

Delayed and no responses to complaints

Providing timely responses to complaints is critical to the credibility and effectiveness of any complaint or feedback process. Where responses to complaints about public transport are not provided by operators, or are not provided within established timeframes, complainants will feel justifiably aggrieved. They may seek further redress including by making a new complaint to the Public Transport Ombudsman ("PTO").

PTO approach to complaints where the operator response has been delayed or not provided

Where a complaint includes an issue that public transport operator did not provide a response to a complaint, or provided a delayed response, the PTO will request that the operator separately consider this matter, in addition to the substantive issue of complaint, when providing information for the PTO investigation.

Where the public transport operator agrees that a response to the complaint was not provided or was delayed, the PTO would expect that a reasonable resolution of the complaint would include:

- an explanation as to why the response was not provided or delayed
- an apology to the complainant for the failure to provide a response, or for providing a delayed response
- consideration of a good-will gesture, such as Metcard tickets, reimbursement of taxi fares or similar actions. In considering whether to offer such a gesture, the operator should consider:
 - the subject matter and outcome of the complaint
 - the nature of the investigation required
 - the reasons for the failure to respond or late response
 - the time taken to deal with the complaint.

Where complainants have been required to approach the PTO because there has been no response or a delayed response to a complaint, an explanation, apology and goodwill gesture recognises the inconvenience caused by the failure of the operator to meet expected standards.

This resolution is in addition to any other resolution arising from the substantive matter of complaint.

Case Study

A passenger made a complaint to a public transport operator, and received an automated response advising a staff member would contact the passenger within 7 business days. When the passenger did not receive a response, they contacted the PTO. During the PTO investigation the operator confirmed the passenger was not contacted as a result of an administrative oversight. The operator apologised to the passenger, and offered a goodwill gesture of a daily Zone 1 and 2 Metcard. The passenger accepted this offer.