

2019

Customer Experience Bulletin

PUBLIC
TRANSPORT
OMBUDSMAN



LISTEN · ACT · RESOLVE · IMPROVE

August 2019

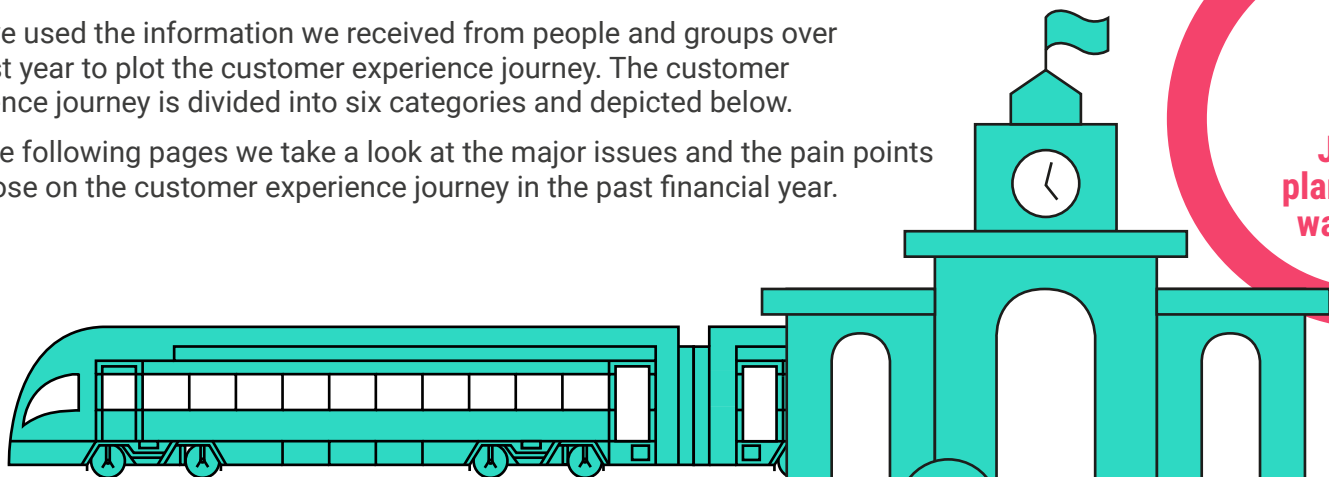
Customer experience journey

Welcome to the Public Transport Ombudsman's first annual bulletin on the customer experience of public transport in Victoria.

We have used the information we received from people and groups over the past year to plot the customer experience journey. The customer experience journey is divided into six categories and depicted below.

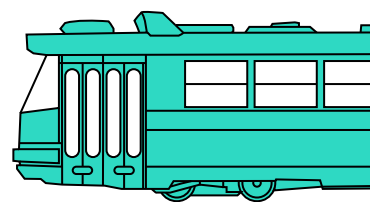
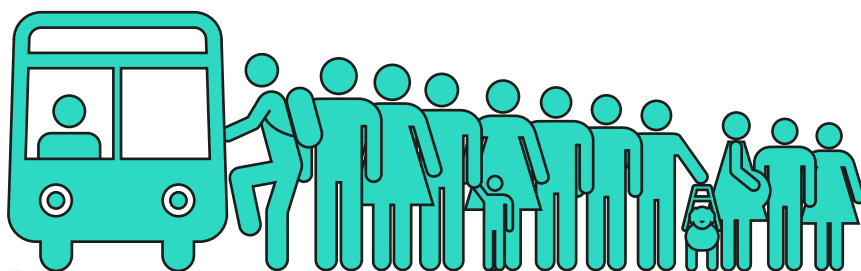
Over the following pages we take a look at the major issues and the pain points that arose on the customer experience journey in the past financial year.

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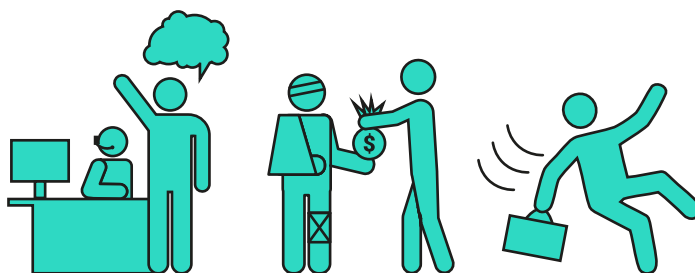
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On your
journey



5

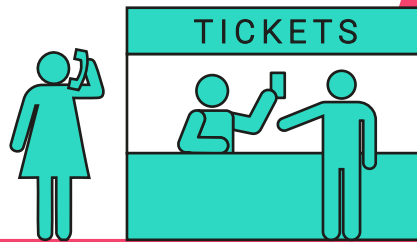
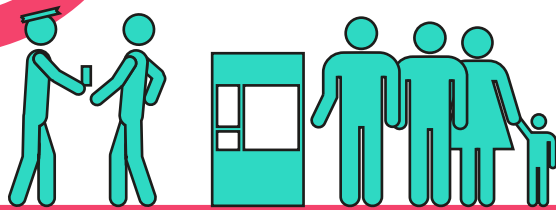
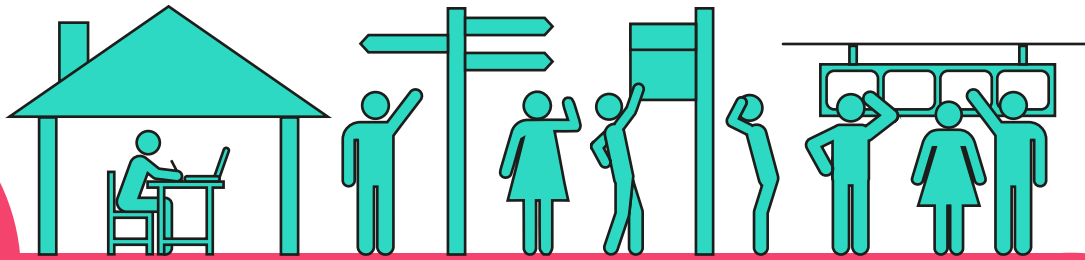
Claims,
compensation
and contact
centre



