

School bus maintenance and safety 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 explains the importance of maintaining and safely operating the department-owned yellow school bus fleet. It establishes principles for fleet safety and allocates roles and responsibilities for safely purchasing, servicing, maintaining, and disposing buses in line with legislative requirements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the department-owned yellow school bus fleet in South Australia.



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4. Detail

The department operates a fleet of yellow school buses that support access to education for South Australian children. Safely transporting those children requires that the department purchases, maintains, and repairs the fleet consistent with legislation and manufacturer specifications.

4.1. Guiding principles

The department will ensure safe transport operations by:

- purchasing a department-owned yellow school bus fleet
- monitoring fleet age and removing buses subject to economic considerations, such as value for money and end of buses' useful life
- maintaining a register of all department-owned yellow school buses, including a record of the vehicle details
- ensuring bus drivers undertake pre-trip inspections, using form TSU005 Department for Education School Bus Pre-journey check and driver declaration.
- scheduling preventative maintenance based on:
 - original equipment manufacturer (OEM) specifications
 - Australian Design Rules
 - Australian Vehicle Standards Rules
 - the National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual
 - relevant sections of the Code of Practice for Buses
- conducting annual vehicle inspections, per the *Passenger Transport Regulations 2024 (SA)* and associated policies
- promptly repairing and rectifying faults and defects
- checking for tampering with equipment such as speed limiters, odometers, and emission systems
- ensuring quality control of third-party repairs and maintenance providers.

4.2. Bus inspections, servicing, and maintenance

4.2.1. Legislative requirements

Under the *Road Traffic Act 1961 (SA)*, all South Australian registered buses must be inspected and safety labelled annually by inspectors from the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT). This Act also allows for random inspections to occur.

DIT's Vehicle Inspection Section is responsible for ensuring that buses are inspected for safety labelling. Department school bus examiners also have a legislative delegation by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport to inspect and safety label buses.

No bus is permitted to operate without a current green safety label, commonly known as a safety triangle.

The Code of Practice for Buses specifies that all buses registered in South Australia must undergo mandatory monthly, 3-monthly, and 12-monthly maintenance inspections by a suitably qualified mechanic. The code also specifies standards for bus construction and safety aspects.

Under the *Road Traffic Act 1961*, It is illegal to operate a heavy vehicle that has not been inspected in accordance with the Code of Practice for Buses.

4.2.2. Department-owned yellow school buses

The department must ensure that department-owned yellow school buses are maintained to the standards specified in the *Road Traffic Act 1961*, the Code of Practice for Buses, and the Heavy Vehicle National Law. This ensures their continued safe operation and ability to pass compulsory and random inspections.

Servicing garages must complete mandatory maintenance forms at each monthly, 3-monthly, and 12-monthly maintenance inspection. These forms must be sent to and kept by the school and the Transport Services Unit (TSU). Schools and TSU will provide the forms to relevant authorities (such as the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator) when requested.

Refer to [school bus maintenance and safety procedure \(PDF 649 KB\)](#) for details on inspections, repairs, maintenance, and servicing of department-owned yellow school buses.

4.2.3. Contract buses

DIT's Vehicle Inspection Section is responsible for making sure contract operated buses are safety labelled in line with legislation. This involves at least an annual inspection by DIT inspectors.

Department-employed school bus examiners may inspect contract buses to determine their continued suitability for school contract work.

4.2.4. Governing council and school-owned buses

Governing councils and schools may purchase their own buses for school use. These are not considered department-owned yellow school buses.

Where this occurs, governing councils and school must

- manage their bus in line with this policy its associated [procedure \(PDF 649 KB\)](#)
- comply with all other requirements, including those detailed in the *Road Traffic Act 1961* and Code of Practice for Buses.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. Transport Services Unit (TSU)

Maintain all maintenance and inspection documentation.

Monitor compliance with inspection and maintenance schedules

Monitor the school bus fleet for age and condition and follow relevant purchase and disposal process.

5.2. Governing Councils

Ensure compliance with all legislative requirements and department policies for governing council owned school buses.

5.3. Principals who own school buses

Ensure compliance with all legislative requirements and department policies for school owned buses.

6. Definitions

6.1. Australian Design Rules (ADRs)

The national standards for road vehicle safety, anti-theft, and emissions. All new road vehicles manufactured in Australia and imported new or second-hand vehicles must comply with the relevant ADRs when they are first supplied to the Australian market.

6.2. Australian Vehicle Standards Rules

The model rules that regulate in-service vehicle standards for vehicles. They form the basis for each State and Territory to implement in their own Vehicle Standards Rules.

6.3. 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 Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) or whether the seats are occupied or vacant.

6.4. National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual

A manual developed by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator that provides authorised officers, inspectors, and industry operators consistent criteria for heavy vehicle inspections.

6.5. original equipment manufacturer (OEM)

A manufacturer of a part or component used in another company's product. For example, the Toyota Coaster using windshield wipers manufactured by a different company.

6.6. 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.

6.7. 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.

6.8. system

A set of integrated resources and activities in a business that work together efficiently to improve safety and other business imperatives. Systems detail the required documentation of policies, procedures, and operational records associated with business practices.

7. Supporting information

[Code of Practice for Buses \(page includes mandatory maintenance forms\)](#)

[National Heavy Vehicle Inspection Manual: Section 13 Buses](#)

[National Heavy Vehicle Regulator: Vehicle standards and modifications](#)

7.1. Related legislation

- [Australian Design Rules](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 3/03 – Seats and Seat Anchorages\) 2006](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 4/03 – Seatbelts\) 2005](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 42/05 – General Safety Requirements\) 2018](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 44/02 – Specific Purpose Vehicle Requirements\) 2006](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 58/00 – Requirements for Omnibuses Designed for Hire and Reward\) 2006](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 59/00 – Standards For Omnibus Rollover Strength\) 2007](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 66/00 – Seat Strength, Seat Anchorage Strength and Padding in Omnibuses\) 2006](#)

- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 68/00 – Occupant Protection in Buses\) 2006](#)
- [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule 93/00 – Forward Field of View\) 2018](#)
- [Heavy Vehicle National Law \(South Australia\) Act 2013 \(SA\)](#)
- [Road Vehicle Standards Rules 2019 \(Cth\)](#)

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 driver policy \(PDF 590 KB\)](#)

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

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

[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 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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