Guidelines
Seatbelts on Regional School Buses Programme

APRIL 2014
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Grant Programme Process Flowchart

APPLICATION
Applicant completes an application.

SUBMIT AN APPLICATION
Applicant submits an application.

APPRaisal
The complete application is accepted. The application is assessed against eligibility and appraisal criteria.

ADVICE TO APPROVER
Advice provided to the Approver on the merits of each application against the programme guidelines.

DECISION/NOTIFICATION
The Approver makes a decision on the application and the applicant is advised of the decision.

CONTRACT/FUNDING
An agreement is negotiated and signed by the applicant and the Department.

COMPLETE/ACQUIT
Applicant undertakes funding activity, completes milestones, provides reports and acquits funds against expenditure. Department makes payments and monitors progress.

EVALUATION
Department evaluates the outcomes of the programme. Applicant provides information to assist this evaluation.
1. Introduction

The following guidelines provide essential information for bus operators who wish to apply for funding under the Seatbelts on Regional School Buses programme. These guidelines may be varied in the future by the Australian Government to ensure that the programme objectives continue to be met.

1.1. Programme background

The Australian Government introduced the Seatbelts on Regional School Buses programme in 2007 to increase the availability of seatbelt equipped buses on high risk regional school bus routes. The programme provides funding to eligible bus operators to subsidise the cost of fitting seatbelts to new buses or retro-fitting seatbelts to existing buses. In the six years to February 2014, the programme provided funding for 412 buses across Australia. The Government is continuing the programme with funding provisions to June 2016.

1.2. Programme objectives and outcomes

The National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020 (NRSS) calls on governments to address the risks associated with school bus travel. The Seatbelts on Regional School Buses programme supports the NRSS by encouraging school bus operators servicing higher risk regional routes to provide buses fitted with lap/sash seatbelts. The policy objective of the programme is to improve school bus safety by increasing the overall number of seatbelt equipped school buses operating on high risk regional school bus routes across Australia.

1.3. Roles and responsibilities

The Grant Programme Process Flowchart on the previous page outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party.

The funding Approver for the Seatbelts on School Buses programme is the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development.

2. Key Dates

All key dates will be published on the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development website http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/seatbelts/

3. Eligibility

3.1. Who is eligible to apply for funding?

An eligible applicant for funding must be a bus operator that:

• Has an existing and continuing contract with a state/territory government to provide school bus services on a school bus route recognised as a high risk regional school bus route*; and
• Is licensed/accredited by a state/territory government to provide school bus services.

Note: State, territory and local governments are not eligible for funding.

*For the purposes of the programme, a high risk regional school bus route is defined as a school bus route operating on roads that include speed zones over 80 km/h, that do not fall within a state capital metropolitan area.
3.2. **What is eligible for funding?**

Applications which will be considered for funding must comply with the following requirements:

- The subsidy is available to eligible school buses operators to cover any necessary costs associated with fitting approved lap/sash seatbelts into their buses and to perform any associated engineering work, including wheelchair restraint systems.
- All work is required to meet the national vehicle standards under the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989 and/or state/territory vehicle modification requirements as applicable.
- An eligible bus is a newly manufactured or existing school bus in the operator’s fleet. It does not include a bus recognised as a coach bus. The bus must be approved by a state/territory government for, and currently used or earmarked for, a contracted state/territory high risk regional school bus route.
- A newly manufactured school bus must be fitted with integrated seats and lap/sash seatbelts that meet Australian Design Rule (ADR) 68 – Occupant Protection in Buses, and be registered with a relevant state/territory transport authority. An existing bus must be suitable for retro-fitment of lap/sash seatbelts, and be approved by the state/territory government transport authority.
- Used buses that are purchased with seatbelts already fitted are not eligible.
- The maximum amount of funding, per bus is $25,000 (including GST).

3.3. **Additional eligibility requirements**

- Funding under this programme will not be available for a bus where the full cost of fitting or retro-fitting seatbelts is available from a state/territory programme. However, where a state/territory programme for seatbelts funds a portion of the total cost of the installation of the belts, an operator may apply for a subsidy for the remaining portion of the cost, including associated engineering work.

4. **Probity**

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring the process for providing funding under the Seatbelts on Regional School Buses programme is transparent and in accordance with published Guidelines.

*Note: Guidelines may be varied from time-to-time by the Australian Government as the needs of the programme dictate. Amended Guidelines will be published on the Department’s website.*

4.1. **Conflict of interest**

A conflict of interest may exist, for example, if the applicant or any of its personnel:

- Has a relationship (whether professional, commercial or personal) with a party who is able to influence the application assessment process, such as a Department staff member;
- Has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicant in carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently; or
- Has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain as a result of the granting of funding under the Seatbelts on Regional School Buses programme.

Each applicant will be required to declare as part of their application, existing conflicts of interest or that to the best of their knowledge there is no conflict of interest, including in relation to the examples above, that would impact on or prevent the applicant from proceeding with the project or any funding agreement it may enter into with the Australian Government.

Where an applicant subsequently identifies that an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest exists or might arise in relation to this application for funding, the applicant must inform the Department in writing immediately.
5. **How to Apply**

5.1. **Application requirements**

Applications must be submitted on the official Seatbelts on Regional School Buses application form to the Department by the predetermined date, which will be published on the Department’s website.


