

On Track

PUBLIC
TRANSPORT
OMBUDSMAN
LIMITED



Welcome to the first edition of the PTO's e-newsletter, On Track. On Track will inform our stakeholders about case trends, emerging complaint issues and PTO activities.

On Track's goal is to keep all stakeholders up-to-date with the issues consumers are raising with us and increase your understanding of the principles and processes that underpin the PTO's work.

PTO Members—Victoria's public transport operators and key bodies, will find some suggested initiatives to address complaint issues arising from the services they deliver.

Other stakeholders will gain insight into PTO's work with consumers, public transport operators, community agencies and government departments. Please share On Track with your colleagues.

Feature Articles

2012..... It's been a busy year so far [page 2](#)

PTO Cases: what's in a name? [page 3](#)

PTO cultural values: how we approach our work [page 4](#)

When a phone call is more than a phone call: the refer to member process [pages 5-6](#)

Professional development workshops: Resilience and Deaf Cultural Awareness [pages 7-8](#)

Case Overview

Recent trends in PTO case receipt: Jan—Jul 2012 : up 103% [page 9](#)

Long-term case trends: the bigger picture [page 10](#)

Most common issues: by operator: all cases and investigations [page 11](#)

Trends in myki complaints: January 2010 to June 2012 [page 12](#)

myki complaints: key issues identified through PTO case work [page 13](#)

PTO case studies: Faulty myki card replacement delay, Debit card swallowed by myki machine, Tram access – bridging the gap and No smoking – more signs please [pages 14-15](#)

Public Affairs, the PTO Team and feedback from you

Community engagement: a PTO Charter responsibility [page 16](#)

PTO's public submissions Victorian Taxi Industry, National Pro Bono Resource Centre, NADRAC—Your Guide to Resolution and State Disability Plan [page 17](#)

PTO Team, something you'd like us to cover in PTO On Track?, and contacting the PTO [page 18](#)



From the Ombudsman

2012 it's been a busy year so far

At the PTO we've had significant change over the past six months. From a governance perspective, we've said farewell to Merran Kelsall, PTO Chair and Maree Davidson, Consumer Director, both of whom had been directors since 2004. We've welcomed Richard Allsop as Chair (previously a Consumer Director) and Lawrence Seyers and Caroline Elliott as Consumer Directors.

From a case perspective we've seen our work load double—receiving 2,382 cases in the six months from 1 January 2012 to 30 June 2012, up from 1,838 received in the previous financial year. In particular, myki cases increased significantly (see [page 12](#)), but so too did transport operator complaints. In order to manage the increase in complaint issues and investigations, PTO staff numbers have also increased.

It has also been very busy from a PTO member perspective. With the establishment of Public Transport Victoria (PTV) from 2 April 2012, we've begun reviewing our budget funding model and referral processes. We have also begun work on developing effective reporting protocols and processes aligned with the PTV's dual role—that of PTO member and public transport regulator.

On Track will give you an overview of all of that work—and more. I welcome your feedback.



Janine Young, Public Transport Ombudsman



About the PTO

The PTO was established in 2004, as a not-for-profit, independent dispute resolution body, providing a free, fair, informal and accessible service for the resolution of complaints about Victorian public transport operators, who are members of the PTO scheme. We're independent from the transport operators and government. Equally, we do not act as a consumer advocate.

The PTO's role is to **receive**, **investigate** and **resolve** complaints from consumers who use or are affected by Victorian public passenger transport services, or the public transport related activities of the operators.

The PTO will only investigate a complaint if the complaint has first been raised with the operator *and* it is within our jurisdiction. If the complaint has not been raised first with the operator or falls outside our jurisdiction, we provide impartial advice and referral information.

During a complaint investigation by the PTO, we investigate and assist the consumer and operator to negotiate a fair and reasonable outcome. Complaints are handled independently and promptly and where an agreement can't be reached, the Ombudsman may make a binding decision or dismiss the complaint. We also play an important role in identifying, investigating and reporting systemic issues which affect more than one consumer, and are again, within PTO jurisdiction. Systemic issues, not within our jurisdiction are referred to the Department of Transport, PTV or other relevant bodies. This important aspect of our work contributes to improved public transport services.

[Back to Contents](#)



PTO Case Types – what's in a name?

The PTO is continually reviewing our policies and processes to ensure consumer enquiries and complaints are handled efficiently, effectively and in line with the best practice of other ombudsman and dispute resolution schemes.

As part of this, we consider feedback and suggestions from consumers, members of the PTO scheme, stakeholders and PTO staff.

We recently reviewed and changed some of the categories under which we register and record the consumer enquiries and complaints made to our office. There has been no change to the policies or processes we use to handle these cases.

The changes will reduce the potential for confusion about complaints regarding the functions of PTV as a PTO member, and those relating to PTV as the regulator of the public transport industry.

We'll be able to provide more detailed data to scheme members, stakeholders and consumers through public reports about how we've handled and responded to enquiries and complaints.

From 1 July 2012, the PTO will categorise cases using the following case types:

Non Member Case

An enquiry or complaint that doesn't relate to a member of the PTO scheme.

