

The School Transport Assistance Scheme

Conveyance committee information booklet
November 2014

Contents

Contents	3
Introduction	3
What is a conveyance committee?	3
What is the role of the conveyance committee?	4
Why is a conveyance committee necessary?	4
When do conveyance committees meet?	4
Who can vote at conveyance committee meetings?	5
Model constitution	6
Order of business	8
Office bearers	9
Documentation	9
The code of conduct	11
Definitions	12
Quick reference guide	13

Introduction

In Queensland approximately 150 000 students travel by bus to and from school each day. Of these students 40 000 travel on services known as kilometre-based school bus services. These services generally operate in rural areas, and transport students to the nearest school. However, there are services that may transport students to other than their nearest school. Such circumstances are usually due to historical factors and fall within the guidelines of The School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS).

The Department of Transport and Main Roads enters into contracts with bus operators to operate kilometre-based school bus services. These services are funded by the Queensland Government through STAS and are administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads in conjunction with conveyance committees.

The information contained in this package is intended to assist conveyance committees in their important role. Further information on kilometre-based school bus services and the roles and responsibilities of conveyance committees is contained in the policy document *The School Transport Assistance Scheme* which is available at: www.translink.com.au/schooltransport

Other documentation included in this package is:

- A Conveyance Committee Quorum and Meeting Advice Form.
- A copy of a Kilometre Exception Report.

For the latest STAS policy please refer to: www.translink.com.au/schooltransport

Further information can also be obtained by contacting your local TransLink Division office of the Department of Transport and Main Roads as shown on page 11.

What is a conveyance committee?

A conveyance committee is comprised of parents/guardians of students who are distance-eligible and using the kilometre-based school bus service.

What is the role of the conveyance committee?

The conveyance committee provides an invaluable role in the administration of each kilometre-based school bus service. The local area knowledge possessed by the conveyance committee assists in ensuring that the route, timetable and bus stops for the service meet the specific transport needs of the students.

In addition, conveyance committees have an ongoing role in:

- assisting school principals and bus operators in maintaining discipline of school students while travelling on school buses
- liaising with operators on matters such as bus stops and timetables
- monitoring the performance of bus operators – see kilometre exception report on page 7.

Why is a conveyance committee necessary?

It is important that each school bus service meets the needs of the students it is established for. When designing a bus service to achieve this outcome, it is essential that local conditions be considered. Issues such as the commencement times of the local schools, the condition of the roads over which the service will operate, the distribution of the student population travelling on the service and the travelling time required to complete each journey must be taken into consideration. As time passes, it will be necessary for variations to be made to the service to respond to the changing conditions and allow the service to continue to meet the needs of the students.

The people most qualified to make these decisions and monitor the service are the local community whose children use the school bus service and attend the local schools. These are the people who know the local roads, the traffic conditions and any factors that may impact on the bus journey to and from school.

These people form the conveyance committee – without their local knowledge and expertise an effective school bus service may not be able to be operated.

When do conveyance committees meet?

There are certain occasions when it is important for conveyance committees to meet. These are:

The formation meeting

Once the Department of Transport and Main Roads has given approval for the institution of a kilometre-based school bus service, a general meeting of all parents of eligible students should be held to form a local conveyance committee. Members of conveyance committees must be parents of students who are distance eligible on the new service and who will be using the service.

The conveyance committee may wish to invite their local Department of Transport and Main Roads officer, the principal/s of the school/s to which the bus service will operate, and the bus operator to this meeting. While these people may provide valuable input, they are not permitted to vote at the meeting.

At the formation meeting, it is important that a number of tasks be completed. These are:

- the election of office bearers
- the adoption of a constitution (see below)
- the completion of all necessary documentation
- the preparation of a proposal including a draft of the bus route, the timetable, bus stops and any other special requirements – this information is required to be submitted to your local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

The annual general meeting

Early in each school year an annual general meeting of the conveyance committee must be held. Some committees find it useful to have their local Department of Transport and Main Roads officer, the principal/s of the school/s to which the bus service operates, and the bus operator at this meeting.

At this meeting, the committee will:

- elect office bearers for the coming year
- determine how often the committee will meet during the year
- prepare a list for the Department of Transport and Main Roads indicating the names and contact details of the officer bearers elected at the meeting.

