



# Chartering a Bus or Coach in NSW

What to look for

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This guide is designed to assist individuals and organisations 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 bus and coach charter.



## Planning a Successful & 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 & 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. 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 wherever possible.

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 accurate numbers 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.

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 efficiently.

### What features do you require?

When requesting a quotation 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 pre-booked for an agreed "group" fee, where all passengers' journeys have a common origin or a common destination.

You should be aware that if a school teacher, relative or friend drives a bus or coach hired from a rental company it is not considered a charter service. This means that the driver will not necessarily have a Driver Authorisation, comply with fatigue, drug or alcohol regulations, or that the bus or coach will meet Public Transport Standards.



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

In New South Wales, any operator who holds a NSW Ministry of Transport Operator Accreditation for Long Distance, Tourist and Charter Services is allowed to tender for your charter.

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 the bus or coach.



Operators are issued with an Operator Accreditation Certificate by the NSW Ministry of Transport and can provide a copy to you if requested.

## Who can drive the charter bus or coach?

Under the NSW Passenger Transport Act, 1990, a driver of a Public Passenger Vehicle must hold a Drivers Authority, which has been issued by the Director General of the NSW Ministry of Transport.



A Drivers Authority means that a person has been assessed by the Ministry of Transport as being fit and proper to drive a public passenger vehicle, which includes an assessment of their medical fitness and a police criminal check.

When boarding a bus or coach you should check that the driver is displaying their Driver Authority Card.

# Charter Checklist

The following checklist should be used as a guide:

- » Is the operator accredited by the NSW Ministry of Transport?
- » Does the operator have experience in providing the charter service required?
- » Is the driver licenced and authorised to drive a public passenger vehicle?
- » Is the vehicle suitable for the trip?
- » Does the vehicle have the features required by your group e.g. luggage capacity, seat belts, toilet etc.
- » Does the itinerary allow the driver to comply with Driving Hours Regulations?
- » Does the operator have a back up procedure in the case of a break down?

# 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 seat belts compulsory?

Coaches manufactured after 1 July 1994 and designed for long-distance travel (with seats greater than 100cm high) must be equipped with seat belts for all occupants. It is not compulsory for other types of buses to have seat belts.

## Are buses or coaches equipped for Wheelchairs?

Charter bus or coach services for groups are not required to comply with the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Guidelines 2004.

However, there are buses and coaches available that are equipped and licenced 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 the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) as part of the Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme (HVIS).

In addition, they may be tested at temporary or permanent road side Heavy Vehicle Inspection Stations and or weighbridges.

## Can all bus or coach operators sell tour packages?

Bus or coach operators who take bookings for attractions or accommodation packages (where the value exceeds \$50,000 per annum) should be licensed travel agents.

You can check whether your bus or coach operator is a licensed travel agent by contacting the NSW Department of Fair Trading. This ensures that all monies held on your group's behalf are kept in a trust account which is audited every year.

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

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

No. Food or beverages (inc. alcohol) should not be consumed on buses or coaches (only bottled water).

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

No. Approximately 700 bus and coach operators are members of BusNSW. BusNSW works with all members to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and all accreditation conditions.

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

## 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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