



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE

PROGRAM

GUIDELINES

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ABBREVIATIONS

BFAP	Bus Fare Assistance Program
EAP	Education Adjustment Program
DET	.....	Department of Education and Training
DTMR	.....	Department of Transport and Main Roads
FFPOS	.....	Full Fee Paying Overseas Student
IEP	.....	Individual Education Plan
ISQ	.....	Independent Schools Queensland
NGSTAS	.....	Non Government Schools Transport Assistance Scheme
NSSTAS	.....	Non State Schools Transport Assistance Scheme
QCEC	.....	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
SET (Plan)	.....	Senior Education Training (Plan)
STAS	.....	School Transport Assistance Scheme
STMCFCS	.....	School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule
SWD	.....	Students With Disabilities

1 INTRODUCTION

The Queensland Government considers families have the prime responsibility for making suitable travel arrangements for their students to attend school. Since 1997 the Queensland Government has provided funding to enable the non-state school sector to administer a transport assistance scheme for students attending non-state schools.

The Scheme is known as the Non State Schools Transport Assistance Scheme (NSSTAS). The Scheme was originally known as Non Government Schools Transport Assistance Scheme (NGSTAS) until its name change in 2014. It is a joint initiative of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ). The Scheme is administered by QCEC on behalf of all non-state schools.

The NSSTAS consists of two programs:

- Bus Fare Assistance Program (BFAP), and
- Students With Disabilities Transport Assistance Program (SWD).

These guidelines address the Students With Disabilities Transport Assistance Program.

2 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE

The purpose of the program is to provide financial support to families of those students whose disability necessitates transport assistance to and from a non-state school by a means that takes account of their disability.

To qualify for travel assistance students must have transport needs that are demonstrably different to those of their same age peers, by reason of their disability.

Funds are limited and the level of assistance provided to eligible applicants will depend on the program funds available in the relevant semester.

3 ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

3.1 FOR APPLICANTS

Applications for assistance will normally be accepted only from a parent or carer of eligible students. However, in exceptional circumstances applications may be accepted from charitable organisations or government agencies acting on behalf of a student.

Applicants with shared custody arrangements are encouraged to lodge one application if the student concerned resides mainly in one household during the school week. Where this is not the situation, separate applications may be lodged with parents indicating the appropriate proportion of weeks involved. For example in a 20 week semester in a 50/50 custody arrangement, one parent will apply with a start date of the beginning of semester marking 10 weeks absent and the other parent apply indicating a start date half way through the semester.

3.2 FOR STUDENTS

To be **eligible** for travel assistance a student must:

- reside in Queensland,
- be eligible to attract the Australian Government General Recurrent Grant for the school attended,

- attend an accredited non-state school in Queensland,
- have a disability that necessitates transport assistance to and from their school,
- have been verified and deemed eligible for an Education Adjustment Program (EAP) profile,
- have an Individual Education Plan (IEP),
- have transport needs that are identified as being eligible for travel assistance in the IEP, and
- have at least one of the impairments listed in the following categories:
 - **Autistic Spectrum Disorder**
 - **Hearing Impairment**
 - **Intellectual Impairment**
 - **Physical Impairment**
 - **Social Emotional Disorder**
 - **Speech Language Impairment**
 - **Vision Impairment**
- or comply with the conditions of having an Exceptional Circumstance (see [Section 3.2.5](#)).

The following students are **not eligible** for travel assistance:

- students declared ineligible for travel assistance as part of their IEP,
- students attending a State school,
- second and subsequent SWD student(s) travelling with an SWD sibling by private motor vehicle or taxi,
- students not eligible to attract the Australian Government General Recurrent Grant for the school attended,
- Full Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS),
- pre-preparatory year students,
- students residing outside Queensland,
- students conveyed only on the free school bus to an Autism Queensland school (parents can apply for other assistance e.g. car),
- students attending an approved hospital school, and
- students travelling to and from any form of “work experience” program.

3.2.1 EDUCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT PLAN

Students will be eligible for travel assistance when the Principal of the school, or his/her authorised representative, has confirmed their eligibility under the Educational Adjustment Plan.

Travel assistance will be available from the beginning of the semester in which the EAP is confirmed by the sector authority (e.g. If a student’s EAP was confirmed in August, the student would qualify for travel assistance from the start of semester two of that year).

A review of a student’s transport assistance needs should occur at least annually and be conducted by the school’s IEP team. A review may also be undertaken when a student’s travel circumstances change.

Changes in the Travel Capability Rating may reflect the changes in the student’s transport needs as they mature. As part of the IEP process, students’ transport needs will be determined according to the Travel Capability Rating scale in Section 3.2.2 below.

3.2.2 STUDENT TRAVEL CAPABILITY RATING SCALE

Students given a Travel Capability Rating of **A or B will NOT be eligible** for NSSTAS SWD assistance:

Category		Description	Eligibility
A	Adult Travel	The student can negotiate all public transport services including change of buses, ferries and/or trains.	Students are not eligible for SWD travel assistance.
B	Independent	The student is able to wait at the appropriate place for a bus, ferry and/or train and knows where/when to alight. The student is able to board the bus, ferry and/or train and travel safely to the destination.	Students are not eligible for SWD travel assistance.