General meeting

General meetings are held periodically as determined by the committee at its annual general meeting. General meetings provide a good opportunity for committees to discuss issues that concern the operation of services, for example the behaviour of students.

Special meeting

It may be necessary for the committee to hold a special meeting, to allow it to deal with urgent or unexpected business. This may be necessary in order to address an issue such as dangerous behaviour on the bus or an application for an extension to the service.

Who can vote at conveyance committee meetings?

On occasions, it will be necessary for a vote to occur at a conveyance committee meeting. This may be as a result of a motion being proposed at the meeting, or to decide on the new office bearers of the committee.

Only those parents/guardians of distance-eligible students who are using the bus service are eligible to vote. Special guests who have been invited to the meeting may provide information to the meeting which will assist these parents in deciding how they will vote, but are not entitled to a vote themselves. The bus operator of the service is only eligible to vote if he/she is also the parent/guardian of a distance-eligible student who is using the service.

Model constitution

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

Model constitution

1. Name

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

2. Objective

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

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

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

3. Membership

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

4. Date of annual general meeting

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

5. Office bearers

The committee will include office bearers.

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

6. Order of business – annual general meeting

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

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

7. Procedure and order of business general meetings

The order of business at a general meeting shall be:

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

8. Committee records

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

9. Meetings

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

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

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

10. Quorum

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

After each annual general meeting or special general meeting of parents/guardians, the secretary of the committee should advise the department of details of the meeting on the Conveyance committee quorum and meeting advice form (F3561).

The department will advise the secretary of the committee if the quorum for the meeting has not been accepted.

11. Contract issues

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

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

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

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

12. Operator

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

13. Resignation of secretary

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

14. Dissolution

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

15. Chairperson

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

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

Order of business

Most meetings follow a common format. Below is a copy of an agenda that could be adapted to suit the type of meeting being held.

Agenda	
Annual General Meeting of the Springvale State School Conveyance Committee P1749 14 February 2014 7.30pm	
1. Opening	<i>1. Opening</i> – it is important that the chairperson determines that a quorum is present prior to opening the meeting. Once this is confirmed the chairperson will declare the meeting open and welcome members and any special visitors.
2. Apologies	<i>2. Apologies</i> – it is advisable to keep a record of all those who attend together with the names of members who send an apology regarding their inability to attend the meeting.
3. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting	<i>3. Confirmation of minutes of previous annual general meeting</i> – members should be given a chance either prior to or at the meeting to read the minutes of the last meeting. If necessary, amendments will be made prior to a motion being moved and seconded to accept the minutes as an accurate account of the meeting.
4. Correspondence a. Inward: Department of Transport and Main Roads – Information Statement b. Outward: Coorfield Shire Council Roadwork required on Kyong Road	<i>4. Correspondence</i> – any correspondence to be discussed should be listed here. It may be advisable to have copies of correspondence readily available for members to read.
5. Election of office bearers	<i>5. Election of office bearers</i> – at each annual general meeting, conveyance committee members will elect a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer (if applicable). Nominations to any position must be seconded. Officers are generally elected by majority vote of the committee members present.
6. General business i. Code of conduct issues ii. Deletion of Bellfield Road	<i>6. General business</i> – by listing items to be discussed members can come prepared for informed discussion. Other items not listed on the agenda but considered to be general issues should also be introduced at this time.
7. Date of next meeting	<i>7. Date of next meeting</i> – the committee should decide the date for its next meeting.
8. Close	<i>8. Close</i> – once satisfied that all agenda items have been dealt with satisfactorily, and reminding officers of any issues that will require additional attention, the chairperson will declare the meeting closed.

Office bearers

At the annual general meeting held early in each school year, an election will occur to determine the office bearers for the next 12 month period. Each conveyance committee will need to have a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and a secretary. In some instances, it may be necessary to also have a treasurer.

The chairperson

The role of chairperson includes responsibilities such as presiding over the meetings that are held. Other important tasks include:

- promoting a good working relationship with the bus operator
- fostering effective communication within the committee
- encouraging committee members to actively participate in discussions, and so on at meetings.

