

# School bus driver policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this policy must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

## 1. Overview

This policy outlines the responsibilities of department-employed, volunteer, and excursion school bus drivers based at government schools.

It must be read in conjunction with the [department and contract school bus driver procedure \(PDF 632 KB\)](#) and the [school bus driver policy \(PDF 590 KB\)](#).

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all department employees (including school bus drivers) and other stakeholders involved in:

- transporting students to and from school
- transporting students on school-based camps, events, excursions, and curriculum activities
- managing drivers of department-owned yellow school buses.



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## 4. Detail

The department operates a fleet of buses that support access to education for South Australian children.

Safe transportation of children requires the department to carefully select, train, and manage bus drivers. This is to ensure that they are fit for duty, competent bus drivers, and accredited and compliant under the [Passenger Transport Act 1994 \(SA\)](#) and [Heavy Vehicle National Law \(South Australia\) Act 2013 \(SA\)](#).

This policy relates to:

- drivers of department-owned yellow school buses on morning and afternoon school bus services
- camp and excursion drivers
- volunteer drivers
- drivers employed by private transport service providers.

### 4.1. Licence and accreditation requirements

#### 4.1.1. Licence classes

Licence and legislative requirements are specified in the *Motor Vehicles Regulations 2010 (SA)* under the *Motor Vehicles Act 1959 (SA)*. They apply to all persons who wish to gain a driver licence.

Licence classes required for department and contract school bus drivers are listed below.

Class LR (Light Rigid) may drive:

- any motor vehicle covered by class C (for example motor car, tractor)
- any motor vehicle with a gross vehicle mass (GVM) exceeding 4,500kg but not exceeding 8,000kg (for example trucks, vans, buses designed to carry 13 or more seated people including the driver such as Toyota Coaster or Mitsubishi Rosa buses).

Class MR (Medium Rigid) may drive:

- any vehicle covered by class LR
- any motor vehicle with 2 axles and a GVM greater than 8,000kg (such as 2 axle trucks, tippers, and buses (for example Daewoo, Volvo, Iveco buses).

Class HR (Heavy Rigid) may drive:

- any motor vehicle covered by classes LR or MR
- any motor vehicle with 3 or more axles (for example trucks and tippers)
- any bus (including articulated buses).

Class HC (Heavy Combination) may drive:

- any motor vehicle covered by classes LR, MR, or HR
- a prime mover attached to a single trailer.

Class MC (Multi Combination) may drive:

- any motor vehicle covered by classes LR, MR, HR, or HC
- road trains.

### 4.1.2. Driver accreditation

Department-employed yellow school bus drivers, contract drivers, and any other drivers of public passenger vehicles for hire, fare, or reward in South Australia, must have South Australian driver accreditation.

Driver accreditation is issued by DIT for a maximum period of 3 years, or until a driver's Working with Children Check (WWCC) or driver's license expires (whichever date is sooner).

All South Australian accredited drivers must:

- hold a current full South Australian driver's license not subject to any conditions such as provisional, probationary, or suspended
- have held a full Australian driver's license for a minimum of 6 months
- have a valid WWCC issued by the South Australian Department of Human Services
- have a National Criminal History Check issued by SA Police (SAPOL) or an Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) accredited body
- meet minimum fitness, medical, and eyesight requirements, assessed by a medical practitioner (in accordance with [Assessing fitness to drive for commercial and private vehicle drivers](#)).
- be eligible to work in Australia
- be sufficiently competent in speaking, reading, and writing English.

To apply for driver accreditation or for further information, drivers can visit [SA.GOV.AU - Driver accreditation](#)

Upon receipt of driver accreditation, drivers must provide their updated accreditation documentation and current bus licence to the Principal. A new ED222 must also be completed and approved by the Principal.

Drivers must maintain their driver accreditation and notify the Principal if it expires.

Drivers must not operate a bus or passenger transport vehicle without valid accreditation, unless the Principal authorises them to drive as a volunteer. This can occur while a driver is waiting for DIT to approve their accreditation.

Approved volunteer drivers will not be paid by the department until they hold DIT approved driver accreditation and must be accompanied by another staff member.

