



## Stage 2 Reforms of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002



# Scope of conveyances: Dedicated school buses

Currently, dedicated school bus services are exempt from certain physical access requirements in the Transport Standards, which may impact public transport accessibility for students with disability and their parents and carers. There is an opportunity to ensure discrimination against students with disability does not occur by amending or removing exemptions for dedicated school bus services.

## Reform options

### Maintain current requirements in the Transport Standards

The Transport Standards would remain unchanged and no new guidance would be issued.

### Non-regulatory option

Guidance would be provided for school bus operators and providers, including:

- Emphasise that wherever possible, school bus services should be run using conveyances that are compliant with the Transport Standards.
- Provide advice that vehicles procured for school bus services should not be used to offer other public transport services unless they are compliant with the Transport Standards.
- Provide information and examples on potential equivalent access solutions to assist operators and the disability community to reach equivalent access solutions that meet the needs of all parties, without constituting a parallel service.
- Educate operators and providers on the exemption from the Transport Standards, noting which requirements a school bus must comply with.

### Regulatory option

The Transport Standards would be amended to provide better accessibility for students with disability on dedicated school buses. The outcome of this reform area will determine how any new regulatory requirements agreed throughout this reform process will apply to dedicated school buses.

#### Option 1: Remove dedicated school bus exemptions

The Transport Standards would be amended to remove exemptions for dedicated school buses.

Transport Standards *section 1.13, Dedicated school bus and dedicated school bus service*, would be removed. This means there would be no distinction between dedicated school buses and other buses.

Any new regulatory requirements agreed through this process would not exempt dedicated school buses.

## Option 2: Principles for dedicated school bus services

The Transport Standards would be amended to include principles for dedicated school bus services.

The following principles for dedicated school bus services would be adopted:

- Dedicated school bus services must not discriminate and be such that accessible transport services are provided as required and where practical to do so.
- Fully accessible (low floor buses) are to be used for school services where appropriate, practical and available.
- Where a low floor bus is used, it must be fully compliant with the Transport Standards.
- In areas where operational issues such as route accessibility, road terrain, or the need for added safety features such as seatbelts or rollover compliance dictate, then high floor buses can be used.
- In such areas where the need for access to on-board accessible features by passengers using mobility aids is determined, then an accessible high floor bus can be employed.
- Accessible high floor buses (such as high floor buses fitted with a hoist) meet the sections of the Transport Standards covering access to on-board accessible features by passengers using mobility aids.
- To support this process, the following would apply:
  - New high-floor, dedicated school buses must comply with all sections of the Transport Standards except those sections covering access to on-board accessible features by passengers using mobility aids.
  - New high floor dedicated school buses must also be so configured that they are able to be retrofitted with a hoist and be able to provide access to on-board accessible features by passengers using mobility aids.

High-floor, dedicated school buses (such as those fitted with a hoist) would continue to be exempt from certain sections of the Transport Standards. Any regulatory requirements relating to these sections that are agreed through this reform process would continue to exempt dedicated school buses. A high floor is defined as per Vehicle Standard (*Australian Design Rule 59/00 – Standards for Omnibus Rollover Strength*) 2007<sup>1</sup>, and is based on floor height and area. An accessible high floor dedicated school bus (such as those fitted with a hoist) must then meet certain additional requirements. Any new regulatory requirements or requirements relating to these sections that are agreed through this reform process would not exempt dedicated school buses. Guidance on the navigating these principles and providing accessible school bus services would be provided.

## Have your say

Public consultation on the Stage 2 reform of the Transport Standards will open from 15 March to 9 August 2022.

For further information:

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- **Email:** [DisabilityTransport@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:DisabilityTransport@infrastructure.gov.au)
- **Survey:** <https://edm.infrastructure.gov.au/survey.php?sid=28672&name=dedicated-school-buses>

<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation, *Vehicle Standard (Australian Design Rule 59/00 – Standards For Omnibus Rollover Strength) 2007*, (4 November 2021), <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2012C00535>