

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Transport Information</u> <u>Department of Education and Training (DE&T) Victoria</u></p>

DE&T Policy Context

Growing Victoria Together (GVT) provides the policy context for DE&T. “*Valuing and Investing in Lifelong Education*” is the most pertinent section.

The Government has also set five goals and three targets for education and training in Victoria. The targets, which relate most to transport initiatives program are:

“By 2005 – the percentage of young people aged 15-19 in rural and regional Victoria, engaged in education and training will increase by 6 per cent”

“By 2010 – 90 per cent of young people in Victoria will complete Year 12 or it equivalent”

In addition, the learning and working section of “Respect – The Government’s Vision for Young People”

(<http://www.youth.vic.gov.au/youth/framework/default.htm>) states a priority effort in the future will be “*assisting more students from rural and regional Victoria with transport options to ensure participation in education and training*”.

Existing Transport Initiatives within DE&T

The Government currently spends in the vicinity of \$165 million dollars in transport initiatives for students. The majority of funds are expended to facilitate transport for:

- Rural and regional students to schools; and
- Disabled students to special schools.

Free School Bus Service

In many areas, there are enough school students to warrant a free school bus service. Eligibility to access these free buses is also restricted to students who reside more than 4.8km from their nearest school. Ineligible students (including non-school students) may be approved access to the school bus service depending on the availability of spare seats. In special circumstances Regional Directors may also grant permission to fare paying passengers to use the school bus service.

Conveyance Allowance

Conveyance allowances are available to assist school students who reside more than 4.8km from their nearest school and are unable to access a free school bus service. These allowances are available to eligible students attending government and non-government schools in all country and designated outer metropolitan areas and apply to travel by public transport, private bus and private car.

Special School Transport

DE&T directly administers almost 200 services and around 160 taxi services to transport students to special and special developmental schools. To be eligible, students must be attending their designated setting.

“Private” School Buses

Some individual schools (government and non-government) also own their own buses. Use of these buses, including whether they are available for chartering to external agencies, is decided by the school, which owns the bus.

Other Relevant Initiatives

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) (www.llen.vic.gov.au)

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) bring together local education providers, industry, community organisations, individuals and government organisations to:

- Develop and maintain strong local and community networks;
- Plan the development and delivery of educational programs for young people which will assist in meeting the targets for better completion rates and employment outcomes;
- Take a strategic approach to developing pathways for local young people, especially those at risk of dropping out;
- Monitor these pathways and outcomes to ensure they are beneficial to young people; and
- Advise the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) on the needs of young people in their area.

In addition, LLENs often provide references and letters of support for funding submissions coming from their areas.

There are thirty-one LLENs, covering the whole of Victoria. Each LLEN is an incorporated body with a Committee of Management, a Chairperson, and an Executive Officer. The LLENs initiative is funded for 3 years for a total of \$27 million. LLENs receive between \$225,000 and \$400,000 per year for 3 years.

Many of the rural and regional LLENs have raised transport as a significant policy issue for students in attending education and training. Two initiatives have also been undertaken by/or with involvement of LLENs. These are:

- The Highlands LLEN ran a program piloting the use of spare seats on the free bus service by non-school students; and
- The Wimmera LLEN contributed to the development and ongoing running of the Wimmera Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) bus. To date, this program has allowed 130 students to attend VETiS that otherwise would have been unable to do so.

The LLENs are well placed to consider transport issues affecting young people falling into the post-compulsory cohort. DE&T would prefer all proponents of submissions for IFTI grants to have at least consulted their appropriate LLEN/s. LLENs may also be appropriate lead agents or consortium partners in some areas.

Transport Connections Program

The Program is an initiative, which provides \$80,000 grants to community partnerships for brokering better use of transport services within rural, regional and metropolitan fringe areas of Victoria. Exposure draft guidelines for this initiative are currently available and the closing date for tenders is 11 April 2003. Potential tenders have been encouraged to consider discussing their application with their LLEN to ensure that transport issues for young people are considered. Further information is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/vrhss/flexibletransport/.

Issues for the Education and Training Sector in relation to transport

There are currently a number of transport support issues for post-compulsory students (aged 15 – 24) in rural and regional areas that attend education and training providers other than schools.

Initiatives currently assisting young people to access transport services include:

- Amendment to the School Bus Guidelines to allow post compulsory students other than those attending schools, to use spare seats on the free school bus service.
- Provision of once off funding to the Wimmera Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools buses.

Despite these initiatives, there is still work to be done. A range of opportunities exists to enhance transport for post compulsory students in rural and regional areas.

The DE&T is willing to work cooperatively with communities who can suggest innovative solutions to the use of DE&T associated resources.

Other issues affecting the post-compulsory cohort

The Office for Youth in the Department of Victorian Communities (DOVC) has been consulted in the preparation of this document. The Youth Affairs portfolio addresses issues for young people aged between 12-25 years old. This clearly includes the post-compulsory cohort (15-24).

It is recognised that the rural and regional post-compulsory cohort has transport needs other than in accessing education and training. Access to transport for this cohort is not only crucial for education and training opportunities, but also for access to broader services affecting their health and well being. This includes access to health and medical services, entertainment, sports and recreation facilities, employment services, youth groups, and legal services¹.

Fifteen Regional Youth Committees (RYCs) cover Victoria. Including representatives from government, youth and welfare agencies, their key role is to provide policy advice to the Minister for Youth Affairs on issues for local young people. The RYCs are also well placed to be able to comment on the broader needs of the post-compulsory sector in regards to transport.

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¹ “Designing Accessible Youth Services” report of the Fifth Youth Round Table.
<http://www.youth.vic.gov.au/youth/docs/roundtables/roundtable5.doc>