



School Transport Assistance Scheme

Operator payments

October 2015

Contents

Introduction	3
Section 1 – General information	4
1.1 Days that school services must operate	4
1.2 Payment dates	4
1.3 Payment procedures	4
1.4 Changes to student travel	5
1.5 Tax implications for operator payments	5
1.6 Fuel tax credit scheme.....	5
1.7 Payments rate variations	6
1.8 Financial assistance available to operators	6
1.9 Replacement buses.....	6
1.10 Relief or temporary vehicles	6
Section 2 – Fares-based school bus services	7
2.1 Basis of payment	7
2.2 Payment calculation for distance eligible students	7
2.3 Payment calculation for safety-net eligible students.....	7
2.4 STAS fare schedule	7
2.5 Safety-net fares	7
2.6 Part passes.....	8
2.7 Permanent replacement buses.....	8
Section 3 – Kilometre-based school bus services	9
3.1 Payment rate scale.....	9
3.2 Basic payment rate structure	9
3.3 Payment categories	10
3.4 Route distance calculation for payment.....	12
3.5 One vehicle on two services.....	13
3.6 Split of a service	13
3.7 Change of contractor.....	13
3.8 Payment adjustments	13
3.9 Payment rate adjustments	14
3.10 Temporary route deletions	14
3.11 Overpayments	14
3.12 Kilometric payment category review	14
Section 4	22
Capital-based school bus services	22
4.1 Capital-based kilometric school bus services	22
4.2 Fares-based school bus services	24
bus replacement funding	24
4.3 Capital-based school bus services –	25
students with a disability	25
Section 5 – Information statements and pro formas	27
Section 6 – TransLink Division offices of the Department of Transport and Main Roads	28
Contact	28

Introduction

The School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS) is one of the largest assistance schemes funded by the Queensland Government. It provides assistance with school transport costs for eligible students in certain circumstances.

This document provides detail on the policy and procedures relating to the three operator payment systems that apply to bus operators under STAS. These three payment systems are:

- fares-based payment system
- kilometre-based payment system
- capital-based payment system

Information on each payment system is provided in the relevant section as outlined below:

- **Section 1** **General information**
- **Section 2** **Fares-based school bus services**
- **Section 3** **Kilometre-based school bus services**
- **Section 4** **Capital-based school bus services**
- **Section 5** **Information statements and forms**
- **Section 6** **Translink Division offices of the Department of Transport and Main Roads**

The policy of STAS is contained in the document *The School Transport Assistance Scheme*. This document is available online at www.translink.com.au/schooltransport.

The information contained in this document was correct at the time of publication. However, the document may be subject to change. Clarification of any information contained in this document may be obtained from the Department of Transport and Main Roads offices listed in section 6.

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Section 1 – General information

The information contained in this section relates to all operators contracted to the Queensland Government to provide school bus services, unless otherwise specified.

1.1 Days that school services must operate

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

A 'school day' is:

- i. a day of the school year 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
- ii. 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.

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

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

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

- to provide transport for non-state school students whose school is open on a school day when state school students do not attend 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, 10/11 or 12 that finish earlier at end of year
- non-state schools taking extra school vacation holidays at the end of the year and/or during the year
- staff professional development day. 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.

This information can be found on the Department of Education and Training website under Queensland school calendars:

http://education.qld.gov.au/public_media/calendar/holidays.html

1.2 Payment dates

The dates on which payment is generated are specified by the Department of Transport and Main Roads each year.

An information statement which outlines the payment dates is available from the department in January of each year.

1.3 Payment procedures

Payment is made via direct deposit into an operator's bank account through electronic funds transfer (EFT). The form, School Transport New/Amended Payee Bank Details (F3679) should be completed to advise the department of these details and when further changes occur to bank details. This form is available from the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

The following documentation will be forwarded to the operator at the end of each pay period:

- Operator statement
- Recipient created tax invoice (for all non-TransLink operators)
- Kilometre exception report (kilometre-based operators only).

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

The operator should sign the Recipient created tax invoice. The Kilometre exception report (if applicable) must be signed by the operator and a member of the conveyance committee (preferably the Honorary Secretary).

It is the operator's responsibility to ensure the relevant documentation is returned to the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office. Under audit requirements, further payments cannot be made to the operator until the Recipient created tax invoice and Kilometre exception report (if applicable) are returned to the department.

1.4 Changes to student travel

The majority of changes to travel details are provided by parents and schools, direct to the department.

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

Operators have provision to notify the department of any changes to student travel by reporting the changes on the Kilometre Exception Report (kilometre-based operators) or Deletion Notification (F2347) (fares-based operators).

A new application is required to be submitted if a student:

- changes address
- changes school or changes the campus location of the school attended, even if the student is continuing to attend the same school
- changes from year 6 to year 7, even if the student is remaining at the same school
- changes frequency of travel.

Circumstances (for example, road changes and opening of new schools) may also change during a student's schooling which makes a student ineligible to continue to receive assistance or reduce a student's level of assistance. In all cases, the department reserves the right to withdraw travel assistance, adjust payment or assistance levels and recover monies paid.

1.5 Tax implications for operator payments

To comply with Australian Government tax laws, bus operators are required to supply the department with the following tax related information:

- **Australian business number (ABN)**
All operators who have an ABN should provide this number to the department. Operators who do not provide the department with an ABN will have withholding tax withheld from their payment. This tax is remitted to the Australian Tax Office by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.
- **GST registration**
All operators who are registered for GST should provide their ABN and GST registration details to the department. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will only pay operators the GST amount for services they supply if they are GST registered.

This tax information will ensure that the department continues to make school transport payments correctly and as quickly as possible.

The form, School Transport Operator ABN and GST Registration Request Form (F4293) should be completed to advise these details and is available from the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

NOTE: Operators must advise the department when any of their ABN or GST registration details change. Examples include if an operator is no longer registered for GST, or if their ABN number changes due to a change in business arrangements.

Failure to advise the department is a breach of contract and could result in action being taken. If GST registration details have changed and the operator has not advised the department it may also result in any GST amount paid to the operator having to be repaid.

1.6 Fuel tax credit scheme

The Fuel Tax Credit Scheme was introduced in July 2006 by the Australian Tax Office to provide a grant to eligible transport operators on the price of diesel and petrol fuel. It replaces the Energy Grants Credits Scheme.

Fuel tax credit can be claimed for fuel acquired for use in a vehicle with a gross vehicle mass (GVM) greater than 4.5 tonne travelling on a public road (diesel vehicles acquired before 1 July 2006 can equal 4.5 tonne).

Diesel motor vehicles also need to meet one of the following performance criteria. The vehicle must either:

- be manufactured on or after 1 January 1996
- be part of an accredited maintenance program
- meet the Australian Transport Council's in-service emission standard (referred to in the National Environment Protection (Diesel Vehicle Emissions) Measure)
- comply with an Australian Government endorsed maintenance schedule.

Operators must ensure their vehicle meets one of the above criteria. There is no additional payment for a vehicle that does not qualify for the fuel tax credit.

It is the operator's responsibility to register for the fuel tax credit. Information about the fuel tax credit and how to register can be obtained from the Australian Tax Office website at www.ato.gov.au

Further information is available through the following contacts:

- **Fuel tax credit scheme**
Australian Tax Office – www.ato.gov.au or phone 13 28 66 between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm Monday to Friday.
- **Emission performance criteria**
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government website www.infrastructure.gov.au

1.7 Payments rate variations

The Department of Transport and Main Roads regularly reviews STAS payment rates and approved fare schedules. Payment rate reviews are undertaken annually at the beginning of each school year. At this time, changes in the Bus Cost Index (BCI) are taken into consideration and rates are altered according to any fluctuations that have occurred with the costs of running a school bus service.

In addition to this annual review, the department has implemented the use of a fuel price index. This allows the department to respond to fluctuations in fuel prices as they occur. Fuel prices are monitored each month and payments to operators will be adjusted quarterly, if fluctuations during the period are significant.

If the movement in fuel prices is five per cent or more, a corresponding increase or decrease will occur. For kilometre-based and capital-based operators, a change will be made to the variable component of their payment rate and for fares-based operators, an increase or decrease to the STAS fare schedule will be made to reflect the variation in fuel prices. If less than five per cent movement occurs in fuel prices, it will be carried over until the next quarter. The assessment at the end of the following period will include both the carried over amount and price movements in that period.

The data used to determine these daily fuel prices will be obtained from FUELtrac, an independent organisation which provides a wide range of fuel related services to organisations throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Further information on the current payment rates and the variation for fuel prices is available in the relevant information statement (refer Section 5) or by contacting your nearest office.

1.8 Financial assistance available to operators

Financial assistance is available to contracted school bus operators under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme (SchoolBUS). The primary objective of this scheme is to accelerate the introduction of rollover compliant buses into the Queensland school bus fleet.

Information on the assistance available under SchoolBUS is contained in School Transport Information Statements 16A and 16B. Further information on the payment structure of services under the capital-based system is also contained in Section 4 – Capital-based school bus services.

1.9 Replacement buses

1.9 Permanent Replacement buses

As from 1 July 2012 any bus introduced on a contracted School Transport Assistance Scheme service must be less than 15 years of age at the date of change and meet Australian Design Rule 59/00 - Omnibus Rollover Strength (ADR 59/00)*.

