



## Private Schools Operating on Non Government School Days

The Public Transport Authority (PTA) of Western Australia is responsible for all Government subsidised public transport services. This responsibility includes operating the metropolitan Perth Transperth bus, train and ferry system and also operating the “orange” school bus system in rural WA and for special education student transport in metropolitan areas. Additionally, PTA contract manages and subsidises the smaller bus systems that operate in major regional centres (eg Albany, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton etc). In managing the range of services described above, one of the operational issues that must be specified to operators is what trips and services operate on various days of the year. It is important that this information is accurate as it affects contractors’ payments and the way that drivers’ shifts are constructed. Unfortunately, an issue for the PTA, is the lack of alignment of school term dates between Government schools and various private schools; for some reason this seems to have become more prevalent as the number of independent private schools increases.

Historically, Transperth’s “school special services”, “orange” school bus services and any school specials operated by regional town buses, have been aligned with the Government school term dates. In other words, any special bus services specifically dedicated to school students have only operated on the published dates that Government schools were operating. Traditionally, private schools were closely aligned to the Government school dates; however this alignment appears to have shifted with different start and finish dates and even significant variances between different private schools. The non alignment of school term dates presents a number of difficulties for the PTA. Obviously, it is important for students who use these transport services to be aware what dates they will operate.

The PTA is not funded to operate these heavily subsidised services on a variety of dates that suit some schools that may wish to operate their own school calendar. In a practical sense and in terms of fiscal responsibility the most logical alignment the PTA can adopt is to continue alignment with the published Government school term dates.

In the interest of trying to provide the best level of service possible, the PTA has determined that, if a school special service or “orange” school bus service caters significantly for private schools that are operating one or two days out of alignment with the Government school dates and it can be proven that the majority of the bus’s patronage is derived from the private schools that are operating, then the PTA will direct that the services operate.

### Transperth “School Special Services”

For Transperth school special services the approach should be initiated preferably by the senior controlling body (eg Catholic Education Office or Independent Schools Association) via written correspondence to the PTA at least **three months** in advance of the date in question. The request should be addressed to the Service Development Manager, Transperth, PO Box 8125, Perth Business Centre, Perth WA 6849. If the senior body cannot make the request, individual schools can approach the PTA although a more centralised and coordinated approach would be preferred.

### “Orange” School Bus Services

For the “orange” school bus service to operate the private school student load on a large bus (B and C Class) would be a minimum of 15 students and 50% of a small school bus (i.e. Mitsubishi Rosa) would be 12 students. Given the significant sums of money involved to

operate these services, detailed advice on what routes need to run and student details would need to be provided by the party requesting the service, as well as clear proof of the bus load that will be picked up on these additional dates (clear proof should be how many students are carried each day to the specific schools that are operating). If this cannot be substantiated by School Bus Services, the service will not operate and families will need to make alternative transport arrangements.

To request transport assistance for students on the non-standard school days the approach should be made from the school to School Bus Services at least **three months** in advance of the additional day(s) for operation. Approval to operate on the additional dates will need to be provided by School Bus Services.

#### Impact on Regional Town Services with “Orange” School Bus Services

The issue of operating any school special buses in the regional towns is more difficult. Generally, these buses service a mix of Government and private schools and it is anticipated that if Government schools are not in session, the private school student loadings would not generate the critical mass (ie 50%) to warrant any of the school special buses operating. This is further complicated by the fact that most bus services supporting regional towns involve feeder buses and transfer points, so to run the service for an additional day for a limited number of students, demands a more comprehensive network to be operated. For these reasons it is not anticipated that intra town bus services within regional towns can be justified to run on non Government school days. However, if your organisation is aware of any circumstance where this is not the case we would request you present a case in writing with at least **three months** notice to the PTA. The regional centres with town and “orange” school bus services include Bunbury, Busselton, Geraldton, Port Hedland, Esperance, Karratha and Albany.