligible for distance based assistance, non-state primary school students must live more than 3.2km by the shortest trafficable route from both the nearest state primary school and the nearest non-state primary school of the type attended. Some students within this distance may qualify for safety-net assistance.

State secondary school students

To be eligible for distance based assistance, state secondary school students must live more than 4.8km by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state secondary school. Some students within this distance may qualify for safety-net assistance.

Non-state secondary students

To be eligible for distance based assistance, non-state secondary school students must live more than 4.8km from both the nearest state secondary school and the nearest non-state secondary school of the type which they attend. Some students within this distance may qualify for safety-net assistance.

1.3.1.2 Safety-net eligible students

STAS includes safety-net bus travel assistance for financially disadvantaged students who live close to their nearest school. It is available to students travelling on either kilometre-based or fares-based school bus services. To be eligible for safety-net assistance, students must meet the distance criteria, as well as the safety-net eligibility criteria stated below.

Eligibility

To be eligible for safety-net assistance the student must be listed as a dependant on the applicant's:

- Health Care Card issued by the Department of Human Services or
- Pensioner Concession Card issued by the Department of Human Services or
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card.

Students who have a card issued in their own name, as well as students under a Child Protection Order issued by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services may also qualify for safety-net assistance.

The student must not be in receipt of any other STAS assistance.

Note:

A Repatriation Health Care Card issued by the Department of Veterans' Affairs is not acceptable.

The cardholder must sign a certification allowing data matching to occur with Centrelink. Applicants who do not agree to this condition will not be eligible to receive safety-net assistance.

State primary school students

To be eligible for safety-net assistance, state primary school students must live 3.2km or less by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state primary school.

Non-state primary school students

To be eligible for safety-net assistance, non-state primary school students must live 3.2km 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 lives more than 3.2km from the nearest non-state school of the type attended but is 3.2km or less from the nearest state school, may qualify for assistance.

State secondary school students

To be eligible for safety-net assistance, state secondary school students must live 4.8km or less by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state secondary school.

Non-state secondary school students

To be eligible for safety-net assistance, non-state secondary school students must live 4.8km 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 lives more than 4.8km from the nearest non-state secondary school of the type attended but is 4.8km or less from the nearest state secondary school, may qualify for assistance.

1.3.1.3 Other types of students

The following types of students may also be eligible to receive transport assistance to travel on buses.

English as a second language students

English as a second language students who are enrolled in an approved English as a second language course are eligible for transport assistance on either a kilometre-based or fares-based school bus service to the nearest approved English as a second language facility.

This assistance is funded by the Department of Education and Training but administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads through STAS. Because of this, the general conditions relating to STAS do not apply to these students.

The only stipulation is that these students must attend their nearest English as a second language facility operated by the Department of Education and Training. Assistance is available only for 12 months from the original date of enrolment in an English as a second language facility.

Students with a disability

The Department of Education and Training is responsible for assessing the eligibility of students with disability for transport assistance and for authorising and funding the Department of Transport and Main Roads to provide transport assistance.

All enquiries about transport assistance for students with a disability should be directed to the school attended or the relevant Department of Education and Training regional office.

Where a student with a disability does not qualify for the assistance funded by the Department of Education and Training, they can apply as distance or safety-net eligible students provided that they satisfy the relevant criteria, can travel independently and meet all conditions of the scheme as they relate to mainstream students.

The operator is not responsible for the supply of harnesses or any special seating requirements.

1.3.2 Conveyance allowance

In some circumstances, parents make private arrangements for the transport of students to and from school. If eligible, these parents may receive payment of conveyance allowance to assist with travel costs. Students must meet the general guidelines of the scheme to be able to receive conveyance allowance. These guidelines are aimed at the vast majority of students in the state who travel to and from school on a daily basis.

Payment of conveyance allowance will be limited to the distance to the:

- nearest state school, or
- nearest school of type, or
- designated bus service

whichever is the closest to the principal place of residence.

Conveyance allowance must be applied for during the current year of travel. Retrospective claims for travel in previous years cannot be approved.

1.3.2.1 Eligibility

State primary school students

To be eligible for conveyance allowance, state primary school students must live more than 3.2km by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state primary school.

State secondary school students

To be eligible for conveyance allowance, state secondary school students must live more than 4.8km by the shortest trafficable route from the nearest state secondary school.

Non-state school students

Students who attend a non-state school are eligible for conveyance allowance under the conditions applicable to students attending state schools, provided that they also live more than 4.8km from the nearest school of type attended for secondary students, and more than 3.2km for primary students.

The level of assistance provided is limited to the equivalent available to the nearest state school.

Non-state students outside the Brisbane City Local Government Area (LGA)

A conveyance allowance, known as Class D allowance, is available for non-state school students living outside the Brisbane City Council local government boundary (Brisbane City LGA) irrespective of the distance to the nearest state school. Refer Section 1.3.2.2 Types of conveyance allowance.

1.3.2.2 Types of conveyance allowance

Class A

This allowance is payable to parents/guardians of eligible students who are driven to and from school in a private motor vehicle. This allowance is paid on a per vehicle basis.

Conveyance allowance Class A is not available when students live within 3.2km of a kilometre-based school bus service that provides transport for the year level required.

Class B

Class B allowance is payable to parents/guardians of eligible students who use an approved fares-based bus service to travel to school or to the nearest railway station, from where the student catches a train to school.

Class B conveyance allowance is payable in only a small number of instances. It is available only where the department does not make payment directly to the bus operator for eligible distance based students. In these instances, parents/guardians are reimbursed twice a year for fares paid.

For Class B allowance, the assessed fare will be the lesser of:

- the bus fare to and from the nearest state school (using a weekly fare)
- the bus fare to and from the nearest school of the type attended (using a weekly fare).

Parents/guardians may be requested to produce documentation that verifies the payment of these fares.

Note:

- A weekly fare is the discount fare that most bus operators offer for the purchase of a weekly ticket as opposed to the purchase of 10 single trip tickets.
- All refunds of fares for students travelling on TransLink services will be based on go card concession/child fares.
- A parent/guardian cannot receive assistance that is greater than the bus fares actually paid in travelling to and from the school attended, or to and from the nearest train station.
- Students who live within 3.2km of a kilometre-based school bus service are not eligible for Class B conveyance allowance on fares-based services, unless otherwise determined by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.
- Students must be travelling on their designated bus service to be eligible for Class B conveyance allowance.

Class C

Class C conveyance allowance is payable to parents/guardians of students who are driven more than 3.2km to the nearest point of a kilometre-based or approved fares-based school bus route. Class C is also payable to parents/guardians who drive their students over 3.2km to the nearest railway station.

This allowance is paid on a per vehicle basis. Conveyance allowance Class C is not available when students live within 3.2km of their designated school bus service.

Class D

Class D conveyance allowance is available to non-state school students living outside the Brisbane City Council local government boundary (Brisbane City LGA), irrespective of the distance to the nearest state school. To be eligible for Class D allowance, non-state students must:

- live more than 3.2km from the nearest school of the type attended (for primary school students), or live more than 4.8km from the nearest school of the type attended (for secondary school students), and
- be driven by private motor vehicle to school; or
- be driven by private motor vehicle more than 3.2 kilometres to the nearest point from which another form of transport is available which can transport the student to school.

This allowance is paid on a per vehicle basis. Class D allowance is not available for a student for whom Class A or Class C is payable for the same journey, or for a student who lives within 1.6 kilometres of the route of a kilometre-based school bus service on which a student is eligible to travel at no cost to a school of the type attended.

Class I

Class I conveyance allowance is paid at a higher level than other forms of conveyance allowance. It is available for students who live in isolated parts of Queensland and who are driven to school or to a school bus service. Additional criteria must be met for a student to be eligible for Class I allowance. Refer to Section 1.3.4 Assistance for isolated students.

Drought assistance

Additional conveyance allowance is available for families who live on drought declared primary producing properties and who qualify for conveyance allowance Class A or C.

To be eligible for drought assistance the property must either be situated in a drought declared shire or be classified as an individually droughted property by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. If a property is located across two or more shires, the applicant is eligible for drought assistance if any portion of the property is located in a drought declared shire.

The drought status of properties is verified with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on a yearly basis.

Drought assistance is payable during the period that the primary producing property on which the student lives remains on the drought declared list and for a further two years after the property is removed from the list.

A separate Drought Assistance Application form must be completed to receive payment of this assistance. This application form is available by contacting the department.

1.3.2.3 Payment of conveyance allowance

Conveyance allowance is paid directly to parents. It is calculated weekly and paid twice a year at the end of each school semester. Conveyance allowance is paid only while students are actually travelling to school.

If students finish the year early or leave school, payment will be altered accordingly.

Parents who transport their students fewer than 10 trips per week will have their weekly payment adjusted accordingly. For example, a parent who drives their student to school Monday morning and then picks them up Friday afternoon because the student boards during the week, would be paid 20 per cent of the weekly allowance.

1.3.3 Rail travel

1.3.3.1 Queensland Rail City Network

The state government assists with rail fares for students who travel to and from school on the Queensland Rail City Network. This can be either:

- by a child go card (for school students aged five to 14 years)
- a concession go card (for secondary students aged 15 years or older)
- a student discount six or twelve month rail pass
- fully funded travel under the safety-net provision of STAS.

Assistance under the discount six or twelve month rail pass or fully funded travel under the safety-net provisions of STAS is limited to students travelling on trains operated on the Queensland Rail City Network. It can not be transferred to other rail services operated within Queensland or to other transport modes.

Student discount passes

All students (except mature age, overseas, interstate and exchange students) attending approved primary or secondary schools can apply to Queensland Rail for a discounted six or twelve month student pass.

Passes are only available for travel on school days between the station nearest to the student's home and the station nearest to the school attended. For more information on six and twelve month student rail passes contact your local rail station or phone Queensland Rail on 1300 768 595.

Safety-net eligible students

Students who qualify for safety-net rail assistance will receive government funded rail travel from the station nearest to their principal place of residence to the station nearest to the school attended. The distance to the nearest school does not affect eligibility for safety-net rail assistance. However, all other general conditions of the scheme apply.

Eligibility

To be eligible for safety-net assistance the student must be listed as a dependant on the applicant's:

- Health Care Card issued by the Department of Human Services or
- Pensioner Concession Card issued by the Department of Human Services or
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card.

Students who have a card issued in their own name, as well as students under a Child Protection Order issued by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services may also qualify for safety-net assistance.

Note:

- A Repatriation Health Care Card issued by the Department of Veterans' Affairs is not acceptable.
- The cardholder must sign a certification allowing data matching to occur with Centrelink. Applicants who do not agree to this condition will not be eligible to receive safety-net assistance.

Safety-net assistance is only available for one mode of transport. If a student uses more than one type of transport to travel to and from school, for example, the Queensland Rail City Network and bus; or the Queensland Rail City Network and G:Link light rail, safety-net assistance is only able to be approved on one of these transport types. In some cases, however, the safety-net student may qualify for other forms of assistance on the other modes of transport used in conjunction with rail travel to access school. In such cases, the student must meet the eligibility criteria relevant for that assistance type, for example, distance based bus assistance 1.3.1.1 and/or conveyance allowance 1.3.2. Only one assistance type can be paid for each portion of a journey.

1.3.3.2 Gold Coast Light Rail System (G:Link)

The state government assists with rail fares for students who travel to and from school on the G:Link light rail. This can be either:

- by a child go card (for school students aged five to 14 years)
- a concession go card (for secondary students aged 15 years or older)
- fully funded travel under the safety-net provision of STAS.

Safety-net eligible students

Students who qualify for safety-net rail assistance will receive government funded rail travel from the G:Link station nearest to their principal place of residence to the G:Link station nearest to the school attended. The distance to the nearest school does not affect eligibility for safety-net rail assistance. However, all other general conditions of the scheme apply.

Eligibility

To be eligible for safety-net assistance the student must be listed as a dependant on the applicant's:

- Health Care Card issued by the Department of Human Services or
- Pensioner Concession Card issued by the Department of Human Services or
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card.

Students who have a card issued in their own name, as well as students under a Child Protection Order issued by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services may also qualify for safety-net assistance.

Note:

- A Repatriation Health Care Card issued by the Department of Veterans' Affairs is not acceptable.
- The cardholder must sign a certification allowing data matching to occur with Centrelink. Applicants who do not agree to this condition will not be eligible to receive safety-net assistance.

Safety-net assistance is only available for one mode of transport. If a student uses more than one type of transport to travel to and from school, for example, G:Link light rail and bus or G:Link light rail and the Queensland Rail City Network, safety-net assistance is only able to be approved on one of these transport types. In some cases, however, the safety-net student may qualify for other forms of assistance on the other modes of transport used in conjunction with rail travel to access school. In such cases, the student must meet the eligibility criteria relevant for that assistance type, for example, distance based bus assistance 1.3.1.1 and/or conveyance allowance 1.3.2. Only one assistance type can be paid for each portion of a journey.

1.3.3.3 English as a Second Language students

English as a Second Language students who are enrolled in an approved English as a Second Language course are eligible for rail safety-net transport assistance on the Queensland Rail City Network or the G:Link light rail. This assistance is funded by the Department of Education and Training but administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads through STAS.

Because of this, the general conditions relating to STAS do not apply to these students. The only stipulation is that they must attend their nearest approved English as a Second Language facility operated by the Department of Education and Training. Assistance is available for only 12 months from the original date of enrolment in an English as a Second Language facility.

1.3.3.4 Students with a disability

The Department of Education and Training is responsible for assessing the eligibility of students with a disability for transport assistance and for authorising and funding the Department of Transport and Main Roads to provide transport assistance.

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

Where a student with a disability does not qualify for assistance funded by the Department of Education and Training they can apply for rail safety-net assistance under STAS on the Queensland Rail City Network or G:Link light rail provided that they can travel independently and meet all criteria and conditions of the scheme as they relate to mainstream students.

1.3.4 Assistance for isolated students

In recognition of the difficulties that parents in isolated areas of the state face to transport their children to and from school, the Queensland Government provides assistance to eligible families under the school transport isolation package. This package provides increased assistance under STAS for students in isolated parts of the state.

