



**busnsw**

Bus & Coach Association NSW

# Chartering a Bus or Coach in NSW



## What to look for

**This guide is designed to assist individuals and organisations, including school, sporting, social and seniors groups, who are considering chartering a bus or coach for a transfer, day trip or an extended tour.**

The guide explains the current rules that charter bus and coach operators in New South Wales must comply with. It outlines important travel details required by the bus or coach operator and also answers frequently asked questions about chartering a bus or coach.

## Planning a Successful and Safe Trip

### How do I get started?

Before you contact a bus or coach operator, you need to work out some basic details about your proposed trip. Use the following questions to put together the information the operator will need.

### Where and when do you want to go?

Decide your proposed destination and when you want to travel. This will determine the minimum requirements of the bus or coach charter.

### How many passengers will be travelling?

Try to get a firm indication of the number of passengers travelling as early as possible and consider any physical distancing needs for your group. This will determine the bus or coach size and the number of vehicles required for the trip.

For extended trips, a list of passenger names with contact details should be supplied to the operator prior to the commencement of the journey.

Bus or coach operators must stay within legal load limits set for their particular bus or coach. You can help ensure compliance with the limits by providing an accurate number of passengers to the operator.

### What is the itinerary?

Plan your trip with a realistic itinerary which takes into account the needs of your group and the requirements of the bus or coach operator. You may need to consider any physical distancing requirements that apply to hospitality venues and attractions.

For extended tours, decide how many hours or days the trip will take and the daily start and finish times. Be specific about times, keeping in mind rest stops, meal breaks, and any side trips. Whilst there are no restrictions on the distance travelled in one day there are restrictions on how many hours a bus or coach driver can drive in one day or over a number of days.

### How much luggage will be taken?

Advise the bus or coach operator about the amount and type of luggage (e.g. bags, sporting equipment, tents) you will be carrying, to ensure it will be stored safely and within the vehicle's load limit.

### What features do you require?

When requesting a quote, you should advise the operator if you require any of the following features:

- ▶ Air-conditioning
- ▶ Toilet
- ▶ Coach seats (reclining)
- ▶ Seat belts
- ▶ PA System
- ▶ Television/DVD
- ▶ Wheelchair accessibility
- ▶ Bookings for accommodation or attractions

# Current Rules

## What is a charter bus or coach service?

A *charter service* is a service in which a bus or coach and a driver are prebooked for an agreed "group" fee, where all passengers' journeys have a common origin or a common destination.

You should be aware that if a schoolteacher, relative or friend drives a bus or coach owned by a school or hired from a rental company it is not considered a *charter service* under NSW Passenger Transport legislation. This means that the driver may not necessarily have to abide by the conditions of a NSW Bus Driver Authority or be monitored under an accredited operator's Safety Management System. It also means that the vehicle used may not be subject to the same roadworthiness and maintenance standards required for a vehicle owned by an accredited bus or coach operator.

## Who can provide a charter bus or coach service for your group?

In New South Wales, any operator who holds a Long Distance, Tourist and Charter Services Accreditation issued by Transport for NSW is allowed to tender for your charter. Operators providing *charter services* under the NSW Bus Operator Accreditation Scheme use buses and coaches that seat more than 12 adults.

Operators must display details of their accreditation, including their company name, accreditation number and the suburb where the vehicle is based, on the front nearside or offside panel of their bus or coach.

Operators are issued with a Bus Operator Accreditation Certificate by Transport for NSW and can provide a copy to you if requested.

## Who can drive the charter bus or coach?

Under the NSW Passenger Transport Act, a driver of a public passenger vehicle must have a Bus Driver Authority, which has been issued by Transport for NSW.



This means that a person who holds a current Bus Driver Authority has been assessed by Transport for NSW as being fit, proper and competent to drive a public passenger vehicle, which includes an assessment of their medical fitness and a police criminal record check.

When boarding a bus or coach you should check that the driver is displaying their Bus Driver Authority Card, which is a requirement of the NSW Passenger Transport Regulation.



# Charter Checklist

The following checklist should be used as a guide:

- Is the operator accredited by Transport for NSW?
- Does the operator have experience in providing the charter service required?
- Is the driver licenced to drive the class of vehicle being chartered?
- Is the driver authorised to drive a public passenger vehicle in NSW?
- Is the vehicle suitable for the trip?
- Does the vehicle have the features required by your group?
- Does the itinerary allow the driver to comply with fatigue laws including work and rest hours?
- Does the operator have a backup procedure in the case of a break down?

# COVID-19

## Travel and Transport Advice

Private bus and coach operators providing charter services (which includes buses and coached hired for group travel) are not restricted under NSW COVID-19 Public Health Orders. However, bus and coach operators need to provide a safe environment for their customers and staff.