6
Comm
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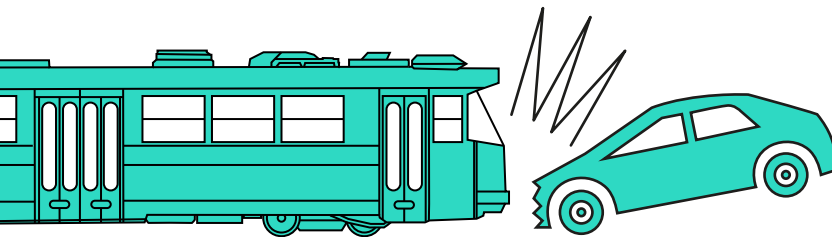
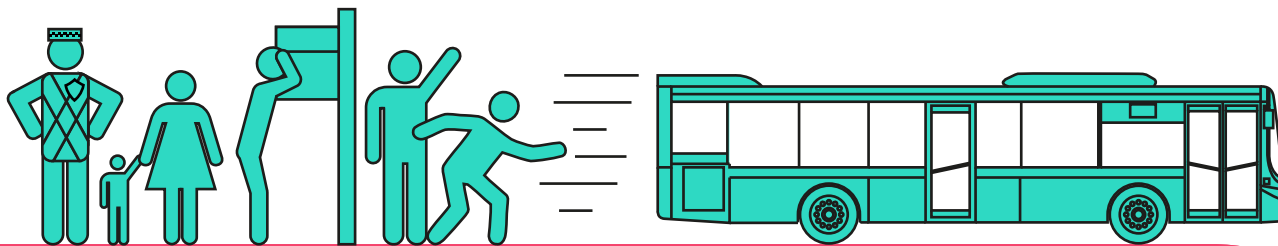
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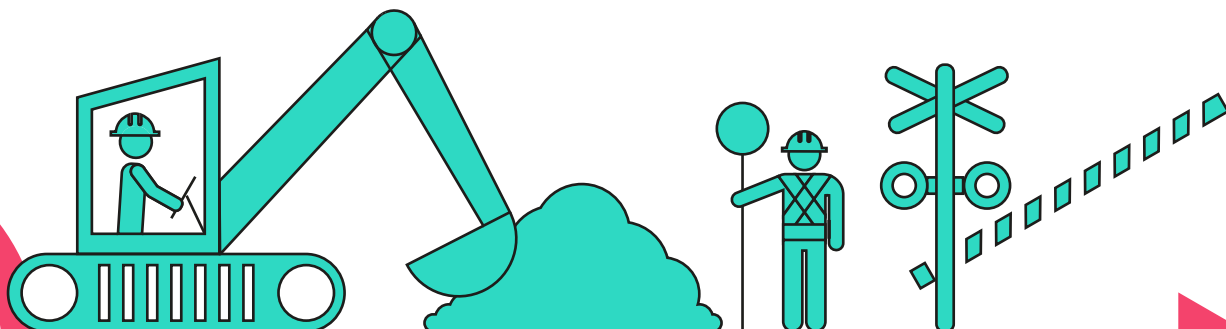
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Buying and
managing your
ticket



4

Complications
and
disruptions



5

Community
experience



01

Journey planning and wayfinding



Planning and wayfinding are how people navigate around public transport. They include planning your journey online before you leave home, getting information at stops, platforms and onboard, reading timetables and using online information and social media to stay informed when things change.

Inadequate information has a significant impact on the accessibility of public transport – imagine seeing “Listen for announcements” on the information screens at Flinders Street station when you have a hearing impairment, or knowing you have to be vigilant about the number of stations you travel by train if you have a vision impairment because the onboard announcements are not always in sync with the correct station.

In the past year we received 271 complaints, containing 298 issues, relating to information about service delivery and timetables. A complaint can contain more than one issue.

People who complained to us were generally dissatisfied

with the availability and consistency of information, with 73 complaints about information on websites, apps and available via social media.

We heard from passengers that different communication channels can provide inconsistent and even contradictory advice that impacts their ability to plan and get around.

“...imagine seeing
“Listen for announcements”
on the information screens
at Flinders Street station
when you have a hearing
impairment...”

We heard about a recent disruption on a metropolitan train line that resulted in contradictory advice via Twitter, the Metro Notify app and announcements on board the train and at a station platform. Passengers were advised that trains would not be running and bus replacements had been arranged, and at the same time that trains were about to start running again.