Member - Enquiry

A case about a member of the PTO scheme where a consumer contacts the PTO to request information about a public transport operator who is a member of the PTO scheme. Most enquiries are referred back to the operator for response but sometimes a referral to another organisation may be appropriate.

Member - Complaint

A case where the consumer is dissatisfied with a public transport operator who is a member of the PTO scheme and a response is explicitly or implicitly expected. Most of these complaints are referred to the operator for response but in a small number of cases, a referral to another organisation may be appropriate.

Refer for Internal Escalation (RFIE)

These are PTO referrals to an operator's Customer Service Team for response and resolution. The operator must contact the consumer within 24 hours to acknowledge receipt of the referral, openly and fairly investigate the complaint and provide the consumer with a full and thorough response within 7 business days. We use this process when a consumer has spoken to an operator staff member once and hasn't received a satisfactory response, but is happy to keep dealing directly with the operator, rather than have the PTO investigate.

Investigation

The PTO will register and undertake an Investigation where the issue is within our jurisdiction and the consumer has raised their concerns with the operator without resolution.

PTO Cultural Values

Over the past twelve months, the PTO team has spent some time considering the values that underpin the work we do and how we approach our role.

Our five values are linked and each comprises key elements and an overarching statement which summarises how we apply that value to our work. They are:



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

Our values are now being integrated in our publications, brochures, policy documents, processes and recruitment interviews. They have also brightened the PTO office, with visual reminders in the form of coloured decals in the foyer and boardroom. They are, most importantly, reflected in our work— our case management, investigations, discussions and case outcomes.



When a phone call is more than a phone call

Understanding how the PTO deals with Member Enquiries and Member Complaints

Concerns are sometimes raised by industry members about the time and resources spent by external dispute resolution (EDR) schemes, like the PTO, when responding to enquiries and complaints that haven't first been raised by the consumer with the relevant service provider.

We recognise the importance of providing an efficient and cost effective dispute resolution service for consumers and members and must balance this with our obligations to be effective and independent.

Putting in the time to get it right

Industry ombudsman schemes do not operate in the way many contact centres do, with strict time limits on staff handling consumer enquiries and complaints. PTO staff take the time necessary to listen to, and understand the individual consumer's issue and provide high quality advice before referring the consumer back to the operator. This empowers the consumer and builds their confidence to ensure that next time, the operator will be the first call they make.

Increasing the likelihood of issues being resolved by an operator's own internal dispute resolution (IDR) process decreases the risk of it escalating into a formal PTO investigation – a far more resource intensive exercise for operators and the PTO than a 10 minute phone call.

The long term benefits we provide to consumers and industry by spending the time necessary to effectively handle enquiries and complaints outweighs the false economy that is created by not investing the time, resources and expertise at the right time.

Interestingly, many contact centres are moving away from using average handling time key performance indicators and staff are given the autonomy to spend the time necessary to handle individual enquiries and complaints. As a result, first time resolution rates are increasing significantly, which further supports this as a best practice complaint management approach.

The PTO will continue to invest the right resources at the right time to provide independent advice and referral in response to the enquiries and complaints raised with our office.

Empowering consumers to call operators first

When consumers contact us without having contacted the operator, we'll spend time talking about:

- the need to contact the operator first;
- the issues involved and what questions to ask the operator;
- relevant consumer rights and obligations; and
- the consumer's expectations for how the issue might be resolved.

.... continued next page



When a phone call is more than a phone call (continued)

Setting realistic expectations

We provide guidance as to what an appropriate outcome to the consumer's complaint might look like, particularly if their expectations are unrealistic.

We also advise consumers how to escalate their concern through the operator's IDR process and what to do if they remain dissatisfied. Again, this is aimed at direct resolution rather than further PTO involvement.

When consumers have the right information, gained from an independent source, they are able to articulate their complaint, set out their expectations for how they want it resolved in the context of their rights and responsibilities and work with industry constructively to resolve complaints quickly - saving time and resources for consumers, industry and EDR.

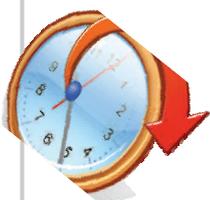
Where consumer confidence in operator service needs a boost, the PTO plays an important role in restoring it.

Why consumers call us first

We are now collecting specific information from consumers about why they chose to contact the PTO before contacting the relevant operator. This provides invaluable information for operators to better connect with their customer and encourage direct contact.

Some reasons consumers call us first are:

- I'm looking for independent advice
- My last contact with the transport operator was unsatisfactory
- Oops—I thought I was calling the transport operator ... but I hope you can help
- I didn't know who else to call
- I was put on hold and could not wait—call queue was too long
- I was given conflicting information last time
- I saw your number on the operator's website
- I did not get a response to my email / letter



ACTION

PTO members should review their monthly PTO Reports and consider how many of their customers contacted the PTO first. If it is a high number, when put in context of the number of PTV contacts and direct member contacts, it may be time to consider whether your complaints process is open and accessible.



