

School group travel options

For school staff
March 2016

When planning public transport travel for groups (e.g. school excursions), schools can continue to make travel arrangements as they do currently. Schools can be advised that:

- **Single use paper tickets are still available**, which include Adult and Concession single bus tickets, and Adult and Concession single and return tickets for trains, ferries and light rail.
- Group travel tickets (e.g. General Purpose Ticket - GPT) may also be available for purchase from transport operators, however schools will need to contact their local transport operator to ensure that they provide this ticketing option
- Schools should **plan ahead**, and contact their local transport operator **3 weeks prior to travel** to make travel arrangements as well as understand what ticketing options are available.
- Under Opal, when undertaking school excursions (group travel) on public transport **all students are encouraged to use their own Child/Youth Opal card for school trips**. For further information on how a Child/Youth Opal card can be obtained visit <https://www.opal.com.au/en/get-an-opal-card/>.

School travel within the Opal network

The following information is to help with school excursions (group travel) within the Opal network. For schools traveling from outside the Opal network, see the paragraph on 'Rural and Regional School excursion travel in the Opal network'.

The following additional information for schools regarding group travel includes:

- (1) planning
- (2) administering ticketing and
- (3) undertaking school excursions (group travel).



(1) Planning for school excursions (group travel)

Schools have two possible options to arrange their school excursion (group travel):

Option 1: Organising a charter service

Schools can charter a bus/es for school excursions (group travel). The school's application will be reviewed according to bus availability, proposed use and other relevant criteria.

Note:

Private buses are usually only available outside of peak service times, from 09:30–14:30hrs, and after 18:00hrs.

For inner Sydney charters, visit Sydney Buses charters (<http://www.sydneybuses.info/chartering-a-bus>).

For all other charters, or to organise school excursions (group travel), contact the nearest bus operator (<http://www.transportsw.info/sites/en/contact-us/transport-operators.page>).

Option 2: Joining a public transport service

When travelling in large groups (>15 people), schools are advised to contact their local transport operator/s at least three weeks in advance to notify of their school excursion (group travel) and to organise the best travel arrangement possible. Local transport operator/s contact details are available at the transport operators page (<http://www.transportsw.info/en/contact-us/transport-operators.page>).

When contacting the local transport operator, schools are encouraged to have the following information ready:

- **when:** proposed date and time of travel
- **where:** departure and destination points
- **how many:** number of travellers
- **who:** school contact details.

(2) Administering ticketing for school excursion (group travel)

Using paper tickets:

Single and return paper tickets will continue to be available for now, but not indefinitely.

Note that these tickets are only available at ticket offices, ticket vending machines or on buses, and access will be defined by availability at the location.

Some operators may offer a General Purpose Ticket (GPT) to manage group travel. However, schools will need to contact their local transport operator to ensure that they provide this ticketing option.

Using Opal:

Under Opal, every child will need a Child/Youth Opal card. To help with ensuring every child has a Child/Youth Opal card, schools are encouraged to ask **parents to manage their child's Opal card prior to the school excursion (group travel)**. Schools choosing this option:

- are recommended to ask that parents ensure that sufficient funds are available on their child's Child/Youth Opal card in preparation for school excursions (group travel)
- consider having extra topped up Child/Youth Opal cards, in case a student forgets or loses their Opal card or has insufficient funds to travel.



Adults accompanying school groups should use an Adult Opal card.

If schools wish to manage a set of Opal cards on behalf of students, schools may call Opal Customer Care on **13 67 25 (13 Opal) at least 3 weeks in advance of the travel date**, to understand what current Opal options are available.

Note:

School Opal cards cannot be used for school excursions, and can only be used by students to travel on public transport between home and school, Monday to Friday, for journeys commencing between 6:30am and 7pm. For more information about the School Opal card visit <https://www.opal.com.au/en/about-opal/opal-for-school-students/>.

(3) Undertaking school excursions (group travel) by mode of transport

Once the school has notified their transport operator of their school excursion **3 weeks prior to travel**, it is important to consider the relevant operator information below. Please also consider the appropriate supervision requirements of students when travelling on public transport, especially if the group needs to be split into smaller groups.

On local buses



When undertaking school excursions (group travel) on buses it is best to avoid peak travel times (0700-0900 hrs and 1600-1830 hrs) as buses often reach capacity during rush hour. Large groups (>15 people) are also advised to be prepared to split into smaller groups as it is not possible to reserve seats for group travel. School groups should plan ahead and allow plenty of time for travel. For more information on group travel, contact your [local bus operator](http://www.transportnsw.info/en/contact-us/transport-operators.page) (<http://www.transportnsw.info/en/contact-us/transport-operators.page>).

On trains



When undertaking school excursions (group travel) on trains please note it is not possible to reserve seats or carriages for school excursions (group travel) on Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink Intercity services. Schools can, however, reserve seating on a NSW TrainLink Regional service. For more information visit [NSW TrainLink](http://www.nswtrainlink.com.au) or call 13 22 32. Large groups should be prepared to split into smaller groups and ensure groups are spread through multiple carriages to increase the likelihood of travelling together on one train. For more information on school excursions (group travel), visit: http://www.sydneystains.info/travelling_with/safety_and_education/excursions.

On Sydney Ferries



When undertaking school excursions (group travel) on Sydney Ferries please note it is not possible to reserve seats for individual customers. Large groups should plan ahead and allow plenty of time for travel. Special event days and school holidays can be busy periods and popular services can fill up quickly. Sydney Ferries cannot guarantee passage on a specific service if there is a delay, cancellation or if a service reaches capacity.

Ferries are allocated a day prior to operation and can often change, so we recommend you arrive early and be prepared that your group may need to split onto different services if ferries are at capacity.

It is highly recommended to notify Sydney Ferries of school excursions (group travel) by emailing groups@harbourcityferries.com.au or phoning 02 8113 3002.

Newcastle Ferries

For school excursion (group travel) information contact Newcastle Ferries on 02 4974 1160.



On Light Rail

When undertaking school excursions (group travel) on Light Rail please note it is not possible to reserve seats or pre purchase tickets for groups. Large groups (>15 people) are highly encouraged to travel outside peak times to improve chances of available seating for all group members. School groups should plan ahead and are advised to split into smaller groups if needed or wait for the next service if the vehicles are full.

Rural and Regional School excursion travel in the Opal network

The Opal network covers the Sydney Metro area and the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Hunter and Southern Highlands. To understand the coverage of Opal, please visit:

<https://www.opal.com.au/en/get-an-opal-card/what-services-can-i-use-it-on/>

- For planning schools excursions (group travel) both outside and within the Opal network, schools should plan ahead.
- For travel outside the Opal network, schools should continue to make school excursion travel arrangements in consultation with the relevant local transport operator **3 weeks in advance of the travel date**.
- When entering the Opal network, each eligible student is encouraged to use an individual Child/Youth Opal card that enables travel across public transport modes. Alternatively, Adult and Concession single bus tickets, and Adult and Concession single and return tickets for trains, ferries and light rail are still available; however these will not be available indefinitely.
- Check with the relevant transport operator/s within the Opal network at least **3 weeks in advance of the travel date** to make travel arrangements as well as understand what ticketing options are available.

Travel Apps

Schools can choose to use available Opal apps to help with their travel. For more information on Opal Travel apps, visit:

www.transportsw.info/en/travelling-with-us/keep-updated/apps.page