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Dear Principal

Operating on Non-Government School Days and Change of School Hours – 'Orange School Buses'

The Public Transport Authority (PTA) of Western Australia is responsible for all Government subsidised public transport services. This responsibility includes operating the 'orange' school bus system in rural WA and for special education student transport in metropolitan areas as provided for under the Student Transport Assistance Policy and Operational Guidelines. These services are scheduled to operate on gazetted school days as published by the Government.

An issue that has emerged in recent years amongst some private schools where school term dates are not aligned to Government's gazetted school dates and changes are being made to in start and finish times for school that differ from previous years.

This presents a number of difficulties for the PTA in providing the 'orange' school bus service. Obviously, it is important for students who use these transport services to be aware of a service being available and what dates they will operate.

In the interest of trying to provide the best level of service possible, the PTA has determined that, for non-government schools that are operating out of alignment with the Government school dates and it can be proven that the majority of the bus's patronage is derived from those non-government schools that are operating, then the PTA will direct that the services operate. To request transport assistance for students on the non-standard school days the approach should be made from the school to School Bus Services (SBS).

For the "orange" school bus service to operate, the following will apply:

- That an eligible student travels on the school bus.
- At least 50% of the approved student passenger list for the service is travelling on the non-standard day e.g. on a large 57 seat bus a minimum of 25 students, and on a small 24 seat bus a minimum of 12 students.

- That a request is made in writing to SBS at least three months in advance of the additional day(s) for operation. It is simply not possible to operate a range of additional school services at short notice on the basis that some schools are operating whilst most are not.

SBS will require confirmation of the number of students to be transported each non-gazetted school day before the school bus will be approved to operate. If this cannot be substantiated by School Bus Services, the service will not operate and families will need to make alternative transport arrangements.

The 'orange' school bus network facilitates daily transportation for eligible students to and from school. These services may cater to a single school, multiple schools, or form part of a broader, integrated network that includes student transfers between services. The network is structured around key design principles, including:

- Ensuring that no student travels for more than 90 minutes on the 'orange' school bus network; and
- Minimising student wait times at school to no more than 30 minutes before the start or after the end of the school day.

Schools intending to alter their start or finish times for the academic year are advised to contact School Bus Services (schoolbus@pta.wa.gov.au) to assess the potential impact on existing transport arrangements. In some cases, it may not be feasible to accommodate changes to school schedules, which could result in students being unable to access the 'orange' school bus service.

I trust the above information clarifies the PTA's position on the issue of non-aligned school term dates and school timings. Please contact School Bus Services if you have any questions about student transport assistance or are considering changes to your school days/times.

Yours Sincerely

Anthony Cattai
MANAGER