Vehicles that do not meet ADR 59/00* or vehicles greater than 15 years are not permitted under any circumstances.

1.10 Relief or temporary vehicles

From time to time operators may need to utilise a relief or temporary vehicle due to emergent circumstances such as mechanical breakdown. When this occurs, an alternate relief vehicle which is suitable to provide 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 following outlines the vehicles allowed to be used as a relief vehicle:

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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

Further information on the use of relief vehicles is contained in *The School Transport Assistance Scheme* under section 2 Fares Based Services and Section 3 Kilometre Based School Bus Services.

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

Section 2 – Fares-based school bus services

This section of the document outlines the payment and administrative policies that apply to fares-based school bus services.

2.1 Basis of payment

Parents/guardians are required to lodge their application form with the bus operator within seven days of the student commencing travel on the bus service. Operators are then required to forward the application form to the department for processing within seven days of receiving the form. However, the department will accept application forms from bus operators for eligible students at any stage during the year in which the student commenced travel.

Payment for travel in the current school year will be made provided the operator has not previously received a fare or other consideration in respect of that travel.

If an application form is received for a student who commenced travel prior to the current school year the department will only make payment for the student from the first school day of the current school year.

Where a student has ceased travel in the current school year, the department will recover any payments made to the operator in respect of that student from the date the student ceased travel.

Payments will only be made to an operator for school days that services must operate.

2.2 Payment calculation for distance eligible students

Payment to bus operators for distance eligible students is made strictly in accordance with the STAS fare schedule issued by the department and distributed to operators.

The payment is modified to reflect a student's frequency of travel and is based on average travel patterns of students travelling to school.

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

Payment is calculated on the following basis:

Frequency of travel	Method of calculation
2 – 5 trips 20% to 50% travel	Operators will be paid five times the single STAS fare
6 – 10 trips 60% to 100% travel	Weekly STAS fare (9 x STAS single fare) (10 x single fare less the formula adjustment of 10%)

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

2.3 Payment calculation for safety-net eligible students

Safety-net provides assistance towards the actual costs of travel for students. A formula adjustment does not apply for safety-net payments. Operators will be paid the safety-net benefit for all safety-net eligible students.

2.4 STAS fare schedule

The STAS fare schedule sets out the prescribed fares that are paid by the Department of Transport and Main Roads to fares-based operators for the carriage of distance eligible school students. It is issued from time to time by the department and only applies to fares-based school bus operators. It does not relate to cash fares.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5 Safety-net fares

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

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

2.6 Part passes

In some circumstances, eligible students who do not attend their nearest school may receive assistance to the value of travel to the nearest state school. Parents are then responsible for payment of any excess fares. This is referred to as a part pass.

For further information regarding the calculation of part-passes, please refer to The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 2: Fares-based school bus services.

Further information about the STAS fare schedule and safety-net arrangements is contained in School Transport Information Statement No. 5 and No. 9 or by contacting your nearest office.

Information is also available at

www.tmr.qld.gov.au/schooltransport

2.7 Permanent replacement buses

As from 1 July 2012 any bus introduced on a contracted School Transport Assistance Scheme service must be less than 15 years of age at the date of change and meet Australian Design Rule 59/00 - Omnibus Rollover Strength (ADR 59/00)*.

Vehicles that do not meet ADR 59/00* or vehicles greater than 15 years are not permitted under any circumstances

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

Note: only buses up to five years of age are eligible to receive replacement funding (refer Section 4.2 Fares-based school bus services bus replacement funding).

Section 3 – Kilometre-based school bus services

This section of the document outlines the payment and administrative policies that apply to kilometre-based school bus services.

3.1 Payment rate scale

Payment to bus operators is made strictly in accordance with the STAS payment rates for kilometre-based school bus operators. The rates are published in School Transport Information Statement No. 6 Payment rates - kilometre-based school bus services and capital-based kilometric school bus services, which is issued from time to time by the department. The rates contained in this information statement only apply to kilometre-based operators on either the kilometre-based payment system or the capital-based payment system.

From 2010, vehicles were frozen on the applicable fixed rate when the vehicle reached 16 years old for a light vehicle or 20 years old for a heavy vehicle. From 1 July 2012 the fixed payment rate will be frozen only for non-rollover compliant vehicles when the vehicle reaches 16 years old for a light vehicle or 20 years old for a heavy vehicle. Rollover compliant vehicles that have frozen rate applied under the previous policy will remain frozen.

This applies to vehicles currently operating on a service, as well as vehicles that are introduced onto a service from the operator's fleet. Note: The replacement vehicle must be registered to the operator continuously from 1 July 2009 to be considered part of their school bus fleet.

- Note: if a vehicle is already 16 years old for a light vehicle or 20 years old for a heavy vehicle as at 27 January 2010, their fixed rates will be frozen at those rates applicable as at 27 January 2009. This applies to vehicles currently operating on a service and vehicles that are introduced onto a service.
For example: at the beginning of the 2010 school year, a 22 year old heavy vehicle is currently operating on a school bus service. The fixed rates that will apply to this vehicle are the 27 January 2009 fixed rates.
- Frozen fixed payment rates will not be adjusted with future increases.
For example: a light vehicle that reaches 16 years of age on 20 January 2010 will be frozen on the 2009 fixed payment rate. The fixed payment rates effective from 27 January 2010 will not apply.
- A frozen fixed rate will be paid for the duration of the vehicle's operation on any contracted service.
- Vehicles with frozen fixed rates will continue to be subject to category reviews.
 - If there is a change to the category (increase/decrease) the frozen fixed rate will be adjusted to the relevant payment category.

- The relevant payment category will only be paid at the fixed rate that applied when the vehicle reached 16/20 years of age.

For example: a 20 year old C5 vehicle's fixed rate is frozen at the 2010 fixed payment rate. In April 2011 the service is reduced to C4 from a category review conducted on 1 July 2009. The service will be decreased to the C4 fixed payment rate that applied in 2010.

Note: vehicles paid under the capital-based payment system are not subject to the above conditions relating to frozen rates.

3.2 Basic payment rate structure

In general terms, the basic payment rate structure has two separate components:

- **Fixed rate**
The fixed rate is a set amount per vehicle per day for each vehicle payment category and is intended to cover those fixed costs to operators. Such costs include registration, insurance and administration.
The distance travelled on a bus route has no bearing on this rate.
- **Variable rate**
The variable rate represents the running cost of a vehicle and is paid on a per kilometre basis according to the vehicle size payment category and the distance travelled over the approved route.
The maximum unloaded payment limits the unloaded portion of the variable rate to a maximum amount per day and applies to services throughout Queensland where large distances are travelled daily.
Operators will be paid a different rate according to the following factors:
 - **Services outside the south-east Queensland school transport zone**
A higher variable rate per kilometre is paid to operators running services wholly outside the mainland area of south east Queensland as defined by the Department of Transport and Main Roads. This is to assist those operators who incur higher costs due to their geographical location.

The rates and conditions applicable to these payments are published in School Transport Information Statement No. 6. A map which defines the south east Queensland school transport zone is on page 15 of the School Transport Assistance Scheme policy document, available online at www.tmr.qld.gov.au/schooltransport or by contacting the department.
 - **Fuel Grant Credit Scheme**
A higher variable rate per kilometre is paid to operators who use a vehicle that has a gross vehicle mass (GVM) less than 4.5 tonne and does not qualify for assistance through the Fuel Tax Credit Scheme. The School Transport Information Statement No. 6 Payment rates - kilometre-based school bus services

and capital-based kilometric school bus services indicates the relevant payment rate applicable.
For further information regarding the Fuel Tax Credit Scheme refer to 1.6 Fuel Tax Credit Scheme.

3.3 Payment categories

3.3.1 Determination of payment categories

The payment category for a service is determined by the Department of Transport and Main Roads based on the following:

- Point of maximum loading (PML)**
 The PML is the point on the service where the most number of seats are required for the transport of distance eligible students. It is not necessarily the point where the largest number of passengers is on the bus. This is because three primary school students may be carried in a bus seat designed for two adults.
- Vehicle category needed to transport all distance eligible students at the PML**
 When determining the vehicle category needed for a service, the department does not take into account operator preferences for the type of vehicle used on a service. These preferences could include coach seats, seatbelts where specified by the operator and not mandated by the department, no standees where determined by the operator or standee capacity restricted by vehicle construction.

3.3.2 Vehicle categories

Table 1 shows the five payment categories for kilometre-based services.

Category	Vehicle
C1	Toyota Hi Ace
	Toyota Commuter
	Toyota Tarago
	Toyota Troop-Carrier
	Nissan Urvan
	Mercedes Benz Sprinter
	Ford Transit or vehicle of similar chassis size*
C2	Toyota Coaster
	Nissan Civilian
	Asia Combi
	Mazda T3000
	Mazda T3500
	Mazda Parkway
	Iveco Turbo Daily 49.10 or vehicle of similar chassis size*
C3	23 – 41 adult passenger seats
C4	42 – 53 adult passengers seats
C5	54 and over adult passenger seats

** For vehicles of similar chassis size, please contact your local office so that vehicles can be assigned to the correct category.*

The payment category (for C3 to C5) is determined by the adult seating capacity of the vehicle as shown on the compliance plate. Should a vehicle not have a compliance or modification plate, the correct seating capacity will be determined by the motor vehicle inspector at the vehicle's next inspection.