The vice-chairperson

The vice-chairperson assists the chairperson in performing his/her role as well as providing support to other office bearers. The vice-chairperson may be called upon to preside over a meeting in the absence of the chairperson.

The secretary

The secretary of the conveyance committee is responsible for ensuring that the correspondence of the committee is completed. In this regard, there are certain documents that are required by the Department of Transport and Main Roads on a periodic basis. More information on these documents is included below.

The secretary is also responsible for tasks such as:

- preparing an agenda for each meeting
- maintaining minutes of each meeting
- providing seven days' notice of all meetings to be held.

The treasurer

A treasurer is only required if the conveyance committee has funds that are administered. This generally occurs on the rare occasions when the conveyance committee is the contractor for the service. In instances where a treasurer is required for the conveyance committee further advice should be sought from your local Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

Documentation

As part of the administration of kilometre-based school bus services, the Department of Transport and Main Roads requires the secretary of the conveyance committee to advise certain information.

Conveyance committee quorum and meeting advice

This form needs to be completed each year following the annual general meeting, and following any special meeting of the committee. It allows the Department of Transport and Main Roads to ensure that adequate notice of the intention to hold a meeting was given, and that the necessary quorum was present at the meeting.

It is also important that the department is informed of the names, addresses and offices of the office bearers elected at the annual general meeting or at any time when an election has occurred resulting in new committee members. The completion of these details on this form meets the requirements of the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

A copy of this form is enclosed in this package.

Privacy of information

The Department of Transport and Main Roads collects the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the office bearers of conveyance committees and records this information on a database. Authorised officers have access to the information recorded on the database to contact conveyance committee members as part of their role in assisting in the management of kilometre-based school bus services.

Details of conveyance committee contacts may be given to staff in the Department of Education, Training and Employment to enable them to contact conveyance committee members. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will not disclose an individual's details to other third parties without their consent, unless required by law.

Kilometre Exception Report

The *Kilometre Exception Report* is used by bus operators to advise the department of any factors that may require an adjustment being made to the operator's regular monthly payment.

Factors that may result in adjustment to payment include:

- a variation to the approved route due to flooding, bridge closure, detours, and so on
- the service not operating on a particular day as a result of school closure, pupil free day or vehicle breakdown
- permanent changes to the vehicle being used on the service.

It is important that the secretary of the conveyance committee certifies the *Kilometre Exception Report* in relation to the route variations section and/or change of vehicle section. This should be done as promptly as possible and returned to the bus operator. Failure to do so will result in a delayed payment to the operator.

If the secretary is unable to certify this report due to absence, illness and so on, arrangements should be made for another member of the committee to perform this task. In extreme cases, it may be necessary to have the principal of the base school to which the service operates certify the report on behalf of the conveyance committee.

If the secretary does not agree with the information provided by the operator, the secretary should note his/her concerns on the exception report and return it to the operator.

**Remember – accurate information on this form ensures accurate payment to the bus operator.
Do not delay in returning it to the operator.**

Requests for extensions/alterations to the school bus service

As mentioned earlier, it may sometimes be necessary to request a variation or extension to a service to help the service respond to changing local conditions. The department will consider any such request from the conveyance committee. Section 3.2 of *The School Transport Assistance Scheme – Conditions of operation*, provides more information on the factors which will be considered when assessing any request to extend or alter a kilometre-based school bus service.

Conveyance committees who elect to apply for an extension or alteration to the bus service must do so in writing to the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office. Please include the following information as part of your application:

- a map which indicates the extension or alteration required
- written advice from the relevant road authority indicating the suitability of the proposed route as a school bus route, under normal weather conditions.

The code of conduct

The ability to drive a school bus safely relies on the bus driver devoting full attention to the task. Distractions such as that caused by student misbehaviour on the bus may reduce the driver's ability to concentrate fully on road conditions, traffic and other factors which impact on a safe journey to and from school.

Most students behave appropriately when travelling on the school bus. However, the behaviour of some students causes concern for those involved in the administration of school buses, for other students, their parents, and schools.

To address this issue, the Department of Transport and Main Roads has developed a framework *The Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses*. This framework assists bus operators in managing situations where students misbehave on buses.