Students given a Travel Capability Rating of **C, D, E or F will be eligible** for NSSTAS SWD assistance:

Category		Description	Eligibility
C	Semi-Independent	<p>The student is supervised while waiting at the appropriate place for a bus, ferry and/or train. Once on board, the student can ride unaccompanied but may be met at the destination by an adult or responsible person. The driver/conductor may assist the student to alight at the destination.</p> <p>This category includes students who are conveyed to and/or from school by private motor vehicle rather than being restricted to travelling by public transport.</p>	<p>Students conveyed by bus, ferry or train will be eligible for a refund of their fares.</p> <p>Students conveyed by private motor vehicle will be eligible for travel assistance at the current kilometric rate per private motor vehicle.</p>
D	Travel Assisted	<p>The student can travel on public transport only when accompanied by a responsible adult. Where transport connections have to be made, the presence of an accompanying adult is needed.</p> <p>This category includes students who are conveyed to and/or from school by private motor vehicle rather than being restricted to travelling by public transport.</p>	<p>Students conveyed by bus, ferry or train will be eligible for a refund of their fares. The fares of an escort appointed by the school will be rebated to the school.</p> <p>Students conveyed by private motor vehicle will be eligible for travel assistance at the current kilometric rate per private motor vehicle.</p>
E	Dependent	The student is not able to use buses, ferries or trains to travel, due to their disability, but can travel in a vehicle (e.g. private motor vehicle or taxi) that does not require modification.	Students will be eligible for travel assistance at the current kilometric rate per private motor vehicle or per taxi.
F	Most Dependent	The student has severe physical disabilities and can only travel in a special purpose vehicle such as a private motor vehicle that has been modified to accommodate the student's travel needs or a Maxi taxi or mini bus.	<p>Students conveyed in a modified private motor vehicle or special purpose vehicle will be eligible for travel assistance at the current kilometric rate per private motor vehicle.</p> <p>Students conveyed in a Maxi taxi will be eligible for travel assistance up to a maximum of \$300 per week, inclusive of any subsidy provided by the Department of Transport and Main Roads <i>Taxi Subsidy Scheme</i>.</p>

3.2.3 TRAVEL TRAINING

Travel training refers to the development of skills designed to increase a student's ability for independent travel. At an appropriate age, students who do not currently possess the skills to travel alone and have the potential to develop these skills, are expected to have these addressed through the school's educational program. The training may be identified as a goal in the student's IEP.

Most students eligible for travel assistance through this program would be expected to be moving towards transport independence by the time they require a Senior Education Training (SET) Plan.

3.2.4 EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Exchange students participating in a Student Exchange Program with an exchange organisation that is registered by the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) may be eligible for travel assistance.

3.2.5 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In exceptional circumstances some students may be eligible for financial support. They must have their medical condition confirmed in writing by a medical practitioner. This exceptional circumstances category is designed to cover students who may have a condition or disability not covered in the impairment categories above. These could include anorexia, cystic fibrosis or broken limbs. This support would be for a specified period of time, as defined in the medical practitioner's report.

3.2.6 DUAL ENROLMENT

It is acknowledged that in some circumstances a student may need to attend more than one school to access specialist support. These students may be eligible for travel assistance to access the schools, providing they are non-state schools. This arrangement is often referred to as a dual enrolment.

4 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The financial support available through this program depends on how the student is transported to and from school. If government funds are limited in any given semester the level of assistance provided to eligible applicants will be a proportion of their normal entitlement.

Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) provides NSSTAS with details of any travel assistance it may have provided to non-state school students. Any assistance provided by DTMR will be taken into consideration when calculating a student's NSSTAS entitlement.

Travel assistance will only be provided from a student's normal residential address to the school attended, via the shortest trafficable route. Distance is checked via *Google Maps* or *Whereis* if not available on *Google Maps*. An exception may be made if a student:

- is required to reside in temporary accommodation, or
- is conveyed to or from an alternative residence where the student receives before or after school care.

If the distance, by the shortest trafficable route, from the alternate address to the school attended is greater than the distance from the student's normal residence to the school attended, travel assistance will be based on the student's normal residential address.