The adult seats in categories C3, C4 and C5 are based on buses that have a seating configuration of four adult seats across behind the driver's seat and forward of the back row of seats at the rear of the bus. The department will assess buses with different seating configurations individually. This means that for the purpose of category classification, the fifth seat of a five across format will not be taken into account.

It should be noted that a vehicle listed in categories C1 or C2 cannot be paid at a higher category, irrespective of the seating capacity as these vehicles are paid on the basis of chassis size.

The driver's seat and jump seats are not to be included in the adult passenger seating capacity. Under the operational requirements of operator accreditation, jump seats are not permitted to be used at any time.

Articulated buses are paid under Category 5.

From 1 July 2009 the Capital-based kilometric school bus services payment system commenced for vehicles newly introduced onto a service. (Refer to Section 4 Capital-based school bus services)

When there is a change of vehicle on a service which is not part of the operator's school bus fleet, the replacement vehicle must meet Australian design rule 59/00 (rollover)*. The service will also be placed on the fixed and variable payment rates applicable to the capital-based payment system. (Refer to Section 3.12.6 Change of vehicle on service)

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

Table 2 shows the five payment categories used for newly introduced rollover vehicles that do not receive Capital-based funding.

Category	Indicator	Example	Minimum passenger seating
NC1	Bus type	Toyota Commuter	13
NC2	Bus type	Toyota Coaster	20/21
NC2	Bus type	Fuso Rosa	24
NC3	Body length	< 9m	30
NC4	Body length	9m to 11m	39
NC5	Body length	11.5m +	57

Conditions

- Both the body length and the minimum numbers of seats must comply with the requirements identified in this table. Non-compliance will result in default to the next lower category.
- Passenger seating is based on standard 4-across format in NC3, NC4 and NC5 categories.

3.3.3 Determination of passenger loading

Subject to a vehicle's GVM limit, passengers may be loaded in accordance with the following:

- not more than one passenger sits in any adult seat, except if the seat is a two adult bench seat then three primary school students may be carried in that seat provided no primary student sits in the seat for more than a total of 90 minutes while any two other primary students sit in the seat
- no passenger stands for more than 20km
- no standing passengers are carried on the vehicle if the vehicle is travelling on a road notified by the chief executive, by gazette notice, as a road on which a vehicle must not carry standing passengers
- passengers are not permitted to be carried in jump seats at any time.

These factors are used to calculate the number of adult passenger seats occupied by the passengers at the point of maximum loading. This calculation determines the vehicle category needed for the service.

3.3.4 Increase in category

Should circumstances change so that a larger vehicle is required to legally carry all distance eligible school students, the operator should complete an Increase in Payment Category Application Form (F3731). These forms are available from the department. If the application is approved, increase in payment will be calculated at the appropriate rates. Further detailed information is contained in Section 3.12: Kilometric payment category review.

This application will need to provide information on:

- the breakdown of distance eligible students (PRIM/SEC, and so on) at the PML
- the adult seating capacity of the bus
- a layout of the seating in the bus
- the date from which the increase in category is requested
- an Actual Travel Survey form for distance eligible students.

Prior to approval being given, the increase in distance eligible student numbers must have been maintained for a period of two months. Only distance eligible students approved by the department and recorded on the STIMS database are recognized for an increase. The operator must also complete an Actual Travel Survey form for distance eligible students for a minimum of two (2) school weeks. The department may require surveys for longer periods.

To be eligible for an increase in category the average number of distance eligible students required must have been travelling during the survey period. For example, if 56 students are required for an increase in category, there must have been an average of 56 or more distance eligible students travelling during the survey period.

An operator may operate a larger than necessary vehicle but payment will only be made at the category rate applicable for the size of vehicle required for the transport of distance eligible students on the particular route.

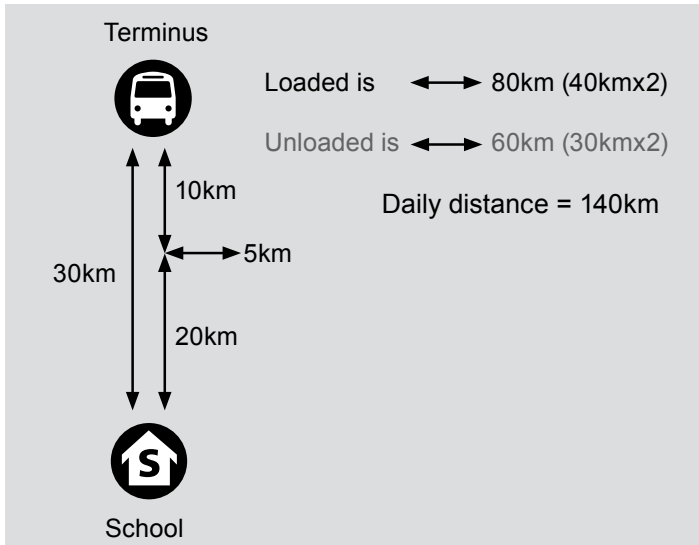
When determining the assessed category of a service, the department does not take into account operator preferences for the type of vehicle used on a service. These operator preferences could include coach seats, or fitting of seat belts where not mandated by the department, no standing passengers, or standing passenger capacity restricted by vehicle construction.

In instances where an operator has a vehicle with a low carrying capacity for a particular category, such as a vehicle with a low GVM, it may be necessary for the operator to purchase a new higher carrying capacity vehicle in the same category in order to carry all the distance eligible students.

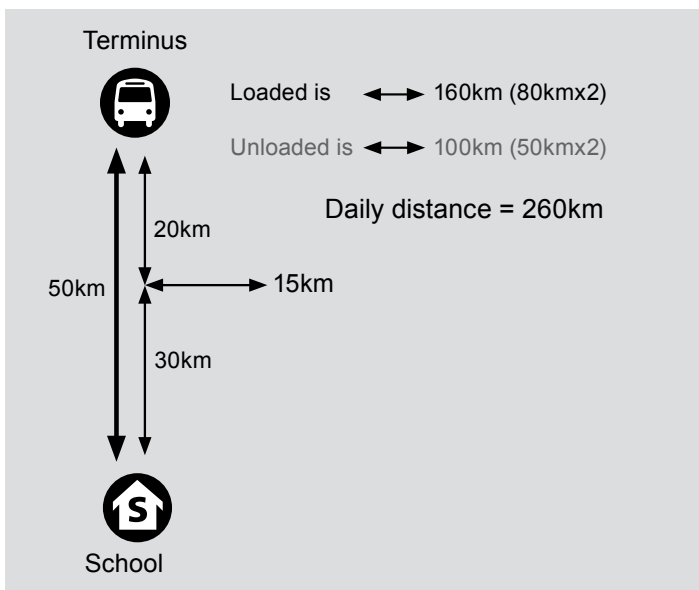
In some circumstances it may be necessary for a bus operator to respond to an overloading situation and introduce a larger vehicle. In such a case retrospective payment may be made and approved from the date of introduction of the larger vehicle provided that distance eligible student numbers are verified and have been maintained for the required period of two months.

Note: please refer to section 3.12.6 Change of vehicle on service, regarding the payment conditions applying to a change of vehicle on a service.

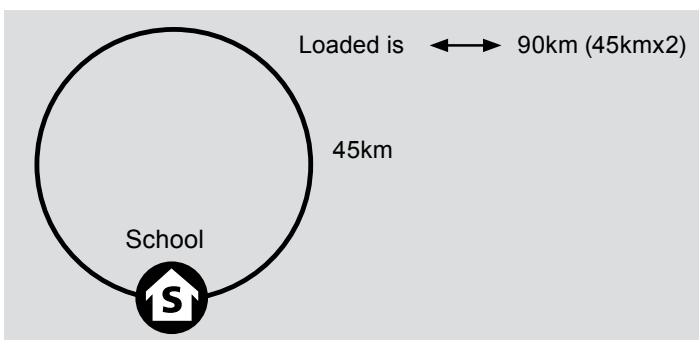
Example A: C3 vehicle



Example B: C4 vehicle



Example C: C5 vehicle



3.4 Route distance calculation for payment

In order to correctly calculate the route distance which will be paid by the department, the terminus of a route must be determined. The terminus is regarded as the point furthest from the school via the bus route even though the actual route taken may not commence picking up at that point.

In some limited instances, such as routes which are circular (loop services), the route design does not lend itself to calculating the route distance in this manner. In these cases the terminus will be at the beginning of the loop.

The daily route distance is divided into two components:

1. loaded distance
2. unloaded distance.

The unloaded distance component of the trip is paid up to a maximum amount per day. This is referred to as the maximum unloaded payment and the amount is published in School Transport Information Statement No. 6 and is available from the department. If the route is circular (a loop service), that is, starts at the school and ends at the school, no unloaded distance is payable.

The following diagrams and steps use examples to explain how the route distance is calculated. In these examples, the following rates have been used to illustrate how the route distance payments are calculated. The current actual rates are available from the department.

