

A Handbook for Community Bus Users



COMMUNITY BUS SERVICE USER GUIDE

About this Guide

Council provides community access to a fleet of commuter buses to support Council and eligible community groups and organisations, deliver a range of programs and services across the municipality. The service aims to provide a low cost, flexible and accessible transport option.

The service is delivered by the Community Care service unit within the requirements of the Bus Safety Act and Council policy and procedures.

This Guide outlines:

- the process for becoming registered as an approved bus user
- bus booking process for approved users, and
- expectations and obligations for approved bus users

In addition, the Guide includes the signing of a declaration that acknowledges that the Guide has been read, understood and is agreed to.

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1. Eligibility Criteria

Interested community groups and organisation are required to submit an application for consideration against an eligibility criteria, prior to becoming an approved bus user. To be successful applicants must:

- operate on a voluntary basis and be of a non-commercial nature,
- have a membership base consisting predominantly of residents of the City of Melton,
- have current public liability insurance,
- attend activities of a recreational, welfare based or educational nature excluding activities that involve mid or end of year club celebrations and functions.

2. How to Become an Approved Bus User

2.1 Process for New Applicants

New applicants are required to:

- complete and submit the Community Bus User Application/Renewal Form
- provide evidence that demonstrates how the applicant meets the eligibility criteria,
- submit the signed declaration section of the Community Bus Service User Guide,
- Provide a current copy of the groups Public Liability Insurance.

Successful applicants will receive written confirmation of their acceptance as an approved bus user and their resulting registration.

Unsuccessful applicants will be formally notified in writing.

2.2 Re-registration Existing Approved Bus Users

Existing users will receive a Community Bus User Application/Renewal Form by post or email no later than 1 June each year for re-application for the following 12-month period. The process outlined above in **2.1 Process for New Applicants**, will then be followed.

2.3 Submitting Community Bus User Application/Renewal Form:

Completed Community Bus User Application/Renewal Forms can be submitted either:

Electronically – Electronic application can be completed and submitted via the Melton City Council website.

By email – A copy of your completed registration form can be emailed to communitycareinfo@melton.vic.gov.au.

By mail – Post your application form to:

Kathy Farrell
Community Transport Supervisor
Melton City Council

Community Care
P.O. Box 21
Melton 3337

In person – Application forms should be submitted to a Melton City Council Customer Service office, located at either:

Melton Civic Centre
232 High St
Melton 3337

Caroline Springs Library & Civic Centre
193-199 Caroline Springs Blvd
Caroline Springs 3023

3. Community Bus Service Availability

Bookings can be made up to 3 months in advance. An exception will be considered for one off annual events.

Requests for bus bookings outside the regular schedule of available hours must be made in writing at least 2 weeks prior to the requested date of use. The regular booking schedule is as follows:

- Weekdays from 8.00am to 11.00pm
- Weekends from 8.00am to 11.00pm on the same day
- Weekend overnight use with return no later than 11pm Sunday
- Buses will not be available on 31 December of each year

Weekday and weekend overnight use for up to two consecutive nights is permitted, with a return time of no later than 11.00pm. The booking must be made in writing at least four weeks in advance and include all relevant travel details and location for bus overnight storage.

A maximum of two buses can be booked per booking. The standard booking fee applies for both buses.

4. Non-permitted Use

Registered users are not permitted to access buses for personal use, sub-let or profit from a fee. Bus use is restricted to the purposes outlined in the submitted Community Bus User Application/Renewal form.

Furthermore buses:

- are not equipped to seat infants or children who are required to be restrained in an approved child restraint, and
- may not be driven:
 - into snow regions of Victoria during the snow season,
 - off road,
 - outside the State of Victoria.

Fee Schedule

Registered users are required to pay a fee per bus for each booking. Community Bus Service fees will be determined in line with Council's budgetary process and will formulate part of the Community Care fees and charges schedule. The 2022 - 2023 fee schedule is as follows:

ITEM	FEE	PAYABLE BY
Standard Fees		
Registered User Group fee per bus per booking	Up to 5hrs - \$31.40 Daily use - \$62.80 Overnight (per night) \$149.30	On approval of application
Bond per booking	\$199.80	On approval of application
Non-compliance Charges		
Bus returned with fuel not replaced	Replacement fuel and \$49.95 administration fee	30 days from user groups receipt of invoice from Melton City Council
Late cancellation (less than 48hrs notice)	Payment of the full scheduled booking fee for that booking	30 days from user groups receipt of invoice from Melton City Council
"At fault" accident insurance excess	\$500.00	30 days from user groups receipt of invoice from Melton City Council
Internal and external damage to the bus	All associated repair costs not covered by insurance	30 days from user groups receipt of invoice from Melton City Council

6. Community Bus Service Bookings

6.1. Making a Booking

Registered users are required to nominate a representative who will be responsible for making/authorising their groups bus bookings. The authorised representative will then make a booking by either contacting:

- Council Customer Service Officer at the Melton Civic Centre or Caroline Springs Library and Civic Centre in person,
- contacting Customer Service on 9747 7200
- or by emailing communitycareinfo@melton.vic.gov.au.