Operators who wish to obtain a hard copy of the application form may call the Seatbelts on Regional School Buses information line on 1300 725 209.

Applications must contain the information specified on the application form, including:

- The name, ABN and bus operation licence/accreditation of the operator who is applying;
- Evidence of an existing contract between the operator and a state/territory government to provide school bus services on a high risk regional school bus route;
- Details of routes serviced by the operator that are considered to be high risk regional school bus routes, including contracted route descriptions and maps;
- The VIN(s), the Identification Plate Approval number(s) (for the purposes of the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989) and a copy of registration documents, where available, of the bus(es) being applied for;
- Evidence that the buses applied for under the subsidy programme have been approved by a state/territory government as suitable to provide the services specified by the school bus contract noted above;
- The nature of the work to be undertaken and the costs involved, including any quotations to undertake the work;
- The amount of assistance requested (up to $25,000 per eligible bus);
- If the bus is new or to be retrofitted; and
- Details of any funding for the applicable bus(es) provided by, approved by, or available from, a state/territory programme.

Applications which do not include the above information may not be accepted.

5.2. **How to submit an application**

Complete applications should be sent to:

- Seatbelts on Regional School Buses Programme
  Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
  GPO Box 594
  Canberra ACT 2601
- Or via email to: seatbelts@infrastructure.gov.au
- Or Fax to: 02 6245 4278

To assist with the appraisal of an application, further information may be requested by the Department. Applicants will be notified by phone, email or post where this is required.
6. Decisions

6.1. Approval of funding

Subject to the availability of funding:

- Applications for buses undergoing voluntary fitment of seatbelts will be given funding priority over applications for buses that are contractually required to be fitted with seatbelts.
- Applications will be further prioritised according to the order in which they are received by the Department; those applications received first will be given funding priority over those received later.

Eligible applications that do not receive funding are not carried over to the next round of funding; operators must apply for a specific round of funding.

Following consideration of eligibility requirements by the Road Safety Policy Section of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, advice will be provided by the Department to the Funding Approver.

The Approver will consider whether the proposal will make a proper use of Commonwealth resources, as required by Commonwealth legislation, and whether any specific requirements will need to be imposed as a condition of funding.

Funding approval is at the discretion of the Approver.

6.2. Advice to applicants

Applicants will be advised by letter of the outcome of their application. Letters to successful applicants will contain details of any specific conditions attached to the funding. Funding approvals will also be listed on the Department’s website.

6.3. Complaint handling

Any enquiries relating to funding decisions for this program should be directed to the Director of Road Safety Policy.

Seatbelts on Regional School Buses Programme
Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
Postal: GPO Box 594, Canberra, ACT, 2601
Phone: 1300 725 209
Email: seatbelts@infrastructure.gov.au
Fax to: 02 6245 4278

7. Conditions of Funding

7.1. Contracting arrangements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Commonwealth (represented by the Department). The funding agreement states the obligations of the applicant and of the Department. Applicants are advised to be aware of their obligations and requirements. If an applicant has any queries regarding the funding agreement they are advised to seek independent legal advice.

A template of the funding agreement is available from the Department’s website at http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/seatbelts/
7.2. **Specific conditions**

There may be specific conditions attached to the funding approval required as a result of the selecting process or imposed by the Approver. These will be identified in the offer of funding or during funding agreement negotiations.

7.3. **Payment arrangements**

Payments will be made at the conclusion of all activities associated with having seatbelts fitted to a bus, as specified in the funding agreement.

Before any payment can be made, funding recipients will be required to provide:

- A tax invoice for the amount of the payment;
- Evidence of meeting the obligations specified in the funding agreement.

7.4. **Monitoring**

The funding recipient will be required to actively manage the delivery of the project. The Department will monitor progress against the funding agreement.

7.5. **Evaluation**

An evaluation by the Department will determine how the funding contributed to the objectives of the program. Funding recipients will be required to provide information to assist in this evaluation for a period of time, as stipulated in the funding agreement, after funding has been provided.

8. **Contact Details**

Seatbelts on Regional School Buses Programme  
Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development  
Postal: GPO Box 594, Canberra, ACT, 2601  
Phone: 1300 725 209  
Email: seatbelts@infrastructure.gov.au  
Fax to: 02 6245 4278
9. Checklist

The following documentation must be submitted when applying for funding:

- Evidence of the contract between your company and a state/territory authority to provide school bus services on a route defined as a high risk regional school bus route.

- Details of routes and/or a map serviced by your company that meet the eligible route criteria.

- A copy of the registration documents, where available, for the nominated bus(es) being applied for.

- For retro-fitted buses (lap/sash seatbelts only), a detailed quotation listing the nature of the work to be undertaken, and the costs and timeframes (expected date that the work will be completed).

- If the bus is new, a statement from the bus manufacturer identifying the difference in price between the bus without seatbelts and the bus ordered with seatbelts, compliant with ADR 68, and timeframes for the bus to be put into service.

- A copy of documents detailing any funding provided by, or available from, state/territory programs for any of the buses that are the subject of the application.

- Evidence that you are a licensed/accredited school bus operator.