C3	\$1.00 per kilometre
C4	\$1.10 per kilometre
C5	\$1.20 per kilometre
Maximum unloaded payment	\$100 per day

Step 1

Determine the loaded and unloaded distances as per the examples A, B and C above, for Example C above, loop service, there is no unloaded. Definitions are outlined below:

(i) Loaded distance

The loaded distance is the trip from the terminus to the school (am) and the school to the terminus (pm) where students are transported on a bus.

(ii) Unloaded distance

The unloaded distance is the most direct distance, without any students, from the school to the terminus (am) and from the terminus to the school (pm).

Note: the terminus is regarded as the point furthest from the school via the bus route even though the actual route taken may not commence picking up at that point. In some limited instances, such as routes that are circular (loop services), the route design does not lend itself to calculating the route distance in this manner. In these cases, the terminus will be at the beginning of the loop.

Step 2

Where the cost of the total daily unloaded calculation is less than the maximum unloaded payment, the run will be paid for the distance travelled.

In example A, the unloaded calculation of \$60 (60km @ \$1.00) is less than the maximum unloaded payment of \$100. Therefore, the unloaded payment is the appropriate amount.

Where the cost of the total daily unloaded payment is more than the maximum unloaded payment, the unloaded distance component of the route would be paid at the maximum of \$100. The variable rate will be paid for the loaded distance only.

In example B, the unloaded calculation of \$110 (100km @ \$1.10) is greater than the maximum unloaded payment of \$100. Therefore, the maximum unloaded payment of \$100 is made for the unloaded section of the route.

In example C, being a loop service would be paid on actual distance with no allowance for the unloaded component. The total distance calculation for example C will consist of 90km x \$1.20 = \$108.

3.5 One vehicle on two services

The Department of Transport and Main Roads may approve an arrangement where one bus is used to provide two kilometre-based school bus services. To ensure students' waiting and travelling times are not adversely affected, this type of arrangement is limited to services that link or are in close proximity.

Where one bus is used on more than one kilometre-based school bus service, only one service will receive the fixed rate payment. If one service has a higher assessed payment category than the other service, the higher of the fixed rate payment category will be paid.

Both services will receive the variable rate payment. The higher applicable category for the variable rate will be paid for both services.

If the services do not link because they operate in different localities, payment for dead running distance travelled between the services may also be made to the operator at the relevant variable payment rate. The dead running distance will be paid on the service that is paid the variable rate only.

No pick-ups are permitted in the dead running area between the services unless the operator has the agreement of the local conveyance committee and the approval of the department.

The maximum unloaded payment allowance, which limits the unloaded portion of the variable rate to a maximum amount, will be based on the total of the unloaded distances of each route plus any dead running distance.

No payment will be made for an additional vehicle used on these services without the prior approval of the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Operators must also obtain the prior approval of the department for the transfer (sale) of any contract.

3.6 Split of a service

Where a bus service is split into two separate services (refer Section 3.12.9) a category review will be conducted on both services. The service will be paid in accordance with the information contained in Section 3.12.13 – Guide to category assessments based on vehicle age.

3.7 Change of contractor

Where there is a change of contractor, a category review will be conducted, effective from the date of transfer of the contract (refer to Section 3.12.13 – Guide to category assessments based on vehicle age).

3.8 Payment adjustments

In the majority of circumstances the amount payable to bus operators does not vary from month to month. The department will automatically make the regular payments on the basis of the approved rates for each bus service.

At times, there may be circumstances that require adjustment to be made which can vary the amount payable. It is essential that operators 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. The payment adjustments will appear on the operator statement sent at the end of each pay period.

The following are examples of variations that can affect payment:

- flooding
- bridge closure
- no students in an area
- roadworks
- detours (temporary or permanent)
- deletion of a section of route
- no service provided
- vehicle breakdowns
- school closure (local show holiday, ministerial holiday, staff development days, school camps, industrial action, schools closed because of natural disaster)
- staff development days
- absence of students that reduce the daily distance of the service.

In addition, the kilometre exception report is also to be used to advise the department of any student deletions and changes to the vehicle being used on the service.

3.9 Payment rate adjustments

The following information provides guidelines for amendments to payments:

- full payment will be made for local show holidays and ministerial holidays for schools
- no payment is made on state public holidays and weekends
- the fixed rate only will be paid to the end of the school year for the following services which cease operation early:
 - services which carry year 11/12 students only
 - services operating to western/remote schools which have the additional week's school vacation. No other payment will be made during a state school vacation period
- services are paid the fixed rate for staff professional development days There is no payment made for a staff professional development day that occurs within the gazetted summer vacation (December/January school holidays)
- the variable rate will only be paid for actual distance travelled where the service is required by eligible students attending a non-state school which elects to be open for the instruction of students. Any instances where an operator is required to operate on a staff professional development day must be recorded on the exception report so that payment can be made for the distance travelled on that day
- services are paid the fixed rate when a school is closed due to operating under flexible arrangements.

When payment adjustments occur due to vehicle changes, route variation or student travel, the following adjustment rules will apply:

- service did not operate:
 - fixed rate only will be paid
- service did not operate over full route*:
 - fixed rate plus variable rate for actual distance travelled only
- service travelled extra distance:
 - fixed rate plus variable rate for actual distance travelled will be paid.

*Capital-based services with a total distance of > 160km receive an additional variable payment rate. When the route variation affects the > 160km distance, the calculated manual adjustment will include both the daily variable rate and the additional payment rate.

Note: 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. Where acceptable alternative arrangements have been organised because of a genuine emergency and the operator takes all reasonable steps to return the nominated vehicle into service as soon as possible, the normal payment category rates apply.

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

3.10 Temporary route deletions

The Department of Transport and Main Roads must be advised immediately when any section of the bus route is no longer required to be serviced. The conveyance committee should apply to the department for consideration to be given to a temporary deletion of part of a service for a reasonable period of time, provided the retention of the section can be justified.

In those situations where consideration is given to such a request, a timeframe of three months would be considered a reasonable period of time for a temporary deletion to be granted.

If the deletion becomes permanent, the contract schedule and map will be required to be updated to reflect the distance change to the bus route and the daily payment rate adjusted accordingly.

3.11 Overpayments

All overpayments are recoverable by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

3.12 Kilometric payment category review

3.12.1 What is a kilometric payment category review?

Kilometre-based school bus operators are paid according to a schedule of payment rates. These rates are determined by the capacity of bus required to transport distance eligible students. To ensure that these rates reflect the appropriate vehicle required, a mechanism exists within the schedule to periodically reassess the requirements of each service.

Under current arrangements, this review of payment categories for operators of kilometre-based services occurs at the following times:

1 July of each year	
1 April of each year (for those services under review)	See Table 3.12.12
When there is a change of operator	Use Table 3.12.13 in conjunction with
When there is a change of vehicle	
When a service is split	Table 3.12.12
When an operator applies for a payment category increase	

3.12.2 Which students are counted in a kilometric payment category review?

All distance eligible students (primary, secondary and students with a disability) are included in the numbers that are counted for a review. Adults who travel as official supervisors for students with a disability are also included. Safety-net students and fare paying passengers are not included in the review.

Note: students under phase-out arrangements cannot be included in the eligible student numbers towards a category review or increase in payment category. An operator cannot be approved for a category or an increase in category on the basis of the incorrect assessment of these passengers.

3.12.3 How is the kilometric payment category review done?

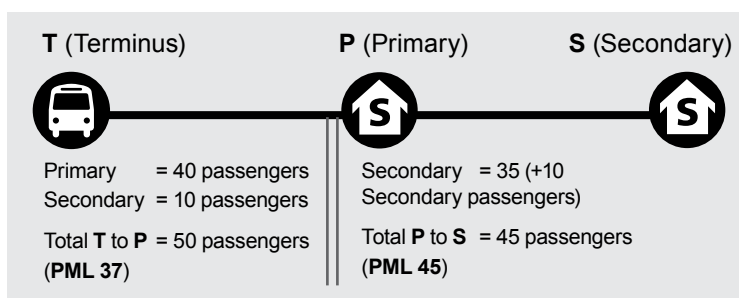
The kilometric payment category review is broken into four parts:

1. Point of maximum loading
2. Determining the assessed category
3. Determining the vehicle category for each vehicle
4. Determining if your payment category is likely to change and when.

1. Point of maximum loading (PML)

The PML is the point on the service where the most number of seats are required to transport distance eligible students.

The PML is not necessarily the point where the largest numbers of passengers are on the bus. The following example will illustrate:



- Bus travels T to P (primary school) with 40 primary and 10 secondary students.
- Adult seats occupied on arrival at P calculated by three primary to two adult seats (see Note A), one secondary to one adult seat are as follows:

40 primary students occupy 26 adult seats	27
10 secondary students occupy 10 adult seats	10
Total	37

Bus then travels P to S.

- Two primary students from T to P travel past P as fare paying passengers. (Fare paying passengers are not included in PML calculations).
- The 10 secondary students from T to P are still on the bus.
- The bus picks up a further 35 secondary students between P and S.
- On arrival at S there are:

45 secondary students occupying 45 adult seats	45
Total	45

In summary, the loading points are as follows:

Point P – 50 passengers occupying 37 adult seats

Point S – 45 passengers occupying 45 adult seats

In this example, the point of maximum loading where most seats are used is Point S – containing 45 secondary students and zero primary students. This point can be described as the school location, for example, Spring Creek State High School (see Note B).

