

HOW CAN I MAKE MY CHILD'S COMMUTE TO SCHOOL SAFER?



What:

This question is often heard from parents, especially at transition from Junior to High School, and the child is expected to commute to school for the very first time on their own.

Best advice:

1. If possible, in advance, practise the commute together. Either travel together, or sitting apart (whichever gives the most confidence to the child). Discuss road rules, traffic signals, any challenges along the route and visibility issues (seeing/being seen).
 - a. Practise the following scenarios and what the child should do:
 - Where the child gets off at the wrong stop/station (either too early, or too late)
 - Where the wrong bus/train is taken
 - When trains change their normal stopping patterns.
 - b. Choose the safest route – use any available crossings; make eye contact with any drivers to ensure they have seen you; cross perpendicular to the road; do not run.
 - c. Discuss a plan for communication if the child's phone is unavailable (has no charge, lost etc).
 - d. On the train, point out the emergency communication point located in the train carriage.
2. Mark all valuables and property that may be easily lost; such as musical instruments, laptops, holdalls, bikes/helmets and sports bags. Borrow an engraver and/or a UV pen from Neighbourhood Watch Ku-ring-gai & Hornsby. Consider the use of tracker/tracer products such as AirTag, Tile, or tracking stickers, in order to track valuable belongings.
3. Consider tracking apps, such as 'Glympse', 'Find my Friends' or Google Personal Safety.
4. Suggest that your children travel with other kids living close by. Find a 'travel buddy'.
5. Plan for lost or stolen property. Discuss keeping all belongings within sight at all times. Beware pickpockets and bag-snatchers! If you rest or sleep, ensure all expensive items like phones/wallets are not visible. Report all theft to the police via the **Police Assistance Line: 131 444** or their **Community Portal**.
 - a. Lost or stolen Opal card:
 - Report it to Transport for NSW. It may have been handed in at a station.
 - Block the card.
 - If you have another card, you can transfer the balance of your blocked card to the other card.
 - For more information see Transport for NSW.
 - Once you have another Opal card, you will need to contact Opal Customer Care to request that the balance from your blocked card be transferred to your new card.

FOR EMERGENCIES (Including anyone on your property)
 TO REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS (Crime Stoppers)
 TO REPORT NON-EMERGENCY CRIME (Police Assistance Line)
 IF YOU'RE NOT SURE (Hornsby Police Station)
 TTY—To ask for Police, type PPP
 SPEAK AND LISTEN

000
 1 800 333 000
 131 444
 9476 9799
 106
 1800 555 727

- b. Lost or stolen property:
- Report it to the police.
 - Report it to the school.
 - Report it to the bus/train company eg online via [Transport for NSW \(CDC\)](#).
 - Consider utilising the help of community groups (eg Soccer team, Facebook) to assist in locating the items.
6. Warn your child of possible dangers. Discuss what to do if approached by a stranger. Discuss how to recognize suspicious behaviour and handle a potentially dangerous situation. Consider Self Defence training for your child, which includes situational awareness and avoidance strategies (eg [Personal Strength](#)).
 7. Make your child memorise your contact details in addition to their phone contacts. Agree on a 'codeword' for emergencies, for instance when a person other than the parent is meeting the child and proof is needed prior to the child accompanying the stranger. Any change of plans should be confirmed by the stranger using the codeword.
 8. We suggest parents join a parent 'chat group' (such as Facebook, or WhatsApp) for use in emergencies, eg for emergency pick-ups.
 9. When travelling alone, suggest the child choose the train compartment closest to the guard.
 - a. If the child feels unsafe, communicate immediately to the guard/a transit police officer.
 - b. Use the emergency help points located throughout stations on the Transport for NSW network.
 - c. If you feel intimidated by someone with you in a train carriage, jump out at the next station, go down a carriage and hop back on.
 10. Discuss how wearing a backpack makes you unbalanced and likely to tip backwards – especially on a station platform, balcony, or escalator. Beware the other passengers' faces. Attempt to lighten the load.
 11. Explain that if you drop anything on train tracks, to ask staff for assistance, use the emergency help point, or phone **CityRail's Security Hotline: 9379 4444**. If anyone goes onto railway tracks, it's not only incredibly dangerous, it's a criminal offence!
 12. Suggest that if your child is ever in doubt, return to the school for help. Discuss other trustworthy people/places to go for help: eg station staff, police station, bus driver, shopkeeper. A good rule of thumb is: "anyone in uniform; if not, then any mum with a child: then any dad with a child, a lady".
 13. Discuss the danger of extreme weather conditions and precautions, eg dehydration.
 14. Regularly ask your child for any problems they may encounter on their commute. There may be problems you can't foresee that you can now effectively address.

Why:

Every child deserves to feel safe and in control on their commute to school. 'Better to be safe than sorry!'

Note:

Neighbourhood Watch Ku-ring-gai & Hornsby cannot endorse any product or service; we can only bring them to your attention. You must do your own research.

This information was compiled by volunteers with Neighbourhood Watch Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby. Please contact your Crime Prevention Officer (CPO) at Hornsby Police Station for more information. Phone: 9476 9799. Tips and other resources are available to download free from the Neighbourhood Watch in Ku-ring-gai & Hornsby website: au-NHWKuringgaiHornsby.org/Tips/.

See also the community's one-stop-shop of crime prevention information: WatchOut.org.au.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or at our [website](#). Contact us at: NHWKuringgaiHornsby@gmail.com.