Proactive release by
NSW Department of Education and Communities

Records relevant to Assisted School Travel Program

Item (b)
Briefings to the Minister for Education about changes to the Assisted School Travel Program
(1 April 2011 – 30 January 2012)
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES

Briefing for the Minister

CONTRACTOR BUS DRIVERS – ASSISTED TRANSPORT SCHEME
– MT 11/1457

ISSUE:

The Minister's Office has requested advice regarding the establishment of a Schedule of Daily Run Rates for Operators engaged to provide assisted school travel for students with a disability to and from school.

BACKGROUND:

The Assisted School Travel Program exists to provide a suitable and reliable transport service for NSW school students who meet the eligibility criteria of the Program for transport assistance from their place of residence to the school in which they are enrolled.

The Department engages contractors to provide around 2,300 individual transport services to more than 10,500 students to access educational services.

A House Fielder Note regarding this tender process was prepared in October 2011. A copy is attached for reference (Tab A).

An open Request for Tender was released by the Department on 4 November 2010 and closed on 20 December 2010. The tender process was delayed due to legal proceedings initiated by the Text Council of NSW. The proceedings were resolved in favour of the Department and the tender process was completed in October 2011.

CURRENT POSITION:

Following the finalisation of the evaluation process in October 2011, the Department sent a Letter of Offer to successful respondents advising them of the number of runs they were considered eligible for based on their evaluated capacity to manage the requested number of runs. The Department is continuing to work with contractors who were initially allocated a smaller number of runs than they requested in order to increase the available capacity of service providers.

Respondents were also advised that in accordance with clause 4.5 of Part B of the Request for Tender, the Department had decided to establish a standard schedule of rates payable for services under the program. The standard rate schedule replaced the tender pricing and respondents were offered the opportunity to provide transport services at the departmental rates.
Of the 838 respondents who received an offer, including the table of standard rates, 612 respondents have so far accepted the Department’s offer.

COMMENT:

Contractors are responsible for the engagement of drivers to deliver these services and arrangements regarding payments to drivers are matters between the contractor and driver.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Minister notes this advice.

Content and accuracy endorsed and approved by:
Ian Anderson, Director, Shared Services, 98061422

Approved by:
Hugo Harmstorf, A/Deputy Director-General, Finance and Infrastructure, 9561 8425

EDO - 28 November 2011 - Sue Emmerson

MINISTER

6 - DEC 2011
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES

Briefing for the Minister’s Meeting

DIRECTOR-GENERAL MEETING WITH THE MINISTER – 6 DECEMBER 2011
– PREPARATION FOR STARTING THE 2012 SCHOOL YEAR
– MT 11/1502

ISSUE:

To discuss preparations for the start of the 2012 school year at the meeting with the Minister on 6 December 2011.

COMMENT:

Portfolio specific advice on preparations for the start of the 2012 school year is attached.

The Office of Education has advised a nil response.

CONSULTATION:

Brian Manning, Manager, Leadership, Communication and Planning, Corporate Communication.
Mark Davis, Director, Media.

RECOMMENDATION:

That preparations for the start of the 2012 school year are discussed at the Minister’s meeting on 6 December 2012.

Content and accuracy endorsed by:
Debbie Hockings, Director Schools and Regional Operations
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Copy provided to Hugo Harmstorf, A/Deputy Director-General, Finance and Infrastructure
Schools Portfolio

In late December each year Regional Directors are asked to provide the Deputy Director-General, Schools with information about likely and significant back to school issues. Updates on these issues and any other emerging issues are also collected in late January of the following year. Updates continue to be collected throughout the beginning of each school year, until each issue is resolved.

Significant 2012 back-to-school issues as identified by Regional Directors and strategies to manage these issues will be recorded on the attached template. An example of how this template was used at the beginning of the 2011 school year is also attached.

Liaison between Public Schools NSW and other portfolio areas such as Finance and Infrastructure ensures that the management of back-to-school issues is supported effectively by state office.
Pages 6 through 11 redacted for the following reasons:

Irrelevant - unrelated to Assisted School Travel Program
Shared Services

The Assisted School Travel Program provides transport services for school students with disability to attend school. Around 10,500 students access these services annually and more than 580 transport operators are currently contracted to provide over 2,300 transport runs each school day.

The Department finalised a tender process for the provision of future transport services in October 2011. It will implement a standardised schedule of rates payable to all transport contractors from 2012 which seeks to pay a fair rate for the services provided.

The Department also called for Expressions of Interest in November 2011 to supplement the Eligible Service Provider list created through the tender process in order to secure an adequate number of service providers for the Program. The Eligible Service Provider list is currently being finalised.

The Assisted School Travel Unit is collating information from schools to identify students who require new or continuing transport services for the 2012 year. Transport runs will then be finalised and offered to service providers, identified throughout the tender and Expressions of Interest processes.
While the acceptance rate for service providers agreeing to be placed on the Eligible Service Provider list at the standardised rates has been extremely high (more than 96%), a number have expressed concern over rates for short distance runs. Offers may be rejected if service providers do not consider the offers to be viable. The Assisted School Travel Unit will be working closely with service providers throughout December and January to finalise arrangements for the beginning of the 2012 school year.

Some existing contractors have not re-tendered for future services and a number of new contractors have been added to the list for 2012. This means that there will be more changes than usual to transport arrangements at the beginning of the 2012 school year. These changes may result in disruption to student routines, which may be of concern to some parents.

The Assisted School Travel Unit will be in contact with parents regarding potential changes and will provide confirmation of transport arrangements where possible by the middle of January 2012.

There is a risk that the assessed capacity of service providers to deliver services to the program and their acceptance or otherwise of runs offered may present a shortfall in service availability for the commencement of the 2012 year. Action is currently being taken to mitigate this risk, however the extent of any shortfall in service availability will not be known until the student and run allocation processes have been finalised in January 2012.
Pages 14 through 16 redacted for the following reasons:

Irrelevant - unrelated to Assisted School Travel Program