Conveyance committees play an important role in assisting bus operators to maintain appropriate levels of behaviour on school buses. Practical ways this can be done may include:

- periodically advising students and their parents/carers that the committee has an expectation of good behaviour on the bus
- working collaboratively with the bus operator to establish a set of rules that students must follow when travelling
- assisting the operator in achieving a consistent approach to the code of conduct.

The Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses sets out procedures for bus operators to follow when a breach of the code has occurred. As part of determining what action the bus operator will take in the event of misbehaviour on the bus, he/she is required to discuss the matter with the conveyance committee.

While the final decision regarding the action to be taken rests with the bus operator, a conveyance committee may wish to have input into that decision. Any such input should be based on the severity of the breach, the implications for the driver and other passengers, discussions held with the school principal concerned, and the committee's desire to maintain a safe travelling environment for all.

A copy of *The Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses* is available online at www.translink.com.au/buscode or by contacting your nearest Department of Transport and Main Roads office.

Definitions

Agenda	An agenda lists what is planned to happen at a meeting. It will include those items to be discussed at the meeting.
Base school	When the Department of Transport and Main Roads first establishes a kilometre-based school bus service, it nominates a base school for the service. This base school is generally the state school or state high school which most of the students using the service will attend. It is used for administrative purposes only.
Constitution	<p>The constitution is a document that outlines the basic principles under which the conveyance committee will operate. It includes information on membership, the order of business for meetings, and the dissolution of the committee. It must also include information on meetings, the quorum, and contract issues. In this regard, there are mandatory requirements of the Department of Transport and Main Roads that must be included in the constitution.</p> <p>A copy of a model constitution is shown at section 3.3.3 on page 39 of <i>The School Transport Assistance Scheme</i>.</p>
Queensland Government Indemnity and Queensland Government Insurance Fund	<p>Under the Queensland Government Indemnity Guideline, which commenced on 31 March 2014, conveyance committee members, as public officers, are indemnified by the State for civil proceeding, inquiry or investigation and criminal proceedings arising out of, or relating to, the officer's duties or functions.</p> <p>Conveyance committee members are also covered as "volunteers" by the Queensland Government Insurance Fund (QGIF). The QGIF will pay compensation for injury to a volunteer as a result of an occurrence while acting in his/her official capacity.</p> <p>Should conveyance committees require any further information regarding the indemnity and insurance provided under the Queensland Government Indemnity Guideline and the QGIF they should seek independent legal advice.</p>
Minutes	Minutes are a written record of a meeting. They give an overview of the meeting and normally list the attendees, the topics discussed and any decisions that were reached at the meeting.
Motions	<p>A motion is a formal proposal put to a meeting. All motions will be discussed, and then voted upon to determine if action will or will not occur.</p> <p>An example of a typical motion at a conveyance committee meeting may be: <i>"That the committee writes to the department seeking a 2.5 kilometre extension of the bus service to include Smith Road"</i>.</p> <p>The person who initiates the motion is called the mover. Following discussion, another person, the seconder will support the motion. If the majority of members vote in favour of the motion, it is then carried and appropriate action to effect that will occur. A carried motion is known as a resolution.</p>
Quorum	The quorum is the minimum number of members that must be present to constitute a valid meeting. Details of the quorum are set out in the committee's constitution.

Quick reference guide

Visit www.translink.com.au/schooltransport for the latest School Transport Assistance Scheme policy.

Issue	Reference Material	Page
administrative arrangements	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	41
bus route	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	31
bus stop areas	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	34
conveyance committees	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services Conveyance committee information booklet	34
Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services Conveyance committee information booklet www.translink.com.au/buscode	39 11
definitions	Conveyance committee information booklet	12
distance-eligible students	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 1: Eligibility and assistance types	9
documentation	Conveyance committee information booklet	9
extensions/deletions to a service	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	32-33
fare paying passengers	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 1:Eligibility and assistance types	17
institution of a new service	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	31
office bearers	Conveyance committee information booklet	9
order of business	Conveyance committee information booklet	8
Queensland Government Indemnity and Queensland Government Insurance Fund	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	36
role of the bus operator	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	37
role of the conveyance committee	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services Conveyance committee information booklet	34
safety-net eligible students	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 1:Eligibility and assistance types	9
timetables	The School Transport Assistance Scheme: Part 3:Kilometre-based school bus services	34

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