Professional Development – Resilience Workshops–March 2012

The PTO provides independently facilitated professional development workshops for PTO and operator staff, aimed at increasing their dispute resolution skills, as well as providing independent opportunities for PTO and operator staff to network.

Resilience Workshops–March 2012

Recognising how challenging complaint management is, in March 2012, the PTO arranged two Resilience Training Workshops attended by 30 PTO Member customer service staff. The workshops were facilitated by a Society of Consumer Affairs Professional (SOCAP) consultant. SOCAP facilitators are highly regarded and understand the pressures and challenges faced by staff dealing with complaints.



The workshop enabled participants to explore and strengthen their:

- self-leadership skills;
- strategies to deal with work challenges;
- ability to stay positive when faced with adversity;
- techniques for disengaging from destructive and negative interactions;
- understanding how to manage personal energy – at work and home; and
- techniques for building resilience in others.

Attendees rated the workshop 4.4 out of 5 overall and the following feedback was provided:

- it will allow staff to feel more empowered and capable of doing their role;
- it will enable me to better manage my emotional awareness and self-leadership;
- it provided excellent stress management advice; and
- it was a great investment in customer contact people.

ACTION

Ongoing professional development is vital for all staff who work in dispute resolution. The PTO encourages operators to identify opportunities for their staff to further develop their complaint handling skills. The PTO will continue to schedule workshops for PTO and operator Staff.



[Back to Contents](#)



Professional Development – VicDeaf– Deaf Cultural Awareness Training – June 2012

In April 2012 the Ombudsman met with Graeme Kelly, who at the time was the Chief Executive Officer, VicDeaf. The meeting was part of the PTO's community engagement program. As well as learning about the role and functions of VicDeaf, an important training opportunity was identified for PTO and operator customer service staff.

David Peters, VicDeaf's Information Officer, has been facilitating Deaf Cultural Awareness Training for a number of years. David facilitated the workshop—hosted at V/Line and attended by PTO and operator staff members. PTO staff returned to the office inspired and motivated by David's presentation. Thank you also to Auslan interpreter, Mark Quinn.

The session covered the following topics:

- Deaf culture and community;
- Language and communication strategies;
- Working with someone who is deaf;
- Issues/barriers that deaf people face;
- Devices (e.g. TTY, Captions, SMS, MSN, ooVoo); and
- Basic Auslan/fingerspelling.

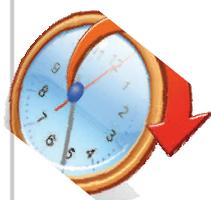


Attendees rated the workshop at 4.6 out of 5 overall and when asked whether the training enabled them to see new approaches to communicating with consumers, the following feedback was provided:

- I now have a greater awareness of the challenges faced by the deaf community;
- I've taken away a greater understanding of the need for good communication;
- We need to adapt our communication to specific needs and develop some special communication tools to operate a more inclusive network;
- It has made me more aware of what can be taken for granted; and
- It has given me ways to communicate with hearing impaired people and really made me see that hearing impaired people should always be treated equally.

We also asked attendees about difficulties they may face in applying this training in their workplaces and the following feedback was provided:

- Too many staff to train;
- Too hard to get time out for frontline staff for this training; and
- Possibly the cost impact of using interpreters.



ACTION

Communication tools such as smartphones, texting, SMS etc are breaking down all sorts of barriers which used to exist between service providers and some customers. Operators should be fully exploring the availability of cost-effective options, to communicate with customers, making public transport even more accessible.

[Back to Contents](#)



Recent trends in PTO case receipt: up 103% on the prior six months

Cases received by case type: January to June 2012– 2,382 cases

	BusVic	Metro	Non-Member	PTV	Southern Cross Station	TTA	V/Line	VicTrack	Yarra Trams	Total
Information Requests	1	7	17	3		9				37
Non-Member / out of PTO jurisdiction		2	373	71			2			448
Member Enquiries	2	50		27		135	9		14	237
Member Complaints	39	234		18		426	43	1	52	813
Refer for Internal Escalation	10	70				317	23		20	440
PTO Investigations	22	42		6		296	25		16	407
Total Cases	74	405	390	125		1183	102	1	102	2,382

