

## Take action now on Transport Concessions

### Why transport matters

Young people use transport for many reasons including looking for work, studying, training, social and support networks, health and fitness, volunteering, relaxation and entertainment.

All of these activities benefit young people and the broader community. When young people do not have safe, affordable and accessible public transport their life opportunities become more limited.

In NSW the following groups of young people face particular disadvantage in relation to transport concessions:

- young people on age based rates of pay (junior wages)
- apprentices and trainees
- full-time university & TAFE students
- job seekers
- young people in alternative education programs such as Links to Learning
- young people in Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) programs.

Young people who are unable to access a full range of concession fares face considerable hardship as a result. YAPA has collected 70 case studies from young people in these circumstances. When asked about the impact of transport fares on them and their family some of the comments from young people included:

*“If I pay full fare for travel I can’t buy food.”*

*“I cannot afford to pay due to my low income hence I have fines. This stops me from getting my licence.”*

*“I’m unable to save to buy a car because I spend so much on public transport.”*

*“It’s hard to pay rent to my mum.”*

Young people also stated that the cost of public transport, resulting from a lack of appropriate concessions leads to increased family tensions, inability to adequately look for and continue work, and an inability to buy necessary study materials.

**One of the main sources of disadvantage is due to the difference in concessions provided by non-government and government services.**

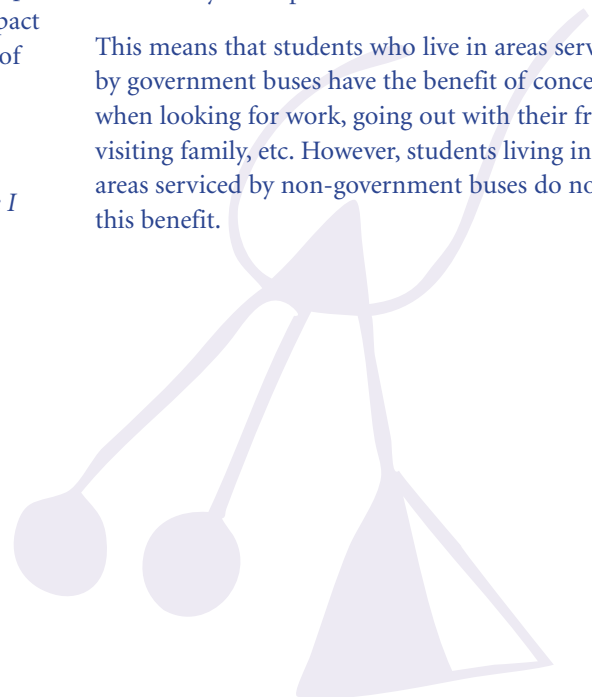
Non-government bus companies service most of Western Sydney, as well as regional and rural areas throughout NSW. These companies offer different concessions to government buses and trains.

The NSW Government subsidises government buses \$103 million per year and trains \$198 million per year to provide concessions. In contrast, the effective amount of government expenditure on concessions on non-government buses is \$32.7 million per year.

### University & TAFE students

Full-time university and TAFE students travelling by non-government buses have access to concession fares when travelling to and from study Monday to Saturday. However, if they have access to government transport they have access to concession fares at all times, plus a range of special tickets such as Travel Ten and Weekly Travelpass.

This means that students who live in areas serviced by government buses have the benefit of concessions when looking for work, going out with their friends, visiting family, etc. However, students living in areas serviced by non-government buses do not have this benefit.



## Apprentices/trainees

On non-government buses, apprentices and trainees aged 16 years and over do not have access to any concessions.

On government buses, apprentices and trainees can get a concession to and from home, work and study.

If an apprentice or trainee is under 16 years old they are still eligible for a child's fare.

Many young apprentices who cannot access concession fares are currently paying up to \$50 per week on transport costs; this represents a significant amount of their income. For example, the weekly income received by a 1st year indentured apprentice in the Building and Construction Industry is \$211.60.

## Young people on junior wages

Young people aged over 16 years who receive junior wages are not eligible for any concessions on any form of public transport.

Junior wages are based on the assumption that young people have lower living costs than working adults. However, young people do not receive discounts on accommodation, food, petrol or transport fares.

Junior wages for a shop assistant start at \$195.90 per week. People on junior wages clearly lack the income to pay full fares for transport.

## Young job seekers

Young job seekers aged 18-20 years are only eligible for a concession fare if they receive the full rate of Youth Allowance. For this age group Youth Allowance is based on a parental income test, regardless of whether the young person lives at home.

An unemployed person aged 18-20 years is not eligible for transport concessions if their parents' combined income is more than \$26,650 per annum.

Centrelink now requires job seekers to travel up to 90 minutes one way to attend mutual obligation requirements such as training courses. A typical 90 minute train ride can cost \$22.80 (eg. Katoomba to Parramatta peak return).

The high cost of transport fares makes it extremely difficult for young people to look for work without a transport concession.

For those aged over 21 years receiving Newstart a concession fare is unavailable if they earn over \$31 per week from part-time work.

If a young person is 'breached', which may occur for a range of reasons, including failure to attend an interview, their rate of payment is reduced and they lose their concession card. Young people are not eligible for a concession card until the breach ceases to have an effect on the rate of payment.

NSW Government transport policy adds to the punitive measures imposed by Centrelink, so that young people are expected to continue looking for work on a reduced rate of payment without access to concession fares.

