



CANBERRA

# WALKING SCHOOL BUS

## Volunteer Information

The Walking School Bus aims to provide safe and secure opportunities for children to walk between home and school by organising and training adult volunteer leaders.



The Walking School Bus Program  
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## Contents

1. Welcome to the YWCA of Canberra
2. What is the Walking School Bus?
3. What is TravelSmart?
4. What are the aims of the Walking School Bus?
5. Benefits of the Walking School Bus program
6. Road Safety
7. What strategies can be used to increase safety?
8. Procedures
9. What to do if ...?
10. Ideas to assist your Walking School Bus
11. Liability issues and conditions
12. Volunteer, Organisation and Clients' Rights and Responsibilities
13. Specific Service Policies and Procedures

## 1. Welcome to the YWCA of Canberra

On behalf of the YWCA of Canberra we welcome you and thank you for expressing an interest in undertaking voluntary work with the YWCA of Canberra, Walking School Bus program. We value your commitment and interest in our organisation and look forward to working with you to foster the growth and success of volunteering within our community.

The information in this handbook is provided to assist you to gain an understanding of the YWCA of Canberra's work, policy and procedures, as well as information concerning day to day matters relating to your work as a member of the Walking School Bus program.

We always seek to improve the information and support that we provide to our staff, and so we invite feedback concerning this handbook and its contents, as this will help to ensure the easy and stress free entry of volunteers into the YWCA of Canberra in the future.

Again, welcome and we hope that you enjoy your time as a volunteer staff member of the YWCA of Canberra.

### **Maree Lehmann**

Director of Children's Services  
YWCA of Canberra

## 2. What is a Walking School Bus?

- A Walking School Bus is a fun, safe and active way for children to travel to and from school with adult supervision.
- Each bus comprises two adult volunteers who walk along an agreed route, collecting children waiting at designated "pick up points" and walking them to school. The process is reversed in the afternoons.
- The service is free, although it will rely on parent volunteers: the more volunteer parents, the more days the bus can run.
- Participation in the Walking School Bus is flexible and families may enrol for as little as one day per week, or walk every day, depending upon the family schedule.
- Routes will be established along those roads most used by pupils, depending upon the level of interest shown by parents and their willingness to volunteer as drivers.
- There is a maximum of eight children per adult and fluorescent vests identify both leaders.
- A safety audit will be conducted on each walking route.
- Most walking routes are between 1 to 1.5 kilometres long. This is the distance that children can comfortably walk within 20 – 25 minutes.
- Many children who live some distance from the school are delivered to the Walking School Bus starting point in order to walk to school with their friends.
- The YWCA of Canberra provides insurance for public liability, personal accident and professional indemnity.
- The Walking School Bus is part of the TravelSmart initiative.

### 3. What is TravelSmart?

TravelSmart is a government initiative that hopes to reduce the impact of the car on our environment, health and community. TravelSmart aims to change people's travel habits by encouraging them to walk, cycle, car pool or use public transport.

In order to meet these aims, TravelSmart organisations have devised a number of strategies that encourage people to start thinking about their travel choices.

Children have been included in this process. **Curricular material**, which focuses on the community and its impact on the environment, has been developed. Exploration of the curriculum allows children to become aware of transport options other than cars. It also allows children to consider walking, cycling, public transport and car pooling as valid means of transport. (<http://www.travelsmart.gov.au/>)

Another initiative of TravelSmart has been the development of the Walking School Bus (WSB) program. These provide a fun and active way of allowing children to walk to and from school, under adult supervision.

Walking School Buses are successfully running in other states and overseas. Those schools participating in the scheme have found the experience to be positive. Some of these benefits have included better fitness, happier children on arrival at school, increased social interaction within the neighbourhood and greater awareness of safety and environmental issues.

### 4. What are the aims of the Walking School Bus?

#### Health and fitness

- To increase children's participation in regular physical activity by walking to school.

#### Sustainable Transport

- To influence children's and families awareness of travel behaviour and reduce reliance upon car travel to and from school
- To reduce the number of cars on the roads around the school and therefore create a safer environment for children.

#### The Environment

- To provide a safe, non-polluting and convenient alternative for children travelling to and from school.

#### Community

- To encourage the development of strong, safe, friendly and supportive communities
- To increase the public's awareness of children walking to school.

