

# School Bus Program

## FAQs – Parents

January 2016

### 1. Who can travel on a school bus?

The general rule is that students living 4.8 km or more from, and attending their nearest appropriate school/campus, are eligible to travel on a school bus service at no cost. Students not attending their nearest school/campus may access a school bus subject to seating capacity and upon payment of a fare.

### 2. How do I apply for my child to catch the school bus?

The bus coordinator at your child's school will provide you with the appropriate school bus application form for you to fill out and sign. Attached to the application form are the conditions under which your child will be transported. Parents/guardians and students must sign agreeing to those conditions of travel. The bus coordinator will process your application and advise you of the outcome in a timely manner.

### 3. Can my child continue to travel on the school bus if we move house during the year?

A change of address automatically triggers a reassessment of your child's eligibility and requires parents/guardians to submit a new permission to travel application form. The change of address may mean your child is still eligible but is required to change bus services or needs to be picked up and dropped off at a different stop. Conversely, the move may see your child residing within 4.8 km of the school or no longer attending their closest school. The bus coordinator at your child's school will be able to assist you.

### 4. I have been told that my child can only catch a school bus to their nearest school. Why can't I send my child to another school?

Parents/guardians are free to send their child to any school at which they can be accommodated. However, under the School Bus Program's policy, only students living 4.8 km or more and attending their nearest government or appropriate non-government school are eligible to travel at no cost. Students attending their next nearest school may be eligible to travel on a school bus service subject to seating capacity and upon payment of a fare.

### 5. What if a school bus stops at my front gate but the bus to my closest school is further away? Can my child get the bus outside our gate?

If the bus that stops at your front gate travels to a school other than your nearest, your child may be able to travel on it, subject to seating capacity and upon payment of a fare. If the bus service to your nearest government school is more than 4.8 km away from your home, then your child may seek an exemption to travel at no cost to your next nearest government school (this exemption is only applicable to government school students).

### 6. Can a school bus that is garaged near my house pick-up/drop-off my child on its way to and from starting/finishing its school run?

No, drivers are not permitted to carry students on the way to or from the start and end of a school run. For safety reasons, students must be picked up and dropped off at designated bus stops.



The coordinating principal can put a case forward for having the route extended to allow student access.

#### 7. We live in a split family arrangement. My child currently catches the school bus from my place; can they catch the school bus from the other parent's place?

Students in these circumstances may be granted a seat on two buses when identified as eligible to travel at no cost to their nearest school from their primary residential address. If students need to catch a different bus to school from their secondary residence, they may only catch that bus when determined eligible from the primary residential address.

This option is also provided to students deemed as not eligible subject to the payment of a fare.

#### 8. What is the process for getting a bus stop moved?

Parents/guardians wishing to have the location of a bus stop reviewed, need to write to the coordinating principal of their school's bus network and detail their reasons for wanting the review. The bus coordinator at your child's school can advise you who the principal is of the coordinating school. The coordinating principal will then work with the school bus operator, PTV, VicRoads or an officer from the local council to review the bus stop location.

#### 9. Fares have recently been updated for 2016. What happens if I have already paid a higher fare?

Please speak with the bus coordinator at your school. Parents may choose to be reimbursed for any over payment, or have the over payment credited to subsequent term(s).

#### 10. What if I cannot afford the bus fare my child is required to pay; can my child travel at no cost?

The School Bus Program is not means tested and the requirement to pay a fare is not based on parents' income. Under the policy, students who attend their nearest government or non-government school are eligible to travel at no cost.

#### 11. I have concerns about my child getting to and from the bus stop. Is there anything the school can do?

Under the conditions of travel parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from authorised bus stops and their safety while at the bus stop.

#### 11. Do school buses travel during bushfires?

In forecast emergencies school bus services will be cancelled if any part of a route is deemed at risk. Bus services will not be diverted even if only a small section of the overall route is affected. This is to ensure student safety.

In a rapid onset emergency, schools, bus operators and bus drivers are required to enact their emergency management plans. A rapid onset emergency may result in service cancellations and buses being held at the school. If buses are in transit, they may be returned to the school if safe to do so.

Your child's principal will be able to advise you of the school's bus emergency management plan in relation to both forecast and rapid onset emergencies.

#### Further information

Families should contact the bus coordinator at their child's school or go to [www.education.vic.gov.au/travellingtoschool](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/travellingtoschool) to download the School Bus Program's policy and procedures and eligibility brochure.