YAPA has been informed about situations where young people have been 'breached' and lost their concession card because they have been unable to afford the cost of transport to attend an interview.

## JPET

A program for which concessions recently became available is the Jobs Placement Employment and Training program (JPET), which is aimed at assisting students and unemployed young people aged 15-21 years, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

JPET clients are now eligible for a concession fare on trains and both government and non-government buses.

## Links to Learning

The Links to Learning program assists young people who have left school early or who are students at risk of leaving school early. It provides them with different opportunities to remain in or re-enter mainstream education and training.

Community organisations and Local Councils typically manage Links to Learning projects in locations other than schools. The programs may also require young people to travel to different services in their local area for assistance.

Young people aged over 16 years who do not have a school concession pass and are participating in this program are not eligible for concessions on both government and non-government services. A young person who has a school concession pass may also be unable to use it as they are not strictly travelling to or from their school.

YAPA has been informed about situations where services with already tight budgets have paid for young people's travel from their own budget in order to ensure the young people are able to attend the program.

### **CDEP**

A program for which concessions are also not available is the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP).

CDEP provides employment for Indigenous people in a wide range of community projects and enterprises. CDEP is open to Indigenous people who are eligible for Centrelink payments such as Newstart, Youth Allowance and Sole Pension.

Young people participating in both Links to Learning and CDEP are some of the most marginalised young people in NSW. In many cases their education has been extremely disrupted and they continue to be discouraged from participating by a transport concession regime that is clearly inequitable.

### **YAPA recommends that:**

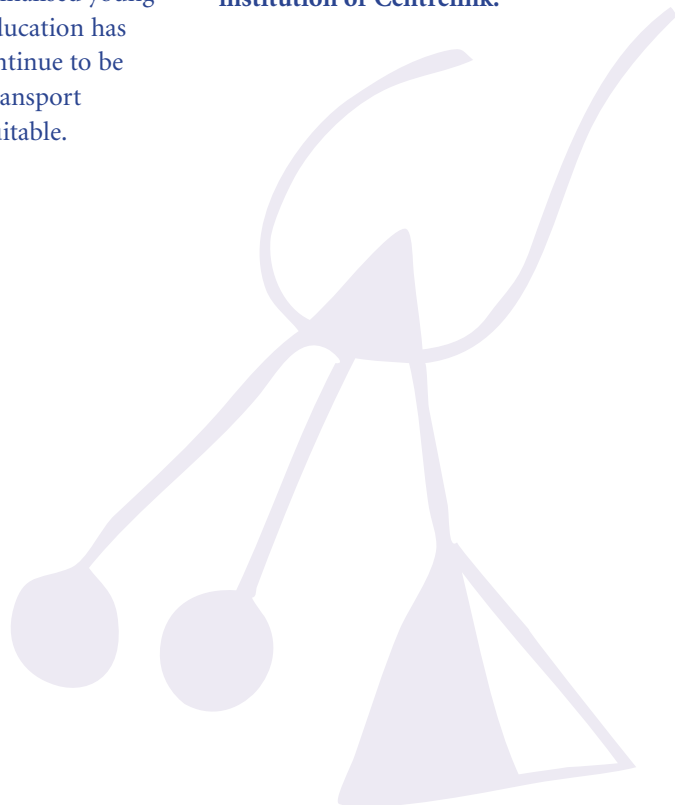
The NSW Government extend and expand concessions to the following groups of young people as a matter of fairness and in recognition of their low incomes:

- young people on age-based rates of pay (junior wages)
- apprentices and trainees
- full-time students
- job seekers
- young people in Links to Learning programs
- young people in CDEP programs.

### **Take Action Now on Transport Concessions**

- If you would like to support the campaign for *fairer fares for young people* write to your local State MP, relevant Ministers and Shadow Ministers outlining your concerns and case studies. See the Take Action Now – Contacts Sheet contained in this Campaign Kit.
- Meet with your local MP.
- Talk with the local media and/or write a letter to the editor.

**The information in this factsheet is as accurate as possible as at January 2003. To work out your individual entitlement to concession fares YAPA recommends you contact your educational institution or Centrelink.**



# Summary of transport concession entitlements for young people in NSW

Status of young person	Government buses (STA) & trains (SRA)	Non-government buses
Full-time university and TAFE students	Full range of concessions and discount tickets on all routes at all times	Concessions only available to/from place of study, Monday to Friday and if aged under 30 years
TAFE students under 18yrs attending 20hrs over 4 days	Free rail travel between home and study for journeys commencing before 9.30am	Free travel on private bus to and from study if more than 3.2km walking distance
Trainees and apprentices aged 16yrs and older	Concessions available to/from work, study and home	No concessions available
Young people on age based rates of pay (junior wages)	No concessions available	No concessions available
Young unemployed	Under 21yrs : only available if combined parental income is below \$26,650  Over 21 years : available, unless earning over \$31 per week from part-time work  No concessions available if "breached" by Centrelink	
Young people in Links to Learning programs	Concession only available if holding a school travel pass	Concession only available if holding a school travel pass and travelling to and from school
Young people in JPET programs	Concession fare available	Concession fare available
Young people in CDEP programs	No concessions available	No concessions available



## Youth Action & Policy Association NSW (YAPA)

Suite 405, 410 Elizabeth St,

Surry Hills NSW 2010

Phone: 02 9281 2344

1800 627 323 (Outside Sydney)

Fax: 02 9211 2037

info@yapa.org.au www.yapa.org.au