Note A: there are cases where three for two seating are not permitted (see other factors to be considered). In these instances, the PML is calculated using one for one seating.

Note B: as illustrated in this example, the point at which the larger number of passengers occurs is not necessarily the point at which the PML occurs.

2. Determining the assessed category

After the number of students at the PML has been determined, the assessed category at the PML must be ascertained using the kilometric category matrix. The matrix has been developed to help determine the correct payment category for an operator based on the number and mix of students currently travelling and the size of vehicle required to legally carry them.

To obtain a copy of the matrix, contact your local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

The kilometric category matrix contains two tables that will help determine the assessed category for the service.

Table 1

This table refers to passenger numbers that relate to purely secondary students or mixed loads (primary, secondary and students with a disability).

Services carrying only secondary students

To use this table for a service that carries purely STAS eligible secondary students, simply find the number of students in the secondary column (on the left hand side of the table) and the category is identified by the corresponding colour. For example, 60 secondary students are in category 5.

Please note: the seating of students, who because of their disability receive transport assistance under the School Transport Assistance Program for Students With a Disability, is the same as secondary students, that is, one for one seating arrangements.

Services carrying both primary and secondary students

For a mixed load, find the number of secondary students in the secondary column on the left hand side of the table and the number of primary students in the row across the top of the table. Follow the primary number down the column and secondary number across the row to where they intersect. The intersection of these two numbers is the point which shows the assessed category. For example, 41 secondary students and 12 primary students, intersects at 49 which is in category 4.

Please note: the seating of students, who because of their disability receive transport assistance under the School transport assistance program for students with a disability, is the same as secondary students, that is, one for one seating arrangements.

Table 2

This table refers to passenger numbers that relate to purely primary students.

Services carrying only primary students

To use this table for a service that carries only primary students, simply find the number of students in the primary column on the right hand side of the table and the category is identified by the corresponding colour. For example, 42 primary students are in category 3.

Other factors to be considered

The kilometric matrix has not taken into account the following:

- services where standing passengers are not permitted (that is, services where passengers must not stand for more than 20km, or services that operate on designated roads or sections of roads where the carriage of standing passengers is not permitted by the department)
- services where the journey time of the third child in a three for two seating position is longer than 90 minutes one way
- services that transport students with a disability who have special requirements for more than one seating position, for example, travelling in a wheelchair
- services that transport adults who are travelling as official supervisors for students with a disability.

Any of the above factors could change the assessed category determined by the matrix. If one or more of the above factors applies to your particular service, you will need to contact your local Department of Transport and Main Roads office for assistance.

Please note: when determining the assessed category of a service, the department does not take into account operator preferences for the type of vehicle used on a service. These preferences could include coach seats, seat belts where specified by the operator not by the department, no standees where determined by the operator or standee capacity restricted by vehicle construction.

3. Determining the vehicle category for your vehicle

After the PML and the assessed category for the eligible students on the service have been calculated, the category of the vehicle currently being used on the service must be determined.

Please refer to Section 3.3.2 – Vehicle categories of this document for detailed information about vehicle types and relevant categories.

Gross vehicle mass (GVM)

It is recognised that a number of vehicles will have a different carrying capacity when assessed by using GVM rather than the seating capacity. For example, a bus may have an adult passenger seating capacity of 50 adult passengers but can only carry 38 passengers when assessed under GVM. In all cases, it is the operator's responsibility to ensure that the GVM of the vehicle is not exceeded.

In instances where operators have a vehicle with a low GVM for a particular category, it may be necessary for the operator to purchase a new higher GVM vehicle in the same category in order to carry all the eligible students. Services will not be split to accommodate vehicles with a low GVM.

4. Determining if your payment category is likely to change and when

At this stage the assessed category and the applicable vehicle category are compared with the current category (the category the department is currently paying for your service) to assess whether the service is being paid correctly. However, a service may be exempt from a reduction in payment category as outlined below.

3.12.4 Vehicles exempt from a reduction

From 1 July 2008, if the kilometric payment category review is being conducted for other than a change of vehicle, a service will be exempt from a reduction in payment category if the permanent vehicle on the service is one of the following:

- a heavy bus that is greater than 5 tonne GVM that meets Australian design rule 59/00 (rollover)* and is less than 15 years of age (NC3, NC4 and NC5 category vehicles are considered a heavy bus)
- a light bus that is less than or equal to 5 tonne GVM that meets the Australian design rule 59/00 (rollover)* and is less than 12 years of age (NC1 and NC2 category vehicles are considered a light bus irrespective of GVM).

The age of the vehicle will be based on Department of Transport and Main Roads official registration records and is calculated as outlined in Part 2 of Schedule 1 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010*. The operator (not the department) is responsible for proving the age of the vehicle.

Note: as a guide, rollover compliant vehicles are manufactured on or after:

- 1 July 1993 for a light omnibus (under 5 tonne)
- 1 July 1992 for a heavy omnibus (>5 tonne)

There may be some vehicles that comply with Australian design rule 59/00 (rollover)* and are rollover compliant that have been manufactured prior to the dates mentioned above.

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

3.12.5 Frozen rates

From 2010, vehicles were frozen on the applicable fixed rate when the vehicle reached 16 years old for a light vehicle or 20 years old for a heavy vehicle. This applied to vehicles currently operating on a service, as well as vehicles introduced onto a service.

From 1 July 2012 the fixed payment rate will be frozen only for non-rollover* compliant vehicles when the vehicle reaches 16 years old for a light vehicle or 20 years old for a heavy vehicle. Rollover compliant vehicles that have frozen rates applied under the previous policy will remain frozen.

Frozen fixed payment rates will not be adjusted with future increases.

Frozen fixed rates will continue to be subject to category reviews. If there is a change to the category, the frozen fixed rate will be adjusted to the relevant payment category. The relevant payment category will only be paid at the fixed rate that applied when the vehicle reached 16/20 years of age.

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

3.12.6 Permanent change of vehicle on service

A reduction in payment category (if the service is being paid at a category higher than the category of the bus required for the service) will apply when there is a change of vehicle on a service, regardless of the age of the vehicle entering the service. A replacement vehicle on a service will be paid at the correct category.

The following applies to the payment system for the service:

1. Vehicle new to operator
 - Service placed on the NC fixed and variable rates at category assessed in review (there is no capital payment unless approved under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme).
2. Vehicle is part of the operator's existing fleet (registered to the operator continuously since 1 July 2009)
 - If the service is on the C fixed and variable rates, service remains on this payment system at category assessed in review.

Note: As from 1 July 2012 any bus introduced on a contracted School Transport Assistance Scheme service must be less than 15 years of age at the date of change and meet Australian Design Rule 59/00 - Omnibus Rollover Strength (ADR 59/00)*.

Vehicles that do not meet ADR 59/00* or vehicles greater than 15 years are not permitted under any circumstances, even if the vehicle is part of an operator's fleet.

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

3.12.7 What will happen when a heavy bus reaches 15 years of age or a light bus reaches 12 years of age after the 1 July 2008 kilometric payment category review?

If no change occurs on the service, the payment category for the service will not be reviewed until the next annual 1 July kilometric payment category review.

If there is a change of operator or change of bus on the service, the department will conduct a kilometric payment category review and if the service is being paid at a category higher than the category required, a reduction in payment category will apply immediately.

3.12.8 Upgraded school bus

An upgraded school bus that is to be used on a kilometre-based service is given an allocated vehicle category when the department approves the bus operator's application for funding under the School Bus Upgrade Scheme. This is based on the bus category size required for the task of transporting the distance eligible students travelling on the service. The allocated vehicle category is the payment category to be paid to the operator from the date the upgraded school bus commences on the service.

Changes that occur after the upgraded school bus has been introduced into service are subject to the same category reviews that apply generally to kilometre-based services and are outlined in the tables at 3.12.12 and 3.12.13. If a change of vehicle occurs during the economic life of the bus, the operator must also have the approval of the department as specified under the conditions of the operator's School Bus Upgrade Agreement.

3.12.9 Split of service

Where a bus service is split into separate services, the following will apply:

1. One service will retain the original route number and service contract as well as the current vehicle. This will be determined by the department. This service will be paid at the date of split as follows:
 - i. The payment category that applied before the split of service if the bus is:
 - a heavy bus or NC3, NC4 or NC5 category bus less than 15 years of age
 - a light bus or NC1 or NC2 category bus less than 12 years of age.
 - ii. The correct payment category applies if:
 - a heavy bus or NC3, NC4 or NC5 category bus has reached 15 years of age
 - a light bus or NC1 or NC2 category bus has reached 12 years of age.
2. One service will be given a new route number by the department. A new service contract will be issued to the operator for this new service. The new service contract will be for a term of one year and three months.

A new or less than five year bus must be introduced into service on this new route within 12 months of the commencement of the new service. If the operator does not comply with this requirement the department will invite offers from the public for the service contract that is required after this one year and three month service contract expires.

3.12.10 Payment categories and rates

Payment details for the current fixed and variable rates and the applicable vehicle category are available in School Transport Information Statement No. 6.

3.12.11 Change of contractor

Where there is a change of contractor, a category review will be conducted, effective from the date of transfer of contract.