#### Education

- To provide practical lessons in road and pedestrian safety
- To introduce the TravelSmart curriculum to schools.  
(<http://www.travelsmart.gov.au/teachers/index.html>)

## 5. Benefits of the Walking School Bus program

### Establishing Walking School Buses:

- Ensures there are fewer cars on the roads around the school and a safer environment for children
- Gives children a sense of independence while “being a part of a team” walking to school
- Provides children travelling to and from school with a safe, non polluting and convenient means of travel
- Enables children and adults to become more physically active and thus gain the many health benefits of moderate physical activity
- Encourages a sense of community as families get to know each other and their children become friends
- Gives parents extra time as they don't have to accompany their children to school every day
- Helps teach children good road sense and safety
- IS FUN for children and parents!

## 6. Road Safety

### When crossing a road:

- **Group cohesion** is essential at all times. Once children have joined the group, they must stay with the group.
- **Travel pace** must match the slowest person in the group.
- It is recommended that the group should **not become separated** as a result of negotiating road crossings or intersections.
- **Wait** one step back from the kerb while waiting to cross.
- Use a **marked pedestrian crossing** whenever one is available.
- Choose a crossing place where drivers can see pedestrians if no marked crossing is available.
- **Stop, look** (right – left – right), **listen and think**.
- **Watch** until there is no traffic or traffic that has stopped.
- **Walk** quickly across the road, looking and listening for traffic both right and left.
- **Talk** with the children about road safety, and allow them to assist in making choices.

## 7. What strategies can be used to increase safety?

- Teach children to scan the road. Remind them to physically turn the head from side to side to compensate for their reduced peripheral vision.
- Explain to children why you are making a decision to cross or not to cross a road. This helps children to understand the decision making process.
- Activities such as counting the time vehicles take to travel from sighting to crossover point.
- Compare this time with the time it takes a group of children to cross the road (with time to spare).
- Any activity that can assist children in learning to judge distance, speed and the length of time needed to cross the road is beneficial.
- Explain to children that when they hear a traffic sound they should begin scanning until they have identified the source and whether the vehicle could be a threat to their safety.
- Advise children that they must have a clear view of the road in all directions.
- Discuss the risk of stepping of into the roadway from behind a parked vehicle or bush.
- Assist children's concentration by asking questions that cause the child to focus on a potential or actual hazard.
- Reinforce the need for children to approach path ends and carriageway boundaries cautiously and STOP, LOOK (right-left-right), LISTEN and THINK.
- Encourage children to cross all roads at a brisk pace, never running.
- Be aware of the influence that other children have on behaviour of the individual.

## 8. Procedures

- Wear your fluorescent vest throughout the walk.
- Greet children and check roll. Once a child has joined the group, they must stay with the group.
- Start walking.
- If a child does not turn up, **do not wait** for them.
- Walk along the specified route, picking up children. **Check the roll** to ensure all children are collected. Ensure the group stays together.
- When you arrive at school, suggest to the children that they go to the **toilet** and have a drink of **water** before school starts.
- After delivering the children you should then go to the school office, ask for the WSB folder, go to section one marked "Walking Rolls", go to the roll of your walking route and **mark off the children** who walked.
- If something happened (such as a skinned knee or extra children) mark this in section 4 "**Incident Reports**" and take the child to the school medical officer/nurse.
- If other children want to join, they must fill in an **enrolment form** (found in the WSB folder). This form should be placed in the plastic envelope for your walk, and the child's name written on the list, and added to your roll. Ensure that all volunteers have the child's family contact details and that they have all volunteers contact numbers.
- If it rains, the volunteers may **cancel the walk**. Organise a telephone tree to do this.
- If you **cannot walk** on your designated day, organise for another volunteer to take your place.
- If new parents want to volunteer, they should complete a **police form, ATTACH A PHOTOCOPY OF THEIR DRIVER LICENCE**, and the **Volunteer Contract** and send them to the Program Officer.
- If the route is not suitable, it **can be changed**. Discuss the route amongst yourselves and tell the Program Officer of any changes.
- Once the route has been established, the volunteers and participants run the WSB themselves.

## 9. What to do if....?

### **A child joins in the WSB without a parent consent form on file or walks only occasionally**

Enter the child in the 'incident' report, and assume responsibility for the child that day.

### **A volunteer is unable to meet her or his scheduled commitment**

The volunteer rings another volunteer and organises for that person to replace them.

### **Only one volunteer arrives to walk with the children**

If only one volunteer turns up to walk with the children, that volunteer may walk with the children if they feel it is safe and are comfortable to assume responsibility.

### **The weather conditions deteriorate**

In the morning, the WSB may be suspended if all participants can be contacted. The participants should organise a phone tree in order to contact each other in this event.