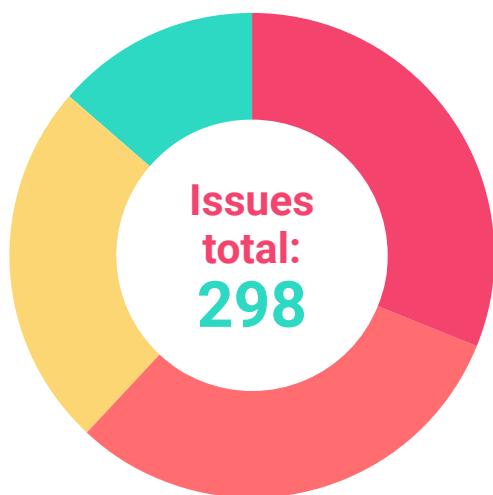
People left the train after being advised by the train driver that trains did not appear to be going anywhere, only to be ushered back onto the train by station staff. Trains began running again shortly, however the Metro Notify app continued to say that trains were suspended.

In response to this experience and others we have heard about, we are exploring the issue of inconsistent and missing information through our systemic issues process and will engage with public transport operators about improvements as part of that process. We encourage operators and PTV to continue to improve the consistency of information provided across all channels to ensure accessibility for all.

We conducted 34 investigations into complaints about information, timetables, websites and social media. One third of the investigations were into V/Line’s management of information provided during disrupted and cancelled services.



Complaint issue types



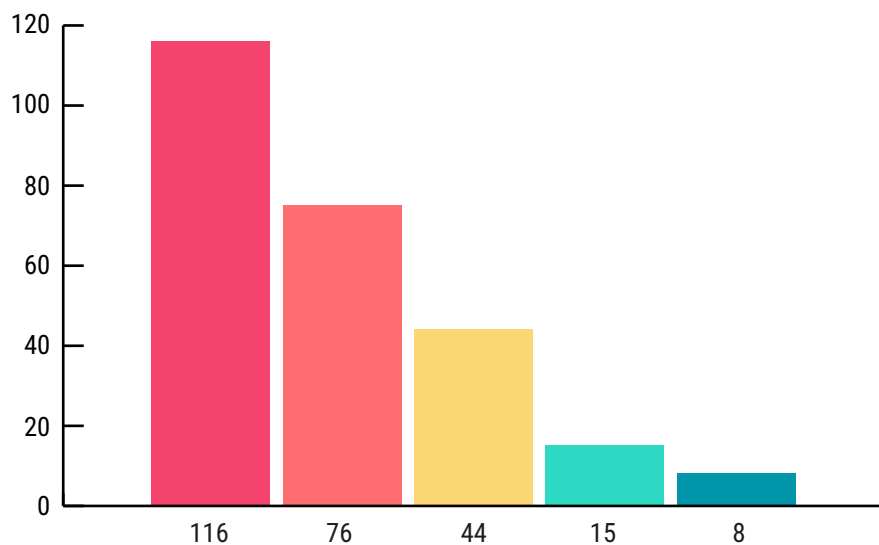
Information Availability (93)

Timetables (92)

Website/Social Media (73)

Information Accuracy (40)

Cases by operator (top 5)



Public Transport Victoria

Metro trains

V/Line

Yarra Trams

Transdev

02

Buying and managing your ticket



Buying and managing tickets is the biggest driver of complaints in the customer journey. We received 1026 complaints containing 1381 issues about ticketing in the past year, mostly about myki. Fifty two of those complaints were about paper tickets in use on V/Line in regional areas and SkyBus services.

The main complaint issue is refunds (417) followed by problems topping up myki (257) and people concerned about myki charges (157).

Myki refunds can be complicated, and we hear from many people who are confused by the process. We appreciate that one of the considerations for PTV is making sure that everyone pays the same for their travel, and people do not benefit financially through buying and refunding a pass. However because of the way a myki refund is calculated, it is not always in someone's best interests to get a refund when their travel circumstances change.

For example, one customer contacted us after he got a refund with three months to go on his yearly myki pass. He was told by PTV that he should get a refund of around \$100 and went ahead with the refund, but only received \$4. We found that although

“Our view is that PTV needs to provide clear information to people who wish to make a claim to ensure they can make a decision in their own best interests. Because the choice between a refund and reimbursement can be confusing, PTV's procedures should be designed to promote the best outcomes for consumers.”

the calculation was correct under the rules, he got wrong advice from PTV. Ultimately he would have been better off keeping the myki pass, even if he wasn't travelling regularly.

The application of the refund calculation is the subject of

a systemic enquiry by our office, which includes the advice people are given by PTV on their options. It may be that they qualify for a reimbursement due to special circumstances, in which case the amount they receive could be higher than a refund.

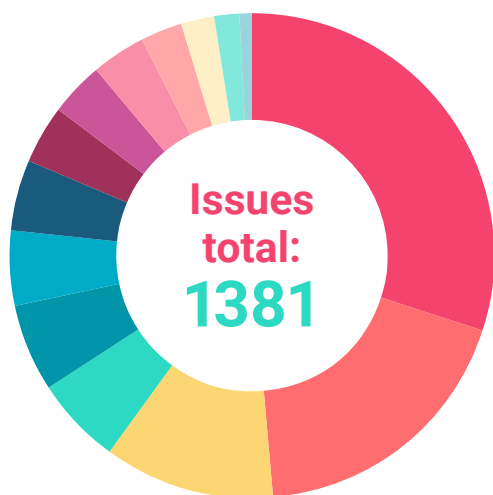
Our initial view is that PTV has an interest in providing clear information to people who wish to make a claim to ensure they can make a decision in their own best interests. Because the choice between a refund and reimbursement can be confusing, PTV's procedures should be designed to promote the best outcomes for consumers.