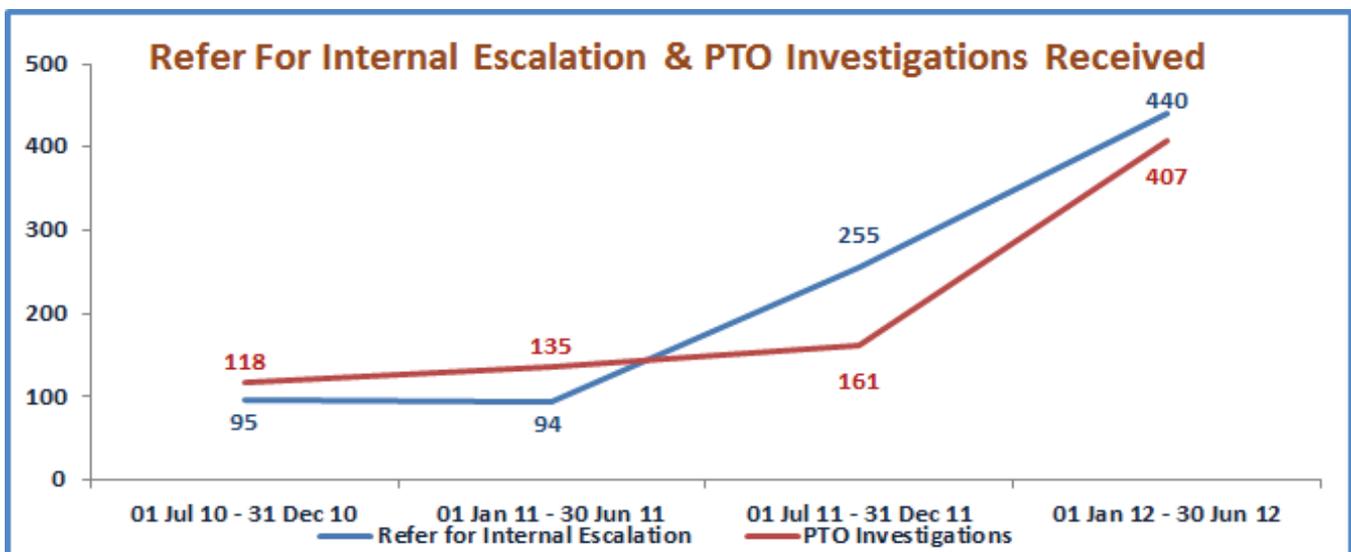
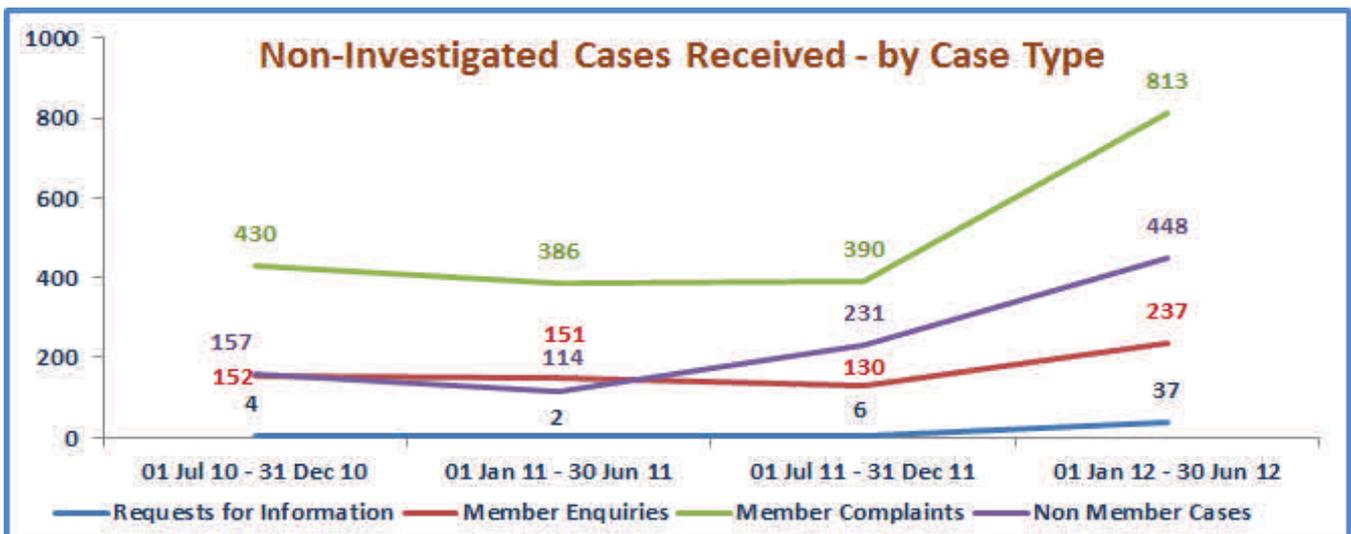
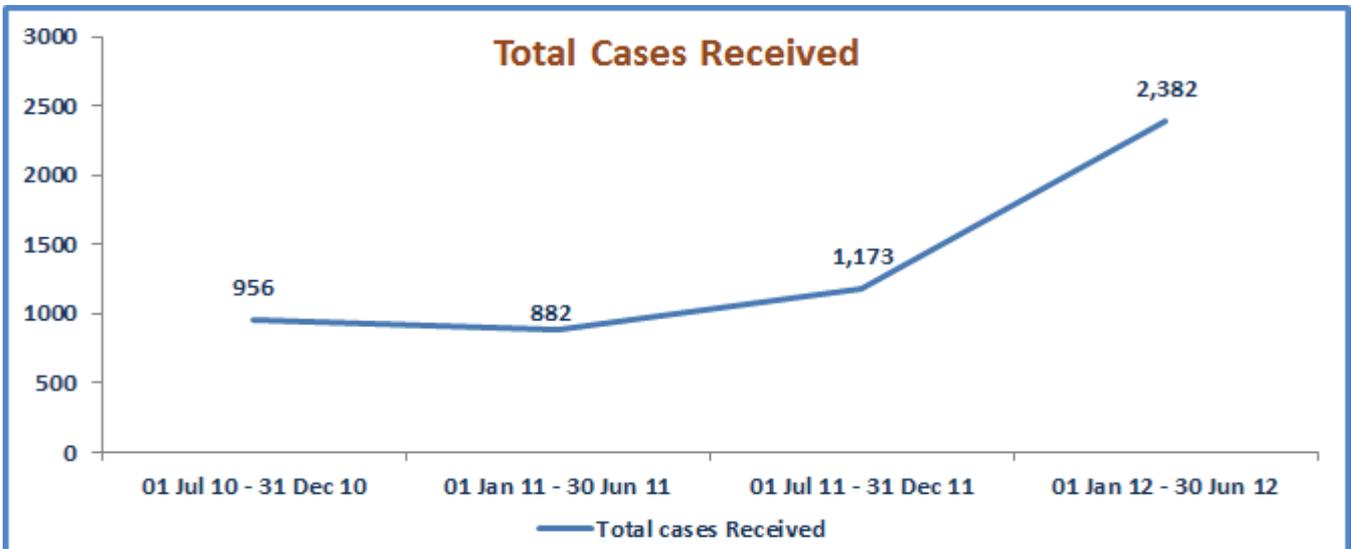
Cases received by case type: July–December 2011–1,173