### **A child misbehaves**

If a child misbehaves, the volunteer is encouraged to speak to the child's parents, teacher and school principal. The Program Officers should also be informed and will join the Walking School Bus route on their next walk. If the child's behaviour does not improve, they can be formally asked by the YWCA of Canberra to leave the Bus.

### **A child or volunteer is unable to complete the trip because of sickness or injury not considered serious enough to require an ambulance**

The person is taken to a near-by "safe house" or is stayed with until transport can be arranged to home or to a medical centre.

**IF THERE IS A MAJOR INCIDENT**, go to the nearest house and **phone 000** for assistance. Also, ring the YWCA of Canberra on 6239 6878.

## 10. Ideas to assist your Walking School Bus

- The best way for a Walking School Bus route to grow, is for those involved in it to tell everyone all about it. People will join something that is already established and successful.
- Encourage your neighbouring families to participate.
- Read and distribute The Walking Times, the Walking School Bus newsletter.
- Encourage teachers to access the TravelSmart teaching resources at [www.travelsmart.gov.au](http://www.travelsmart.gov.au)
- Encourage the school to participate in the “feat 4 feet” program, run by the Department of Education and Training. (<http://activated.det.act.gov.au/hps/tl/feat4feet.htm>)
- Ask the Project Officer for a pedometer and measure the distance of your walk, and the number of footsteps every child takes.
- Encourage the school to develop a School Travel Plan that encourages families to walk or ride their bicycles to school.
- Talk to your friends and neighbours about the program. Walking School Buses are most successful where the entire school community is supportive.

## 11. Liability issues and conditions

Walking School Bus volunteers are covered for personal accident, public liability and professional indemnity by the YWCA of Canberra insurance policies if the following conditions are met:

- The WSB volunteer group must operate under the auspices of the YWCA of Canberra.
- Each WSB route must have a street audit completed.
- Each WSB route, including any alterations to routes, must be registered.
- Volunteers must complete the training course before they can commence leading a Walking School Bus. This does not exclude other parents from walking with the group.
- The Volunteer have read and follow the duties outlined in the Volunteer Booklet (eg. Always wear the fluorescent jacket, stick to the agreed route and times, carry participating information etc).
- Each WSB must have two volunteers in attendance. It is essential that there is one adult volunteer for every 8 children.
- All volunteers have completed a police check.
- All volunteers have registered with the YWCA of Canberra.
- For liability reasons, the Walking School Bus volunteers are distanced from the school's P&C and any related State Executive. It is managed under the auspices of the YWCA of Canberra.

It may also be the case that even if a volunteer parent is proved to be negligent by not following one or more of the above, that the volunteer is covered by the YWCA's public liability insurance unless there is a situation where for example, the school or Volunteer has changed the Walking School Bus route or procedures without notifying the YWCA.

Please note: The above conditions are not mutually exclusive.

**If an incident does occur**, it must be immediately reported to the Walking School Bus Program Officer at the YWCA of Canberra on 6239 6878.

## **12. Volunteer, Organisation and Clients' Rights and Responsibilities**

### **Volunteers' Rights and Responsibilities**

**As volunteer staff of the YWCA of Canberra you have the right to:**

- be treated as a co-worker and a member of the team
- receive appropriate training and in-service education
- receive regular and skilled support
- adequate information to carry out the assignment
- recognition of contribution to program through day to day acknowledgement
- take part in planning and decision making
- time for de-briefing with program staff
- reimbursement of expenses incurred in the direct delivery of your position
- appropriate insurance cover
- expect confidentiality.

**As volunteer staff of the YWCA of Canberra you have the responsibility to:**

- inform the project manager of the amount of time you are able to commit
- be aware of your reasons for volunteering
- be reliable in your commitment
- seek clarification re your assignment if necessary
- be open in your communications with the Organisation
- refuse assignments that you believe you are unable to undertake
- be loyal to the Organisation but offer constructive criticism when appropriate
- undertake appropriate training and accept supervision and support
- give regular feedback regarding your assignments, availability and job satisfaction
- maintain appropriate records as required for statistical purposes and reimbursements
- maintain confidentiality
- inform the project manager if you wish to withdraw from your position.

### **Organisation's Rights and Responsibilities with Regard to Volunteers**

**The YWCA of Canberra has the right to:**

- expect clear and open communication from the Volunteer with regard to their commitment, availability, assignments and job satisfaction
- require reliability and promptness
- require Volunteers to undertake training
- counsel Volunteers regarding their suitability for assignments
- expect loyalty to the Organisation
- withdraw an unreliable Volunteer from a position.