1.3.4.1 Eligibility

To be eligible for assistance under the school transport isolation package, students must:

- (1) reside more than 16km from the nearest state school and the nearest approved bus service which can transport the student to a state school with the required year level (see measuring note below)

and
- (2) reside outside the south-east Queensland school transport zone (see map on page 14)

and
- (3a) reside in the seven week summer vacation zone, that is, the area in Queensland west of the 144th meridian of east longitude or north of the 16th parallel of south latitude and the following centres:

Alpha	Cunnamulla	Muttaburra
Aramac	Eulo	Prairie
Augathella	Hughenden	Quilpie
Barcaldine	Ilfracombe	Tambo
Blackall	Isisford	Wyandra
Cameron Downs	Jericho	Yaraka
Charleville	Longreach	

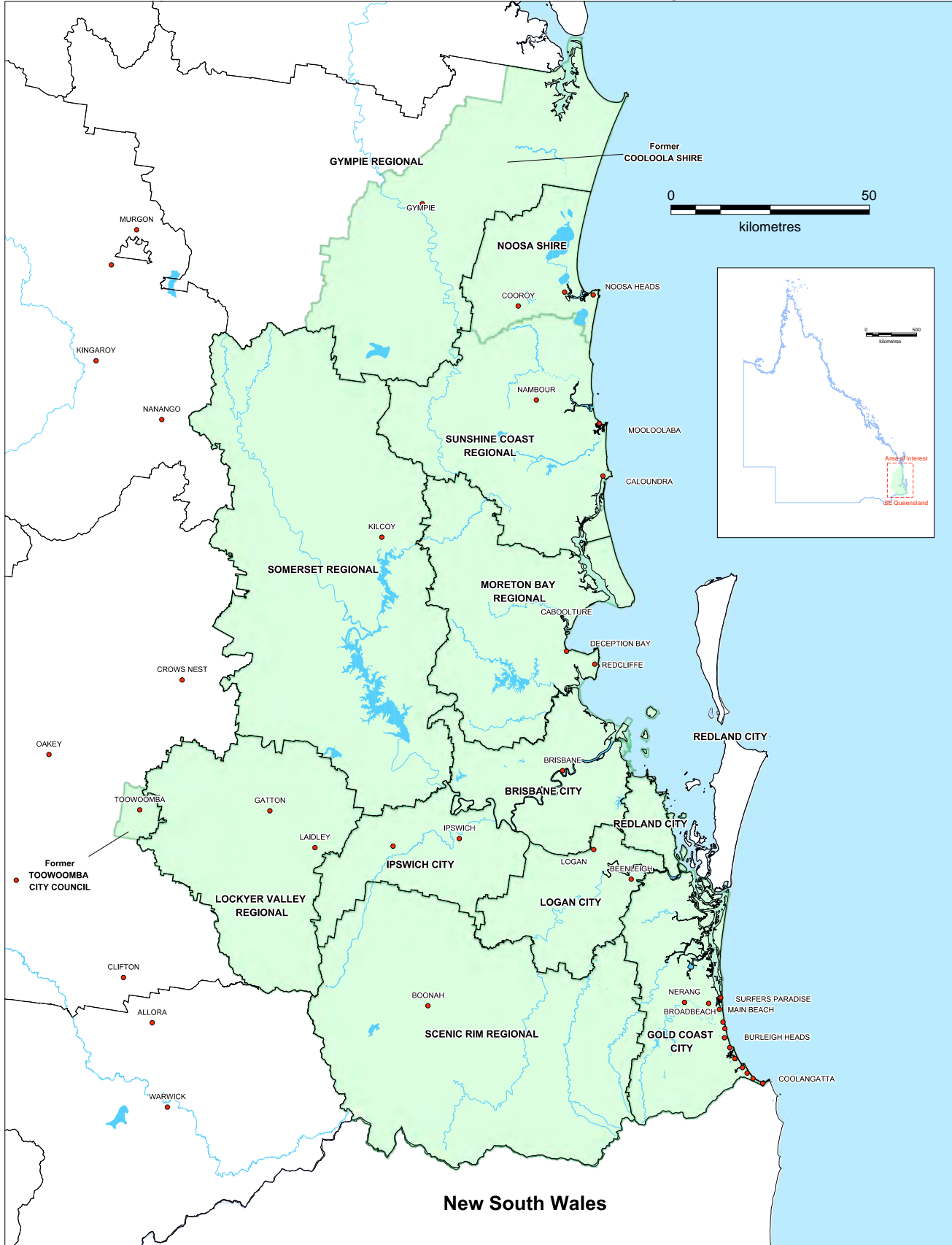
or

- (3b) or reside more than 50km, measured by the shortest trafficable route from the main post office in each of the following centres:

Atherton	Home Hill	Proserpine
Ayr	Ingham	Ravenshoe
Bowen	Innisfail	Rockhampton
Bundaberg	Kingaroy	Sarina
Cairns	Mackay	Stanthorpe
Dalby	Malanda	Toowoomba
Gladstone	Mareeba	Townsville
Gympie	Maryborough	Tully
Hervey Bay	Mossman	Warwick

A list of nominated post offices for each designated centre is provided on the conveyance allowance application form.

South East Queensland School Transport Zone



New South Wales

While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this data no representations or warranties about its accuracy, reliability, completeness or suitability for any particular purpose and disclaims all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages, (including indirect or subsequent damage) and costs which you might incur as a result of the data being inaccurate or incomplete in any way or for any reason. Data must not be used for direct marketing or be used in breach of privacy laws. Information is for display purposes only and no responsibility is taken for data accuracy. State Digital Road Network (SDRN) provided with permission of Pitney Bowes Software (2013). State Digital Cadastral Database (DCDB) provided with permission of Department of Natural Resources and Mines (2013).

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SEQ School Transport Zone



Produced by: Passenger Transport Integration - Customer Technology

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Date: 28/03/2014

Measuring note:

Distances are measured by the shortest trafficable route, over roads open for public use, between:

- the property alignment at the vehicle access point to the residential property
- the nearest point on the route of the service (not the bus stop)
- the entrance to the nearest state school which is closest to the residential property.

No measurements are taken on private property. (*Local Traffic Only* signs have no impact on measuring eligibility).

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

1.3.4.2 Types of assistance for isolated students

Class I conveyance allowance

Financial assistance is available to parents in the form of conveyance allowance for students who travel to and from school by private arrangement.

Class I conveyance allowance is paid at a higher rate than other conveyance allowances and is available only for students in isolated areas.

Class I conveyance allowance is not payable for the same journey for a student in receipt of Class A, C or D conveyance allowance or drought assistance (additional conveyance allowance).

Conveyance allowance Class I is:

- calculated weekly and paid twice a year at the end of each school semester
- paid only while students are actually travelling to school.

Class I conveyance allowance must be applied for prior to 31 December in the year assistance is sought.

Retrospective claims for travel in previous years cannot be approved.

Please note:

- the actual amount paid is based on the number of weeks the student is in attendance at school
- students who travel fewer than 10 trips per week (for example: travel only Monday am and Friday pm) will have their weekly payment adjusted accordingly. The allowance paid in this example will be 20 per cent of the weekly allowance.

Payment of the allowance is made at the end of each school semester. Details of the method of payment are contained in the approval letter forwarded to parents.

Carpooling

Class I conveyance allowance is paid on a per family basis rather than per vehicle basis, as is the case with conveyance allowance Class A, C or D. This is to help promote carpooling among families in isolated areas. Carpooling will assist families in isolated areas

by reducing duplication in travel and minimising time away from their homes and properties.

For example, two families with school aged children may reside in one general area. On the journey to school (which is a 90 minute round trip) they pass another property with a school aged child they pick up each day. Under conveyance allowance Class I, the three families involved would all receive conveyance allowance.

If it was decided that one family would be responsible for driving the children to school each day, the other two families may offer their allowance to this family to cover their costs, for example, petrol, oil, wear and tear on vehicle. However, if each family took turns at driving, then each family would retain their allowance.

Please note:

Each family involved in carpooling must submit their own application for this allowance. The allowance will be paid only to the legal guardians or parents of the students being carried. Payment cannot be made on behalf of other students or transferred to other parents.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads will not be involved in:

- making arrangements for carpooling (this is entirely the responsibility of the parents involved)
- determining the distribution of conveyance allowance Class I among families who car pool.

Subsidised bus services in isolated areas

While kilometre-based and fares-based school bus services are fully funded by the government, a small number of services across the state operate on the basis of partial funding by the government.

Partially funded, or subsidised services, occur as a result of one or a combination of the following factors:

- extremely long route length
- low number of distance eligible students
- remote locations
- funding restrictions.

These services may be provided by a bus operator who accepts the level of government funding provided. Any shortfall in funding is generally met by the parents involved.

In some cases, groups of parents can form a conveyance committee and elect to provide the service themselves. Payment is made to the committee as the operator of the service.

Under the school transport isolation package, seven is the minimum number of eligible students required to institute a subsidised school bus service in isolated areas (as defined in Section 1.3.4.1 Eligibility).

Eligible students must come from a minimum of three different families to institute a subsidised school bus service.

Designated bus service

The designated service for an isolated student (subject to the note below) will be the approved service nearest to the student's residential property which transports eligible students of the required year level or an approved service that will transport the student to the nearest state school from the student's residential property.

Distances are measured by the shortest trafficable route, over roads open for public use, between:

- the property alignment at the vehicle access point to the residential property
- the nearest point on the route of the service (not to the bus stop).

No measurements are taken on private property.

In calculating this distance, the single journey is used. However, in cases where the distance to and from the service varies because of different routes, for example, one way roads, the average distance is taken.

Note: a student does not have a designated bus service if the distance to the nearest bus service, which transports eligible students for the required year level, is further than the distance from the student's residential property to the nearest state school offering the required year level.

Assistance for senior secondary students travelling to P-10 schools

The Department of Education and Training requires students to participate in education, training and employment for a period of two years after the completion of their compulsory years of schooling which end when a student turns 16 or completes year 10.

A small number of students in isolated rural Queensland do not have access to schools offering years 11 and 12. These students need to complete years 11 and 12 by distance education and may receive tutoring at their nearest P-10 school.

School transport assistance will be available to these students under the following conditions.

A student must:

- have completed their compulsory years of schooling (to year 10)
- reside in a designated isolated area of the state
- meet the minimum 20 per cent travel and all other eligibility criteria of the scheme
- attend their nearest P-10 school at one of the following schools, for tutoring and assistance:

1. Alpha	6. Injune	11. Richmond
2. Baralaba	7. Mornington Island	12. Tambo
3. Dirranbandi	8. Normanton	13. Taroom
4. Doomadgee	9. Palm Island	14. Texas.
5. Inglewood	10. Quilpie	

1.4 Types of school bus services and their conditions of operation

There are two main types of school bus services that operate in Queensland on which students can receive STAS assistance. These are kilometre-based services and fares-based services.

Kilometre-based school bus services generally exist in rural areas. These services are funded through STAS. The government pays these operators an amount based on the size of bus needed to legally carry the number of eligible students on the bus run.

Fares-based school bus services normally operate in the more densely populated areas of south-east Queensland and in the larger provincial cities throughout Queensland. These services provide transport for students for the payment of individual student fares. If eligible for assistance on fares-based services, the government will pay the individual student fare direct to the bus operator.

1.4.1 Kilometre-based school bus services

Students who meet the distance criteria and the general conditions of the scheme are eligible to receive transport assistance on their designated bus service.

This travel will normally be to their nearest school, however, in some areas a student's designated bus service may transport students to other than their nearest school. Such circumstances are usually due to historical factors and fall within the guidelines of STAS.

If an eligible student wishes to travel beyond their nearest school, they are able to do so provided that room exists on the bus service. This travel is a private arrangement between the parent/guardian and the bus operator. As such the appropriate fare for the journey undertaken is paid direct to the bus operator and no STAS funding for this part of the journey is available.

1.4.1.1 Conditions of travel

Use of secondary school services

Generally, kilometre-based secondary school services transport distance eligible secondary school students to a state secondary school that is located in another town or centre. These bus services are not intended to transport primary school students away from a primary school in the local area.

Distance eligible primary school students may use a secondary school service only if:

- no primary school services operate in their area
- the department, having regard to all relevant local circumstances, approves the travel arrangement to other than the nearest state school. Generally, a primary school student would need to reside more than 16km from a state school before the department would consider approval under this criteria.

Use of primary school services

Distance eligible secondary school students may be approved to travel on a primary school service that connects with their designated secondary school service if they live more than 3.2km from the interchange point of the two services.

Travel by school principal

Principals may travel on the school bus as required. The purpose of this travel would be to provide advice on travel behaviour and behaviour management and to obtain general knowledge of the location of family homes and potential growth areas.

Travel by conveyance committee members

Members of the conveyance committee may travel on the service to perform duties associated with the management of the service.

Travel by escorts for students with a disability

Escorts who are appointed by the Department of Education and Training to supervise students with a disability on the service are counted in the eligible passenger numbers. They cannot be charged a fare while performing their duties.

The provision of a supervisor usually occurs on a temporary basis as part of the promotion of the student's ability to travel independently. However, the provision of a permanent supervisor may be authorised by the Department of Education and Training where there is a demonstrated need to supervise students while travelling.

Operators should note that the Department of Education and Training requires principals to regularly monitor and reassess the continued need for supervisors.

Department of Transport and Main Roads staff

Officers of the Department of Transport and Main Roads who have duties and responsibilities associated with the operation of these services are permitted to travel on kilometre-based bus services at any time.

1.4.1.2 Safety-net assistance

Where there is room on the bus, safety-net students will be carried free of charge on kilometre-based school bus services to the state school nearest to the student's home. Where there is no kilometre-based service going to the nearest state school, assistance is not available on kilometre-based services to other schools.

Non-state school students are also eligible for safety-net assistance, limited to travel to the nearest state school, provided they are not bypassing a nearer non-state school of the type attended. In some cases, transport past the nearest state school may be free of charge. This generally occurs when the extension provided to the non-state school has historically been funded by the government.

Eligibility on one service is not able to be transferred to another service. No place on the bus service can be guaranteed, but every effort will be made to place students on buses. The local conveyance committee and bus operator are responsible for

monitoring the space available on services, and for determining the priority for this space.

1.4.1.3 Fare-paying passengers

Adults and students who are not eligible for assistance under STAS are able to travel on kilometre-based bus services as fare-paying passengers, subject to the following conditions:

- Fare-paying passengers will be carried only if spare capacity exists after all STAS eligible students are catered for.
- Travel for adults will be available only if space exists on the bus after all students, both eligible and ineligible, have been accommodated.
- The passenger pays the appropriate fare direct to the bus operator.
- No alterations to existing routes will be approved to cater for fare-paying passengers without consultation with the conveyance committee and approval of the department.
- The bus operator regularly monitors availability of excess capacity. Adequate advance notice should be given by the bus operator to parents/guardians/students of any intention to withdraw transport from fare-paying students for any reason.
- Operators are to advise all applicants of the conditions of travel.
- On some services, pre-booking of seats may be required.
- Continued availability of space for fare-paying passengers cannot be guaranteed. Access to the service and any extensions provided for fare-paying passengers, may be discontinued through the following circumstances:
 - increased numbers of distance eligible students, approaching the maximum gross vehicle mass of the vehicle
 - school/route closures
 - reduced size of vehicle.
- The carriage of fare-paying passengers is a commercial arrangement between the bus operator and that passenger. It is the operator's responsibility to ensure that they have the appropriate compulsory third party insurance for the number and type of passengers carried.
- Bus operators and principals have the authority for the discipline of students where necessary.
- Adult passengers are subject to the sole authority of the driver of the vehicle in terms of behaviour standards. The driver has the authority to remove adults whose behaviour is not appropriate.
- The Department of Transport and Main Roads may, in the public interest, grant or withdraw approval for fare-paying passengers at any time.

