

MEDIA RELEASE

Public Transport Ombudsman



Tuesday 23 November 2021

COMPLAINTS FALL AS PUBLIC TRANSPORT USAGE HIT BY LOCKDOWNS EMBARGOED UNTIL 1 A.M. 24 NOVEMBER 2021

Data released by the Public Transport Ombudsman Mr Simon McKenzie today shows that complaints about public transport fell 47% from the previous year due to lockdowns and travel restrictions.

For the 2020/2021 year, overall approaches at 2072 were down 39% from the previous year (3373). Complaints and investigations decreased 47% from 2428 to 1292.

The year began and ended with Melbourne and Victoria going into lockdowns to curb the spread of COVID-19, with public transport patronage falling as low as 9% in some weeks. The reduced passenger trips and transactions went against the long-term trend of Melbourne's growing population and public transport usage, complaints to the PTO fell but not as much as patronage. Although patronage fell under 10% of the previous year's baseline on some modes, approaches to the PTO only fell as low as 30%.

Approaches to the PTO, including complaints, can have one or more issues recorded. The top 5 issue categories within approaches were:

- Staff: 1007
- Service delivery: 744
- Ticketing: 672
- Land and Infrastructure: 559
- COVID-19: 328

"Staff complaint issues remain prominent, often we are talking to someone after a negative experience out on the network, or after they have dealt with customer service staff when trying to resolve a complaint," Mr McKenzie said.

"Commuters complained about myki passes as they tried to arrange refunds. When it became apparent that working from home was here for longer than first thought, people expected quick, convenient solutions," Mr McKenzie said.

More information, and consumer stories, about how COVID-19 affected complaints can be found in the 2021 PTO Annual Report, which is available at: <https://www.ptovic.com.au/publications-media/annual-reports>.

Continued.

PTO data captured 328 COVID related issues within approaches to the PTO. Of the 328 issues, the most common were:

- Social distancing (32%)
- Hygiene and cleanliness of vehicles (30%)
- Ticketing, including refund delays and disputes linked to changed circumstances (21%)

“It’s pretty clear that people were anxious about infection on public transport. Regulation of boarding, passenger loading, overcrowding and mask compliance by staff featured regularly in complaints,” Mr McKenzie said.

“As Victoria starts to move around again, it will be crucial to listen to customers who are using the network, or want to but face barriers. Feedback should inform design and the rebuilding of confidence in public transport,” Mr McKenzie said.

Approaches to the PTO increased in line with patronage as restrictions eased in the warmer months but fell again after the 2021 COVID-19 Delta outbreak.

More information can be found in the 2020/21 PTO Annual Report, which is available at:

<https://www.ptovic.com.au/publications-media/annual-reports>.

The Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO) is a fair, free and fast service to sort out public transport complaints and help make the system better for everyone.

The PTO’s members are: BusVic, CDC Victoria, Department of Transport (DOT)/Public Transport Victoria (PTV), Level Crossing Removal Project, Metro Trains Melbourne, Rail Projects Victoria, SkyBus, Southern Cross Station, Transdev, Transit Systems Victoria, Ventura Bus Lines, VicTrack, V/Line and Yarra Trams.

The PTO office is open during standard business hours, or enquiries can be lodged out of hours via our website. Visit www.ptovic.com.au, call 1800 466 865 or search ‘Public Transport Ombudsman’ on Facebook.

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