- If the vehicle used on the bus service is exempt from a reduction in payment category (refer to Section 3.12.4 – Vehicles exempt from a reduction) no reduction to the payment category will occur, provided the same bus is retained on the service.
- Where a vehicle is not exempt from a reduction and the category review indicates that the service should be paid at a lower category then the reduction in payment category will be effective from the date on which the transfer of contractor occurred.
- When the category review indicates that an increase in category may be considered, then an Increase in Payment Category Application Form F3731 is to be submitted by the new owner. Approval can only be granted to increase the category if an application is received from the new contractor and all conditions to increase the category are satisfied.

Please refer to the table at Section 3.12.13 – Guide to category assessments based on vehicle age.

3.12.12 Guide to assessment of payment category

The following table illustrates some of the possible category combinations that result from a category review assessment and the corresponding action taken by the government.

Scenario	Examples			Action codes
	Vehicle category	Current category	Assessed category	
The vehicle category, current category and the assessed category are all the same	C3 C5 and so on	C3 C5	C3 C5 and so on	No action
The current and assessed category is the same but the vehicle category is higher	C5 C4	C4 C3	C4, C3 and so on	No action
The vehicle and current category are the same but the assessed category is higher	C4 C2	C4 C2	C5 C3 and so on	No action (unless vehicle is changed – see Note 1 below)
The vehicle and current category are the same but the assessed category is lower (Refer to 3.12.4 Vehicles exempt from a reduction)	C3 C2	C3 C2	C2 C1 and so on	↓ 21 months ↓ Date of change ↓ Reduction exemption
The vehicle category is higher than the current category and the assessed category is lower than the current category (Refer to 3.12.4 Vehicles exempt from a reduction)	C4 C3	C3 C2	C2 C1 and so on	↓ 21 months ↓ Date of change ↓ Reduction exemption
The vehicle category is higher than the current category and the assessed category is higher than the current category	C4 C2	C3 C1	C4 C2 and so on	↑ Apply
The current and assessed category is the same but the vehicle category is lower	C3 C2	C4 C3	C4 C3 and so on	↓ Now
The vehicle and assessed category are the same but the current category is higher	C3 C2	C4 C3	C3 C2 and so on	↓ Now
The vehicle category is lower than the current category and the assessed category is higher than the current category	C2 C3	C3 C4	C4 C5 and so on	↓ Now

Note: in the above example the assessed categories have only increased/decreased by one category, however, it is possible they may alter by more than one category.

The table below explains the outcomes of the action codes in the review table.

Action codes	Outcome
<p>↓ 21 months</p> <p>↓ Date of Change</p> <p>↓ Reduction Exemption (Refer to 3.12.4 Vehicles exempt from a reduction)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a July annual review identifies the payment category at a higher rate than the assessed category, the payment is continued for a maximum of 21 months. If at the end of that concessionary period (1 April review) the payment assessment is confirmed, the category is reduced to that payment category. A service can have an additional 1 April review due to the following July annual assessment identifying a further reduction. The 1 April review can only reduce the category based on the corresponding July assessment. The service continues to be on review until the following April when it is assessed again for a possible further reduction. Enter the relevant 1 April review date in STIMS. The additional 1 April review will need to be manually kept on file until it is able to be entered into STIMS. If a reduction is identified when the service is assessed for various reasons, for example, contractor/split service (unless exempt from a reduction) or change of vehicle the reduction applies from the date of change. A manual adjustment is applicable if the date of change is within a previous pay period. <p>If a category reduction is identified and the vehicle is <12y.o. for a light vehicle/NC1, NC2 or <15y.o. for a heavy vehicle/NC3, NC4, NC5 the service is exempt from a payment category reduction. (This does not apply when a change of vehicle assessment is performed – the correct category must be applied regardless of the age of the vehicles).</p>
<p>*↑ Apply</p>	<p>The service may be eligible for an increase. An application form should be completed by the operator applying for an increase. To be eligible for an increase the following conditions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the number of distance eligible students on the service must be below the red line on the kilometric category matrix these numbers must have been maintained for at least two months an Actual Travel Survey must be completed and submitted with the application for increase the vehicle category of the vehicle on the service must be of the same category or higher than the assessed category back payment can be made if a retrospective application is lodged and approved for an increase.
<p>↓ *Now</p>	<p>As the vehicle category must be the same or higher than the assessed category, in these examples the service is being overpaid and the government is entitled to recover any overpayments.</p>
<p>Note 1</p>	<p>The service is not eligible for an increase because the vehicle category must be the same or higher than the assessed category before an increase can be considered.</p>

What happens if the numbers on my service increase after the 1 July kilometric payment category review?

(Also refer to Payment categories – increase in category)

If your service was being paid correctly as at 1 July and your numbers have increased subsequently to the next category, provided your vehicle capacity is also at this or a higher category, you can apply for an increase provided the conditions as listed above are met.

If your service was being paid at a rate higher than the assessed category as at 1 July and the numbers on the service temporarily increase after the 1 July assessment date you will be able to apply for consideration of re-assessment on the following criteria:

- the increased numbers of distance eligible students would move the service back into the next payment category, that is, the original category
- the vehicle category of the vehicle used on the service is the same category or higher than the assessed category
- the increased numbers as described in (a) above have travelled on the service for a minimum period of two months.

Should these conditions be satisfied, you should apply to the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office requesting that the service's payment category be re-examined. You should supply all relevant data to the department to ensure that all factors are taken into account in arriving at a decision whether to review the category or not.

Factors to be considered by the department would include the following matters:

- (a) reasons for fluctuations
- (b) frequency of fluctuations
- (c) history of fluctuations
- (d) possibility of future variations in passenger numbers and other details which the operator may feel would be relevant to the issue.



What happens if the 21 month review period is to apply?

The 21 month review period is a concessionary period given to the operator in order to purchase a different vehicle, if required. Any service which is approved to be re-assessed at an interim period will be reviewed again at the next 1 July review date. If the next 1 July annual review indicates that the service is being paid at the correct rate, then the 1 April review date can be cancelled.

3.12.13 Guide to category assessments based on vehicle age

Circumstances	Heavy bus or NC₃, 4 or 5 category bus less than 15 years of age Light bus or NC₁ and NC₂ category bus less than 12 years of age	Once a heavy bus or NC₃, 4 or 5 category bus reaches 15 years of age Once a light bus or NC₁ and NC₂ category bus reaches 12 years of age
Current vehicle remains on service and student numbers increase to a higher category and are maintained for a minimum period of two months Refer to Section 3.3.4	If the vehicle category is the same category or higher than the new assessed category the payment category may be increased to the new assessed category.	If the vehicle category is the same category or higher than the new assessed category the payment category may be increased to the new assessed category.
Change of vehicle on service (A vehicle must be registered to the operator continuously from 1 July 2009 to be considered part of their school bus fleet. If a vehicle is not considered part of the operator's fleet payments will be based on the capital-based payment rates.)	The service will be paid at the correct category regardless of the age of the replacement vehicle, effective from the date of change of the vehicle.	The service will be paid at the correct category regardless of the age of the replacement vehicle, effective from the date of change of the vehicle.
Change of operator	No reduction in payment category.	From the date of change of the operator the service will be paid at the correct category.
Split of service	For the current vehicle that is retained with the original route number and service contract (as determined by the department) the payment category that applied before the split of service will be paid.	For the current vehicle that is retained with the original route number and service contract (as determined by the department) the correct payment category will apply.
	For the vehicle introduced into service as a result of the service being split, the correct capital-based kilometric fixed and variable category will apply.	A non-rollover vehicle cannot be introduced into service. For the vehicle introduced into service as a result of the service being split, the correct capital-based kilometric fixed and variable category will apply.

Section 4

Capital-based school bus services

Capital-based school bus services are those school bus services that operate with a vehicle which has been purchased after 1 July 2009. This new payment system was introduced as part of the Queensland school bus strategy, the aim of which is to introduce a newer, safer school bus fleet in Queensland.

4.1 Capital-based kilometric school bus services

This payment system has been introduced for buses, operating on kilometre-based services, which have been purchased after 1 July 2009. Further information on these services is available in School Transport Information Statement 16A.

4.1.1 Funding

Funding for buses which operate under the capital-based kilometric service system is paid on the following basis.

Vehicle Purchase Allowance (NC1)

From 1 January 2014 Capital Funding for NC1 vehicles (for example Toyota Commuter) has been replaced by the Vehicle Purchase Allowance. The reason for this change is that there have been a large number of NC1 services forced to close due to low student numbers.

If buses in this situation are funded under the annuity model and the service is terminated, it is an extremely complex process for the operator and department to resolve. The new payment model is designed to eliminate this problem.

The Vehicle Purchase Allowance assists operators of kilometre based services with the purchase of a bus. The allowance is \$25 per day and is paid for up to 5 years commencing on the date the bus is introduced into service. The allowance is paid on each day that a service receives a fixed payment. The allowance ceases if the service is closed (with no repayment provision).

To receive the allowance all of the following conditions must be met:

1. The operator must have purchased a qualifying bus for use on the subsidised service after 1 January 2014. A qualifying bus is a motor vehicle with seating capacity for 9 or more passengers (excluding the driver) that is less than 10 years of age at date of commencement on the service. Determining the age of a vehicle is defined in the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard.
2. The vehicle must be registered to, and owned by, the operator.
3. The vehicle must not be fitted with lap only seatbelts.

