



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed: 2.00 am 28 November 2013

PTO Annual Report reveals complaints up 23% and systemic causes under scrutiny

The release of the Public Transport Ombudsman 2013 Annual Report today reveals that complaints to the office by commuters is up 23% (from 3,555 in 2011/12 to 4,377 in 2012/13), and most were related to myki.

The PTO also finalised significantly more investigations, 708 compared to 437 the previous year.

Now in its 10th year of operation, this year's Annual Report outlined a challenging year for the PTO, which handled the increased caseload with no additional resources. This led to innovative sharing and support arrangements with another Ombudsman scheme to help manage complaints at peak times. The PTO also pushed for industry to have a greater focus on resolving systemic issues that are the root cause of complaints.

During the full rollout of the myki ticketing system across Melbourne, the PTO identified and resolved 18 systemic issues which were causing consumer complaints. Three other detailed systemic investigations were finalised involving Metro Trains and V/Line service issues.

"It's really important that when people have a complaint about public transport that they speak up – it helps address the problem for them individually and they are helping to identify the underlying problems in the public transport system. We watch for any emerging patterns so we can act on them and do our part in improving the public transport system for everyone," explained Janine Young, Victoria's Public Transport Ombudsman.

The Report also reveals that while Public Transport Victoria (PTV) ticketing complaints about myki comprised 39% of total cases received by the PTO, and overall, the number of complaints was up, this was an improvement for PTV against the previous year (2011/12) – when the ticketing proportion of all cases was 46%.

Most PTO members had an increase in cases recorded compared to the previous financial year. In 2012/13 the increases were:

- PTV (ticketing) - 1,720 cases, up from 1,640 (5% increase)
- Metro Trains – 862 cases, up from 634 (36% increase)
- Yarra Trams – 243 cases, up from 190 (28% increase)
- V/Line – 241 cases, up from 159 (52% increase)
- Bus Operators – 219 cases, up from 152 (45% increase).

Ms Young said that it was important not to focus only on myki in light of the numbers.

“We should not lose sight of some other very important areas that cause complaints. All operators and the industry as a whole must continue to look at ways they can improve the services they provide including accessibility and customer service,” she said.

Ms Young pointed to the release of a key report looking into accessibility issues in September 2013. The Closing the Accessibility Gap report included 14 recommendations which could make public transport more accessible, especially for those with mobility issues, and urged operators to be more innovative in their approach to customer service and information provision.

“In the 2013/14 financial year we will be monitoring the responses to our recommendations very closely. We want to see progress,” said Ms Young.

“In the year ahead, we will also focus our efforts on increasing the efficiency and timeliness of our own dispute resolution process and collaborating with operators to improve theirs. We will continue our awareness raising efforts and outreach work, and we will keep a keen eye on monitoring systemic issues – particularly those related to myki”.

“Victoria has a great resource – now nearly 10 years old – in an independent Ombudsman Scheme devoted to public transport, especially as the popularity of public transport continues its rapid rise. We all have a role to play in the development of the system. Ours is to focus on improving the commuter experience through strong, independent and thoughtful identification of areas that need improvement as well as playing our part in resolving complaints and disputes,” she said.

“Everyone has the right to be heard and our public transport system can only be improved if people speak up – for themselves, or for others,” Ms Young concluded.

Also announced in the Annual Report was the reappointment of Ms Young as the Public Transport Ombudsman for a further term of five years, following the completion this year of her initial three-year term.

The PTO can be contacted in the following ways:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Free call | 1800 466 865 |
| National Relay Service | www.relayservice.com.au |
| TTY/Voice calls/Speak & Listen | 1300 555 727 (then ask for 1800 466 865) |
| Interpreter | 131 450 |
| Email | enquiries@ptovic.com.au |
| Web | www.ptovic.com.au |

Media inquiries: Kim Rushidi - 03 8623 2111