1.4.1.4 Fares

The Department of Transport and Main Roads publishes a School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule that sets out the maximum cash fare that a bus operator can charge students for journeys to and from school. This schedule applies to all

kilometre-based school bus operators and to school bus operators who have a fares-based school service contract.

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

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

The maximum cash fare levels are reviewed from time to time by the department.

1.4.2 Fares-based school bus services

1.4.2.1 Conditions of travel

Students who satisfy the eligibility criteria are eligible to receive assistance on the approved fares-based bus service designated for their area. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will pay the required fare direct to the bus contractor.

For distance eligible students the department will pay the operator the appropriate STAS fare for the journey to the nearest state school or the school attended, whichever is the closest (see section 1.4.2.2 for the details of benefits for safety-net students). Where a journey for a student exceeds the journey funded by the department, the operator may charge the student an excess fare (also known as a top-up fare). Any excess fare for the student is the responsibility of the parent/ guardian of the eligible student.

Students living within the designated area of a kilometre-based school bus service are not eligible for assistance on a fares-based service, unless otherwise determined by the department.

Approved fares-based service types on which STAS is payable

STAS is payable only where a student is travelling on a designated service for the area in which they live. A designated service is determined by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, will vary for each area and will be limited to:

- a public passenger service which is operated by an urban service contract holder
- a public passenger service which is operated by a fares-based school service contract holder.

1.4.2.2 Safety-net assistance

TransLink services

Safety-net students who are eligible to travel on TransLink services will receive a safety-net benefit that covers the shortest trafficable distance from the student's residence to a maximum of 3.2km for primary and 4.8km for secondary school students.

Where the distance by the shortest trafficable route to the school attended is more than these distances, parents/students will be

required to pay a top-up fare direct to the TransLink operator for the additional distance travelled.

Regional service contract operators (*qconnect*)

The *qconnect* program has been established to incorporate all regional passenger transport services into one integrated and coordinated transport system with a clearly identifiable identity.

Primary and secondary school students who are eligible to travel on *qconnect* services under safety-net provisions will receive a single benefit. This benefit will be paid direct to the bus operator. Parents/guardians are responsible for the payment of any excess fares above the benefit amount. The excess fare should be paid direct to the bus operator.

The amount of assistance is reviewed each year, and can be obtained by contacting the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Prescribed school service operators

The Department of Transport and Main Roads will pay an amount directly to the bus operator for any students eligible under the safety-net guidelines travelling on approved, privately operated fare-paying services.

The amount of assistance is reviewed each year, and details can be obtained by contacting the department.

1.4.2.3 Travel by escorts for students with a disability

Escorts who are appointed by the Department of Education and Training to supervise students with a disability are eligible for travel on fares-based school bus services. The department will fund the escort's journey in which the student is transported from home to school and school to home.

The provision of a supervisor usually occurs on a temporary basis as part of the promotion of the student's ability to travel independently. However, the provision of a permanent supervisor may be authorised by the Department of Education and Training where there is a demonstrated need to supervise students while travelling.

Operators should note that the Department of Education and Training requires principals to regularly monitor and reassess the continued need for supervisors.

1.4.2.4 Fares

The Department of Transport and Main Roads publishes a School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule that sets out the maximum cash fare that a bus operator can charge students for journeys to and from school. This schedule applies to all kilometre-based school bus operators and to school bus operators who have a fares-based school service contract.

It should be noted that the School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule is the maximum allowable fare and is not a mandatory fare schedule. Where an operator charges fares below this maximum fare schedule, these fares may be increased only by a

maximum of 10 per cent each six months, until the maximum fare is reached (with due notice to customers and notification of fares to the department).

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

The maximum cash fare levels are reviewed from time to time by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

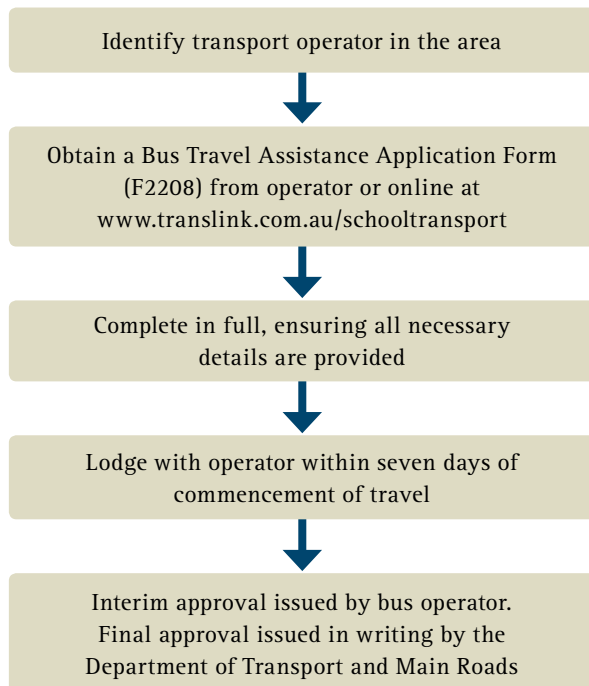
1.5 Application procedures

The information contained in Part 1 of this document should provide parents/guardians with an initial guide to their eligibility status. To apply for assistance, parents/guardians should follow the steps below for their eligibility type.

Applications for all types of assistance can only be accepted for the current school year.

As any change of address or school may affect eligibility, the Department of Transport and Main Roads must be advised of any changes immediately and a new assessment of eligibility will be undertaken. Eligibility will also be reassessed if a new school or road network is built in the local area.

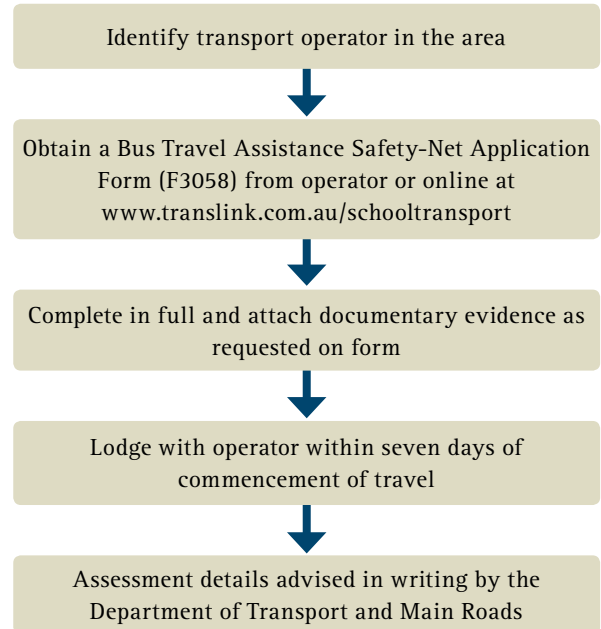
1.5.1 Distance eligible students



Distance eligible students will receive ongoing approval until they complete either primary school (year 6) or secondary school (year 12). This approval is subject to there being no change in a student's circumstances.

Where more than one service is used to complete the journey to and from school, a separate application must be completed for each service.

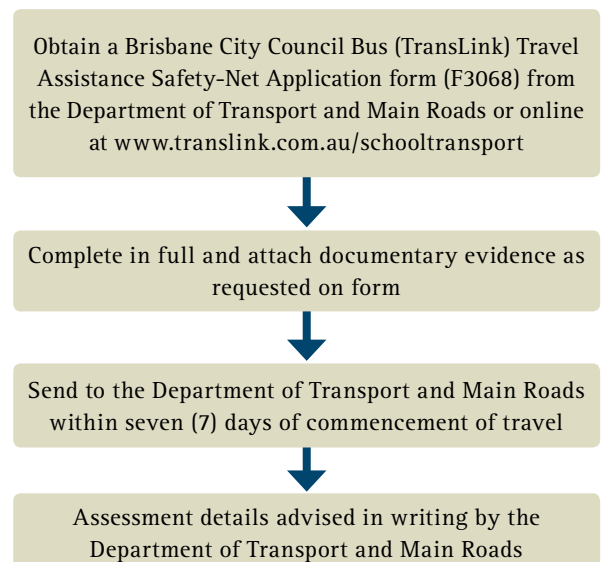
1.5.2 Safety-net students



Parents/guardians of safety-net eligible students will receive approval for assistance on a yearly basis. At the end of each school year, confirmation of an applicant's continued eligibility for the assistance type stated on their application form will occur.

If an applicant still qualifies for Centrelink assistance, then safety-net assistance will be continued in the following year. If the applicant is no longer eligible for Centrelink assistance, they will be informed via letter, and eligibility will cease at the end of the current school year. If there is a change of school, address or government assistance, a new application must be submitted.

1.5.3 Safety-net students travelling on Brisbane City Council (Brisbane Transport) buses

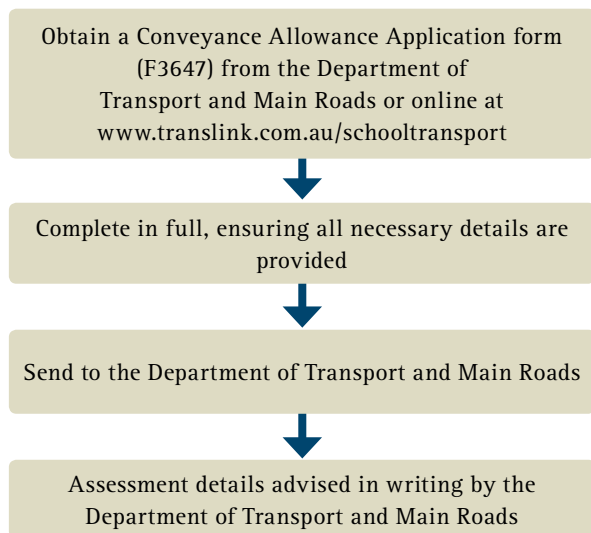


Parents/guardians of safety-net eligible students will receive approval for assistance on a yearly basis. At the end of each school year, confirmation of an applicant's continued eligibility for the assistance type stated on their application form will occur. Parents/guardians will also be asked to confirm personal details held by the department.

If an applicant still qualifies for Centrelink assistance, and they have verified their personal details, then safety-net assistance will be continued in the following year.

If the applicant is no longer eligible for Centrelink assistance, they will be informed via letter, and eligibility will cease at the end of the current school year. If there is a change of school, address or government assistance, a new application must be submitted.

1.5.4 Conveyance allowance

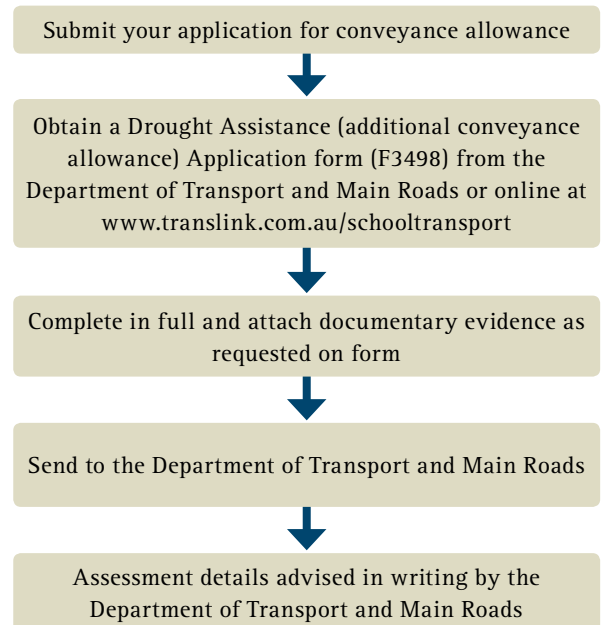


Before conveyance allowance can be approved, the department will confirm a student's ongoing attendance with individual schools. Subject to confirmation of continued attendance, payment can be deposited directly into a parent's bank account through electronic funds transfer. This payment is made twice each year in July and December.

The December payment will be accompanied by a renewal form which must be completed and returned by 28 February in the following year to ensure continuation of assistance.

Note: parents/guardians do not need to assess what type of conveyance allowance they are eligible for. Department staff will do this upon receiving a completed application form.

Drought assistance



Assessment of eligibility for assistance will be based on the drought status of the property at the date from which assistance is sought provided it is in the current year. For example, if an applicant applies for assistance from 28 January but does not submit their form until December of that year, the assessment would be based on the property's drought status as at 28 January and not December.

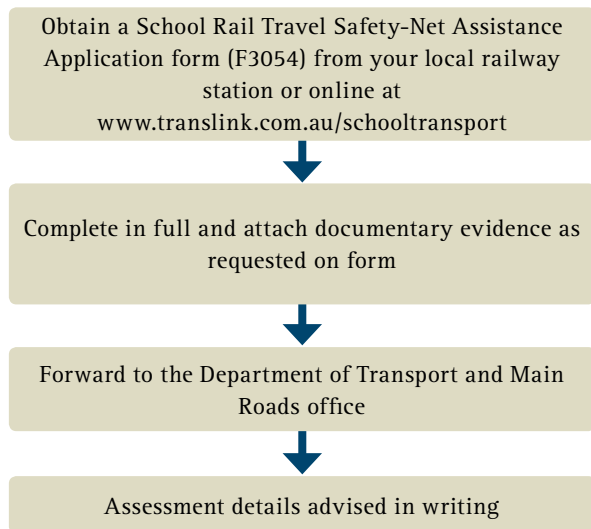
The department will confirm ongoing school attendance with individual schools. Subject to confirmation of continued attendance, payment can be deposited directly into a parent's bank account through electronic funds transfer. This payment is made twice each year in April and October.

Drought assistance is payable during the period that the primary producing property on which the student lives remains on the drought declared list, and for a further two years after the property is removed from the list. However, if a property has its drought status revoked, (that is, the individually droughted property status is revoked or the shire is removed from the drought declared list) but that status is then reinstated at a later date, the applicant must reapply for drought assistance, even if it is within the two year period.

A renewal form will be posted to you with your December conveyance allowance payment. This form will contain details of your conveyance allowance and drought assistance. It must be completed and returned by the end of February in the following year to ensure continuation of assistance.

