



# **Queensland Heavy Vehicle Standards (Warning Lights and Signs on School Buses Exemption) Notice 2026**

## **Operator's Guide**

February 2026

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## Introduction

The *Queensland Heavy Vehicle Standards (Warning Lights and Signs on School Buses) Exemption Notice 2026 (No.1)* allows particular buses in Queensland to operate without fully complying with specific requirements regarding warning lights and signage set out in the *Heavy Vehicle National Law* (HVNL).

These requirements are outlined in Schedule 2, Part 6, Division 16 of the *Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation 2014*.

This notice strikes a balance between flexibility to continue to operate existing buses while maintaining safety standards necessary for carrying children. Operators of heavy vehicles carrying children must ensure they are familiar with the scope of this exemption and manage their obligations accordingly.

This notice will commence on **20 February 2026** and remain effective until **19 February 2031**.

## Background

Previously, Queensland's requirements for school warning lights and signs were set out in the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010 (Qld)* (PT Standard). With the expiry of the PT Standard in 2026, the HVNL now provides the applicable standards for these lights and signs.

To support a smooth transition, the *Queensland Vehicle Standards (Warning Lights and Signs on School Buses Exemption) Notice 2026 (No.1)* was introduced. This allows the following three (3) categories of buses to operate with the warning lights and signs that were previously required, rather than those required under the HVNL:

- transitioning buses
- non-school buses
- conditionally agreed relief buses.

## Definitions and interpretations

**conditionally agreed relief bus** means a bus temporarily providing school services without the required signage and warning lights.

**defined urban area** means—

- a) the area of the City of Brisbane under the *City of Brisbane Act 2010 (Qld)*; or
- b) an area for which a service contract is required under section 42 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 (Qld)* for the provision of road-based general route services that are not—
  - i. school services only; or
  - ii. services only for the carriage of eligible school students.

**non-school bus** means a bus operating in Queensland and not a school bus.

**school bus** means a bus being used to provide a school service outside, or partly outside, a defined urban area, even though the bus may be used for other purposes at other times.

**school service** means a scheduled passenger service only or primarily for the transport of school students to and from school (other than for school excursions) on days that schools are open for instruction.

**transitioning bus** means a bus that was fitted with warning lights and signs complying with one of the following:

- the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Standard 2010 (Qld)*; or
- for buses in-service prior to 1 October 1999, the *Traffic Regulation 1962, schedule 1, section 18B*.

**Note:** In the Notice, references to yellow in relation to a light, includes amber.

## Conditionally agreed relief bus

A conditionally agreed relief bus supports operators in responding to unexpected circumstances without compromising safety. To be considered a conditionally agreed relief bus the following conditions must be met:

- the operator has contacted the Department of Transport and Main Roads at the earliest opportunity to discuss temporary arrangements for school services
- a reasonable and short period of time has been agreed with Department of Transport and Main Roads
- the relief bus is being used only because the usual school bus is unexpectedly unavailable
- the operator is actively seeking a suitable replacement bus that is fitted with school warning signs and lights, and continues to make all reasonable efforts to secure one as soon as practicable
- despite best efforts, a relief bus with warning signs and lights cannot be sourced
- the operator has completed a written risk assessment that confirms that the use of the relief bus does not pose an unacceptable safety risk to children or other road users.

## Operation of warning lights

Warning lights must be operated in accordance with sections 222 and 222A of the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Road Rules) Regulation 2009* and can be found at

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2009-0194#>

## Complying with the national heavy vehicle safety standards

The operator of a heavy vehicle must ensure their vehicle complies with the Australian Design Rules, the HVNL and the *Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation*. Using or permitting another person to use a defective heavy vehicle on a road is an offence.

Failure to comply with the conditions of the *Queensland Vehicle Standards (Warning Lights and Signs on School Buses Exemption) Notice 2026 (No.1)* may leave the driver and operator liable for an offence.

Penalties can include on-the-spot fines or prosecution. Formal warnings or a defect notice may also be issued. More information can be found at [Heavy vehicle defects | NHVR](#).

## Chain of Responsibility

The primary duty requires **Chain of Responsibility** parties to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that they carry out their transport activities in a way that ensures public safety when heavy vehicles are used on a road.

## Your Responsibility

Every effort has been made to provide accurate information at the time of production of this Operator's Guide. However, any trip is made at the absolute risk of the operator and driver of the heavy vehicle.

### For more information:

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