

Senior Secondary Transport Fund – 2024 Frequently Asked Questions for Schools

What is the Senior Secondary Transport Fund (transport fund)?

The transport fund will assist clusters of schools to provide their students with access to VDSS. The funding will address barriers to access by providing schools with travel solutions that are coordinated and fit-for-purpose and offering greater choice for senior secondary students.

The Victorian Local Learning and Employment Network (LLENs) has been identified as the most appropriate choice to coordinate this funding in 2024. This continues work delivered by the LLENs in 2023 in coordinating with schools to determine local solutions to transport barriers facing VET clusters.

What the funds can be used for?

The 2024 fund is to enable clusters of schools to provide government school students with access to off-site VDSS, prioritising the [Core Offering of VET pathways](#).

The transport fund can be used for:

- Hiring a bus from a transport company
- Using a school bus and paying for fuel and/or a driver
- A school staff member driving a car owned by the staff member or by the school
- Compensating a parent for fuel when using a vehicle owned by a parent
- Subsidising a student for public transport costs
- Paying for a Working With Children Check for an adult on transport to supervise children
- Transporting students from a VET provider back to school or a central location
- Transporting ES staff to accompany students on transport where required
- Transporting a VET trainer to students at a given location (school, RTO etc.) where it is cost prohibitive for students to travel
- Hiring a taxi if no other suitable travel options are viable

Note: Where an existing solution is already in place for government-school students, non-government schools can leverage this solution (i.e. a bus on the same route) as long as this does not result in government school students missing out.

The funding cannot be used for:

- Transport infrastructure such as bus maintenance or a new bus
- Accommodation costs

- Certificate I access

Funding also cannot be used for providing transport support for programs including:

- School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships/Structured Workplace Learning
- VET taster programs
- Work readiness and personal development programs such as Project Ready
- Excursions or other work-based learning programs

Who is the entity that contracts the bus service and pays for it?

In most cases it is the role of the LLEN to contract the bus service. There may be some instances when a school will instead contract with the bus service – the LLEN and school will discuss if this is the school's preference.

In some instances, transport assistance may not be used to contract a bus service. Instead, the relevant LLEN and school will have elected to use the funding to access a different mode of transport, such as fuel, a driver, or public transport subsidies (as above). The LLEN and school will discuss the transport needs for that school.

What are the supervision requirements while students are on a bus?

In order to meet the Department of Education's (the Department) supervision requirements, the following must be met:

- The bus driver must hold a working with children check,
- The driver must be trained to drive a public transport vehicle,
- The transport operator must be Child Safe compliant,
- The transport operator must hold public liability insurance.

The LLENs must verify this information with transport companies **prior** to contracting with them. Further information about duty of care can be found at: [Duty of Care: Policy](#). Additional supervision by school staff is up to the discretion of the school.

The Department's Legal Division can be contacted for individual legal advice.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/contact-us-department-education>

What are the transport safety requirements in vehicles owned, hired or chartered by a school?

For students travelling in vehicles with less than 10 seats, the policy [Vehicles \(excluding buses\) owned, hired or chartered by a school](#) must be followed. As per the [VicRoads guidance](#), if a child is between 7-16 years and less than 145cm tall, they must use a booster seat. By law, all vehicles with less than 10 seats must be equipped with seatbelts and each occupant must wear their seatbelt. In vehicles such as buses with 10 or more seats, the policy [Buses – Owned, Hired or Chartered by a School](#) must be followed. The transport provider (whether it be a commercial bus operator or taxi) **must** meet their safety obligations under their respective regulator.

LLENs are required to ensure that these safety requirements will be met prior to contracting with them.

Can schools request 2024 transport support throughout the year? Is there a deadline for schools to request transport support?

While transport needs have been identified through strategic planning, schools are able to make requests for 2024 transport support as the need arises.

If unforeseen need arises, schools should contact the LLEN responsible for managing transport for their cluster to express an interest in receiving support. In turn, the local LLEN

will determine if the request is in scope and can proceed. There is no deadline for clusters of schools to request 2024 transport support, however requests must be made before transport occurs.

Does the school have any additional responsibilities in relation to arrangement of travel for students to access VDSS, ie: if a student does not wish to access the bus, or cannot get to the designated stop on the bus travel route – what are the school’s responsibilities? Does the school have to make additional arrangements?

Schools should discuss with their LLEN the most suitable way for all students to access VDSS under the transport fund. As part of this, the LLEN and school should discuss the most appropriate designated stops on a bus route. The school is not obligated to make additional arrangements for students under the terms of the transport fund.