When making a booking the name of the organisation making the booking and a contact person's name and phone number is required. This along with details of the officer who made the booking will be recorded. This is important, should Customer Service need to make contact in the event a bus becomes unavailable.

Responsibility for the correctness of bookings will fall with the registered user. It is therefore recommended that you request a hardcopy of your booking to be forwarded to you.

Each request for use by a registered user group must be submitted on a single Application for Bus Use Form.

Registered users should note that a high demand for bookings exists and this demand is escalated on weekends therefore bus access may not be met for every request.

6.2. Cancellation of Booking

Registered users are required to provide 48 hours' notice when cancelling a bus booking. Late cancellations will result in the registered user group being responsible for the payment of the scheduled booking fee attached to that booking. Repeated incidents of booking cancellations will result in the grievance process being activated.

Bookings may be cancelled by the Melton City Council in circumstances where a bus must be taken off the road due to breakdown, accident, damage, or servicing of buses and where Council's regular transport commitments cannot be re-organised.

6.3. Responsibility for Collecting and Returning Bus Keys

Keys must be collected during Council's business hours of 8.30am to 4.30pm on the day of the booking, or the day prior if the booking is for 8.00am, or the Friday prior if the booking is for weekend use. Please note there will be no issuing of keys outside these hours.

When collecting the keys, the 'key collector' must provide the Customer Service Officer with:

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- a completed and signed 'Application for Bus Use Form which has been completed by the registered user and the nominated driver, and
 - the driver's licence of the nominated driver which will be photocopied by the Customer Service Officer.

The 'key collector' must also collect from the Customer Service Officer a Community Bus Drivers Checklist, which is to be completed prior to departing and on return of the bus. The bus keys are to be returned to the Customer Service Officer at the Melton Civic Centre during office hours or dropped into the drop box provided at the:

- Melton City Council 7, McKenzie Street, Melton which is located at the bus pick up point, or
- Caroline Springs Civic Centre/Library.

The keys must be accompanied by:

- a completed Community Bus Drivers Checklist, and
- copy of the fuel docket representing the fuel replaced by the registered user.

7. Bus Collection and Return

Community buses are housed and collected from the vehicle compound at Community Care, 7 McKenzie Street, Melton or at Morton Homestead 7 - 17 Morton Blvd, Taylors Hill. Under no circumstances should buses be left or collected from outside of the vehicle compound, without prior arrangements being made with the Community Transport Supervisor.

For security and insurance purposes, buses must be returned to the appropriate bus compound at the end of each booking period. Buses must not be garaged overnight at any other location.

When collecting a bus, the designated bus driver may leave their vehicle in the allocated bus-parking bay provided in the bus compound. Any private vehicles left in the bus compound or near the premises is done so at the owner's risk.

The compound must be locked when collecting and returning a bus and the bus must be securely locked after use.

An inspection should be made around and throughout the bus after return to ensure no property is left behind. All defects or damage must be reported and noted on the Community Bus Drivers Checklist so subsequent users can be assured of roadworthiness and appropriate maintenance. Community Bus Drivers Checklist must be returned with the bus keys at the end of each booking.

If registered users have difficulty in meeting the agreed bus return time, a representative must advise Melton City Council Customer Service on 9747 7200 and during after hours by also contacting 9747 7200.

Under no circumstances will any bus be available until the day of hire.

8. Driver Responsibilities

The driver is the person in charge of the bus and must:

- hold a current full Victorian Drivers Licence,
- complete the driver details and driver declaration sections on the registered user Application for Bus Use Form,
- be a minimum of 21 years of age with at least 3 years driving experience i.e. probationary drivers are not eligible to drive community buses,
- take responsibility for all parking and traffic fines or penalties incurred while driving a community bus and should advise Council on the first working day following use if an offence is known to have occurred. Infringements will be forwarded to the driver of the registered user for payment,
- carry a maximum of 11 passengers (Community buses only),
- ensure there is no smoking or consuming of alcohol in the bus,
- ensure passenger behaviour is always monitored and maintained at an appropriate standard,
- immediately notify Council of any defects/ damage or likelihood of delayed return
- Maintain the bus in a clean and safe condition,
- ensure goods and equipment are safely stored and secured,
- refuel the bus at the end of the journey and prior to returning to bus storage area.