Since February this year we have received 28 complaints about mobile myki; a relatively small figure in the context of around 100,000 people using mobile myki on their phones.

We will continue to talk with PTV about the customer experience of myki refunds and reimbursements and make sure systemic issues are addressed.

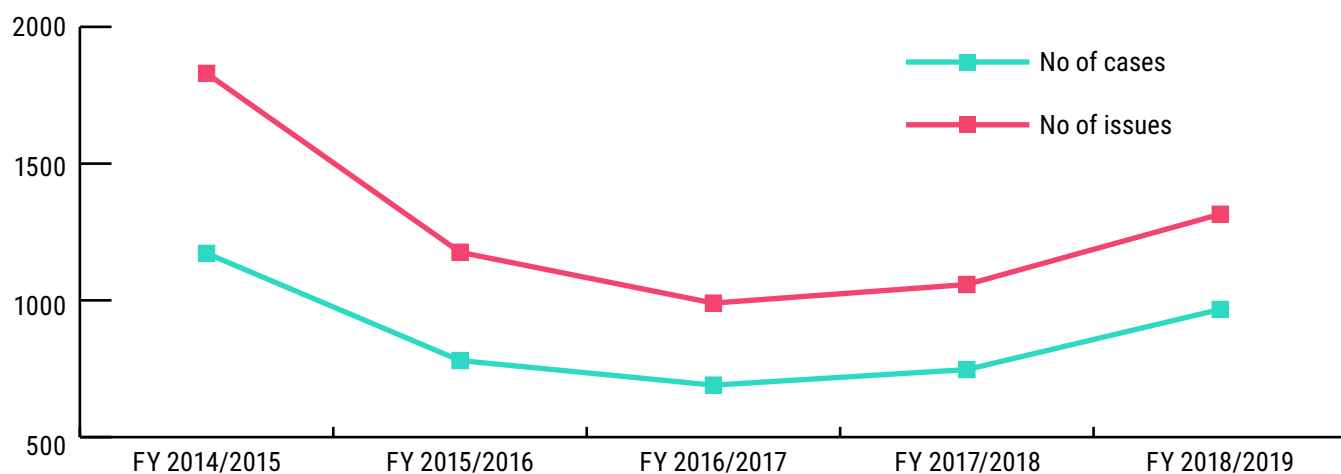


Complaint issue types



Refund/Reimbursement (417)	Concessions & free travel (54)
Top Up (257)	Vending Machine (51)
Charges (157)	Lost/Stolen/Damaged (49)
Account (80)	Point of Sale (39)
Terms & Conditions/VFTM (80)	Mobile (28)
Replacement (68)	Card Reader/Gate (24)
Balance transfer (67)	Dormant (10)

Myki cases over five years



03

On your journey



The on-journey experience includes all aspects of travel from the time of setting out until you reach your destination. This includes accessibility and comfort of trains, buses and trams as well as interactions with public transport staff along the way.

However, there are some notable exceptions. Issues relating directly to disruptions and service delivery are being reported separately in the next stage “complications and disruptions”. Authorised officer issues are closely linked to public transport fines, so we are reporting on them at stage 5 of the journey in “claims, compensation and contact centre” where we look at issues relating to fines.

In the last year we received 724 complaints containing 872 issues relating to on-journey experiences.

People complained to us about the location and amenity of stations and stops as well as the accessibility of trains, trams and buses.

496 or 57% of all issues in this category relate to staff, and of these, 392 issues specifically call out drivers, including a failure to pick up or set down passengers, safe driving and conduct more generally.

Transdev had the most driver related issues (100) followed by Yarra Trams (80) and Ventura (48).

“Safety is a challenging area of complaints for operators and PTV and we encourage more work on training and support for drivers.”

Driver complaints are usually about tram, bus and coach drivers, who are more likely to have interactions with passengers.

Yarra Trams had the most issues related to failure to pick up or set down, with 24, followed by Transdev (20) and Ventura Bus Lines (18).

One passenger told us of his experience waiting at the bus stop to catch an early morning

bus to the station. The bus drove straight past the bus stop at full speed before stopping 100 metres down the road.

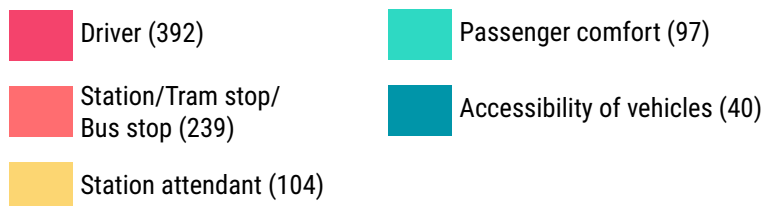
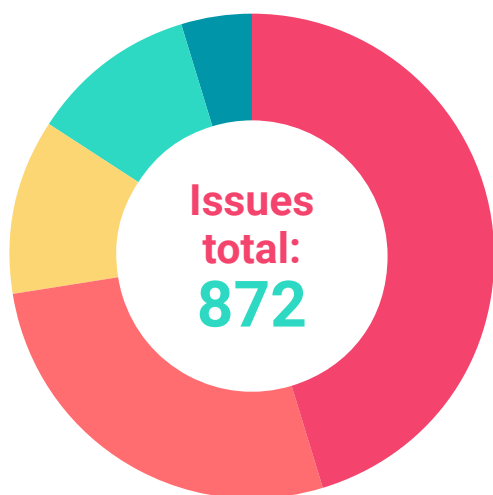
The passenger told us that he did not feel safe walking alongside traffic to the stopped bus, so he went home again and got someone to drive him to the station. The bus company confirmed that the bus did not stop, and additional training was provided to the driver, together with ongoing monitoring, to ensure it did not happen again.