4.1 DAY STUDENTS

Assistance will be provided in accordance with the following table:

Mode of Travel	Assistance Available
Bus, Ferry or Train/Rail	The travel costs for distance eligible students will be refunded based on one-way distance, by the shortest trafficable route, from the student's residence, or alternative accommodation, to the school attended, utilising the School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule (STMCFs) provided by DTMR.
Private Motor Vehicle	A kilometric allowance will be provided. It will be based on the one-way distance, by the shortest trafficable route, from the student's residence, or alternative accommodation, to the school attended.
Taxi	<p>If a student has been rated '<i>E - Dependent</i>' in the Travel Capability Rating Scale, a taxi kilometric allowance will be provided. It will be based on the one-way distance, by the shortest trafficable route, from the student's residence, or alternative accommodation, to the school attended.</p> <p>If a student has been rated '<i>F - Most Dependent</i>' in the Travel Capability Rating Scale, the full cost of taxi fares will be refunded, up to a maximum of \$300 per week, inclusive of any assistance provided through the Taxi Subsidy Scheme referred to in Section 5, and upon the applicant providing all receipts as evidence of this expenditure.</p>

4.2 REBATE CALCULATION

It is essential that the fares charged by the transport provider do not exceed those set by DTMR in its School Transport Maximum Cash Fare Schedule (STMCFs). If the transport provider charges greater than the fare schedule fee, NSSTAS will take into consideration only the costs up to the maximum fare as per the Schedule.

For a student travelling on a Translink service or other service with discounted fares, the rebate we pay you is based on Go Card concession fares or discounted fares (depending on the average weekly number of trips the student catches the service).

For a student travelling on a single/return/pay-as-you-go ticketed service, the rebate we pay you is based on the average weekly number of trips the student catches the service.

For a student travelling on a Weekly, Monthly, Term, Semester or Annual ticketed service, the rebate we pay you is based on the average weekly number of trips the student catches the service when we apply the STMCFs to cap your fares:

0-1 trips per week	Weekly fare we assess is zero
2-5 trips per week	Weekly fare we assess is calculated on 5 trips per week
6-10 trips per week	Weekly fare we assess is calculated on the weekly rate of the ticket type purchased.

4.3 BOARDING STUDENTS

Eligible boarding school students who attend a boarding school on either a term or weekly basis may be eligible for transport assistance if they are conveyed to and/or from their school by public transport or private motor vehicle. Term boarding students will qualify for two trips per term when they travel from home to the school attended at the start of and the end of each term (i.e. four trips per semester). Weekly boarding students will qualify for two trips per week when they travel from home to the school attended at the start of the week, board at school or stay with a relative or friend during the school week (e.g. because the relative/friend resides closer to the student's school), and travel back to their home at the end of the week.

5 TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FROM DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS

Parents or carers of students who meet the eligibility criteria for travel assistance through the Department of Transport and Main Roads *School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS)* must submit an application to DTMR in addition to applying for assistance through the NSSTAS.

Some parents, guardians or carers may qualify for *Conveyance Allowance* or *Drought Allowance* from DTMR. For more information refer to the following website <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/>

Some students may be eligible for travel assistance through the DTMR *Taxi Subsidy Scheme*. To be eligible to participate in the Taxi Subsidy Scheme students must have a severe permanent or temporary disability. Further details about the Taxi Subsidy Scheme can be obtained from the Taxi Subsidy Section at DTMR on 1300 134 755 or from their website <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/>

Travel assistance received through the DTMR will be taken into consideration when calculating an applicant's entitlement through the NSSTAS.

6 APPLICATION PROCESS

Parents, guardians or carers applying for NSSTAS travel assistance may submit an online application form available during the month of May for Semester One and October for Semester Two on the NSSTAS website at <http://www.schooltransport.com.au/>

All applications must be received by the 31st of May or October (whichever applies) to be eligible for funding for that semester. Applications for SWD travel assistance cannot be accepted by NSSTAS after the closing date.

The Principal or authorised representative is required to complete a verification report for students, following communication from the School Transport Unit at NSSTAS.

Travel assistance rebates are normally deposited into the nominated bank accounts of eligible applicants by September for Semester One and March for Semester Two. All eligible applicants are advised that their entitlement has been deposited into their nominated bank account via email.

A small fee may be deducted from the entitlement of applicants who provide inaccurate bank account details or fail to advise NSSTAS of any changes to bank account details prior to rebates being paid.

7 PRIVACY

By submitting an application through NSSTAS, the parent consents to the disclosure of personal and sensitive information to QCEC and/or NSSTAS to enable the administration of NSSTAS. This information is collected through a standardised application form. This information may be shared with Government authorities, for example Centrelink (if concession card details are provided). If this information is not disclosed, full or partial payment by NSSTAS may not be possible. Further information is available in the Privacy Compliance Manual available by using the search field at <http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/>.

8 SWD FARE AUDITS

Each semester a sample of applicants are selected to provide proof of the expenditure declared on their application form. The proof may be in the form of:

- (a) receipts from the transport provider
- (b) bus tickets issued to students
- (c) a letter from the transport provider or the school attended
- (d) a signed statutory declaration or
- (e) a transaction record from a registered Translink Go Card.

It is recommended that parents retain evidence of their student's travel expenditure for a period of six months after the semester has ended.

9 APPEAL PROCESS

Any appeal under these guidelines should be brought to the attention of the Reference Committee via email to: schooltransport@qcec.catholic.edu.au or post to:

Executive Officer – School Transport
QCEC
GPO Box 2441
BRISBANE QLD 4001