COVID Safe recommendations for passengers:

- ▶ use physical distancing when travelling and seated on services where possible
- ▶ anyone that is unwell or has COVID-19 symptoms should not travel
- ▶ take extra care around vulnerable people
- ▶ practise good hygiene

Bus and coach operators may also:

- ▶ provide hand sanitiser
- ▶ clean surfaces thoroughly particularly all high contact areas such as doors, handles and toilets
- ▶ maintain a record of customers and their seating allocation using a QR app or similar measure
- ▶ have signage on board services to remind everyone of their responsibility to keep each other safe
- ▶ encourage passengers to wear a face mask, particularly if physical distancing cannot be maintained



## COVID-19 Safety Plan

Bus and coach companies should have a **COVID-19 Safety Plan** that addresses how they will protect their staff and customers, which can be made available on request.

Bus and coach operators registered as COVID Safe businesses in NSW are easily recognised by the blue tick badge displayed on their premises or online.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the maximum age for buses and coaches in NSW?

In New South Wales there is no maximum age for buses and coaches used for charter services.

## Are seatbelts compulsory?

Only coaches manufactured after 1 July 1994 and designed for long-distance travel (with seats greater than 100cm high) must be equipped with seatbelts for all occupants.

However, there are other types of buses and coaches available that are equipped with seatbelts.

## Are passengers required to wear seatbelts on a bus or coach?

Yes. The operator must take reasonable steps to ensure that every passenger on a bus or coach is made aware that they are required to wear a seatbelt if fitted.

## Are buses or coaches equipped for wheelchairs?

Buses and coaches used for charter services are generally exempt from being wheelchair accessible under the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport.

However, there are other types of buses and coaches available that are equipped and licensed to carry wheelchairs.

## How do I know if an operator is experienced?

How long an operator has been in business generally provides a good indication of their experience. If you do not know anyone who has previously used the operator's services, you may request that the operator provide details of a current customer who you may contact for a reference.

## Do buses and coaches have an independent safety check?

All buses and coaches in NSW undergo an inspection every six months by Transport for NSW as part of the Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme (HVIS).

In addition, Transport for NSW uses Heavy Vehicle Safety Stations to intercept and inspect buses and coaches which may be operating illegally or in an unsafe manner on NSW roads.

## Do bus and coach drivers require a Working with Children Check?

Yes. A Working with Children Check is a requirement for anyone who works in child-related work in NSW. It involves a National Police Check (criminal history record check) and a review of reportable workplace misconduct.

## Can bus or coach operators sell tour packages?

Yes. From 1 July 2014, travel agents do not need a licence. This includes coach tour operators who provide booking services as a travel agent.

Some operators involved in selling tour packages may belong to the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS) which is a voluntary industry accreditation scheme managed by the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA).

## Can all bus or coach operators travel to national parks?

Bus or coach operators who take passengers to national parks should be licensed tour or charter operators with NSW National Parks and Wildlife.

This ensures passengers are protected by adequate safety standards and public liability insurance whilst enjoying their time in national parks.

## Are there special requirements for driving buses and coaches in the Kosciuszko National Park?

Yes. Accredited operators must ensure only suitably trained drivers are employed to drive vehicles carrying passengers in the NSW snowfields (between 1 June and 11 October). A driver will be considered suitably trained if the driver has completed a Snow Driver Training course approved by Transport for NSW. Drivers are required to carry a card ("snow licence") as evidence of completing the course.

## Can passengers eat and drink on a bus or coach?

Passengers are only prohibited from eating or drinking on a bus if there is a sign prohibiting eating or drinking on the bus. Nothing prohibits a person from drinking water, or from eating or drinking for medical reasons.

## Can passengers drink alcohol on a bus or coach?

Passengers can only drink alcohol with the written permission of the operator.

## Are all bus and coach operators members of BusNSW?

No. A large proportion of bus and coach operators who provide charter services in NSW are members of BusNSW. BusNSW works with all members to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and conditions of accreditation.

Members of BusNSW have a genuine interest in operational best practice and the provision of professional services to their customers.

To check if a bus or coach operator is a member of BusNSW, use the search facility that is available via the homepage on the BusNSW website.

## How much can I expect to pay for a charter bus or coach?

Where possible, you should get quotes from a number of bus or coach operators. Ask them to supply details of the bus or coach and its features with the quote.

You can generally expect to pay more for additional features such as seat belts, air-conditioning, toilets, coach seating, travel agency services such as booking attractions and services on your behalf, and some vehicle types and sizes.

Remember, you get what you pay for.

Your BusNSW operator

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