If, within the 5 year period, the bus is replaced with a qualifying bus which is less than 5 years of age, the 5 year period will restart from the commencement date of the replacement. However if the

bus is replaced with a qualifying bus which is 5 years of age or more, the allowance period will not restart but will continue from the original commencement date. If the bus is replaced with a non qualifying bus (over 10 years old) the allowance will end on the date the original bus ceased on the service.

If a new operator acquires the service the allowance will continue provided the bus continues on the service. If the new operator purchases a bus for the service, the replacement policy as indicated above will apply.

If an operator purchases a vehicle larger than an NC1 category and distance eligible student numbers increase the payment category to a higher category the Vehicle Purchase Allowance will continue. Retrospective SchoolBUS capital funding cannot be approved.

Note: The introduction of the new allowance will not affect NC1 buses that were capital funded by the department prior to 1 January 2014. Any outstanding payments on those buses will continue in accordance with their SchoolBUS funding agreement.

Capital component (NC2 – NC5)

The operator purchases a bus to a value approved by the department. The approved capital amount is then paid to the operator in a lump sum amount in each of the first two financial years and then by an annuity over the ensuing five or eight financial years, depending on the size of the bus.

The capital funding is determined by the cost of the bus and an applicable funding cap. New payment categories (NC2 – NC5) based on the bus type, body length and minimum passenger seats have been developed under the capital-based kilometric system. A table of the new categories is provided at Section 4.1.2 – Category sizes for capital-based kilometre services.

For NC2 buses, the lump sum rate is 20 per cent of the approved cost of the bus and the annuity period is five years. For NC3, NC4 and NC5 buses, the lump sum rate is 25 per cent and the annuity period is eight years.

Example:

Oct-09	1st 20% lump sum payment
Oct-10	2nd 20% lump sum payment
Jul-11	1st annuity payment (including interest). Payment for interest accrued prior to annuity payment
Aug-11	Remaining annuity payments (including interest) commence

Fixed component

This component meets the fixed costs (registration, insurance, drivers' wages, administration) for a representative school bus service. It is indexed each year that the bus continues to be in use.

Variable component

This component meets the costs of tyres, fuel and oil and maintenance for a representative school bus service. It is indexed annually and the fuel component may be adjusted quarterly.

Funding for replacement buses

As from 1 July 2012, only buses which comply with Australian design rule 59/00 (rollover)* and less than 15 years of age can be introduced into service.

In addition to the capital payments, an approved new or less than five year old bus introduced into service will be paid a fixed rate and a variable rate for the applicable payment category.

A bus introduced into service that has not been approved for capital payments, or is a bus that has attained the age of five years or greater, will only be paid the fixed rate and variable rate for the applicable payment category.

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

4.1.2 Category sizes for capital-based kilometre services

The table below lists the category sizes under the capital-based kilometric system.

Category	Indicator	Example	Minimum passenger seating
NC1	Bus type	Toyota Commuter	13
NC2	Bus type	Toyota Coaster	20/21
NC2	Bus type	Fuso Rosa	24
NC3	Body length	<9m	30
NC4	Body length	9m to 11m	39
NC5	Body length	11.5m +	57

Conditions

1. Both the body length and the minimum numbers of seats must comply with the requirements identified in this table. Non-compliance will result in default to the next lower category.
2. Passenger seating is based on standard 4-across format in NC3, NC4 and NC5 categories.
3. The number of distance eligible students at PML requires a vehicle of this configuration.

Note: payment categories are determined on a case by case basis, based on factors such as the seating capacity required for distance eligible students, requirements for additional capacity and future demand.

Note: each kilometre travelled in excess of 160km per day (daily distance of loaded plus unloaded) will be paid an additional rate per kilometre. There is no maximum unloaded payment in the capital-based kilometric system.

4.1.3 Allocated vehicle categories

The replacement school bus will be given an approved allocated vehicle category by the department. This is based on the bus category size required for the task of transporting distance eligible students. This payment category will be maintained until the bus reaches 12 years of age if it is an NCI or NC2 bus or 15 years of age if it is a NC3, NC4 or NC5 bus, even if student numbers decrease during this time. At the next annual 1 July kilometric payment category review after the conclusion of this period, the correct payment category will be paid from that 1 July review date.

The STAS category size payment may be increased above the allocated vehicle category during this period if the student numbers increase to a level that qualifies for a higher category payment and the bus has capacity equivalent to the higher category. The higher payment category for the fixed and variable payments will then be paid for the remainder of the 12/15 year period.

Please note: the fitting of seatbelts may reduce the passenger carrying capacity of that bus. Where an operator chooses to fit seatbelts to a bus, it is the operator's responsibility to arrange the transport of any future eligible students affected by this reduced capacity. The department will only meet the cost of transport due to growth in student numbers for buses fitted with seatbelts in the following circumstances:

- the bus is a category NC1
- the service is operating on an Environment 3 road
- student numbers have grown to a limit where a bus fitted without seatbelts (that is, a bus with seats capable of taking standing passengers and 3 for 2 seating) would not have sufficient capacity to transport all distance eligible students.

4.1.4 Operator obligations

Operating the replacement school bus

A replacement school bus must be introduced into service as soon as practical after delivery and be used to deliver the school service on the nominated route for its economic life.

This means the replacement school bus must always be used to provide the school service and can only be used for other purposes during times that are outside of the school service timetable.

The operator shall not sell the replacement school bus or transfer the upgraded school bus to another service during its economic life, without the prior approval of the department.

A failure to meet these requirements constitutes a breach of the operator's funding agreement and key performance indicators under the service contract. Such breaches may lead to the cancellation of the operator's service contract.

What happens if the service contract is to be sold?

Unless otherwise approved by the department:

- the sale of a service contract must include the sale of the replacement school bus to the new contractor
- the new contractor must agree to use the replacement school bus on the route approved for the operation of the replacement school bus, for the balance of its economic life.

What circumstances require repayment of the funding?

If the operator does not use, or ceases using, the replacement school bus on the service approved for the operation of this bus, the operator shall repay the department within 10 working days after such an event, any capital funding to date.

1. Within the first 2 financial years	100% of lump sum payments made
2. Within financial years 3 to 7 (NC1 and NC2 vehicles) or financial years 3 to 10 (NC3, NC4 and NC5 vehicles)	100% of lump sum payments made plus 50% of annuity payments made
3. After the completion of periods 1 and 2 above and before the end of the economic life of the bus	100% of lump sum payments made

Note: these periods are calculated from the first date of registration of the bus in the operator's name.

In the event of unforeseen circumstances relating to the operator's obligations to use the bus, the department will negotiate any requirement for repayment of funding with operators on a case-by-case basis.

Institution of a new service

In the event that a new capital-based kilometric service is started, the operator of the new service must provide a new vehicle or a used vehicle less than five years of age, of the appropriate capacity.

Split of service

If a standard or capital-based kilometric school bus service is split because of excessive student numbers, timetabling or other issues, the new service must have a bus less than five years of age introduced into service not more than 12 months after the new service is instituted, unless otherwise approved by the department.

Closure of services

In the event that a capital-based kilometric school bus service is closed due to insufficient distance eligible students to maintain the service; opening or closure of schools; or for other reasons, the department and the operator will negotiate any requirement for repayment of funding on a case-by-case basis.

4.2 Fares-based school bus services bus replacement funding

This payment system has been introduced for buses, operating on fares-based services, which have been purchased after 1 July 2009. Further information on these services is available in School Transport Information Statement 16B.

4.2.1 Funding

Capital funding for buses which operate under fares-based contracts is paid on the following basis:

- The capital funding is determined by the cost of the bus and an applicable funding cap. In general, funding for fares-based services is provided on the basis that large capacity buses are required. If vehicles of a smaller capacity are required, funding will be negotiated with the operator on a case-by-case basis.
- The operator purchases a bus to a value approved by the department. The approved capital amount of up to 50 per cent of the cost of the bus is then paid to the operator in a lump sum amount of 20 per cent of the approved amount in each of the first two financial years for small capacity vehicles and 25 per cent for mid and large capacity vehicles.

4.2.2 Use of buses

Buses which receive capital funding are required to be operated on the approved service for the economic life of the vehicle. For small capacity buses, the economic life is 12 years and for mid and large capacity buses, the economic life is 15 years.

4.2.3 Operator obligations

Replacement buses

As from 1 July 2012, only buses which comply with Australian design rule 59/00 (rollover)* and are less than 15 years of age can be introduced into service. Please note that only buses up to five years of age are eligible for replacement funding.

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

Operating the replacement school bus

A replacement school bus must be introduced into service as soon as practical after delivery and be used to deliver the school service on the nominated route for its economic life.

This means the replacement school bus must always be used to provide the school service and can only be used for other purposes during times that are outside of the school service timetable.

The operator shall not sell the upgraded replacement school bus or transfer the upgraded school bus to another service during its economic life, without the prior approval of the department.

A failure to meet these requirements will disqualify the operator from further capital funding and constitutes a breach of the operator's funding agreement and key performance indicators under the service contract. Such breaches may lead to the cancellation of the operator's service contract.