	BusVic	Metro	Non-Mem-	PTV	Southern Cross	TTA	V/Line	VicTrack	Yarra Trams	Overall
Information Requests		2	4							6
Non-Member / out of PTO jurisdiction			231							231
Member Enquiries	3	25		15		62	5	1	19	130
Member Complaints	30	130		8	1	163	21		37	390
Refer for Internal Escalation	21	43		1		153	17		20	255
PTO Investigations	24	29		2	1	79	14		12	161
Total Cases	78	229	235	26	2	457	57	1	88	1,173

[Back to Contents](#)



Long-term case trends: the bigger picture



[Back to Contents](#)



Most Common Complaint Issues received over the past six months

Metro

All Cases

Service Delivery - Punctuality	55
Infrastructure - Platform/Shelter	54
Staff - Customer Service	52
Service Delivery - Cancellation	47
Staff - Station Attendant	47

Investigations

Staff - Customer Service	15
Infrastructure - Platform/Shelter	9
Staff - Station Attendant	7
AO - Behaviour / Demeanour	6
Service Delivery - Cancellation	6

Yarra Trams

All Cases

Infrastructure & RS - Vehicles	39
Staff - Driver	37
Staff - Customer Service	16
AO - Behaviour / Demeanour	12
Service Delivery - Punctuality	7

Investigations

Infrastructure & RS - Vehicles	8
Staff - Driver	6
Staff - Customer Service	5
Infrastructure & RS - Injury / Loss	2

V/Line

All Cases

Staff - Customer Service	32
Service Delivery - Disruption	16
Infrastructure & RS - Vehicles	15
Service Delivery - Insufficient Service	12
Service Delivery - Punctuality	12

Investigations

Staff - Customer Service	14
Service Delivery - Disruption	4

TTA

myki cases

Staff Contact Centre - Customer Service	220
Refund/Reimbursement - Delay	117
Refund/Reimbursement Declined	97
Account Charges - Overcharge	88
Staff Contact Centre - Product Knowledge	56
Replacement Delayed	52

myki Investigations

Staff Contact Centre - Customer Service	86
Refund/Reimbursement - Delay	61
Refund/Reimbursement Declined	30
Account Charges - Overcharge	27
Staff Contact Centre - Product Knowledge	26
Replacement - Delayed	23

PTV

All Cases

Other - PT Information	23
Staff - Customer Service	18
myki - Terms & Conditions	14
Service Delivery - Timetables	14
Service Delivery - Timetable Changes	11

Investigations

Staff - Customer Service	10
Ticketing - Information/Condition	1
Infrastructure - Buildings	1

BusVic

All Cases

Staff - Driver	54
Service Delivery - Punctuality	21
Staff - Customer Service	13
Infrastructure & RS - Vehicles	12
Service Delivery - Fail to Pick up/Down	4

Investigations

Staff - Driver	14
Service Delivery - Punctuality	9
Staff - Customer Service	6
Infrastructure & RS - Vehicles	4