People who complained to us about driver safety and dangerous driving lodged 31 issues about Transdev, 29 issues about Yarra Trams and 12 issues about Ventura Bus Lines. Complaints are received from passengers travelling on services as well as from road users and other members of the community who want to report dangerous conduct.

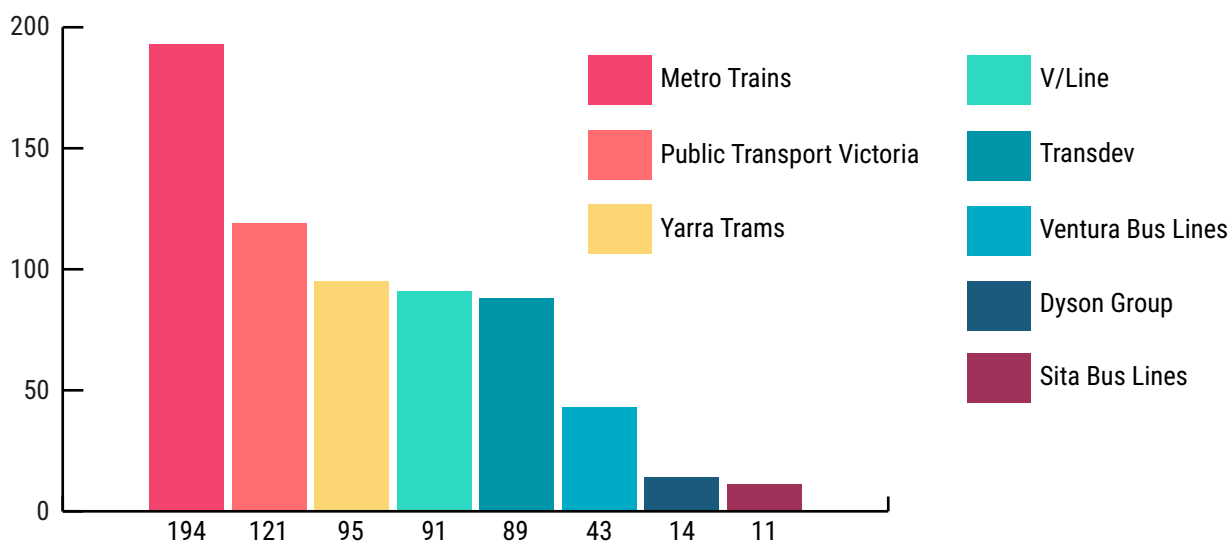
Safety is a challenging area of complaints for operators and PTV and we encourage more work on training and support for drivers.



Complaint issue types



Cases by operator (top 8)



04

Complications and disruptions



Patronage of the metropolitan and regional public transport network continues to grow, at the same time that major works are impacting services and infrastructure. The significant number of issues in our cases indicate the multiple pressure points that can complicate a journey.

Over the past year we received 727 complaints containing 1152 issues about service delivery failures. Issues relating to punctuality and reliability were present within 42% of the complaints we received.

Both metropolitan and regional train services generated the most complaints – we received 281 complaints about Metro Trains and 174 complaints about V/Line.

Replacements services generated 14% of issues raised in this journey stage, and we undertook over 30 investigations into replacement services complaints. Most of these related to insufficient service and dissatisfaction with the information provided.

Our sense is that there has been goodwill and understanding in the community that planned disruptions are necessary to facilitate improvements to the public transport system.

“ Disruptions and complications are awful for everyone and can be particularly challenging for people with disabilities and more vulnerable travellers. Operators and PTV need to focus on helping people make good choices in a difficult situation. ”

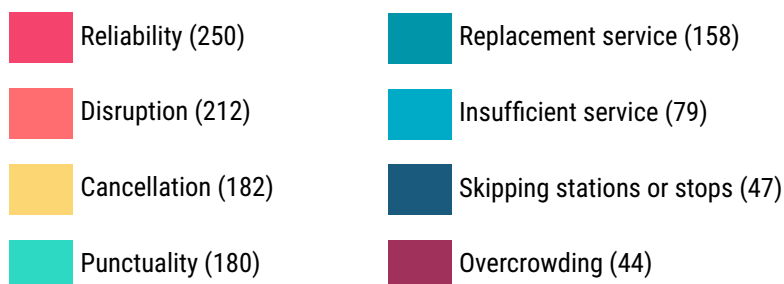
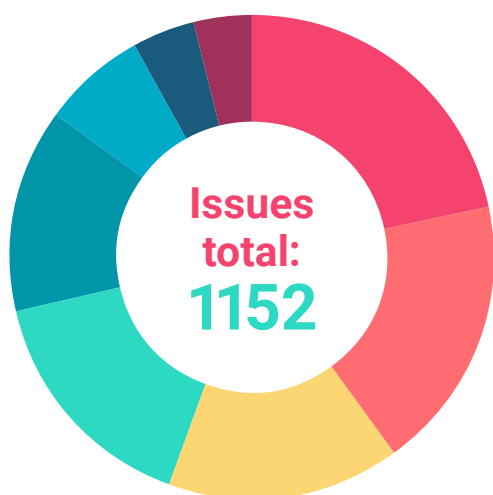
However, an unplanned disruption on top of a planned shutdown can have a significant impact, as we saw in April this year when the effects of a major shutdown on the Frankston, Cranbourne and Pakenham train lines were compounded by an unexpected peak hour shutdown of the Sandringham line. This is when an effective management plan is crucial.