Could a parent opt in to transport a child themselves to their VET course (at a TAFE campus for example) and receive some reimbursement? How is this money paid?

The transport fund allows for schools to compensate parents for the cost for fuel only in the instance that the schools, parents and LLENs have an agreement that parents will drive students to access their VET certificate as other transport is not appropriate.

Parents and schools must reach such an agreement and notify the LLEN of this decision before reimbursements are sought. The LLENs will allocate funds to the school for the school to compensate the parents via fuel vouchers. The LLENs will arrange this formal documentation to allocate the funds to the school to compensate the parents.

Can transport to and from SBATs be funded as part of the program?

The senior secondary transport fund contract outlines the fund is to enable VDSS certificate access at Certificate II level and above. Funding to enable access to other types of Work Based Learning, including SBATs, is out of scope. The limitations to funding for SBATs is specific to:

- SBATs accessing VET as part of training contract, not as VDSS
- Enrolment in VET as an SBAT being funded under Skills First, not targeted VET funding.

What is an excursion? Can transport to and from excursions be funded as part of the program?

Excursions are activities organised by a school where the students:

- Are taken out of the school grounds (for example, a camp, day excursion or school sports)
- Undertake adventure activities, regardless of whether or not they occur outside the school grounds.

Excursions are separate to the LLEN’s administration of the transport fund and are out of scope as excursions are not mandatory components of VDSS course delivery.

Schools must follow the [Excursions](#) policy for the organisation of excursions.

Is there further Department of Education policy guidance?

Further operational policies and guidance for schools can be found on the Department’s [Policy and Advisory Library](#).

Who should LLENs contact with any questions or issues?

If you have any questions regarding the contract or procedures, please contact:

- Allison Nicholls, FMPLLEN Transport Coordinator as first point of contact. allison@fmpllen.com.au, 0423 578 912

- Angela Byatt, FMPLLEN EO.
angela@fmpllen.com.au, 0412 807 816

If you have any questions regarding transport solutions in your DE region, please contact your local LLEN.

What is the process for arranging different types of transport?

Hiring a bus from a transport company:

- The school will discuss with the LLEN the numbers of students who are travelling on the bus, the day and time of the bus, and the most appropriate designated stops on the bus route.
- The LLEN will arrange the booking confirmation with the transport company, including verifying the Child Safe requirements.
- The LLEN will coordinate with the school to ensure students are travelling on the bus.

Hiring a taxi:

- The school will discuss with the LLEN the numbers of students who are travelling on the taxi, the day and time of the taxi, and the most appropriate designated stops for the taxi.
- The LLEN will arrange the taxi with the transport company, including verifying the Child Safe requirements.
- The LLEN will coordinate with the school to ensure students are travelling on the taxi.

Using a school bus and paying for fuel and/or a driver:

- The school will discuss with the LLEN the school's requirements to compensate the school for fuel and/or a driver, including any necessary time for a staff member to drive the bus.
- The school will invoice the LLEN with anticipated costs prior to travel and the LLEN will issue funding to the school based on the invoice.
- The school will provide the LLEN with receipts from the travel.
- The LLEN will contribute further costs if necessary, based on receipts.

A school staff member driving a car owned by the staff member or by the school:

- If deemed appropriate, the school will discuss with the LLEN, informing them of the school's requirements to compensate the staff member for fuel, and any necessary time for the staff member to drive the car.
- The staff member will notify the school of the anticipated costs prior to travel and the school will invoice the LLEN with these costs.
- The LLEN will issue funding to the school based on the invoice.
- The school will issue the funding to the staff member based on the invoice.
- The staff member will provide the school with any receipts from the travel which the school will then provide to the LLEN.
- The LLEN will contribute further costs if necessary, based on receipts.

Compensating a parent for fuel when using a vehicle owned by a parent:

- If deemed appropriate, the school will discuss with the LLEN, informing them of the school's requirements to compensate a parent for fuel. School will need to confirm with the parent anticipated distance travelled, time of travel, length of travel.
- The parent will notify the school of the anticipated costs prior to travel and the school will invoice the LLEN with these costs.
- The LLEN will issue funding to the school based on the invoice which the school will provide to the parent.

- Following travel, parents should provide the school with any receipts from the travel which the school will provide the LLEN.
- The LLEN will contribute further costs if necessary, based on receipts.

Subsidising a student for public transport costs:

- The LLEN and school will discuss the anticipated cost of covering a student's public transport travel.
- The school will invoice the LLEN with these costs and the LLEN will issue funding to the school based on the invoice.
- Following travel, the student should provide the school with any receipts from travel, which the school will provide the LLEN.
- The LLEN will contribute further costs if necessary, based on receipts.