Southern Cross Station—no cases recorded during this period

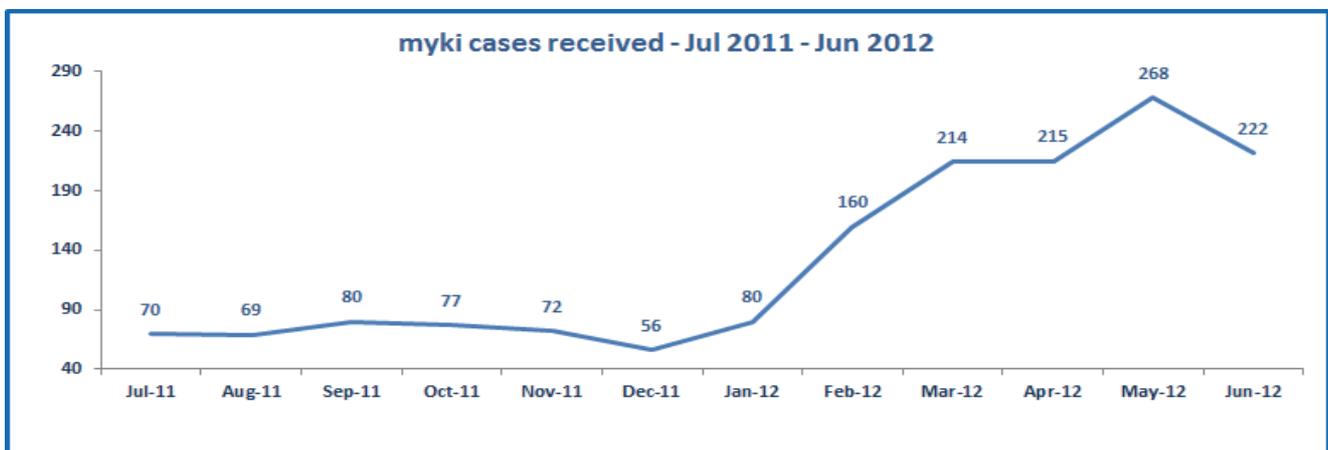
VicTrack—2 cases recorded



Trends in myki cases – short term and long term

We've been managing a month-on-month increase of myki related cases in the first half of 2012

June 2012 was our busiest myki month, with 222 cases received across 20 working days. The number of cases should be considered in the context of the number of people using myki, currently around 80% of all trips. However, complaints are often symptomatic of broader consumer concerns about the myki ticket system and we treat them as such.



Not surprisingly, as myki has been implemented across the public transport network over the past three years, the number of myki PTO cases has also increased year on year.

	Total cases received	myki cases received	% of all PTO cases
2009/2010	1,766	570	32.3%
2010/2011	1,838	775	42.2%
2011/2012	3,555	1,600	45.0%

The important role of an industry ombudsman when new systems are introduced

As we have seen in the telecommunications and energy sectors, new billing systems and major changes to IT and communications systems lead to spikes in consumer complaints. An increase in PTO complaints during the myki rollout was expected and planned for. Importantly, our role is not just to manage increased complaint volumes. It is also to identify systemic issues, report how they are affecting consumers and to make recommendations to address them.

We have invested significant time in this over the past six months and you can review some of the suggestions which we have made to the Transport Ticketing Authority on [Page 13](#).



myki complaints—key issues identified through PTO case work

We've raised the complaint issues outlined below, with the Transport Ticketing Authority, through individual complaints and more broadly in our correspondence, systemic issue reports and our meetings with TTA executives.

1. Complaints about the myki refund/reimbursement process

Predominantly these are about:

- lack of available information about how refunds are calculated;
- inaccurate advice provided by myki staff regarding refund amounts;
- delays in the refund/reimbursement process; and
- confusion about why partial refunds cannot be provided.

Our cases indicate that there is confusion and dissatisfaction with the refund process, particularly about myki passes. We've recommended that TTA improve the transparency of the refund process, so consumers can make informed choices about seeking a refund.

2. Dormant/suspended myki top up credits

This occurs when a consumer tops up their myki balance online or via the call centre and does not touch their myki card onto a card reader within 90 days. The value of the top up (not any existing value) is temporarily suspended. Once the myki card has been touched on, it takes 24 hours for the top up to be sent to the myki card and to become available for use. As a result, consumers who have a low myki balance may be unable to travel immediately unless they top up their myki card again at a machine or retail outlet.

There is confusion in the community about this issue and we've recommended that TTA improve the amount and type of information it makes available to consumers about this.

3. Blocked myki cards

This occurs following dishonoured credit/debit card auto top up payments, generally arising from lost/stolen or expired credit/debit cards. Currently, myki cards must be returned to myki for unblocking, which consumers find very unsatisfactory because they lose access to their cleared funds and must arrange other tickets to keep travelling.

Information is not currently available to consumers when setting up an auto top up arrangement about the need to send a myki card in to be unblocked if an auto payment fails. We've recommended as a matter of priority, that TTA provide this information, so informed choices can be made by consumers when considering setting up auto top up payment arrangements.

TTA recently advised the PTO that as a result of our recommendations, improvements to the information it provides to its customers is in progress. TTA has also informed us that it is working towards a system where myki cards can be unblocked without being returned to myki. These two initiatives will address the cause of these consumer complaints and will result in fewer PTO cases.

[Back to Contents](#)



PTO case studies

Why do we include case studies?