Disruptions and complications are awful for everyone and can be particularly challenging for people with disabilities and more vulnerable travellers. Operators and PTV need to focus on helping people make good choices in a difficult situation.

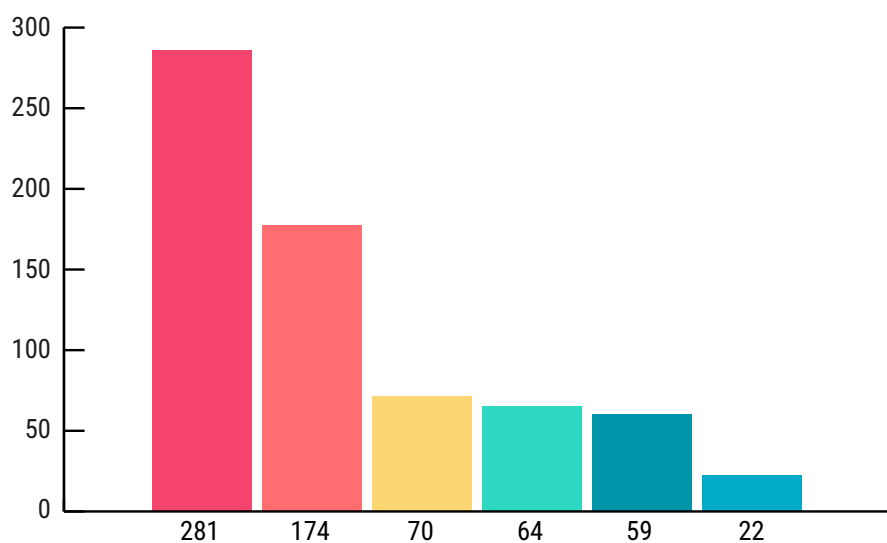
Through our systemic issues process, we have started looking at how different public transport operators manage unplanned disruptions. It is inevitable that things will go wrong from time to time, and operators need to have effective management plans that can be implemented swiftly. Providing people with prompt, detailed and accurate information about the disruption as well as transport alternatives is crucial, so that they can make informed travel decisions that are in their best interests.



Complaint issue types



Cases by operator (top 6)



05

Claims, compensation and contact centre



The customer experience of public transport can continue after you get to the end of your journey. For example, you might have received a fine or wish to query an aspect of your journey like charges to your myki.

Complaints about fines usually figure in our top five issues for the year. There seems to be a perception in the community that we investigate public transport fines, however we cannot review a decision to issue a fine because the Department of Transport is not a member of our Scheme. People contacted us with 328 issues about fines in the past year.

We provide people with information on how to appeal a fine, and if the complaint involves an issue about an Authorised Officer (AO) then we can investigate that as a separate matter. Since the end of the on-the-spot penalty fare trial in 2015, we have seen a sharp decrease in the number of issues involving AOs – from a high of 364 issues in 2016 to 82 issues this year.

The most common issue by far in complaints about AOs is AO behaviour.

We also received a handful of complaints about Protective Services Officers (PSOs) – 19 in total. We are not able to look at complaints about PSOs and typically refer people with complaints to Victoria Police, who employ the PSOs.

“A clear and responsive avenue for complaints is an essential part of the customer experience and promotes confidence in the overall public transport system.”

The biggest driver of complaints in this category is the PTV Contact Centre. The contact centre is the first point of telephone contact for people who want to lodge a complaint about public transport, as well as a source of public transport information and travel bookings. Of the 453 issues relating to the contact centre, 228 were in relation to handling of complaints.

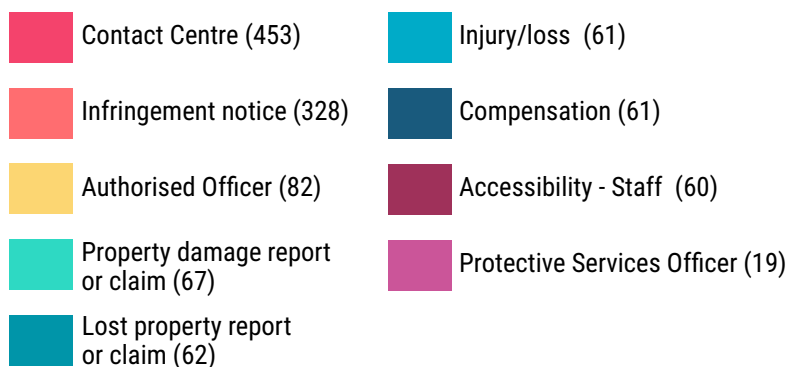
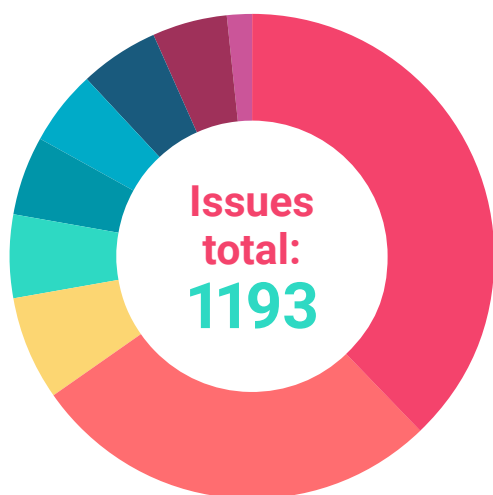
One consumer told us of her experience of receiving incorrect and inconsistent advice about services and fares when she rang the contact centre several times over a period of two days. She eventually contacted our office and told us that she had spent in excess of two hours making a complaint to PTV and had not received a response. PTV confirmed that the consumer had received incorrect and inadequate information and identified opportunities for training and clearer information for contact centre staff.