1.5.5 Rail travel

Queensland Rail City Network



Parents/guardians will be required to pay the full costs of travel until approval is granted by the department. These fares are not refundable. The duration of the processing period should not exceed 20 working days provided parents/guardians provide the correct documentation. Eligible students will be issued with a STAS *go* card which must be activated before use. Instructions on how to activate the card will be included with the *go* card.

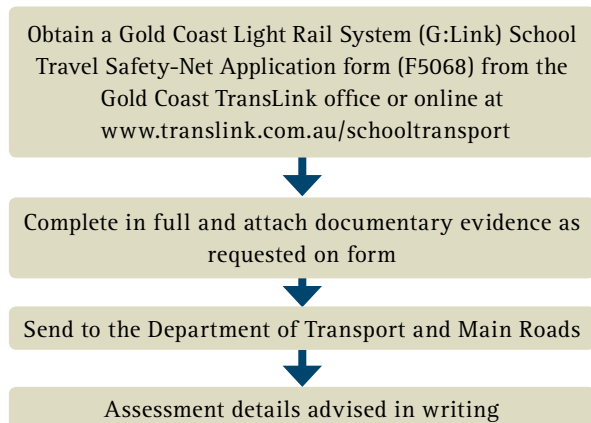
The Department of Transport and Main Roads must be advised immediately if there is a change to the student's details – for example, address, school or government assistance.

If a pass is lost, contact the TransLink Call Centre on 13 12 30 to cancel the old card and arrange for a replacement. This *go* card will need to be activated before use.

Student discount fares and prepaid tickets

Information on student discount fares and prepaid tickets can be obtained from your local railway station, online at www.queenslandrail.com.au or by phoning Queensland Rail on 1300 768 595.

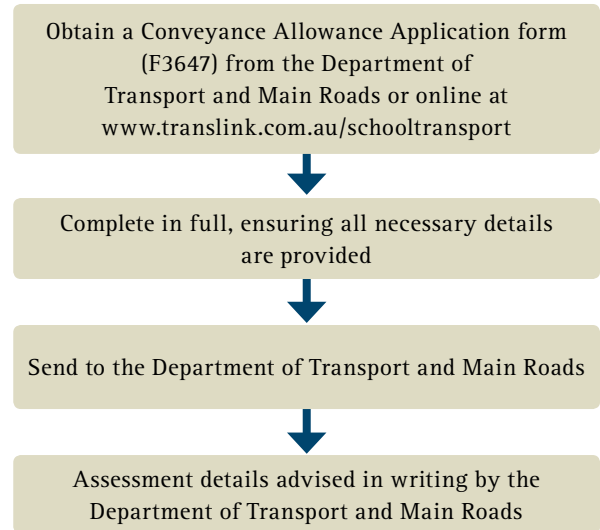
Gold Coast Light Rail System



Parent/guardians will be required to pay the full costs of travel until approval is granted by the department. These fares are not refundable. The duration of the processing period should not exceed 20 working days provided parents/guardians provide the correction documentation

Parents/guardians will be notified by the department when the pass is ready for collection. Proof of identity must be presented before the pass will be issued. The Department of Transport and Main Roads must be advised immediately if there is a change to the student's details – for example, address, school or government assistance.

1.5.6 Assistance for isolated students



Class I conveyance allowance

The department will confirm ongoing school attendance with individual schools. Subject to confirmation of continued attendance, payment can be deposited directly into a parent's bank account through electronic funds transfer. This payment is made twice each year in July and December.

The December payment will be accompanied by a renewal form which must be completed and returned by the end of February in the following year to ensure continuation of assistance.

Carpooling

Submit your application for Class I conveyance allowance as outlined above. If approved, Class I allowance will be paid on a family basis.

Institution of subsidised school bus services

Queries about the institution of a subsidised school bus service should be directed to your local Department of Transport and Main Roads office. The department will consult parents, the Department of Education and Training, local school community and the relevant road authority prior to approving a subsidised school bus service.

Assistance for senior secondary students travelling to P-10 schools

Applicants need to complete a Bus Travel Assistance Application Form (F2208). Department staff will assess if this assistance applies.

Part 2: Fares-based school bus service

2.1 Introduction

This section of the document outlines the conditions of operation of fares-based school bus services.

It details the administrative arrangements to be followed by operators of these services as well as prescribing the standards required to operate a fares-based school bus service.

In Queensland, there are two types of fares-based contracted bus services on which eligible school students can travel and receive STAS assistance.

These are:

- prescribed school service contracts for fares-based school bus services
- urban service contracts.

Where the department assesses a student as eligible to travel on a fares-based service, the department pays the required fare direct to the operator of the service.

The assistance available to eligible students travelling on these services is limited to the cost of travel to the nearest school. If a student wishes to travel on the service beyond the nearest school they are able to do so for the payment of the appropriate fare direct to the bus operator. This is a private arrangement between the parent/guardian of the student involved and the bus company.

2.2 Conditions of operation

2.2.1 Authority

Operators of fares-based school bus services are issued with a service contract to transport eligible school students. These contracts are authorised under the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994*. Where there is spare capacity on a service, operators are required to convey fare-paying passengers and students who do not qualify for government funded transport.

Fares-based school bus services usually operate to both state and non-state schools within the bus operator'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.

When this occurs, the parent/guardian is responsible for the payment of any excess fare direct to the operator.

2.2.1.1 Restrictions to authority

An operator of a prescribed school service contract for fares-based school services is not permitted to pick up fare paying passengers in declared areas or routes. A declared area or route is an area or route for which the department has declared in accordance with Section 42 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994* that a service contract is required to provide a public passenger service for the area or route.

Declarations made under Section 42 have generally been limited to areas and routes which are the subject of urban service contracts and the holders of these contracts are required to provide the

road-based scheduled passenger services in these areas or routes. This means that unless the department has specifically excluded a fares-based service from the requirements of the urban service contract, the operator of the fares-based school service is prevented from picking up and setting down eligible school student or fare-paying passengers in these areas or routes.

However, fare-paying passengers may be picked up by the fares-based operator in a declared area or route if the operator has written authorisation from the relevant contract holder to pick up fare-paying passengers.

In areas or on routes that are not subject to a declaration under Section 42 there is no restriction on the carriage of passengers over those routes.

2.2.2 Instituting services in new areas

The following factors will be considered before a service is introduced in a new area:

- number of students/families to benefit from the new service
- safety and suitability of roads to be travelled upon
- cost of implementing and running a new service
- service delivery for eligible students, including timetable and travelling times
- any impact on existing services and their viability
- any future development of, and planning for, population growth, new schools in the area and road network changes
- overall public interest
- transport demand from ineligible student and non-student sections of the community in the area
- all other transport options in the area.

2.2.3 Extensions to services or additional services

In existing contract areas, it is the operator's responsibility to respond to an increase in travel demand. The bus operator may be required to meet this demand by providing additional services for overload situations or extend services within the existing contract area.

Where services are extended, operators should consult with their local Department of Transport and Main Roads office to determine if school transport funding is available. In assessing any proposal for payment of fares for school students, the department will consider the location of schools and other transport services, particularly contract school bus services.

2.2.4 School closures

When a school is closed, either temporarily or permanently, the transport arrangements for the area will be reviewed. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will consult with the Department of Education and Training when determining future transport arrangements. Any future transport arrangements as well as eligibility for transport assistance will be made in accordance with the STAS guidelines.

2.2.5 Service provisions

2.2.5.1 Bus operator responsibility

In providing public passenger services, a bus operator must ensure the wellbeing and safety of students travelling on their buses. It is a bus operator's responsibility to deliver students to their destination whether that is a school, home or a bus interchange.

Reasonable steps should also be taken by the bus operator to ensure the safety of students at bus interchanges. This may include arrangements where students remain on the bus until the arrival of the interchanging bus, or streamlining bus schedules to minimise waiting periods.

A bus operator also has responsibilities under the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses (Section 2.8).

2.2.5.2 Vehicle breakdowns/other emergency circumstances – Use of Relief Vehicles

Where mechanical breakdown or other emergency circumstances prevent the provision of a normal service, the bus operator must take all reasonable steps to arrange alternative transport for the students. This would normally mean that an alternative relief vehicle, which is suitable to provide a continuity of service delivery for the safe transport of the students, would be used.

In these situations the bus operator should ensure that all schools affected are notified immediately of any alternative arrangements put in place.

The use of a relief vehicle to replace a SchoolBUS funded vehicle for charter or another purpose is not permitted under any circumstances.

Operators who have permanent vehicles with a regular record of breakdown will be subject to a Passenger Transport Audit by the department.

An operator, who replaces a SchoolBUS funded vehicle for a reason other than the repair of the permanent vehicle, will be in breach of their contract and the department will:

1. Take action under the Key Performance Indicators of the contract, and
2. Consider repayment of SchoolBUS funding, contract termination or the non renewal of contract for multiple breaches of the relief vehicle policy

The following outlines the vehicles allowed to be used as a relief vehicle to replace an individual bus:

1. Any vehicle used must comply with all of the vehicle requirements of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010 and other statutory legislation.
2. A vehicle less than 15 years of age that meets ADR 59/00 (rollover)* can be used as a relief vehicle with no limit to the number of days
3. A vehicle greater than 15 years of age that meets ADR 59/00 (rollover)* can be used as a relief vehicle for up to five school days or 10 trips (a trip is regarded as the whole or part of a

morning or afternoon service), with a maximum of 10 school days or 20 trips per year. Prior departmental approval can be obtained for periods over the five school days (10 trips) limit. Documentation from an independent person will be required with the application.

4. A non rollover* compliant vehicle is only permitted for limited use if the vehicle has been registered to the operator continuously from 1 July 2009. A non rollover vehicle can be used as a relief vehicle for up to five school days or 10 trips, with a maximum of 10 school days or 20 trips per year. No extensions allowed to these limits.

** CI/NCI vehicles are not required to meet rollover.*

2.2.5.3 Adverse weather conditions

Adverse weather conditions may prevent the provision of a normal service. Where possible, the bus operator is to ensure that satisfactory alternative arrangements are made for the transport of students.

When unable to provide alternative arrangements, the operator should ensure that all schools affected are immediately notified.

2.2.5.4 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 the department immediately if road conditions deteriorate to a level which could affect its suitability as a school route.

2.2.5.5 Change of school hours

Principals may change the hours of operation of their school to suit local conditions. Some secondary schools may also have flexible arrangements for students involved in vocational education and training and school-based apprenticeships.

In these situations, the department will not pay any additional school transport fares or payments where operators choose to run additional services to accommodate changed school hours.

The operating times of services can be varied by operators, provided the general conditions of their contract are met and that appropriate consultation with schools affected, parent groups and the department occurs.

2.2.6 Bus passes

The Department of Transport and Main Roads 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 the department.

Under no circumstances is an operator permitted to deny transport to a student unless the processes under the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses have been followed.

An operator must not charge or receive a fare or other consideration in respect of a journey by an eligible student, or part of a journey by an eligible student, for which government funding is received.

Where a student applies to travel am or pm only, that is, two to five trips per week am only or two to five 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 the department.

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. The department 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 Government's privacy policy. Personal information printed on a pass should be limited to a student's name, school attended and year level. It is acceptable, however, for information to be included on the pass which may help to identify the bus stop at which the student boards/alights the bus, for example, Smith Street stop, or the numbers of zones/sections covered by the pass, for example, three zones.

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

2.3 Administrative arrangements

The School Transport Information Management System (STIMS) database is used to administer STAS. This database is a complex information management and payment system that facilitates payment and other processing functions associated with STAS.

The STIMS database is used for the day-to-day functions of processing applications, as well as calculating the level of payment to be made to parents and bus operators for the transport of eligible school students.

Access to this database is restricted to authorised officers of the department and the database is managed in accordance with the Department of Transport and Main Roads privacy policy.

In addition to the processing and payments functions, the database also fulfils the important role of providing the government with accurate statistics about bus operations, the geographic distribution of students across the state and data which is used for general policy modelling of the scheme.

2.3.1 Applications for assistance

The Department of Transport and Main Roads issues all operators with Bus Travel Assistance Application (F2208) and Bus Travel Assistance Safety-Net Application (F3058) forms which are to be completed by the parent/guardian. Application forms are also available at: www.translink.com.au/schooltransport.

Applications for assistance can be accepted only for the current school year.

Applications for travel in a previous school year will not be accepted or approved for payment by the department.

2.3.1.1 Distance eligible students

The approval procedure for distance eligible students is shown on page 45.

2.3.1.2 Safety-net eligible students

The approval procedure for safety-net eligible students is shown on page 46.

2.3.2 Verification reports for bus operators

To ensure the accuracy of payments being made to operators and to satisfy audit requirements, all operators who provide services for eligible students must complete an operator verification report on a regular basis.

These reports are generated by the department and list all eligible students that the department has on the School Transport Information Management System (STIMS) database as receiving transport assistance.

Bus operators 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 verifying all details are correct, bus operators should sign and return the verification report to their local Department of Transport and Main Roads office. Under audit requirements further payments may be suspended if operator verification reports are not returned by the due date.

Each page of the verification report is to be signed by the operator. In cases where the verification report is quite lengthy, it is acceptable for the operator to amend the certification on the last page of the verification report to include the page numbers, initial the alteration and then sign the certification.

2.3.3 Verification reports for schools

A similar verification report is undertaken with DET and non-state schools each term to confirm student attendance and to update details for STAS eligible students. This ongoing process enables STIMS data to be maintained in an accurate form.

To do this, TMR send data centrally to DET a number of times per year to be electronically data matched against details held by DET in the OneSchool database. This is authorised under Section 144 of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 which provides the department with the authority to obtain information from schools about a student, or a student's parent/guardian, that is relevant to the administration of STAS.

TMR is currently unable to undertake an electronic school verification process with non-state schools. For these schools, a report that lists current eligible students who receive STAS assistance and attend a certain school is produced from STIMS. These school verification reports are distributed to schools on a quarterly basis.

Each page of a school verification report is to be signed off by the school principal. In cases where the verification report is quite lengthy, it is acceptable for a school principal to amend the certification on the last page of the verification report to include the page numbers, initial the alteration and then sign the certification.

Alternatively, a covering letter on school letterhead and signed by the principal that states the report was thoroughly checked/processed by the school would also be acceptable.

2.3.4 Deletion notification form

When students cease to travel on a service for which they have been assessed as eligible, bus operators need to advise the department. This can be done by the operator completing a School Bus Travel Assistance Scheme Deletion Notification Form (F2347) which they should forward to the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

2.3.5 Days that school services must operate

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

A school day is:

- a day of the school year shown on the school calendar published by the Department of Education and Training for the current school year and includes a gazetted local show holiday and a ministerial special holiday for students
- a day occurring on a date set and published by the Department of Education and Training for the current school year as a staff professional development day (non-contact day for teachers) but does not include a staff professional development day that occurs within a gazetted school holiday period.