PTO case studies provide an overview about the issues consumers raise with us, how we investigate them and the outcomes achieved.

myki pass—it took too long to get the card fixed

A consumer's 60-day zone 1+2 monthly myki pass stopped working after only being used for approximately 10 days, and began deducting myki money instead. The consumer was advised by myki that it was a small error that would be easily fixed, however after 3 phone calls, which were not followed up by myki, and a month of having her myki card deduct myki money and not days from her activated pass, she contacted the PTO for an investigation.

TTA immediately provided the consumer with a new myki card and as a result of the PTO investigation, a cheque for \$400.08 was sent to the consumer, reflecting:

- the reimbursement of the 50 unused days from her myki pass
- the difference in cost between the myki pass rate she would have been charged had her myki card functioned correctly and the myki money rate she was charged while attempting to resolve her complaint, and
- a goodwill gesture in recognition of the inconvenience and frustration caused.

TTA also sincerely apologised for the level of customer service provided and the inconvenience caused by the failure of her myki pass. TTA made changes to its workflow, to ensure that myki staff maintain regular contact with consumers when conducting an investigation.

Debit card stuck in myki card vending machine

A consumer's debit card became stuck in a myki card vending machine (CVM) when he attempted to top up his myki card. He immediately contacted myki and advised that the CVM had taken his card and as a result, he was unable to travel home on public transport as his myki balance was too low and he had no other means of topping up or paying for a Metcard. myki advised it couldn't assist him and when he complained, he was advised that someone from myki would contact him within 48 hours to discuss his concerns. Contact between the consumer and myki was unsuccessful until almost a month later, when in response to a complaint letter written by the consumer, he was advised his debit card wasn't found during a CVM inspection.

The PTO investigation, resulted in TTA apologising to the consumer for the time it took to inspect the CVM. TTA acknowledged that the level of customer service provided was not appropriate and agreed to consider implementing a number of policies to assist consumers who find themselves in a similar situation without the means to travel home. Policy changes include advising customers to contact their financial institution to cancel the card as it may be released automatically by the CVM.

As a gesture of goodwill, the TTA offered a small finance gesture and stated that it would consider reimbursement of any out of pocket expenses incurred in replacing the debit card.

While the consumer was grateful for TTA's offer, he did not accept it, as his aim was to raise awareness of flaws in myki's customer service provision. He felt he had achieved his aim through the independent investigation of his complaint by the PTO and the policy changes offered by TTA.

[Back to Contents](#)



PTO case studies (continued)

Tram access— bridging the gap between the platform and the tram

A consumer contacted the PTO dissatisfied that she was unable to board a low-floored tram at an accessible tram stop—due to the gap between the tram and the stop being too large for her wheel chair to traverse. When she asked the driver for assistance to board the tram, she was advised that he could not assist and she would need to catch the next accessible tram. The consumer lodged a complaint with Yarra Trams and was advised by it that she would need to catch a low-floored bus in future. She was dissatisfied with this response and believed that an accessible tram and stop should be truly accessible for all commuters.

As a result of the PTO investigation, Yarra Trams advised that it sincerely regretted that the consumer was unable to access its low-floored tram at an accessible tram stop and that its driver was unable to assist her to board the tram due to occupational health and safety considerations. It also apologised that its written response to her complaint had appeared dismissive and explained that its intention was to ensure she was aware of alternative and accessible modes of public transport, to allow her to travel in future if the gap between the tram and stop was too large for her to traverse.

As a result of this and other complaints of this nature, the PTO has considered whether it is the most appropriate forum in the context of our jurisdiction and binding decision monetary limits, for complaints relating to often complex issues of compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, and associated standards. When a complaint relates to compliance of infrastructure and vehicles (rather than the service or processes of an operator), we will refer this aspect of the complaint to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Australian Human Rights Commission as the most appropriate bodies to handle such complaints.

The PTO will continue to investigate those aspects of complaints which relate to improving accessibility through customer service. It is our view that accessibility is as much about service as it is about infrastructure and standards.

No smoking –more signs please

A consumer contacted the PTO concerned that signage at Werribee Railway Station advising that it is illegal to smoke undercover was inadequate, with only one faded poster placed on Platforms 1 and 2. He believed the lack of adequate signage was leading to commuters smoking in prohibited areas. The consumer had submitted numerous complaints to Metro and had been advised that the no smoking sign at the entrance of the station was sufficient. He felt that the regularity of smoking in prohibited areas was a clear indication that the signage was inadequate.

Metro provided a detailed response outlining what it does to monitor smoking at railway stations, and advised that it was the State Government's responsibility to erect formal 'no smoking' signs. In relation to resolving the issue at Werribee Station, Metro advised that a direction had been provided to all Authorised Officers to report commuters if found smoking in prohibited areas. Further, it had worked with the Werribee Station Master to erect further posters about the prohibition of smoking undercover and to ensure that posters are replaced as soon as possible if they become faded or illegible. The consumer was satisfied with Metro's response to his complaint.