A clear and responsive avenue for complaints is an essential part of the customer experience and promotes confidence in the overall public transport system. When dealing with customer complaints, PTV needs to get it right first time. If the person is still dissatisfied, there must to be a clear pathway to our office.

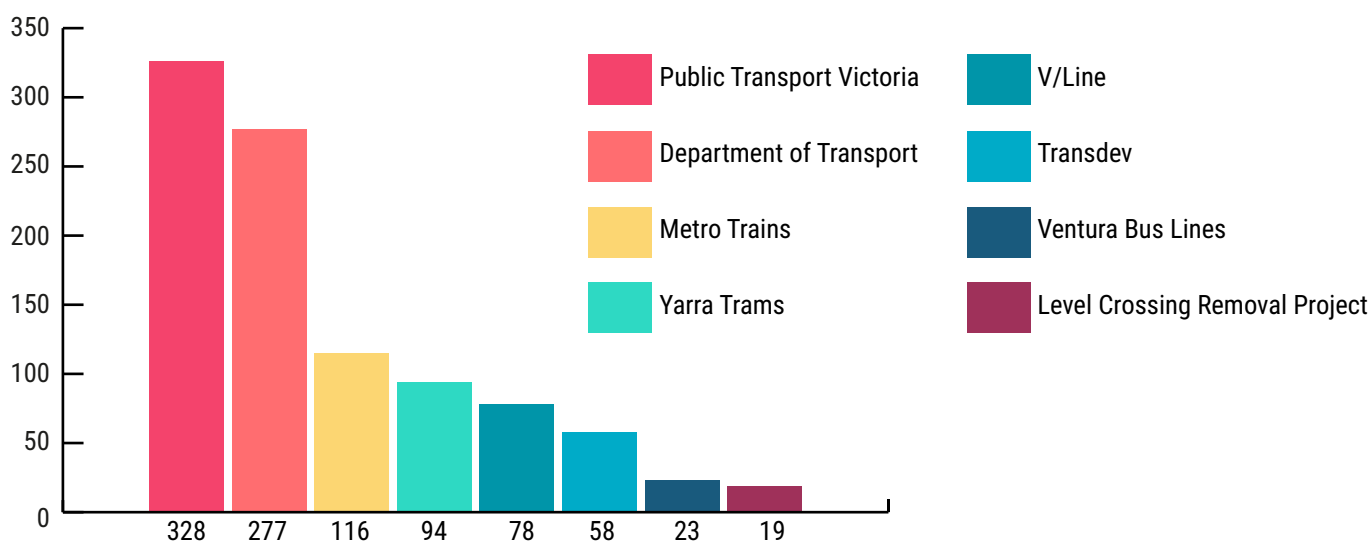
The role of our office extends beyond resolving individual complaints to asking questions about why things go wrong and making public transport better for everyone.



Complaint issue types



Cases by operator (top 8)



06

Community experience



Increasingly, the customer experience of public transport is expanding to encompass more experiences beyond those of passengers. People living near tram, train and bus lines have different experiences, as do those affected by level crossing removals, or work on the Melbourne Metro Tunnel. Squealing trams, buses idling across driveways and dust from public transport building sites are some of the issues that people complain to us about.

Within our three major issue types, we had 185 complaints about environmental nuisance. Environmental nuisance includes a wide range of issues that impact on people such as noise, dust, vibration and unpleasant smells. Investigating complaints like these can involve our conciliators undertaking site visits, often with the public transport operator also in attendance, to speak with people to understand the impact of the issue and often experience it first-hand.

We visited one resident living near a train line to experience the rail noise he was

complaining about and that he said was causing things to fall off shelves in his home. At ground level by the tracks, the noise was not very loud, however in the upper story of the house it was far more noticeable. As technical staff from Metro were also in attendance, they were able to identify that the noise was caused by an issue with the track that could be fixed fairly easily.

“When people have clear and accurate information, they are prepared and able to take steps to deal with the disruption to their lives.”

Getting first-hand experience of the problem in complaints like these is often the best way to find practical and lasting outcomes.