### 4.1.3. Medical and eyesight requirements

Applicants must declare specific health, medical, and eyesight conditions as part of the DIT accreditation and licencing process. DIT may require applicants to undergo a medical and eyesight examination before issuing a licence.

Drivers who experience illness or injury that may impair their competency to drive safely must notify the Principal and the Registrar of Motor Vehicles within a reasonable timeframe.

All school bus drivers must undergo a medical and eyesight examination every 3 years, or earlier if deemed necessary by DIT or the Principal. Examinations may be required early if a driver experiences medical issues within the 3-year period. The cost of these medical examinations is the responsibility of the driver.

## 4.2. Managing driver fatigue

A key component in managing bus drivers is preventing impairment by fatigue.

Fatigue is a feeling or behaviour commonly associated with tiredness. Fatigue is a subjective experience that differs from person to person, which makes it difficult to precisely define.

Under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL), fatigue includes:

- feeling sleepy
- feeling physically or mentally tired, weary, or drowsy
- feeling exhausted or lacking energy
- behaving in a way consistent with the above.

Fatigue can occur because of poor or inadequate sleep, or the length and nature of tasks, especially where they are repetitive, monotonous, or require intense periods of concentration.

Fatigue impacts performance as it makes us less attentive and more prone to distraction. As we fatigue, we make mistakes, which can impact work performance.

Fatigue is particularly serious in the context of driving.

A driver becomes impaired by fatigue when the fatigue is at a level that poses a risk to safety.

Once drivers become impaired by fatigue, they:

- perform more inappropriate lane deviations and have slower steering responses
- are slower to respond to speed changes in other vehicles
- vary their speeds more than non-fatigued drivers
- exhibit slower reaction times
- experience impaired visual scanning or tunnel vision
- are at risk of falling asleep at the wheel.

Fatigue can also cause or contribute to long-term health effects including:

- increased blood pressure
- increased risk of heart disease
- gastrointestinal problems
- increased calorie consumption
- weight gain
- disrupted of circadian rhythm

- type II diabetes
- poor immune system function
- increased likelihood to smoke and use alcohol
- increased irritability and depression
- disruption in relationships
- worsening psychiatric conditions
- decreased quality of life
- increased sick leave use.

Therefore, managing fatigue is essential in supporting the safety and wellbeing of school bus drivers and students.

#### 4.2.1. Bus driver responsibilities for managing fatigue

To ensure compliance with the HVNL in relation to fatigue, bus drivers must:

- arrange fitness to drive medical assessments before employment, and as required by legislation thereafter
- manage personal activities to ensure their fitness for duty is not compromised
- contribute to bus route and driver schedule planning
- proactively communicate changed conditions to schedulers, bus driver managers, and principals, including additional work performed and other employment
- comply with prescribed maximum hours of work and minimum hours of rest (refer to [standard hours information by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator](#))
- keep accurate records of work and rest hours, as per the record keeping system assigned by the scheduler
- complete the TSU029: Driver fitness self-assessment guide before each driving task
- provide TSU029s and applicable logbook sheets to the Principal and bus driver manager fortnightly
- report when they are impaired by fatigue or unfit for duty to the Principal
- take discretionary rest as and where required
- call out when they are pressured, incentivised, coerced, or required to work in ways that may result in impairment by fatigue or other unsafe on-road behaviours
- take reasonable care of their health and wellbeing.

### 4.3. More information for school bus drivers

Refer to the [department and contract school bus driver procedure \(PDF 632 KB\)](#) for information about:

- selection and approval process of department-employed yellow and contract school bus drivers
- roles and responsibilities of school bus drivers
- department school bus driver payments
- driver and induction training
- camp, excursion, and volunteer drivers
- resolution process for complaints and issues involving school bus drivers

## 4.4. Records management

All records relating to school transport services are to be retained and managed in accordance with the department's obligations under the *State Records Act 1997* (SA) and [information and records management policy \(PDF 139 KB\)](#).

For more information on retaining official records relating to school transport services please contact the [Information Management Team](#).

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

### 5.1. All department staff and volunteers

Comply with this policy and associated procedures.

### 5.2. Principals

Manage school transport services at the local level, including day-to-day management of drivers.

Manage any concerns raised by or about drivers.