This information can be found on the link to the school calendar for the current year on the web page located on the Department of Education and Training website at www.education.qld.gov.au.

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) above applies, the operator must provide a level of service sufficient to transport those eligible students:

- who regularly travel on contract services
- 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 school
- to 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), for example, some services cross shire/city boundaries to schools in each location but 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 of the state that finish early and have an extra week school vacation at the end of the year
- year levels, for example, years 10/11 or 12 that finish earlier at the end of the year
- non-state schools taking extra school vacation at the end of the year and/or during the year
- staff professional development days: some non-state schools will be open on these days when state schools are closed and instead may close for a staff professional development day on a different school day when state schools are open.

2.3.6 Forms used in school transport administration

The following documentation is used in administering fares-based school bus services under STAS. Stocks are available from the nearest Department of Transport and Main Roads office. Application forms are also available online at: www.translink.com.au/schooltransport.

- Bus Travel Assistance Application Form (F2208): completed by parents/guardians to apply for distance based assistance
- Bus Travel Assistance Safety-Net Application Form (F3058): completed by parents/guardians to apply for safety-net assistance
- Brisbane City Council Bus Travel Assistance Safety-Net Application Form (F3068): completed by parents/guardians to apply for safety-net assistance on Brisbane Transport buses.
- School Bus Travel Assistance Scheme Deletion Notification Form (F2347): used by operators to advise the department of eligible students who stop using the bus service

- School Transport Operator ABN and GST Registration Request Form (F4293): used by operators to advise the department of their ABN and GST registration details
- School Transport New/Amended Payee Bank Details Form (F3679): used by operators to advise the department of the bank account details for payment purposes.

The following reports and statements are generated by STIMS, and forwarded to bus operators:

- Operator verification report: this report is sent to operators on a regular basis and lists all eligible students whose details have been entered on the STIMS database, refer Section 2.3.2 Verification reports for bus operators.
- Recipient created tax invoice fares-based services: this report provides full details of the service provider, including the bank account details into which payment has been made, as well as the net payment amount, the amount of GST and a description of what the payment is for. It must be signed by the bus operator and returned to the department before future payments can be made.
- Fares-based operator statement: this report contains a breakdown of the transactions which have occurred for each passenger during the pay period and includes details of existing passengers, new passengers and details of any back payments or adjustments made.

2.4 Standards

Bus operators must ensure all vehicles comply with the requirements of Schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010* as listed below.

- maximum age, design and luggage
- bus padding
- warning lights and signs to be fitted to school bus
- buses carrying school students on a no standing passenger road
- structural inspection and repair of buses
- maintenance record
- heavy bus service life extensions
- maintaining particular relevant vehicles in a clean, tidy and comfortable condition and other vehicle requirements.

The above legislation is available to view online at www.legislation.qld.gov.au.

2.4.1 Operators

The operator must hold the appropriate category of operator accreditation required under the Act and Regulation at all times. Under the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010*, applicants for operator accreditation must successfully complete a training course approved by the Director General, Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Further information can be obtained from Information Bulletin PT 211, available at www.tmr.qld.gov.au/information_bulletins.

2.4.2 Drivers

All drivers must hold current and appropriate driver authorisation, as issued by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

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

- are capable of safely operating the relevant type of vehicle
- are aware of their customer service responsibilities
- conduct themselves appropriately.

2.4.3 Service

All drivers must be competent in providing customer service by:

- behaving courteously towards passengers and the public
- following the processes outlined in the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses, including maintaining a high level of discipline among school student passengers and advising the school principal promptly of any discipline problems
- following advertised routes and timetables.

2.4.4 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
- Code of Practice Omnibus Licensing Evaluation S6 (buses manufactured before 20 May 1992)
- Guidelines for Front Door Closure Systems on Heavy Buses providing Public Passenger Services.

2.4.5 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
- must comply with the department's information bulletin Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Buses available at: www.tmr.qld.gov.au/information_bulletins.

2.4.6 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 20km
 - the bus does not travel on a road notified by the department as a road on which the bus must not carry standing passengers
 - a bus fitted with seatbelts for every seated passenger should not carry standing passengers except where the carriage of a student as a standing passenger would reduce the student's exposure to risk.

* The number of passengers carried must not cause an overload beyond the vehicle manufacturer's safety limits for gross vehicle mass.

2.4.7 Bus seating

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

- the seat is not fitted with seatbelts or the seat is fitted with either a seat belt or an approved restraint for each of the three children
- the placement and construction of the seat allows
- no child sits in the seat for more than a total of 90 minutes while any two other children sit in the seat.

2.4.8 Incident management plan

Under section 34 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010* it is a requirement for operators of public passenger services in Queensland to have a documented Incident Management Plan.

Guidelines for Developing an Incident Management Plan-PT222 has been developed and is available for operators to use as a guide for developing an Incident Management Plan.

Operators need to develop and maintain a plan specific to their own organisation.

The above document should be read in conjunction with the department's information bulletin – Incident Management Plans. These are available at:
www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Information_bulletins.

2.5 Part passes

2.5.1 Distance eligible students

The Department of Transport and Main Roads will pay the operator the appropriate STAS fare for a student for the journey to the nearest state school or the school attended, whichever is the closest.

Where a journey for a student exceeds the journey funded by the department, the operator may charge the student an excess fare (also known as a top-up fare). Any excess fare for the student is the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the eligible student.

The operator must have arrangements in place to enable excess fares to be paid on either a weekly or per trip basis.

Where a student elects to travel less than the full school week, they may apply for five trips per week am travel only or five trips per week pm travel only.

Where this occurs, the operator shall make arrangements to identify the student as an am or pm traveller.

An operator must comply with the following when calculating the top-up fare amount.

Part pass top-ups are a cash fare. As such, they are subject to the same guidelines as cash fares. Refer Part 2 Section 2.6 Cash fares.

The maximum cash fare that an operator can charge for the top-up fare is taken from their cash fare levels that are authorised by the Department of Transport and Main Roads from time to time.

The distance for the top-up fare is calculated as follows:

Example: Prescribed school service contracts

Calculation	
Shortest trafficable journey, boarding point* to school attended	15km
Shortest trafficable journey, boarding point* to nearest state school	10km
Excess distance	5km
Secondary student single cash fare for 5km	\$2.00#
Primary student single cash fare for 5km	\$1.00#

These are examples only

* 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 case where this would not apply is where the student nominates a boarding zone/section closer to the school.

Note 1: this is an example of a maximum part pass top-up fare an operator is permitted to charge for a 5km journey. An operator may have current approved cash fare levels that are lower than the maximum calculation. If so, they cannot 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 (that is, if on all other fares eight single trips = weekly fare, then the single fare will be calculated as 1/8 of the weekly fare). If the operator does not have a standard discount rate then the single fare may not exceed 12.5 per cent of the weekly fare.

- A maximum 10 per cent fare increase each six months may be applied to the cash fares provided:
 - the increase is approved by the department 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 increased by the Consumer Price Index, for example, and then a further 10 per cent.
 - the only exception to this rule is where an operator previously charged no top-up as a commercial decision. If the operator decides to introduce top-up fares, the fares can be any amount up to the maximum.
- As with other cash fares there is no requirement to offer weekly discounts.
 - If the halfway point between two schools (that offer the same year levels) falls within a fare zone or fare section which yields equal STAS fares to either school, the operator cannot charge a top up fare for distance eligible students residing in that zone/section if they attend either school.

Example

- **TransLink services**

Calculation	
Distance to school attended	8km
Distance to nearest state school	5km
Excess distance	3km
Top Up Fare level is based on excess distance	

- **qconnect services**

Where students (approved on STIMS as distance eligible) travel beyond the distance to their nearest state school they can be charged a top-up fare based on the excess number of zones travelled.

Examples 1 and 2

Example 1 Calculation	
Distance to school attended	8km
Distance to nearest state school	5km
Excess distance	3km
Number of zones to school attended	3
Number of zones to nearest state school	1
Excess zones	2
Outcome: Student can be charged for 2 zones	

Example 2 Calculation	
Distance to school attended	12km
Distance to nearest state school	11km
Excess distance	1km
Number of zones to school attended	2
Number of zones to nearest state school	2
Excess zones	0
Outcome: Student can be charged for 1 zone	

Note: In cases where the excess distance is greater than zero but travel is the same number of zones, a top-up fare based on a minimum of 1 zone can be charged. Where the distance differential is negative no top up fare can be charged.

Example 3

Student's origin of travel AM to school (and/or destination of travel PM from school) is outside the qconnect urban contract area:

Example 3 Calculation	
Distance to school attended	19km
Distance to nearest state school	10km
Excess distance	9km
Nearest state school is located in zone	4
School attended is located in zone	1
Excess zones	3
Outcome: Student can be charged for 3 zones	

Note: Where the origin of travel is outside the qconnect urban contract area the actual number of zones from the nearest state school to the school attended can be charged.

2.5.2 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 five trips per week am travel only or five 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. Operators will be paid the full safety-net benefit for all safety-net eligible students.

More detailed information on safety-net payment processes is contained in the document Operator Payment Policy.

The following examples are for non-TransLink operators and 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

- Prescribed school service operators

Calculation	
Weekly fare (from operator's approved cash fare schedule)#	\$15.60
Less safety-net benefit (paid by the department)*	\$7.60*
Weekly top-up	\$8.00
#Discounted where offered. In this example, 8 x \$1.95 single fare = weekly fare	

- qconnect operators

Calculation	
Weekly fare (from operator's approved cash fare schedule)#	\$11.60
Less safety-net benefit (paid by the department)*	\$7.00*
Weekly top-up	\$4.60
#Discounted, where offered. In this example, 8 x \$1.45 single fare = weekly fare	

Per trip top-up calculation

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

- Prescribed school service operators

Calculation	
Single fare \$1.95 x 10	\$19.50
Less safety-net benefit (paid by the department)*	\$9.00*
Balance	\$10.50
Divide balance by 10	
per trip top-up	\$1.05
per trip top-up (rounded to nearest 5 cents)	\$1.05

- qconnect operators

Calculation	
Single fare \$1.45 x 10	\$14.50
Less safety-net benefit (paid by the department)*	\$7.00*
Balance	\$7.50
Divide balance by 10	
per trip top-up	\$0.75
per trip top-up (rounded to nearest 5 cents)	\$0.75

Example 2 – top-up for am or pm travel

- Prescribed school service operators

Calculation	
Single fare \$2.10 x 5	\$10.50
Less safety-net benefit (paid by the department)*	\$7.00*
Balance	\$3.50
Divide balance by 5 (am or pm trips)	
per trip top-up	\$0.70
per trip top-up (rounded to nearest 5 cents)	\$0.70

- qconnect operators

Calculation	
Single fare \$2.10 x 5	\$10.50
Less safety-net benefit (paid by the department)*	\$7.60*
Balance	\$2.90
Divide balance by 5 (am or pm trips)	
per trip top-up	\$0.58
per trip top-up (rounded to nearest 5 cents)	\$0.60

* The monetary amount 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, that is, 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 per cent of the weekly fare.

TransLink operators

The safety-net bus travel benefit in the TransLink area covers the shortest trafficable distance from a student's residence to a maximum of 3.2km for primary and 4.8km for a secondary student.

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

Calculation	
Distance to school attended	6.3km
Maximum TransLink benefit (secondary)	4.8km
TransLink safety-net top-up cash fare	1.5km

2.6 Cash fares

The School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule sets out the maximum cash fare that a bus operator can charge students for journeys to and from school. This schedule applies to all school bus operators who have a prescribed school service contract for fares-based school services.

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 schedule is the maximum allowable fare and is not a mandatory fare schedule. Where an operator charges fares below this maximum fare schedule, these fares may be increased by only a maximum of 10 per cent each six months, until the maximum fare is reached (with due notice to customers and notification of fares to the department).

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

The maximum cash fare levels are reviewed from time to time by the department.

Please refer to www.translink.com.au for information regarding TransLink fares.

Information regarding *qconnect* services is available at www.qconnect.qld.gov.au.

2.7 Fare evasion

Where a student evades or attempts to evade a fare, operators should take action in accordance with the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses. This is to ensure that students are not put at any unnecessary risk by being left at a bus stop.

2.8 Code of Conduct For School Students Travelling on Buses

All school students travelling on buses are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses. This includes not only travel to and from school, but any travel on buses, for example, excursions and sport.

If students breach the Code they may be refused travel for a period of time, or excluded from the bus service on a permanent basis. When this occurs, parents are responsible for the student's travel to and from school, including all costs.

The Code is available from your local Department of Transport and Main Roads office and at: www.translink.com.au/buscode.

2.8.1 Surveillance equipment and CCTV on school buses

Some bus operators have found that fitting surveillance cameras and recording equipment to school buses is a useful tool in the monitoring of behaviour. The equipment not only acts as a deterrent to unacceptable behaviour, but also provides evidence in identifying those students who are behaving inappropriately.

It is expected that before fitting such equipment, consultation has occurred between the operator, parents/carers of the students, conveyance committee (if applicable) and the schools involved.

The department strongly advises bus operators that surveillance cameras must be in open view and that warning signs advising of the cameras be posted in the bus entrance.

The department has issued information bulletins on the installation and use of CCTV in buses. The department strongly recommends that operators of school services who wish to install or have installed CCTV equipment adopt the guidelines recommended in the bulletins as issued from time to time.

The following information bulletins are available from the department's website at:

www.tmr.qld.gov.au/information_bulletins:

- PT404 – A recommended code of practice for the use of CCTV
- PT405 – Recommended specifications for CCTV fitted in Queensland buses
- PT406 – A recommended guideline for the Installation and use of CCTV in Queensland buses
- PT407 – Requirement for warning signs in Queensland buses equipped with CCTV.

Part 3: Kilometre-based school bus services

3.1 Introduction

This section provides information to bus operators and conveyance committees about their roles and responsibilities in the operation of kilometre-based school bus services in Queensland.

Kilometre-based school bus services normally operate in rural and regional areas. In general, these services carry eligible school students to the nearest school. However, in some areas, local circumstances dictate that these services travel to other than the nearest school.

There are also a limited number of ferry services throughout Queensland which operate under similar conditions to kilometre-based school bus services.

Kilometre-based school bus services are funded through the School Transport Assistance Scheme. They are administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads in conjunction with conveyance committees.

A conveyance committee is a group of people who are elected annually by the parents and guardians of the distance eligible students who use the local kilometre-based school bus service.

