



SUBMISSION

Review of the Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes

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Role of the Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO)

The PTO is an independent industry-based Ombudsman scheme, established in 2004 to receive, investigate and resolve complaints about public transport services provided by Victorian public transport operators that are members of the PTO scheme. PTO scheme members include passenger train, tram and bus companies, and others involved in providing public transport services, such as Public Transport Victoria and Southern Cross Station. The scheme is funded by the industry, based on an annual fixed membership fee and on a variable user-pays basis, calculated on annual complaint numbers.

The PTO complies with the **National Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes** and utilises the principles of alternative dispute resolution to effectively and efficiently handle complaints. If a complaint cannot be resolved through agreement, the Ombudsman is able to make a Binding Decision to resolve the complaint, or may dismiss the complaint.

The PTO has extensive experience in handling customer complaints and working with the public transport industry to improve customer service practices and internal dispute resolution (IDR) processes. We also play an important role in the identification of systemic issues facing the public transport industry, including investigation and resolution of issues within PTO jurisdiction and referral to appropriate agencies for other issues.

Further information about the operation of the PTO, including public reports can be found on our website www.ptovic.com.au.

PTO Vision

Through providing leading dispute resolution services, we will contribute to improving how public transport services meet the needs of the Victorian community.

Cultural Values

Excellence:	Quality focused, Accountable, Responsive, Accurate We strive for excellence because we value what we do
Integrity:	Open, Confident, Strong, Committed We are transparent, honest and consistent
Leadership:	Inspired, Creative, Courageous, Effective We lead through encouragement, guidance and innovation
Respect:	Empathic, Considerate, Honest, Fair We treat ourselves and others with dignity
Independence:	Equitable, Reasonable, Consistent, Transparent We are impartial and objective

**Review of the Benchmarks for Industry-Based
Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes
(also known as the *National Benchmarks*)**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Commonwealth Consumer Affairs Advisory Council, Consumer Policy Framework Unit's Review of the *National Benchmarks*.

My interest in responding to this review is based on the experience of my office handling customer complaints in the context of the *National Benchmarks*; which underpin the governance, policies and procedures and awareness activities of the PTO.

Since their introduction in 1997, the *National Benchmarks* have provided a strong and consistent framework for the independent resolution of complaints by Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes. This is vitally important for consumers who have found themselves in a situation where they have required the services of these Schemes and/or other External Dispute Resolution (EDR) offices which use the *National Benchmarks*.

The significant increase in complaint receipt experienced by all of these EDR bodies indicates that the *National Benchmarks* are even more relevant today than they were in 1997.

I fully support the *National Benchmarks* in their current format; however, I also recognise that changes have occurred in the EDR environment since 1997. Accordingly, CCAAC's review is very timely and appropriate.

As a member of the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association, I endorse its submission and suggestions for modernising the *National Benchmarks* to ensure that they continue to be as relevant and useful in the future as they have been since their introduction.

Thank you again, for this opportunity. If you would like any further information, please contact me on (03)8623 2111 or at enquiries@ptovic.com.au.

**Janine Young
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