What happens if the service contract is to be sold?

Unless otherwise approved by the department:

- the sale of a service contract must include the sale of the replacement school bus to the new contractor
- the new contractor must agree to use the replacement school bus on the route approved for the operation of the upgraded replacement school bus, for the balance of its economic life.

What circumstances require repayment of the funding?

If the operator does not use, or ceases using, the replacement school bus on the service approved for the operation of this bus, the operator shall repay the department within 10 working days after such an event, any capital funding to date.

In the event of unforeseen circumstances relating to the operator's obligations to use the bus, the department will negotiate any requirement for repayment of funding with operators on a case-by-case basis.

Institution of a new service

In the event that a new fares-based service is started, the operator of the new service must provide a new vehicle or a used vehicle less than five years of age, of the appropriate capacity.

Closure of services

In the event that a fares-based school bus service is closed due to insufficient distance eligible students to maintain the service; opening or closure of schools; or for other reasons, the department and the operator will negotiate any requirement for repayment of funding on a case-by-case basis.

4.3 Capital-based school bus services – students with a disability

The following payment system has been introduced for buses that provide students with a disability school bus services and which have been purchased after 1 July 2009.

Funding for capital-based school bus services–students with a disability is currently on hold pending the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

4.3.1 Funding

Funding for buses which operate under the capital-based school bus service (students with a disability) system is paid on the following basis.

Capital component

The contractor purchases a suitable bus to a value approved by the department. The approved capital amount is then paid to the contractor in a lump sum amount in each of the first two financial

years and then by an annuity over the ensuing five or eight financial years, depending on the size of the bus.

The capital funding is determined by the cost of the bus and an applicable funding cap. A table of the new categories (NC1 to NC3) is provided at 4.3.2 – Category sizes.

Buses for students with a disability school bus services are generally categories NC1 or NC2. For NC1 and NC2 buses, the lump sum rate is 20 per cent of the approved cost of the bus and the annuity period is five years.

In some cases, the department may consider the use of a larger NC3 category bus. However, this would involve a full assessment of the suitability of the larger bus and consultation with the Department of Education and Training having regard to the particular needs of students with a disability. If approved, the lump sum rate is 25 per cent and the annuity period is eight years for an NC3 bus.

Example:

October 2009	October 2010	July 2011	August 2011
1st 20% lump sum payment	2nd 20% lump sum payment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st annuity payment (incl. interest) • Payment for interest accrued prior to annuity payments 	Remaining annuity payments (incl. interest) commence

Fixed component

This component meets the fixed costs (registration, insurance, drivers' wages, administration for a representative school bus service. It is indexed annually.

Variable component

This component meets the costs of tyres, fuel and oil and maintenance for a representative school bus service. It is indexed annually and the fuel component may be adjusted quarterly.

Funding for replacement buses

As from 1 July 2009, only buses which comply with Australian design rule 59/00 (rollover)* can be introduced into service.

In addition to the capital payments an approved new or less than five year old bus introduced into service will be paid a fixed rate and a variable rate for the applicable payment category.

A bus introduced into service that has not been approved for capital payments or is a bus that has attained the age of five years or greater will only be paid the fixed rate and variable rate for the applicable payment category.

Funding is not available for spare buses.

*C1/NC1 vehicles are not required to meet rollover.

4.3.2 Category sizes

Students with a disability school bus services are paid under various payment methods:

- kilometre-aligned rates
- standard payment rates (excess distance)
- per vehicle payment.

The fixed and variable components for the various capital-based school bus services (students with a disability) payment methods are modelled and calculated from the rates used for the capital-based kilometric system.

The table below lists the category sizes for capital-based school bus services (students with a disability):

Category	Indicator	Example	Minimum adult passenger seating (calculated in unmodified format)
NC1	Bus type	Toyota Commuter	13
NC2	Bus type	Toyota Coaster	20
		Fuso Rosa	24
NC3	Body length	<9m	30

Conditions

Both the body length and the minimum numbers of seats must comply with the requirements identified in this table. Non-compliance will result in default to the next lower category.

4.3.3 Contractor obligations

Operating the replacement school bus

A replacement school bus must be introduced into service as soon as practical after delivery and be used for its economic life to deliver students with a disability school bus services in the service contract area. However, if the replacement upgraded school bus has been funded to provide a service on a nominated no standing passenger road it must be used to provide the service on a no standing passenger road at any time that there are students with a disability who require transport over that road.

The contractor shall not sell the replacement upgraded school bus, or, if the contractor is the holder of another service contract, transfer the upgraded school bus to another service contract during its economic life, without the prior approval of the department.

A failure to meet these requirements will disqualify the operator from further capital funding and constitutes a breach of the contractor's funding agreement and key performance indicators under the service contract. Such breaches may lead to the cancellation of the contractor's service contract.

What happens if the service contract is to be sold?

Unless otherwise approved by the department, during the economic life of a replacement upgraded school bus:

- the sale of a service contract must include the sale of the replacement upgraded school bus to the new contractor
- the new contractor must agree to use the replacement upgraded school bus for its economic life on the relevant students with a disability school bus services to be provided under the service contract.

What circumstances require repayment of the funding?

If the contractor does not use, or ceases using, the replacement upgraded school bus on the relevant services under the service contract, the contractor shall repay the department within 10 working days after such an event, the capital funding specified in the following table:

1.	Within the first two financial years	100% of lump sum payments made
2.	Within financial years 3 to 7 (NC1 and NC2 vehicles) or financial years 3 to 10 (NC3 vehicles)	100% of lump sum repayments made plus 50% of annuity payments made (excluding interest payments)
3.	After the completion of periods 1 and 2 above and before the end of the economic life of the bus Within years 7 to 12 (NC1 and NC2 vehicles) or years 10 to 15 (NC3, NC4 and NC5 vehicles)	100% of lump sum payments made (excludes interest and annuity payments.)

Note: these periods are calculated from the first date of registration of the bus in the contractor's name.

In the event of unforeseen circumstances relating to the contractor's obligations to use the bus, the department will negotiate any requirement for repayment of funding with contractors on a case-by-case basis.

Institution of a new service contract

If a new service contract is instituted for the transport of students with a disability by bus, the successful contractor must provide new or used vehicles less than five years of age, of the appropriate capacity, for services to be provided under the service contract.

Additional services required under the service contract

If the department approves an additional service to be provided under the service contract, the contractor must introduce on to that new service a new or less than five year old bus, unless otherwise approved by the department.

Closure of services

In the event that a students with a disability school bus service is closed due to insufficient students, opening or closure of schools; or for other reasons, the department and the contractor will negotiate any requirement for repayment of funding on a case-by-case basis.

Section 5 – Information statements and pro formas

The following School Transport Information Statements are available for operators from Department of Transport and Main Roads regional offices. The information contained in all information statements forms part of the policy of STAS.

Information statement	Title
No. 5	Safety-net arrangements for fares-based school bus operators
No. 6	Payment rates update – kilometre-based school bus services and capital-based kilometric school bus services
No. 9	STAS fare schedule update – fares-based school bus services
No. 10	School transport maximum cash fare schedule
No. 12	Safety net arrangements for kilometre-based school bus operators
No. 13	Kilometric payment category review – information for operators
No. 15A	Standard payment rates – (students with a disability) Contract bus services and capital-based school bus services
No. 15B	Kilometre aligned payment rates (students with a disability) - contract bus services
No. 16A	Capital-based kilometric school bus services
No. 16B	Fares-based school bus services bus replacement funding
No. 16C	Capital-based school bus services – students with a disability
No. 18	Safety-net arrangements for TransLink (private bus operators)
No. 19	Subsidised services – payment rates
No. 21	Safety-net arrangements for qconnect operators
No. 22	Pay period information for all transport operators
No. 23	STAS fare schedule fares-based school bus services variations for fuel prices
No. 24	Payment rates kilometre-based school bus services variations for fuel prices
No. 28A	Vehicle purchase allowance for NC1 kilometre based school bus services
No. 28B	Vehicle purchase allowance for Subsidised School Bus Services
No. 29A	STAS vehicle policy - kilometre based school bus services
No. 29B	STAS vehicle policy - fares based school bus services

Form number	Title
F2347	School bus travel assistance scheme deletion notification
F3679	School transport new/amended payee bank details
F3671	Kilometre exception report
F3731	Increase in payment category application form
F4293	School transport operator ABN and GST registration request form
F2208	Bus travel assistance application form
F3058	Bus travel assistance safety-net application
F3068	Brisbane City Council (TransLink) bus travel assistance safety-net application

Section 6 – TransLink Division offices of the Department of Transport and Main Roads

Further information

Please contact your local TransLink Division office of the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

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Southport

PO Box 10420
Southport BC Qld 4215
Phone: 5585 1857
Fax: 5585 1858

Ipswich

PO Box 631
Ipswich Qld 4305
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Fax: 3813 8605

TransLink SEQ North

Carseldine

GPO Box 1412
Brisbane Qld 4001
Phone: 3863 9849
Fax: 3863 9812

Mooloolaba

PO Box 111
Mooloolaba Qld 4557
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Fax: 5452 1818

TransLink Southern

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Maryborough (Wide Bay Burnett)

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TransLink Central

Mackay

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Rockhampton

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TransLink Northern

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