Conveyance committees have an important role in monitoring contract performance and assisting in the development of timetables and routes. This is an essential part of the effective provision of these services.

3.2 Conditions of operation

3.2.1 Institution of a new service

A kilometre-based school bus service may be started where there is a demonstrated need and no other transport service operates in the area. Such services are instituted to transport distance eligible students to the nearest state school. In a minority of cases, circumstance may dictate that services travel to other than the nearest school.

To institute a new service, an application should be made to the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office. This would normally be done by the parents of children eligible to travel on the service.

This group of parents would form what is known as the conveyance committee for that service. Refer Section 3.3 Role of the conveyance committee.

Any application for a new service must meet statewide criteria before approval can be granted for the service to begin. In assessing an application for a new service, the department will consider:

- the number of students/families to benefit from the institution of the service. The number of distance eligible students to be transported to the nearest state school must be large enough to ensure that a daily average of nine would be maintained
- more than 50 per cent of distance eligible students must reside more than 6.4km from the nearest state school

- the suitability of roads and turnarounds
- the estimated cost of providing the service. The overall daily cost of the total service must not exceed the approved maximum cost as published by the department
 - As part of the investigation process, the department may request that the cost of any new service be offset against savings in payment of conveyance allowance to benefiting families or by rationalisation of other services in the area.
- the service delivery for distance eligible students, including length of the route, timetable and overall travelling times
- the impact on existing operator(s) services and viability
- any future development of, and planning for, population growth, new schools and road network changes
- the overall public passenger transport requirements. This includes passenger transport demand from the ineligible student and nonstudent sections of the community in the area
 - In areas of higher population densities, the impact of urban service contracts will require an assessment as to the suitability of a kilometre-based service in the longer term. The department will generally not approve new kilometre-based school bus services:
 - » within the south-east Queensland school transport zone
 - » within or abutting an existing urban service contract area outside the south-east Queensland school transport zone.
- any other transport options that exist in the area.

Once it has been determined that a new kilometre-based school bus service is to be instituted, the department will begin the process for the selection of an operator.

This process is determined by the department in accordance with legislative provisions. In awarding school service contracts for transporting eligible school children, the department ensures that the views of any relevant conveyance committee are taken into account.

3.2.2 Base school

The department will nominate a base school for each kilometre-based school bus service. This is generally the state primary school or state secondary school that most of the students using the service will attend. It is used for administrative purposes only.

3.2.3 Contract

All contracts for the provision of passenger transport services will be made between the state of Queensland and the operator.

Operators must obtain the prior approval of the Department of Transport and Main Roads for the transfer (sale) of any contract.

3.2.4 Bus route

The route over which the kilometre-based school bus service operates must be approved by the department. A service will not be instituted until written advice is obtained from the relevant

road authority that the roads travelled on are suitable for a bus route. This also applies for any alterations or extensions to a service. Such advice should confirm the suitability of the proposed route for daily use in the transport of school students, under normal weather conditions.

Regular alternative routes such as wet weather routes should be applied for and approved prior to use.

If a temporary route variation is necessary to ensure passenger safety, payment for this variation may be considered only if it is entered on the monthly exception report and certified by the conveyance committee. Refer Section 3.7.5 Certification of exception report.

The bus operator should immediately report to the relevant road authority and the conveyance committee, if road conditions deteriorate to a level which could affect its suitability as a school route. Remedial action should be requested as soon as possible.

3.2.5 Extensions to a service

A request to extend a service will only be considered if it is submitted to the department in writing by the conveyance committee. A full review of the service will then occur.

The following will be considered when assessing an application for an extension:

- there must be two or more distance eligible students who live more than 1.6 kilometres from the existing service (students previously included in an extension approval for this same section of the service cannot be considered)
- there must be two distance eligible primary or secondary students to meet this minimum 1.6km distance requirement for an extension. For each additional distance eligible student, the route may be extended for a further 0.8 km.

Note: If two or more of these distance eligible students reside more than 1.6km from the existing service and live more than 16km from the nearest state school, the proposed extension is not subject to the above stated distance limitation, however, the service must not exceed the approved maximum cost.

- extensions of less than 1.6km are not normally considered
- the new overall daily cost of the service must not exceed the approved maximum cost as published by the department
- any extra travel time involved
- the permanent status of students
- the availability of any other services
- the proximity to other schools
- the suitability of the road/s and turnarounds. Refer Section 3.2.12 Bus stop areas
- any No Standing Passenger Roads implications that may apply
- additional overall costs involved.

Extensions are not generally approved within the designated area or within 3.2km of any other service that transports students of the same year levels.

3.2.5.1 Extensions to other than the nearest state school

In many areas, kilometre-based services travel beyond the nearest state school to other schools in the same town/city.

In some limited instances, the department pays for the kilometre-based service to travel beyond the nearest state school to either a non-state or state school offering the same year level. These payments relate to past historical circumstances that no longer apply. They may be continued but any new extensions of this type will not be funded by STAS.

All future extensions to kilometre-based services to travel to other than the nearest state school may be considered by the department only as an alteration to the route for fare-paying passengers. No kilometre-based government funding will apply for these alterations.

3.2.5.2 Extensions for fare-paying passengers

An operator may wish to provide an extension to the official route for fare-paying passengers at the beginning of the service (that is, past the terminus) or at the end of the service (that is, past the last school on the official route funded by the department).

The department would become involved in the above circumstances only if there were an impact on the official service, for example, operating times, loadings. These need to be judged on a case-by-case basis to assess whether they adversely affect the main service.

However, the Department of Transport and Main Roads is responsible for approval of funded and fare-paying extensions to the official route funded by the department. If the side spur fare-paying extension is less than 1.6km, department approval will be given only if the extension is not funded as part of the official route and a student who is eligible to travel on the service is not charged a fare on this side spur.

Before approval is given for an alteration to a service for any reason it is important that the views of the conveyance committee are considered as well as the impact on the operating times for other students on the service.

The conveyance committee should ensure that the following conditions are met before an extension to cater for fare-paying passengers is submitted:

- documentation of consultation with all stakeholders, including the principals of schools affected, is obtained
- appropriate written advice from the road authority on road suitability is obtained.

Note: extensions to the routes that cater exclusively for fare-paying passengers may be approved but will not be funded by the STAS.

3.2.6 Deletion of part of service

The Department of Transport and Main Roads must be advised immediately when any section of the route is no longer required.

When the deletion of part of a service occurs, the department will provide written notification to the operator of the adjusted route including the new daily distance and daily payment details. Until this official notification is received, bus operators are required to declare the deleted distance on the exception report forwarded to the department at the end of each pay period.

At the request of the conveyance committee, consideration may be given to granting a temporary deletion for a reasonable period of time, provided the retention of the section can be justified. This period would not exceed three months.

There may be circumstances where distance eligible students have left an area of the route, for example, a side spur and only safety-net eligible students remain to travel on the service for that part of the route. In these cases, the department will only continue to pay for that part of the route until the end of the school semester. This decision will only be reversed if distance eligible students return to that part of the service on or before the first school day of the new semester.

3.2.7 Review of service

To ensure optimum operating efficiencies, and also accountable expenditure of public money, the department conducts operational reviews on a regular basis. If necessary, adjustments to services and routes may be undertaken. When this occurs, negotiation will occur with those operators affected. Refer Section 3.8 Operational review.

If the review shows an increased demand which can not be met by the existing services, other bus services (both kilometre-based and fares-based) may be used.

3.2.8 Service arrangements resulting from significant passenger variations

The number of passengers carried on a service may change significantly over time. Where student numbers increase, changes to operational arrangements may be required. Where numbers decrease significantly, the viability of the service may need to be reviewed. In all cases where student numbers have changed significantly, any future arrangements will be determined by the department.

3.2.8.1 Increase in the number of students

If the number of distance eligible students on a service increases substantially, the department will determine the most suitable and cost effective option available.

In general, substantial increases in student numbers may be addressed by:

- a re-run where the increase is of a temporary nature (refer Section 3.2.11 Re-runs)
- the department requiring the operator to purchase a larger category vehicle, including a higher carrying capacity vehicle in the same category, in order to carry all distance eligible students.

The department may also conduct a review to determine the most suitable arrangements for the overall provision of services in the area. Where this occurs, the following factors will be considered:

- Overall public passenger transport requirements. This includes passenger transport demand from all student and non-student sections of the community in the area.
- Future development of and planning for population growth, new schools and road network changes.
- Transfer of distance eligible students to other services including fares-based school bus services or urban contract services to balance or optimise loadings in a given area.

Note: in areas of higher population densities, the impact of urban service contracts will require an assessment as to the suitability of a kilometre-based service in the longer term. The department will generally not approve new kilometre-based school bus services:

- within the south-east Queensland school transport zone
- within or abutting an existing urban service contract area outside the south-east Queensland school transport zone.

Where the department determines that the most suitable transport option is to split a service into two kilometre-based school services, the resulting new services:

- will be split in a manner which provides the most cost effective result for the STAS
- must not exceed the approved maximum cost as published by the department from time to time
- will be paid at their correct category from the effective date of the split.

3.2.8.2 Decrease in the number of students

If the number of distance eligible students on any service decreases substantially, the department will investigate the future viability of the service.

Any such investigation will include consultation with all parties involved.

The department will close a service:

- if the number of distance eligible students using the service (20 per cent to 100 per cent travel) falls below six
- when it is determined that costs for the service have become excessive with declining numbers.

Closure of a service will usually occur at the end of a school term. However, a service may close on a date during a school term if student numbers are very low.

3.2.9 School closures

When a school is closed, either temporarily or permanently, the transport arrangements for the area will be reviewed. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will consult with the Department of Education and Training when determining future transport arrangements. Any future transport arrangements as well as eligibility for transport assistance will be made in accordance with the STAS guidelines.

3.2.10 Feeder service

A feeder service is a service which collects eligible students from an area and meets at an interchange point with another service. An operator of a feeder service must ensure timely coordination with connecting services.

Bus operators have a responsibility to ensure the safety of students at bus interchanges. This may include arrangements where students remain on the bus until the arrival of the interchanging bus, or streamlining bus schedules to minimise waiting periods. The operator should consult with the conveyance committee on any arrangements.

3.2.11 Re-runs

The department may approve daily re-runs to address an overload situation for distance eligible students. In general, re-runs are instituted as a short term measure:

- for overloading of a temporary nature, for example, seasonal fluctuations and instances where overloading does not occur on a daily basis
- while investigating other alternatives to address a permanent overloading situation.

Unless approved by the department, re-runs are not instituted as a permanent arrangement if all distance eligible students are able to be carried in a larger category vehicle, including a higher carrying capacity vehicle in the same category.

The payment for the distance of the re-run must be claimed on the exception report each pay period for the relevant days that the re-run was required.

3.2.12 Bus stop areas

The bus operator, in consultation with the conveyance committee, is responsible for the regular review of the designated set down (bus stop) and turnaround areas.

Decisions to alter existing sites should be made only after proper consideration of all safety aspects.

The operator and conveyance committee should consult with the relevant road authority regarding the suitability and maintenance of bus stops and turnaround areas.

3.2.13 Road signs

The placement of appropriate signs is the responsibility of the relevant road authority.

Requests for placement of road signs should be made in writing to that authority.

3.2.14 Timetables

The bus operator is responsible for the timetable of a bus service. After each annual general meeting of the conveyance committee (and at any time when service changes warrant) the bus operator, in consultation with the conveyance committee, should review the service timetable to ensure its continued suitability for students.

3.2.15 Bus passes

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

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 cannot 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. The department 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.

Bus passes must comply with Queensland Government's privacy policy. Personal information printed on a pass should be limited to a student's name, school attended and year level.

It is acceptable, however, for information to be included on the pass which may help to identify the bus stop at which the student boards/alights the bus, for example, Smith Street stop, or the numbers of zones/sections covered by the pass, for example, three zones.

3.3 Role of the conveyance committee

3.3.1 Background

Conveyance committees comprise the parents/ guardians of distance eligible students who use a kilometre-based school bus service. They play an invaluable role in the administration of about 1,200 kilometre-based school transport services which operate around the state.

Conveyance committees provide vital local area knowledge which ensures kilometre-based services are tailored to best suit the specific transport needs of individual rural, regional and remote communities.

The government considers conveyance committees so essential to school transport services in Queensland that their role has been officially recognised in the regulations supporting the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994*.

The roles and responsibilities of a conveyance committee are contained in the conveyance committee information kit available from the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

These kits are distributed to conveyance committees upon their formation and contain all necessary documentation for the committee to fulfil its role in helping to administer the school bus service.

3.3.2 Formation of conveyance committee

Once approval has been given by the Department of Transport and Main Roads for the institution of a kilometre-based bus service (refer Section 3.2.1 Institution of a new service), a general meeting should be held to form a local conveyance committee.

Members of conveyance committees must be parents/guardians of distance eligible students who are using the service. This meeting should follow the general outline of an annual general meeting.

Where possible, each particular service should have its own separate conveyance committee. However, the department may approve arrangements where conveyance committees are combined for administrative purposes.

A combined conveyance committee would be only for services contracted to the same operator.

Members of a combined conveyance committee would be parents of distance eligible students who are currently using one of the services contracted to the same operator.

Where possible, the elected office bearers should consist of parents of distance eligible students from all services represented. A combined conveyance committee has the same role and responsibility of a conveyance committee for a single service.

All conveyance committees must:

- elect office bearers
- adopt a constitution (based on the model constitution as shown). All constitutions shall include, without alteration, the sections of the model constitution entitled meetings, quorum and contract issues
- complete all necessary documentation as required
- forward a proposal including draft routes, timetables and bus stops and any other special requirements to the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

The process for the selection of an operator is determined by the department in accordance with legislative provisions. In awarding school service contracts for transporting eligible school children, the department ensures that the views of any relevant conveyance committee are taken into account.

3.3.3 Model constitution

The following is an example of a model constitution for use by conveyance committees.

Model constitution

1. Name

The name of the conveyance committee shall be 'The local conveyance committee' hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'.

2. Objective

The objective of the committee shall be to have an ongoing role in:

- (a) monitoring the performance of the holders of school service contracts
- (b) assisting the holders of school service contracts in the development of timetabling and route design
- (c) assisting school principals and the holders of school service contracts in maintaining discipline of school children.

This is subject to legislation and policies and procedures of the Queensland Government as may from time to time apply to school transport.

3. Membership

The committee shall consist of no fewer than five people elected annually from their numbers by a meeting of parents/guardians of students who are distance eligible and using the local school transport service (hereinafter referred to as eligible students). The principal of the school to which the service operates, or his nominee, shall have the right to attend meetings of the committee but shall not have a vote nor hold office.

4. Date of annual general meeting

The annual general meeting shall be held in early February each year.