Community engagement: a PTO Charter responsibility

The PTO is founded on the principles of independence, natural justice, access, equity, effectiveness, accountability and community awareness. In fact, the PTO Charter requires the Ombudsman to develop appropriate public information programs which promote the PTO scheme and its complaint handling procedures to ensure Victoria-wide access to the scheme.

A key aspect of all awareness activities is for the Ombudsman and PTO staff to advise consumers about operator internal dispute resolution processes. This increases consumer understanding that they should first contact the operator, but gives them the reassurance that if the issue is not resolved, they can access independent dispute resolution from the PTO.

All PTO staff enjoy this aspect of their work – it's great to talk to consumers about resolving complaints directly with the operator, the role of the PTO and to provide general advice about public transport services.

Over the past six months, the Ombudsman and PTO staff have met with:

- Blind Citizens Australia - Geelong and Districts Branch;
- Mitchell Shire Council with V/Line;
- Youth Law;
- Autism Victoria;
- Transport Connections Benalla;
- VicDeaf;
- Council on the Ageing;
- Disability Justice Advocacy;
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Disability Reference Access Committee;
- Greater Shepparton City Council;
- Public Transport Users Association;
- Consumer Action Law Centre;
- Rotary Club of Melbourne;
- Disability Discrimination Legal Service;
- Probus Club Seymour;
- Local Government Customer Service Managers with VicTrack; and
- Victorian Council of Social Services.

We've also attended a number of joint industry ombudsman forums where representatives from the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria and the PTO meet with community groups. These forums inform consumers of their rights and obligations, provide independent advice and empower individuals to resolve complaints directly with their service providers. They also inform consumers about how they can access independent, external dispute resolution when things can't be resolved.

Community engagement is a rewarding part of our work – and it benefits PTO members in many ways. As well as linking their customers to their complaints systems, it also provides training opportunities – such as the VicDeaf training which PTO members recently attended.



ACTION

If your community group would like the Ombudsman or PTO staff to meet with you, please contact Elicia at educzmal@ptovic.com.au or by telephone on 03 8623 2111.

[Back to Contents](#)



PTO's public submissions

The PTO regularly provides comment and submissions to consultations undertaken by regulators, government agencies and non-government bodies regarding public transport related issues, dispute resolution, social justice, industry reform and law reform.

We carefully consider the consultations we provide submissions to and only comment on aspects of the consultation that are relevant to the work we do. We draw on our experience in handling consumer enquiries and complaints and our stakeholder engagement work.

Victorian Taxi Industry Inquiry

We provided comment to the Inquiry's draft report *Customers First: Service, Safety, Choice* released on 31 May 2012. Our comments supported the Inquiry's recommendations that the taxi industry establish robust internal dispute resolution processes, supported by a strong external mechanism for the resolution of consumer complaints.

Read the draft report and our submission here www.taxiindustryinquiry.vic.gov.au

National Pro Bono Resource Centre

We provided comment to the Centre's discussion paper about how pro bono lawyers could be used in the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) setting. A final report titled 'Alternative Dispute Resolution: Assisting people experiencing disadvantage' was released in June 2012. The report provides a valuable resource for how lawyers and those providing ADR services can assist people experiencing disadvantage.

Read the final report here www.nationalprobono.org.au

NADRAC 'Your guide to Dispute Resolution'

The National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council (NADRAC) sought comment on a draft Guide aimed at assisting consumers to understand the many different types of alternative dispute resolution available.

We provided comments to the draft, as well as to the Ombudsman peak body, the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA). The NADRAC 'Your Guide to Dispute Resolution' was released on 23 July 2012, and provides accessible information about the role of an Ombudsman.

Read the Guide here www.nadrac.gov.au/publications/DisputeResolutionGuide

State Disability Plan

The PTO provided comment on the Draft Victorian Government's State Disability Plan 2013 - 2016. We support the broad principles outlined in the draft plan regarding accessible public transport and strengthening and promoting access to rights and justice for people with disabilities.

Read the draft Plan here www.dhs.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan

[Back to Contents](#)



PTO Team

Name	Title
Janine Young	Ombudsman
Christine Arthur	Manager Finance & Administration
Bridie Fennessy	Policy Manager
Mandy Wilkins	Conciliation Manager
Craig Little	Conciliator Complex Investigations
Ricky Hewton	Senior Conciliator—Coaching & Development
Clare Tucker	Senior Conciliator
Amanda Prins	Conciliator
Tom Healy	Conciliator
Danijela Zaric	Case Officer
Eleanor Meldrum	Case Officer
Elicia Duczmal	Executive Assistant
Catherine Donaldson	Administration Assistant



Something you'd like us to cover in PTO On Track?

Please let us know. Contact Elicia Duczmal, Executive Assistant, by email educzmal@ptovic.com.au or phone (03) 8623 2111.



Contacting the PTO

- By phone:** 1800 466 865 — Free Call* (* free from landlines)
(03) 8623 2111 — Administration
- By fax:** (03) 8623 2100
- By email:** enquiries@ptovic.com.au
- Website:** www.ptovic.com.au
- By post:** PO Box 538 Collins Street West, Melbourne Vic 8007

[Back to Contents](#)