The most complaints about this aspect of customer experience were about Metro Trains, followed by Level Crossing Removal Project and Yarra Trams. People living close to train and tram services can be impacted on a daily basis by

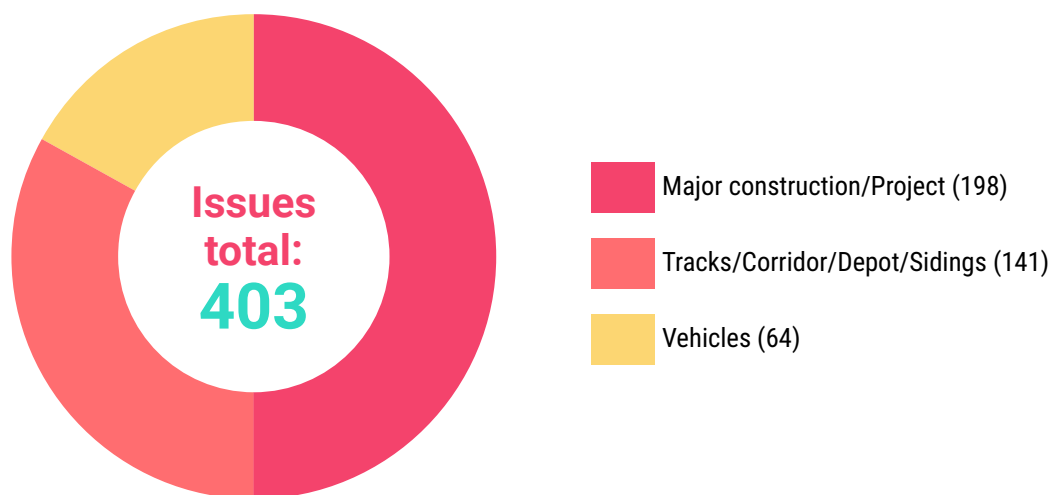
noise — from unplanned works and maintenance to station announcements and tram bells.

Just as works and disruptions can wreak havoc with travel plans, they can also significantly interrupt the lives of people around them. Where possible, we encourage public transport operators to notify those likely to be affected in advance of the proposed works, their duration and the likely impact. When people have clear and accurate information, they are prepared and able to take steps to deal with the disruption to their lives.

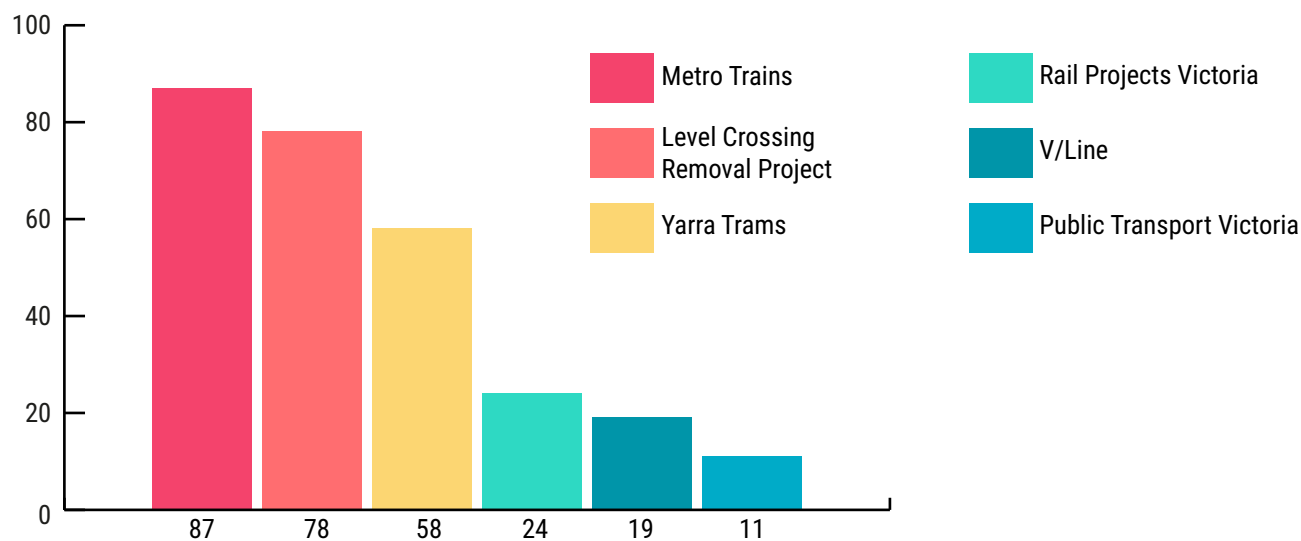
We note the significant effort to engage the community about level crossing removals and metro tunnel works that has resulted in relatively low levels of complaints to our office. Over the year we received 57 complaints about engagement and consultation in relation to major construction projects.



Complaint issue types



Cases by operator (top 6)



07

Contact us

The Public Transport Ombudsman is a free, independent service that looks at complaints about public transport in Victoria. We resolve complaints and also work with public transport operators, PTV and the Government to help make public transport better for everyone.

If you or someone you know wants to discuss customer experience issues or has a complaint about public transport, we would like to hear from you.

This is how you can make a complaint or raise an issue with us:

Phone 1800 466 865

Email enquiries@ptovic.com.au

Website ptovic.com.au

Facebook – facebook.com/PublicTransportOmbudsman

Mail

Public Transport Ombudsman
PO Box 538
Collins Street West
Melbourne Vic 8007

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment you can contact us through:
[The National Relay Service.](#)

Speak another language and want to complain?

Information about our service in various languages can be found on our [website](#) or you can contact the [Translating and Interpreting Service](#) on 131 450.

Need help lodging your complaint?

You can nominate a carer or advocate, family member or friend to lodge a complaint on your behalf. Access information on how to nominate an authorised representative on our [website](#).