5. Office bearers

The committee will include office bearers.

- (a) The office bearers shall consist of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer (if required).
- (b) All offices shall be held in an honorary capacity.
- (c) Retiring officers shall be eligible for re-election.
- (d) The secretary of the committee shall, after each annual general meeting, notify the Department of Transport and Main Roads of the names, addresses and offices of the office bearers elected at the meeting.

6. Order of business – annual general meeting

The order of business at the annual general meeting shall be:

- (a) welcome to members and any special visitors
- (b) apologies
- (c) confirmation of minutes of previous annual general meeting
- (d) election of committee
- (e) general business.

7. Procedure and order of business general meetings

The order of business at a general meeting shall be:

- (a) apologies
- (b) confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
- (c) business arising out of minutes (to be limited to matters directly arising from the minutes and not to include matters which will be dealt with in general business)
- (d) correspondence
- (e) motions on notice
- (f) general business.

8. Committee records

A committee shall keep accurate records of decisions made at all meetings.

9. Meetings

The committee shall meet at such times as are decided upon at its first meeting after election.

The secretary shall give at least seven days clear notice of intention to convene a special meeting of the committee; or a special meeting or annual general meeting of the parents and guardians of eligible students. Such notice may be waived in urgent circumstances.

In such cases the committee will inform the parents of all eligible students.

10. Quorum

Conditional upon the correct meeting notice procedure being complied with, a quorum for any annual general meeting or special general meeting of parents/guardians of eligible students shall be 75 per cent of all eligible parents/guardians (on the basis of one representative per family) or such figure as determined by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

After each annual general meeting or special general meeting of parents/guardians, the secretary of the committee should advise the department of details of the meeting on the Conveyance Committee Quorum and Meeting Advice Form (F3561).

The Department of Transport and Main Roads will advise the secretary of the committee if the quorum for the meeting has not been accepted.

11. Contract issues

All contracts for the provision of school transport services are between the state of Queensland and the individual operator.

If the local conveyance committee has an issue that affects the contract of the operator, it shall call a special general meeting of all eligible parents/guardians. A motion to refer an issue to the department shall require an affirmative vote of 75 per cent of those present (to the nearest whole vote). The operator shall be notified of the time and place of the meeting. An operator may attend the meeting and may address it if the operator so wishes, but the operator may not vote or participate in the meeting in any other way.

However, an operator who is the parent/guardian of an eligible student on the service may vote at an annual general meeting or special meeting of parents/guardians.

Following the special general meeting, all resolutions relating to contract issues must be forwarded to the Department of Transport and Main Roads with comprehensive details of the circumstances surrounding each issue.

12. Operator

The operator or any immediate family member shall not be eligible for membership of the committee. The operator may attend meetings of the committee at the committee's invitation. However, an operator who is the parent/guardian of an eligible student on the service may vote at an annual general meeting or special meeting of parents/guardians.

13. Resignation of secretary

Should the secretary resign during a term of office all records and minutes should be promptly forwarded to the new secretary.

14. Dissolution

The committee shall be dissolved when the local school transport service is discontinued.

15. Chairperson

At every meeting of the committee and at every meeting of eligible parents, the chairperson of the committee shall occupy the chair. In the chairperson's absence a chairperson shall be elected by those present at the meeting.

The chairperson or other person presiding shall be entitled to a casting vote as well as a deliberative vote.

3.3.4 Queensland Government Indemnity and Queensland Government Insurance Fund

Under the Queensland Government Indemnity Guideline which commenced on 31 March 2014, conveyance committee members, as public officers, are indemnified by the State for civil proceeding, inquiry or investigation and criminal proceedings arising out of or relating to the officer's duties or functions.

Conveyance committee members are also covered as “volunteers” by the Queensland Government Insurance Fund (QGIF). The QGIF will pay compensation for injury to a volunteer as a result of an occurrence while acting in his/her official capacity.

Should conveyance committees require any further information regarding the indemnity and insurance provided under the Queensland Government Indemnity Guideline and QGIF they should seek independent legal advice.

3.4 Role of bus operators

3.4.1 Contract obligations

Bus operators are bound by the conditions of their prescribed school service contract. In addition to these general contract conditions, the bus operator must:

- comply with all statutory requirements associated with the use of a passenger transport vehicle used in the carriage of students
- maintain all vehicles in accordance with the current department bus safety standards policy
- provide a suitable approved vehicle of adequate passenger capacity able to carry all passengers in accordance with the vehicle standards policy
- develop a documented program for training drivers in their responsibilities under the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994* and subordinate legislation (that is, the Regulation and the Standard)
- ensure their drivers are trained in their obligations under the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994* and subordinate legislation (that is, the Regulation and the Standard). The training must include the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses and the management of student behaviour
- check the currency of a driver authorisation by accessing the Public Transport Driver Authorisation System, a free government internet system which has been specifically designed to ensure that the privacy of the driver is protected at all times
- must not operate, or allow someone else to operate, a vehicle providing the service unless the insurance requirements under the *Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994* for the vehicle have been complied with
- work with the conveyance committee with regard to the daily management of the service
- comply with the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses and provide written advice to conveyance committees and the principal of any school concerning any serious breaches in accordance with the code
- advise the conveyance committee and the department when any route variation occurs. This must also be shown on the kilometre exception report following each pay period.

3.4.2 Bus operator responsibility

In providing public passenger services, a bus operator must ensure the wellbeing and safety of students travelling on their buses. It is a bus operator's responsibility to deliver students to their destination, whether that is a school, home or a bus interchange.

Reasonable steps should also be taken by the bus operator to ensure the safety of students at bus interchanges. This may include arrangements where students remain on the bus until the arrival of the interchanging bus, or streamlining bus schedules to minimise waiting periods.

A bus operator also has responsibilities under the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses (Section 3.5).

3.4.3 Operator restrictions

Sub-contracting is not permitted without the prior approval of the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

3.4.4 Drivers

An operator may nominate a driver to conduct a service on either a regular basis or in a relief capacity.

All drivers must hold the appropriate driver authorisation from the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

A driver with a learner's permit is not permitted to operate a vehicle while passengers are on board. The bus operator is responsible for all actions of the drivers and must ensure that drivers are fully aware of the approved route, bus stops, timetable, the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses and any other factors necessary for the safe operation of the service.

3.4.5 Conveying passengers on kilometre-based services

The purpose of kilometre-based services is the transport of distance eligible students and the needs of these students must be the main focus of the service. The carriage of fare-paying passengers should in no way interfere with this focus. However, where there is spare capacity on a service, operators are required to convey fare-paying passengers. These arrangements to carry fare-paying passengers may be withdrawn or amended by the department.

An operator of a kilometre-based service is not permitted to pick up fare-paying passengers in declared areas or routes. A declared area or route is an area or route for which the department has declared in accordance with Section 42 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994* that a service contract is required to provide a public passenger service for the area or route.

Declarations under Section 42 have generally been limited to areas and routes which are the subject of urban service contracts and the holders of these contracts are required to provide the road-based scheduled passenger services in these areas or routes.

This means that unless the department has specifically excluded a kilometre-based service from the requirements of the urban service contract, the operator of the kilometre-based school service is prevented from picking up and setting down eligible school students or fare-paying passengers in these areas or routes.

However, fare-paying passengers may be picked up by the kilometre-based operator in a declared area or route if the operator has written authorisation from the relevant contract holder to pick up fare-paying passengers.

In areas or on routes that are not subject to a declaration under Section 42 there is no restriction on the carriage of passengers over those routes.

3.4.6 Charging of fares

Fares can be charged on all kilometre-based services, except those where an exemption from conveying fare-paying passengers has been approved.

Fares may be charged only for the following passengers travelling on kilometre-based school bus services:

- students not eligible to use the service*
- adults (however, fares cannot be charged for persons described in Section 1.4.1.1 Conditions of travel on kilometre-based services)
- students travelling further than the distance funded by the government. This means operators may charge an eligible student a fare for that part of the journey which is beyond the distance from the stop nearest the student's residence to the school the student is eligible to
- it is the operator's responsibility to transport students to and from school. In cases where a student wishes to alight at a stop other than their normal stop, either on the way to or from school, this may be allowed only at the operator's discretion.

* Operators must charge a fare that is within the School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule where a student's journey is fully or partly within the route of the school service contract.

3.4.7 Fares

The department's School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule sets out the maximum cash fare that a bus operator can charge students for journeys to and from school. This schedule applies to all kilometre-based school bus operators and to school bus operators who have a fares-based school service contract.

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 Maximum Cash Fare Schedule is the maximum allowable fare and is not a mandatory fare schedule. Where an operator charges fares below this maximum fare schedule, these fares may be increased only by a maximum of 10 per cent each six months, until the maximum fare is reached (with due notice to customers and notification of fares to the department).

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

The maximum cash fare levels are reviewed from time to time by the department.

3.4.8 Priority for travel

On kilometre-based school bus services, priority of access is granted to distance eligible and special eligible students. After these students have been accommodated, the priority of access to other school students on a service will be:

1. bus safety-net eligible students
2. fare-paying students.

There may be local circumstances where the operator and conveyance committee wish to apply to change the priority of access for their particular service. These circumstances should be submitted to the department, where approval to vary the priority of access will be considered.

Access to services by other members of the community should only be considered after the needs of all students have been met.

3.4.9 Conditions for safety-net students

Students approved under safety-net criteria (refer Section 1.3.1.2. Safety-net eligible students) are carried free of charge on kilometre-based school bus services. No place on the bus service can be guaranteed, but every effort must be made to place these students on buses. The initial and continued availability and priority of space on services will be determined by the local conveyance committee and bus operator.

Where spare capacity exists, safety-net students will be carried free of charge on kilometre-based school bus services to the state school nearest to the student's residence. Where there is no kilometre-based service to the nearest state school, assistance is not available on kilometre-based services to other schools.

Non-state school students are also eligible for safety-net bus travel to the nearest state school, provided they are not bypassing a nearer non-state school of the type attended. In some cases, transport past the nearest state school may be free of charge, where historically, the extension provided to the non-state school in the same centre is government funded.

Refer Section 3.2.5.1 Extensions to other than the nearest state school.

Eligibility on one service is not able to be transferred to another service.

3.5 Code Of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses

All school students travelling on buses are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses. This includes not only travel to and from school, but any travel on buses, for example, excursions, sport.

If students breach the Code they may be refused travel for a period of time, or excluded from the bus service on a permanent basis. When this occurs, parents are responsible for the student's travel to and from school, including all costs.

The Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses is available at www.translink.com.au/buscode.

3.5.1 Surveillance equipment and closed circuit television (CCTV) on school buses

Some bus operators have found that fitting surveillance cameras and recording equipment to school buses is a useful tool in the monitoring of behaviour. The equipment not only acts as a deterrent to unacceptable behaviour, but also provides evidence in identifying those students who are behaving inappropriately.

It is expected that before fitting such equipment, consultation has occurred between the operator, parents/carers of the students, conveyance committee (if applicable) and the schools involved.

The department strongly advises bus operators that surveillance cameras must be in open view and that warning signs advising of the cameras be posted in the bus entrance.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads has issued information bulletins on the installation and use of CCTV in buses. The department strongly recommends that operators of school services who wish to install or have installed CCTV equipment adopt the guidelines recommended in the bulletins as issued from time to time.

The following information bulletins are available at: www.tmr.qld.gov.au/information_bulletins.

- PT404-Code of practice for the use of CCTV.
- PT405-Recommended specifications for CCTV fitted in Queensland buses.
- PT406-Installation and use of CCTV in Queensland buses.
- PT407-Requirement for warning signs in Queensland buses equipped with CCTV.

3.6 Standards

Bus operators must ensure all vehicles comply with the requirements of Schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010* as listed below.

- maximum age, design and luggage
- bus padding
- warning lights and signs to be fitted to school bus
- buses carrying school students on a no standing passenger road

- structural inspection and repair of buses
- maintenance record
- heavy bus service life extensions
- maintaining particular relevant vehicles in a clean, tidy and comfortable condition and other vehicle requirements.

The above legislation is available at www.legislation.qld.gov.au.

3.6.1 Operators

The operator must hold the appropriate category of operator accreditation required under the Act and Regulation at all times.

Under the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010*, applicants for operator accreditation must successfully complete a training course approved by the Director-General, Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Further information can be obtained from Information Bulletin PT 211.

3.6.2 Drivers

All drivers must hold current and appropriate driver authorisation, as issued by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

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

- are capable of safely operating the relevant type of vehicle
- are aware of their customer service responsibilities
- conduct themselves appropriately.

3.6.3 Service

All drivers must be competent in providing customer service by:

- behaving courteously towards passengers and the public
- following the processes outlined in the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses including maintaining a high level of discipline amongst school student passengers and advising the school principal promptly of any discipline problems
- following advertised routes and timetables.

3.6.4 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)
- Guidelines for Front Door Closure Systems on Heavy Buses providing Public Passenger Services.

3.6.5 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
- must comply with the department's information bulletin Carriage of Dangerous Goods By Buses. This bulletin states that dangerous goods must not be transported by passenger carrying buses and is available at:
www.tmr.qld.gov.au/information_bulletins.

3.6.6 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 20km
 - the bus does not travel on a road notified by the department as a road on which the bus must not carry standing passengers
 - the driver of a bus fitted with seatbelts for every seated passenger must ensure the bus is used only to carry seated passengers, unless each seat of the bus is occupied. Where standing passengers must be carried the driver is required to provide information to the operator as outlined in section 12(4) of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010.

** The number of passengers carried must not cause an overload beyond the vehicle manufacturer's safety limits for gross vehicle mass.*

3.6.7 Bus seating

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

- the seat is not fitted with seatbelts or the seat is fitted with either a seatbelt or an approved restraint for each of the three children
- the placement and construction of the seat allows
- no child sits in the seat for more than a total of 90 minutes while any other two children sit in the seat.

Students with a disability are treated in the same manner as secondary students (that is, one-for-one seating arrangements).

3.6.8 Change of vehicle notification

When changing the permanent vehicle on a service, the operator is required to provide details of the replacement vehicle to the conveyance committee and to the department.

In some instances, a change of vehicle may affect existing payment rates. Prior to any change of vehicle the bus operator should discuss the proposed change with the department to ensure that an informed decision on the most appropriate vehicle can be made.

3.6.9 Use of other vehicles in emergency circumstances

Where the vehicle nominated to provide the service under the service contract is prevented from being used due to a genuine emergency situation, the bus operator must make all reasonable efforts to arrange for alternative transport for the students.

A genuine emergency is limited to mechanical breakdown/repair or vehicle accident. This would normally mean that an alternative or relief vehicle, which is suitable to provide a continuity of service delivery for the safe transport of the students, would be used.

