

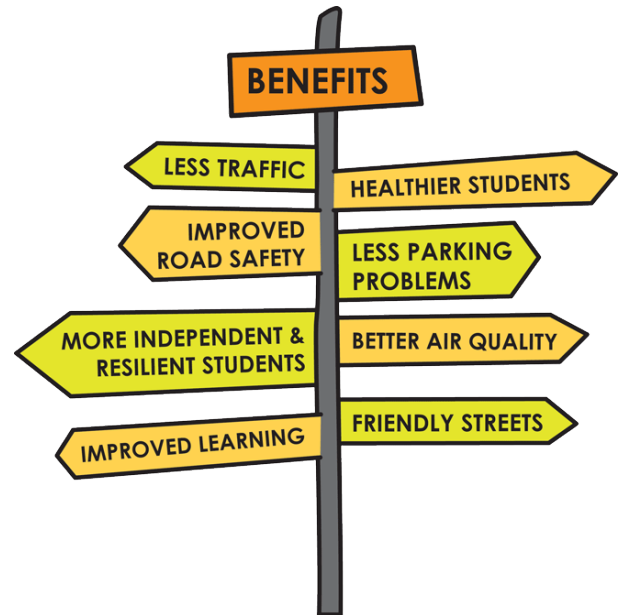


How to start a Walking School Bus

The Walking School Bus is a fun way for local children to walk to school together regularly - thanks to adult volunteers, usually parents, who take turns to walk with the group.

It's great for social time, exercise, community connections, road safety awareness, building kids towards their independence and perfect for busy parents that struggle to find the time to walk every day.

Successful Walking School Bus initiatives are usually led by parents, rather than school staff.



Who can be a volunteer?

The bus is accompanied by at least two adult volunteers. A volunteer might be a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or a community member interested in helping children get to school.

Who can join the bus?

All children can join; collection points are identified by volunteers and may be your front gate or an agreed location.

Get started

Identify parent interest

- Start by discussing the idea with parents living within a kilometre from the school.
- Send the parent survey home with a note or send the parent survey in a link via email.
- Invite interested people to meet up and chat about what they would like to see happen and map out their addresses.
- Watch our 'how to' video [featuring the Kyilla Primary Walking School Bus](#).

Have a go

- Identify a route and volunteers – one, two or more is a good start.
- Start small and keep it manageable. Try out the Walking School Bus one day a week.



Things for volunteers to agree on:

Walking School Bus Operation

Action in the event of:

- Bus, volunteer and child attendance cancellations
- Weather conditions (suspend bus if a road weather alert is issued)
- Child sickness during trip

Consider

- Using SMS groups and have a stand by volunteer rostered.
- Dogs, bikes, roller blades and scooters are often preferred not to be on the bus. Some groups include strollers.

Administration

- Will you use a parent pledge? Require parent consent forms? Will the school manage a register?
- Creating a volunteer roster and creating maps/routes and times

Grow

The key is to recruit and retain volunteers, check out our Volunteer Power guide, always recognise volunteer contributions and invite more families to join as you go.

Legal stuff

The Department of Transport does not provide personal liability insurance for any teacher, parent or other volunteer participating in the Walking School Bus program. Such persons are advised to consult their own insurer to determine if their existing insurance policies provide coverage for participating in this program and, if not, consider whether to obtain a policy of insurance covering their participation in the Walking School Bus program.

Non-parent or guardian volunteers

State legislation states that non-parent volunteers such as grandparents, other relatives or friends should obtain a *Working with Children Check (WWC)* and maintain a volunteer record. Parents of enrolled children are specifically exempt from this requirement.



Figure 1 - A group of Walking School Bus volunteers with students

Tips for Volunteers running a Walking School Bus

Travelling Safely with a group

- The recommended maximum group ratio is no more than 10 children per adult.
- Volunteers should comply with the [Road Traffic Code pedestrian regulations](#)
- Make sure they wear high visibility vests - available through Your Move rewards.
- Volunteers are not expected to act as a traffic warden and it's best not to attempt to stop traffic in order to cross a road.
- Always ensure the top and tail of the group are ready to cross together.
- Where possible cross roads within the 40 km/h school zones.

TIP: Walking with kids presents a great opportunity for teaching and reinforcing road safety:

Teaching Street Wise behaviour

- Demonstrate STOP, LOOK behind-right-left-right, LISTEN, THINK before crossing the road
- Count the time vehicles take to travel from sighting to crossover point and comparing it to the time taken to cross the road.
- Hearing a traffic sound, scanning and identifying the source, deciding if it is safe to cross the road.
- Point out landmarks along the way to help familiarise kids with their local neighbourhood so they begin to learn their way around.

Remember: a goal of the Walking School Bus is to build kids towards their independence, so use this time to help teach important skills but keep it FUN!