### 5.3. Transport Services Unit (TSU)

Manage school transport services at the corporate level, including providing advice on applying this procedure, and associated policies and procedures.

Monitor, evaluate, and review this policy.

## 6. Definitions

### 6.1. bus

A bus is a motor vehicle that seats more than 12 adults including the driver.

The definition of a bus is based on the number of seats, regardless of the GVM or whether the seats are occupied or vacant.

## 6.2. DIT

Department of Infrastructure and Transport.

## 6.3. employee

Someone employed by the department, whether on a permanent or temporary basis.

## 6.4. fatigue-regulated bus

A bus that weighs more than 4.5 tonnes (s 5, HVNL).

## 6.5. heavy vehicle

A vehicle with a GVM or aggregate trailer mass (ATM) of more than 4.5 tonnes (a heavy motor vehicle or a heavy trailer), or a combination that includes a vehicle with a GVM or ATM of more than 4.5 tonnes (a heavy combination).

## 6.6. HVNL

The *Heavy Vehicle National Law (South Australia) Act 2013* (which includes the HVNL) and each of the regulations to that Act and each subsequent amendment to the Act.

## 6.7. NHVR

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The NHVR is Australia's independent regulator for all vehicles over 4.5 tonnes gross vehicle mass in jurisdictions in which the HVNL applies.

## 6.8. non-compliance

Failure or refusal to comply with something (such as a law, regulation, or term of a contract). For example, permitting an unsafe vehicle to be used on a road.

## 6.9. official record

A record made or received by an agency in the conduct of its business.

## 6.10. policy

A clear, simple statement of how an organisation intends to conduct its business practices. Policies provide a set of guiding principles and expectations to help with decision making.

## 6.11. procedure

Describes how policies are put into action in an organisation. Procedures outline who will do what, the steps to take, and the documents or forms to use.

## 6.12. schedule

The journey task provided to a driver. The schedule includes time, distance, route, and rest options.

## 6.13. school transport service

A school service that:

- uses a school transport vehicle
- is provided to students or persons eligible to travel
- meets service viability criteria.

## 6.14. school transport vehicle

A vehicle that is a:

- bus provided by the department as a department-owned and operated school bus (not a bus that is owned by a school)
- bus operated by a third-party provider under a contract with the department (which may include a transport service for children and young people with a disability or those enrolled in the Intensive English Language Program)
- taxi or hire car.

## 6.15. volunteer driver

A person who provides their services as a driver gratuitously (disregarding any reasonable payment for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in undertaking the driving).

# 7. Supporting information

## 7.1. Related legislation

[Education and Children's Services Act 2019 \(SA\)](#)

[Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020 \(SA\)](#)

[Heavy Vehicle National Law \(South Australia\) Act 2013 \(SA\)](#)

[Motor Vehicles Act 1959 \(SA\)](#)

[National Heavy Vehicle Laws](#)

[Passenger Transport Act 1994 \(SA\)](#)

## 7.2. Related policies

[Camps and excursions policy \(PDF 665 KB\)](#)

[Closed-circuit television \(CCTV\) use on department school transport vehicles procedure \(PDF 604 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Department and contract school bus driver procedure \(PDF 632 KB\)](#)

[Driver review procedure \(PDF 589 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Establishing or altering a school transport service procedure \(PDF 589 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Safe transportation of children policy \(PDF 144 KB\)](#)

[Safe transportation of children procedure \(PDF 197 KB\)](#)

[School bus maintenance and safety policy \(PDF 580 KB\)](#)

[School bus maintenance and safety procedure \(PDF 649 KB\)](#)

[School bus management procedure \(PDF 654 KB\)](#)

[School bus travel procedure \(PDF 622 KB\)](#)

[School transport policy \(PDF 678 KB\)](#)

[Travelling and State Education Allowance procedure \(PDF 596 KB\)](#)

## 8. Record history

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### 8.1. Approvals

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Policy Officer: Bus Driver Liaison Officer, Transport Services Unit

Policy sponsor: Chief Procurement Officer

Responsible Executive Director: Chief Operating Officer

Approved by: Chief Operating Officer

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## 8.2. Revision record

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## 9. Contact

Transport Services Unit

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