In these situations the bus operator should ensure that all schools affected are notified immediately of any alternative arrangements put in place.

3.6.10 Relief or temporary vehicles

Some operators will have a spare bus within their fleet which can be used as a relief vehicle in an emergency. In these cases, the operator is required to provide details of such vehicles to the conveyance committee and the department prior to use. In other cases, an operator is able to obtain or hire a bus from another operator or company. Where this occurs, the operator must ensure that the conveyance committee is provided with details of these arrangements.

The following policy applies to the use of relief vehicles

1. Details of what caused the breakdown or repair of the permanent vehicle must be advised on the Exception Report. For example, gearbox failure, repair of panel damage due to collision.
2. The use of a relief vehicle to replace a permanent vehicle for charter or any other purpose is not permitted under any circumstances.
3. Operators who have permanent vehicles with a regular record of breakdown will be subject to a Passenger Transport Audit by the department.
4. If an operator replaces a vehicle without approval (where required) or for a reason other than the repair of the permanent vehicle, will be in breach of their contract and the department will:
 - a. Adjust the payment category to the correct category from the date of change and recover any overpayment based on the adjustment (for kilometre services), and
 - b. Take action under the Key Performance Indicators of the contract, and
 - c. Consider repayment of SchoolBUS funding, contract termination or the non renewal of contract for multiple breaches of the relief vehicle policy

The following outlines the vehicles allowed to be used as a relief vehicle on an individual kilometric service:

1. Any vehicle used must comply with all of the vehicle requirements of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010 and other statutory legislation.
2. A vehicle less than 15 years of age that meets ADR 59/00 (rollover)* can be used as a relief vehicle with no limit to the number of days
3. A vehicle greater than 15 years of age that meets ADR 59/00

(rollover)* can be used as a relief vehicle for up to five school days or 10 trips (a trip is regarded as the whole or part of a morning or afternoon service), with a maximum of 10 school days or 20 trips per year. Prior departmental approval can be obtained for periods over the five school days (10 trips) limit. Documentation from an independent person will be required with the application.

4. A non rollover* compliant vehicle is only permitted for limited use if the vehicle has been registered to the operator continuously from 1 July 2009. A non rollover vehicle can be used as a relief vehicle for up to five school days or 10 trips, with a maximum of 10 school days or 20 trips per year. No extensions allowed to these limits.

* CI/NCI vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

3.6.11 Use of private vehicles

The operator has a responsibility to meet contract obligations to transport students and ensure students arrive safely at their destination.

It is recognised that in some cases, an operator will not have a relief vehicle within the bus fleet and in isolated areas, may not be able to readily obtain or hire a bus from another location.

For emergency situations under these circumstances, the operator may use their private motor vehicle to undertake or complete the travel arrangements of the students, subject to the following:

- current vehicle registration and third party insurance is held
- the vehicle must be in sound mechanical condition
- the loading of passengers must be in accordance with the legal carrying requirements for the vehicle
- the conveyance committee and school principal have been provided with details outlining the procedures to be used when this occurs.

In respect of third party insurance, the Motor Accident Insurance Commission has advised the department that in these circumstances, the compulsory third party insurance of a registered private motor vehicle would extend coverage to the student passengers in the vehicle without alteration to class. However, an operator should check with their own insurance company to confirm this advice.

In circumstances where an operator cannot provide transport and arrangements are made with the parents to transport the students, the operator must ensure any distance not travelled is recorded on the kilometre exception report.

3.7 Administrative arrangements

The School Transport Information Management System (STIMS) database is used to administer STAS. This database is a complex information management and payment system that facilitates payment and other processing functions associated with STAS.

The STIMS database is used for the day-to-day functions of processing applications, as well as calculating the level of payment to be made to parents and bus operators for the transport of eligible school students.

Access to this database is restricted to authorised officers of the department and the database is managed in accordance with the department's privacy policy.

In addition to the processing and payments functions, STIMS also fulfils the important role of providing the government with accurate statistics about bus operations, the geographic distribution of students across the state and data which is used for general policy modelling of the scheme.

Through STIMS, the government makes payment for contract kilometre based school bus service directly to the bus operator. Payments will be made to an operator only for school days that services must operate as outlined in Section 3.7.9.

3.7.1 Incident management plan

Under section 34 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010* it is a requirement for operators of public passenger services in Queensland to have a documented Incident Management Plan.

Guidelines for Developing an Incident Management Plan – PT222, has been developed and is available for operators to use as a guide for developing an Incident Management Plan.

Operators need to develop and maintain a plan specific to their own organisation.

The above information bulletin should be read in conjunction with the department's information bulletin PT221 – Incident Management Plans, which is available at www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Information_bulletins.

3.7.2 Applications for assistance

The department issues all operators with Bus Travel Assistance Application (F2208) and Bus Travel Assistance Safety-Net Application (F3058) forms which are to be completed by the parent/guardian. Application forms are also available at www.translink.com.au/schooltransport.

Applications for assistance can only be accepted for the current school year.

Applications for travel in a previous school year will not be accepted or approved for payment by the department.

3.7.2.1 Distance eligible students

The approval procedure for distance eligible students is shown on page 45.

3.7.2.2 Safety-net eligible students

The approval procedure for safety-net eligible students is shown on page 46.

3.7.3 Verification reports for bus operators

To ensure the accuracy of payments being made to operators and to satisfy audit requirements, operators must complete an operator verification report on a regular basis.

These reports are generated by the department and list all eligible students the department has on the STIMS database as receiving transport assistance.

Bus operators 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 verifying all details are correct, bus operators should sign and return the verification report to their local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

Under audit requirements further payments may be suspended if operator verification reports are not returned by the due date.

Each page of the verification report is to be signed by the operator. In cases where the verification report is quite lengthy, it is acceptable for the operator to amend the certification on the last page of the verification report to include the page numbers, initial the alteration and then sign the certification.

3.7.4 Verification reports for schools

A similar verification report is undertaken with DET and non-state schools each term to confirm student attendance and to update details for STAS eligible students. This ongoing process enables STIMS data to be maintained in an accurate form.

To do this, TMR send data centrally to DET a number of times per year to be electronically data matched against details held by DET in the OneSchool database. This is authorised under Section 144 of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 which provides the department with the authority to obtain information from schools about a student, or a student's parent/guardian, that is relevant to the administration of STAS.

TMR is currently unable to undertake an electronic school verification process with non-state schools. For these schools, a report that lists current eligible students who receive STAS assistance and attend a certain school is produced from STIMS. These school verification reports are distributed to schools on a quarterly basis.

Each page of a school verification report is to be signed off by the school principal. In cases where the verification report is quite lengthy, it is acceptable for a school principal to amend the certification on the last page of the verification report to include the page numbers, initial the alteration and then sign the certification.

Alternatively, a covering letter on school letterhead and signed by the principal that states the report was thoroughly checked/processed by the school would also be acceptable.

3.7.5 Certification of exception report

Generally, the amount payable to a bus operator does not vary from month to month. The STIMS database is programmed to make regular monthly payments on this basis.

It is therefore essential that an operator advise the department, through the use of the kilometre exception report, of any factors that may require an adjustment to be made to the regular monthly payment amount.

Examples of such factors include route variations due to:

- flooding
- bridge closure
- no students in an area
- roadworks
- detours (temporary or permanent)
- deletion of a section of route
- no service provided
- vehicle breakdowns (refer Sections 3.6.9 and 3.6.10)
- school closure (refer Section 3.2.9)
- staff professional development day (refer Section 3.7.6)
- absence of students that reduces the daily distance travelled.

Details on how adjustments are made to the payment are outlined in the document Operator Payment Policy.

The kilometre exception report is also used by the bus operator to advise the department of student deletions and permanent changes to the vehicle being used on the service.

It is necessary for a member of the conveyance committee (preferably the honorary secretary) to certify this kilometre exception report in relation to the route variations section and/or change of vehicle section only.

3.7.6 Schools not operating on certain days

From time to time schools may be required to close. Examples of school closures may include:

- local show holiday
- ministerial holiday for school
- staff professional development day
- school camps
- industrial action
- natural disaster.

If a kilometre-based school bus service has eligible students attending a school which is not affected by a school closure, these students must be provided with a service. Refer to Section 3.7.9 Days that school services must operate.

Details on how the payment may be affected by school closure are outlined in the document Operator Payment Policy.

3.7.7 Payment procedures

STIMS calculates and produces payment details for each operator on a regular basis. The dates on which payment is generated are specified by the department each year.

The preferred method of payment is direct deposit into an operator's bank account through electronic funds transfer.

For each pay period, the following documentation will be forwarded to the operator early in the week after that pay period closes:

- kilometre-based operator statement
- recipient created tax invoice kilometre-based services
- kilometre exception report.

Upon receipt of the documentation, operators should check all details on the kilometre-based operator statement and ensure that all transactions are correct. Any adjustments to payments will be shown here and a brief explanation of each adjustment category will be provided.

The operator should sign the recipient created tax invoice and kilometre exception report and return these forms to their local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

Under audit requirements, further payments cannot be made until the recipient created tax invoice and kilometre exception report are returned to the department.

More detailed information on payment procedures is contained in the document Operator Payment Policy.

3.7.8 Forms used in school transport administration

The following documentation is used in administering kilometre-based school bus services under STAS.

Stocks are available from the nearest Department of Transport and Main Roads office and application forms are also at: www.translink.com.au/schooltransport.

- Bus Travel Assistance Application Form (F2208): completed by parents/guardians to apply for distance based assistance.
- Bus Travel Assistance Safety-Net Application Form (F3058): completed by parents/guardians to apply for safety-net assistance.
- School Bus Travel Assistance Scheme Deletion Notification Form (F2347): used by operators to advise the department of eligible students who stop using the bus service.
- School Transport Operator ABN and GST Registration Request Form (F4293): used by operators to advise the department of their ABN and GST registration details.
- School Transport New/Amended Payee Bank Details Form (F3679): used by operators to advise the department of the bank account details for payment purposes.
- Increase in Payment Category Application Form (F3731): used by operators to apply for an increase in payment category when student numbers have increased.
- Conveyance Committee Quorum and Meeting Advice Form (F3561): used by conveyance committees to advise the department of current committee details.

The following reports and statements are generated by STIMS, and forwarded to bus operators:

- Operator verification report-this report is sent to operators on a regular basis, and lists all eligible students whose details have been entered on the STIMS database (refer Section 3.7.3)
- Recipient created tax invoice kilometre-based services-this report provides full details of the service provider, including the bank account details into which payment has been made, as well as the net payment amount, the amount of GST and a description of what the payment is for. It must be signed by the bus operator and returned to the department before future payments can be made.

- Kilometre exception report-this report is used by operators to advise the department of any factors that may require an adjustment to the operator's payment such as a variation to the approved rate due to flooding; the service not operating or a permanent change to the vehicle being used on the service.
- Kilometre-based operator statement-this report contains a breakdown of the transactions which have occurred for each passenger during the pay period and includes details of existing passengers, new passengers and details of any back payments or adjustments made.

3.7.9 Days that school services must operate

An operator is required to provide contract services on all 'school days'.

The department will make payments to an operator only for school days that a service must operate, as outlined in this section.

A school day is:

- a day of the school year shown on the school calendar published by the Department of Education and Training for the current school year and includes a gazetted local show holiday and a ministerial special holiday for students
- a day occurring on a date set and published by the Department of Education and Training for the current school year as a staff professional development day (non-contact day for teachers) but does not include a staff professional development day that occurs within a gazetted school holiday period.

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 Training website at www.education.qld.gov.au.

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

- 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
- 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 clause (i) or (ii) applies, the operator must provide a level of service sufficient to transport those eligible students:

- who regularly travel on contract services
- who require, or would be expected to require, transport to or from school on that school day.

Under this requirement an operator 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 school
- to 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), for example, 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, for example, year 10/11 or year 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
- staff professional development days. Some non-state schools will be open on these days when state schools are closed and instead may close for a staff professional development day on a different school day when state schools are open.

3.7.10 Change of school hours

Under current legislation, principals may change the hours of operation of their school to suit local conditions. Some secondary schools may also have flexible arrangements for students involved in vocational education and training and school-based apprenticeships.

Where kilometre-based services operate, there will be no re-runs funded by the scheme, or new services instituted, where schools vary their hours.

The timetable of the service may be varied by the bus operator in consultation with the conveyance committee (refer Section 3.2.14). However, given the wide implications for all parents, the operator and conveyance committee should involve all parents and schools, particularly where a service operates to more than one school.

The bus operator must also ensure that any change in the timetable of a service does not conflict with minimum service level provisions of the service contract.

3.8 Operational review

3.8.1 Background

The number of kilometre-based services has grown considerably since they started in the 1940s. The demographics of the state have changed dramatically in the last 60 years, yet school transport arrangements in some areas have not necessarily been changed to reflect this.

While the arrangements have generally worked well, in some cases they have tended to foster a fragmented and duplicated system where the number of services in an area is not the most efficient use of resources.

To ensure ongoing overall effectiveness of the transport system it may be necessary, in some cases, to review services in a given area.

In such cases, the department will determine whether an operational review is to be conducted. It should be noted that an operational review is not generally conducted in response to requests to change the school/s that are serviced by a school transport service.

If directed by the department, the operational review will assess the relevant issues and recommend ways of maintaining transport service delivery through a more efficient and cost effective transport network.

3.8.2 Objectives

To complement the introduction of improved access to kilometre-based services, ongoing operational reviews are carried out to assess the optimum number of kilometre-based routes and services required across the state.

Operational reviews are designed to accomplish the following broad objectives:

- achieve greater service integration and networking by reducing overlapping and duplication of bus routes
- maintain, where possible, the level of service to distance eligible students
- promote individual operator viability and reduce marginal operations.

3.8.3 Methodology

The operational review is a process where officers from the department, in consultation with the conveyance committee, bus operator and schools examine the school transport arrangements in a particular area.

Each particular area has unique circumstances which are considered. Rather than predetermining outcomes, the aim is to encourage existing operators to make recommendations for the best use of services.

This may include buy-outs between existing operators, the formation of consortiums, or simply a reorganisation of existing services to maximise fleet usage and efficiency.

Any changes to services which may be recommended will not be implemented until all operators' recommendations have been considered.

Overall, the operational review is designed to ensure that each area, after consideration of all factors, has the most cost effective, efficient and safe school bus services. Negotiations involve department regional staff, bus operators, conveyance committees and representatives from the Department of Education and Training.

This process does not necessarily mean that all bus services will be subject to change. In many areas the objectives are already being achieved. As indicated, any savings generated will be reallocated towards the overall funding of school transport services across the state.