## **The YWCA of Canberra has the responsibility to:**

- orientate Volunteers
- assign tasks as per the Duty Statement or as directed by the project manager
- provide adequate training, support and supervision
- provide clear guidelines
- arrange appropriate insurance cover
- reimburse expenses incurred in the direct delivery of your position
- formally recognise a Volunteer's contribution.

## **Clients' Rights and Responsibilities**

### **Clients have the right to:**

- utilise the resources of the Service to meet their needs appropriately
- have professionally conducted services and participate in the evaluation of those services
- expect confidentiality
- have their value base, beliefs and attitudes accepted and respected
- not be discriminated against on the basis of age, race, disability or religion
- expect that their own personal space will be respected and that volunteer staff will not impose their own values and beliefs on them
- have any complaint dealt with in a confidential and timely manner
- withdraw from a service(s) at any time.

### **Clients have a responsibility to:**

- treat the staff and volunteers of the Organisation with courtesy and respect
- maintain open communication with the staff concerning their needs for service provision
- inform the Organisation, at the time of request for services, of all known factors which could be considered to influence the delivery of such a service
- inform the Organisation when:
  - service delivery has been unsatisfactory or inappropriate
  - the service is no longer required, or when wishing to change arrangements
  - circumstance(s) change which may affect service delivery
- respect the Organisation's rights to suggest referral and its right to inform the client that it is unable to meet the client's requests either partially or whole.

## 13. Specific Service Policies and Procedures

### Appearance and Grooming

Appropriate dress, appearance and manner helps to present a positive impression when representing the YWCA of Canberra externally. You are also expected to wear any protective clothing or safety equipment provided, in the manner prescribed by the YWCA of Canberra policies.

### Children with additional needs

If you have children with additional needs on your WSB, please phone the WSB program to discuss any necessary procedures. Procedures that should be considered are:

- Allowing more time for the WSB to get to school
- A ratio of 1:6 adults to children or less
- Holding hands if appropriate

### Duty of care to children

All volunteers are asked to report to the school or WSB program anything a child says or writes that needs to be investigated. Confidentiality must be respected in this process.

### Duty Statement

All volunteer staff of the YWCA of Canberra will be issued with a Duty Statement or job description and contract.

### Ethics

The YWCA of Canberra Code of Ethics reflects the Organisation's values and principles at a very practical level. It sets out the minimum acceptable standards of behavior that staff is expected to demonstrate in carrying out their roles. Staff are expected to achieve and maintain the highest standards in professional and business ethics and, through their work performance and behavior, ensure that confidence in the YWCA of Canberra is justified and upheld.

The **Code of Conduct**, as required for all YWCA of Canberra staff members, is detailed in the YWCA of Canberra Policy and Procedures Manual – Staff Code of Conduct. For more information, contact the WSB Program Manager.

### Exit Survey

Once a volunteer has informed the program that they will no longer be volunteering, they will be sent and asked to complete an exit survey.

### Grievances

A grievance is where a member of staff (both employees and volunteers), think a decision or action that affects their employment has been made which is unfair or incorrect or may involve a grievance with another staff member. WSB volunteers have the same access as paid staff to Formal Grievance Procedures as stated in the **YWCA of Canberra Policy and Procedures Manual**. For more information, contact the WSB Program Manager.

## Police Records Checks

All volunteer staff is required to undertake a police check because of the nature of the work involved. Each volunteer must complete a "Consent to obtain Personal Information" form and this, along with a photocopy of their original driver license, will be forwarded to the Federal Police. Police checks usually take two to three weeks and the result will be sent back to the Program Manager; this information remains confidential. If a volunteer has already had a police check done, it should be no older than 3 months. Police checks need to be repeated every three years.

## Privacy and Confidentiality

All staff has a duty to protect the confidentiality of internal discussions, including issues raised and discussed at meetings. All issues related to practice, procedures, or specific workplace issues or incidents should, in the first instance, be raised with a direct supervisor. For more information, contact the WSB Program Manager.

## Social Events

From time to time the WSB program organises social events. These events are promoted ahead of time and we hope you will be able to attend.

## Volunteer Information

When you are accepted as a WSB Volunteer your signed Volunteer Job Description and Contract, acknowledgment of your police clearance and your contact details are kept on file. This information is treated confidentially and is available for inspection by the Volunteer upon request. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer to inform the Program Manager of any changes to their details, particularly about emergency contact details.




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