School group travel options

For school staff
August 2016

When planning travel for groups (e.g. school excursions) on public transport in the NSW Opal network, schools will need to ensure that students have a valid Opal card for travel.

Key information:

- 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/.
- Schools should plan ahead, and contact their local transport operator at least three weeks prior to travel to make travel arrangements as well as understand what ticketing options are available.

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).

Transport
transportnsw.info

(1) Planning for school excursions (group travel)

Schools have two 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). Requests for excursion travel from schools will be reviewed according to bus availability, proposed use and other relevant criteria. To organise a charter bus, contact your local transport operator.

Should your school require further support locating a charter bus service for your desired route, please contact **131 500** for assistance.

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.transportnsw.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)

Ticketing options under Opal:

1. **Individually managed Opal cards**

From 1 August, every child will need a Child/Youth Opal card to travel on the Opal network. To help with this, schools can consider the option of asking 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 Child/Youth Opal cards with sufficient value on them, in case a student forgets or loses their Opal card or has insufficient funds to travel. Adults accompanying school groups need to travel with an Adult Opal card.

Registered Opal cards managed by the school
Schools can also choose to manage their own set of Opal cards as they have the option to register multiple Opal cards linked to one Opal profile. Whilst this may require some administration time to set up and register multiple cards individually, schools will then be able to top up and manage Opal cards via the online platform as well as have card balances secured in case these cards are lost.

To register multiple Opal cards to one profile, schools should visit **opal.com.au** or call **13 67 25** (**13 OPAL**).

Retailer acquired Opal cards managed by the school
Groups can acquire a number of unregistered Opal cards by visiting one of 2100+ Opal retailers in NSW. To find your nearest retailer, visit **http://www.retailers.opal.com.au/**

Note that customers wishing to use this option will need to engage their retailer in advance to ensure sufficient stock and time to set up a number of cards.

For more information or to understand what other Opal options may be available call Opal Customer Care on **13 67 25 (13 Opal)** at least four weeks in advance of the travel date**.**

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 three 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).

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 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.sydneytrains.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 please arrive early. Your group may need to split into 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

For 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. Visit https://www.opal.com.au/en/get-an-opal-card/what-services-can-i-use-it-on/ to view Opal services.

- Schools travelling outside the Opal network need to plan their excursions (group travel) ahead of time. For travel outside the Opal network, schools should make travel arrangements with their local transport operator three weeks in advance of the travel date.
- When entering the Opal network, schools will need to ensure students are using a pre-arranged Child/Youth Opal card and Adult school staff should use an Adult Opal card (or a Concession Opal card if they are eligible for the card) to travel across the Opal transport network.
- For more information on ticketing and timetables, schools need to contact their local relevant transport operator at least three weeks in advance of the travel date.

Travel Apps

Schools can choose to use available Opal apps to help with their travel. For more information on Opal Travel apps, visit: www.transportnsw.info/en/travelling-with-us/keep-updated/apps.page