

## MEDIA RELEASE

Public Transport Ombudsman

Tuesday 6 December 2022

# COMPLAINTS RISE AS PATRONAGE INCREASES, OMBUDSMAN TO LOOK AT PUBLIC TRANSPORT FINES

## EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2022

Data released today in the *Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO) Annual Report* shows a 10 per cent increase in public transport complaints handled by the PTO during the 2021-22 financial year.

***“The increase in complaints we’ve seen is broadly in line with the increase in the number of Victorians travelling again on public transport”***, the Public Transport Ombudsman, Mr Simon McKenzie, said today. Despite the increase, Mr McKenzie said that the types of complaints being brought to the Ombudsman this year were largely unchanged. ***“The proportional mix of complaint types remains similar to last year, with a few notable exceptions”***, he said.

Consumer approaches to the PTO (including complaints) may involve one or more public transport-related issue, which the PTO tracks individually. The top 5 issues reported within the combined 1,423 complaints handled by the PTO in 2021-22 were:

- **Public transport staff:** 797 complaints (56% of complaints contained this issue)
- **Land and infrastructure:** 398 complaints (28% of complaints contained this issue)
- **Service delivery:** 371 complaints (26% of complaints contained this issue)
- **Ticketing issues (including myki):** 285 complaints (20% of complaints contained this issue)
- **Trams, trains and buses:** 223 complaints (16% of complaints reported this issue)

Bucking the increased complaints trend was **myki issues**, which fell slightly and featured in 232 complaints (down from 249 in 2020-21). Mr McKenzie attributed the drop to less pressure on the ticketing system - last year, refund and reimbursement services were stretched during prolonged lockdown periods, when holders of time-based myki passes sought refunds for products that no longer suited their travel patterns.

Mr McKenzie also highlighted an uptick in complaints about **public transport accessibility** and **Authorised Officers**, which rose from 35 to 82 complaints and from 36 to 56 complaints respectively.

*Continued.*

***“Complaints about accessibility and Authorised Officers can shine a light on important fairness and equity issues and can lead to change if the system isn’t meeting community expectations”,***  
Mr McKenzie said.

Mr McKenzie also announced today that, by arrangement with the Department of Transport (DOT), the PTO can now handle complaints about public transport fines where certain ‘special’ or ‘exceptional’ circumstances apply. These circumstances include homelessness, mental illness, cognitive disability, family violence or addiction to alcohol or other drugs.

The new arrangement does not replace DOT’s existing Infringement review process. Instead, it gives Victorians an additional avenue to help sort out a complaint about Transport Infringement Notice in situations where their circumstances may warrant reconsideration. ***“We will take a case management approach where necessary”,*** said Mr McKenzie. ***“For example, PTO staff may help a person to present information that shows that in all fairness, a fine should not be pursued any further.”***

***“I’m very pleased to announce this joint initiative between my office and the Department of Transport. It’s the result of a common goal to improve the accessibility and overall fairness of the fines review system”,*** Mr McKenzie said.

***“It’s important that people know that contacting the Department of Transport is still the first step for appealing a public transport fine”,*** added Mr McKenzie. ***“But if the Department upholds its decision to fine you, the Public Transport Ombudsman can now look at the fairness of that decision in certain circumstances and may take this up with the Department.”***

For further detail view the [PTO Annual Report 2021-22](#), which includes information about the PTO’s:

- ***focus on accessibility*** – including Jin and Paulos’ consumer stories – see pages 34, 18 and 38 respectively.
- ***focus on fairness*** – including the PTO’s new role in the **Transport Infringement Notice review process** and contribution to the [Travel Access Pass](#) program for primary and secondary students in crisis – see page 37

PTO Scheme members are public transport operators, major transport projects and the Department of Transport / Public Transport Victoria (PTV). View a full list of [PTO Scheme members](#).

The PTO office is open during standard business hours, or enquiries can be lodged out of hours via our website. Visit our [contact page](#) or call 1800 466 865.

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