

21 April 2023

Re: School Opal Card Compliance

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As your local school bus operator, we wanted to start Term 2 with a warm welcome and to reaffirm our commitment to working with you throughout the year to provide a safe, reliable and efficient service for your school community.

One of our key focus areas this year is to improve Opal compliance among school students, and we need your help to achieve this.

In Term 1, we visited a number of schools to monitor boarding and encourage correct Opal card usage.

We found that the common reasons students do not tap on are:

- They do not hold an Opal card as they have either not applied for it or have not replaced it after it has expired or been lost,
- They have forgotten to bring their Opal card with them,
- They have a valid card, but do not believe it is a requirement to Tap On and Off,
- The driver does not enforce it/ask them to TAP ON,
- There are insufficient funds on their Child/Youth Opal card.

Why do students need to Tap On and Off with their Opal Card?

It is essential for all school students to travel with a valid School Opal Card or Child/Youth Opal Card.

This is so that we can understand customer travel patterns and can adjust the services provided, if necessary.

Every time a student Taps On and Off, students are counted on our service – when students do not, they are invisible. Without accurate patronage data, Transport for NSW has the option to withdraw services that show low patronage.

Further, adopting the behaviors of Tapping On and Off is a key part of fare compliance.

Once students are no longer travelling to and from school, it is a legal requirement to travel with a valid ticket.

Embedding these behaviors from an early age minimizes chances of adopting non-compliant behaviors later in life.

What can parents and guardians do to help?

We ask that all parents ensure that their children have a valid Opal card for travelling to and from school each day. We also ask that you please encourage them to Tap On and Off every time they use a bus service.

To be eligible for a School Opal Card the student must:

- be a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- be aged 4 years 6 months or older. Pre-school children are not eligible.
- live a minimum distance from your school:
 - Years K-2 (Infants) - No minimum distance.
 - Years 3-6 (Primary) - 1.6km straight line distance or 2.3km walking or further.
 - Years 7-12 (Secondary) - 2km straight line distance or 2.9km walking or further.

If you do not meet these criteria, your child will need to carry a Child/Youth Opal card with funds loaded onto it.

What are we doing to help?

We are working closely with schools to improve Opal compliance and encourage students to Tap On and Off every time.

We found that with onsite assistance from our on-the-ground ambassador team, we are able to significantly improve the number of students tapping on. We assisted drivers and teachers by asking students to line up with their Opal cards ready and gave priority boarding to those with a valid card. Those without were reminded to have a valid Opal card for their next journey. Our drivers are also expected to ask students to TAP ON when they board.

We are also working with Transport for NSW to improve the messaging across the network to communicate that it is a requirement for school students to Tap On and Off with a valid Opal Card.

While we can provide adhoc support upon request, we rely upon your assistance to help us manage Opal compliance. We appreciate any assistance that you can provide.

We hope to work together with you to reduce the number of non-compliant students – as continuous low Tap On and Off data means that our services appear underutilised and are at risk of being modified, reduced, withdrawn or redirected to parts of the network that show a higher demand.

We thank you once again for your understanding and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

School Engagement Team

Transdev John Holland Buses