9. Refuelling of Buses

The fuel level should be recorded on the Community Bus Drivers Checklist prior to use and after use along with the number of litres of petrol replaced. Fuel consumed by the registered user must be replaced prior to returning the bus to the bus storage area. A copy of the fuel docket representing the fuel replaced for that booking, must be submitted when returning the bus keys and Community Bus Drivers Checklist. Failure to do so will result in the registered user being charged for the fuel consumed as indicated in the Community Care fees and charges schedule.

10. Cleaning of Buses

After each use the bus should be returned to the bus storage area clean and in an acceptable condition for other users. This includes sweeping the inside of the bus, removing all rubbish and cleaning seats if required. Where a bus is not satisfactorily cleaned, the registered user will be charged a non-compliance fee as outlined in the Community Care fees and charges schedule.

All comments relating to the cleaning of the bus should be recorded by the registered user on the Community Bus Drivers Checklist.

11. Insurance and Accidents

11.1 Insurance

Melton City Council's vehicle insurance is valid conditionally upon the observation of all Victorian Road Laws.

The registered user will cover cost of any damage, breakage or loss, which occurs to a bus during their period of use, which cannot be legitimately claimed on insurance.

Registered users should note that indemnity will not apply when the bus is driven by a person who:

- is unlicensed, or licence is cancelled or suspended
- is under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs
- is not permitted to drive or seek to use the bus for an unauthorised purpose
- uses the bus for hire, fare taking or reward
- allows the bus to carry a load in excess of that for which it was constructed

Failure of user groups or drivers to adhere to these exclusions will result in total cost recovery being sought by the Melton City Council.

Furthermore, Council does not accept liability for loss or damage of any personal items.

11.2 Accidents

In the event of an accident, the registered user must complete a Melton City Council Motor Vehicle Accident Report Form. The insurance excess associated with any 'at fault' accident and related repairs to the bus will be the responsibility of the registered user. The current excess is \$500 and an additional excess of \$500 per claim applies to drivers under the age of 25.

11.3 Bus Breakdown and Emergencies

Melton City Council's, Civic Centre is not attended after hours or at weekends therefore buses are equipped with an instruction notice including emergency phone number listing to be followed in the event of a breakdown or emergency. This is located in the glove box of the bus.

The instruction notice should be read and understood before driving the bus.

12. Grievance Process

The process to manage misuse or incidents of non-compliance by a registered user will be:

- Step 1: Consultation and discussion
- Step 2: Official caution
- Step 3: Suspended registration for 3-month period
- Step 4: Deregistration as a registered user for a 12-month period

In the instance of misuse or non-compliance of a serious nature, the grievance process may be escalated and could lead directly to Step 3 or Step 4. Each case will be considered on its own merits and the principles of procedural fairness will be followed.

Step 1 Consultation and Discussion

A meeting between the registered user and Community Care representatives will be scheduled with the aim of bringing the misuse or non-compliance issue to the registered users attention for resolution. The discussion may result in determining agreed actions to be undertaken within specific timelines.

Step 2 Official Caution

Further clarification will be sought from the registered user. If the issue is still considered unsatisfactory, Council's Community Care representative will advise the registered user that a written caution will be issued.

Step 3 Suspended Registration for 3 Month Period

A meeting between Council's Community Care representatives and the registered user will be arranged to seek clarification regarding the misuse or non-compliance. If the issue is still considered unsatisfactory the Community Care representative will formally advise the registered user of their 3-month suspension. The formal notification will outline the reason for the suspension and the dates the suspension period is valid.

Step 4 Deregistration as a Registered User for a 12-Month Period

A meeting between Council's Community Care representatives and the registered user will be arranged to seek clarification regarding the misuse or non-compliance. If the issue is still considered unsatisfactory the Community Care representative will formally advise the registered user of their 12-month deregistration. The formal notification will outline the reason for the 12-month deregistration and the dates of the deregistration period. Deregistered users are entitled to reapply for registration at the end of that period.

13. Decision Making

The decision-making process for the community bus service is as follows:

- Eligibility to become a registered user will be made in line with the eligibility criteria outlined in this document by Council's Community Transport Supervisor.
- Eligibility of each booking made by a registered user will be made by Council's Customer Service Officer, in line with the intention of this guide.
- Enforcement of non-compliance charges will be made by Council's Community Transport Supervisor.

DECLARATION

Applicant:

I _____, representing _____
Representative Name *Club/Group Name*

of _____
Club or Group Street Address

_____ *Suburb* _____ *Postcode*

agree to comply with all requirements outlined in this Guide.

_____ *Representative Signature* _____ *Date*

Authorised Person:

Melton City Council Staff Name; _____

_____ *Melton City Council Staff Signature* _____ *Date*