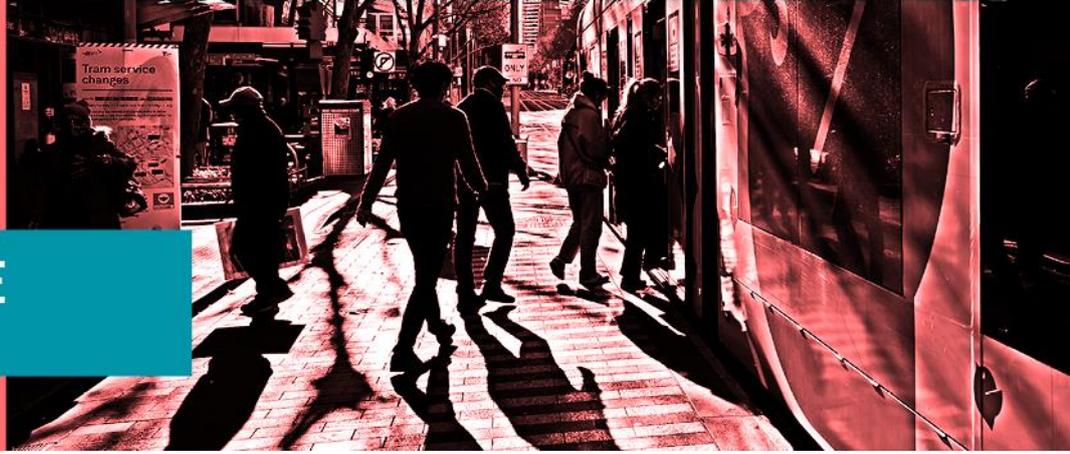


MEDIA RELEASE

Public Transport Ombudsman



Tuesday 5 December 2023

COMPLAINTS UP AS PATRONAGE RISES, PTO HAS ITS EYE ON AUTHORISED OFFICER COMPLAINTS AND FINES

EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2023

Data released today in the Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO) Annual Report shows a 61.6% increase in Victorians contacting the PTO for assistance during the 2022-2023 financial year.

“The big increase in Victorians contacting the Public Transport Ombudsman mirrors the increasing number of Victorians using the public transport network,” Acting Public Transport Ombudsman, Ms Ann Jorgensen, said today. Trips taken on Victorian public transport rose 61.9% over the 2022-23 period.

Although the rise in complaints received was significant, Ms Jorgensen said the overall mix of issues remained similar to previous years.

However, Ms Jorgensen said complaints about some issues increased relative to pre-pandemic levels. **“Our complaints data points to some potential emerging trends that we’re keeping our eye on, particularly around Authorised Officers,”** she said.

A single complaint to the PTO can involve one or more public-transport related issues, which the PTO logs and tracks individually. The top four issues logged within the 2,119 combined complaints the PTO received in 2022-23 related to:

1. **Public transport staff:** 1,150 complaints in total, up 44% on last year
2. **Service delivery:** 588 complaints in total, up 58% on last year
3. **Ticketing issues (including myki):** 574 complaints in total, up 101% on last year
4. **Land & infrastructure:** 418 complaints in total, up 5% on last year

The PTO saw an uptick in complaints about Authorised Officers (AOs) in 2022-23, with 150 complaints about AOs received compared to 56 in 2021-22.

Ms Jorgensen said it was notable that AO complaints were nearly double pre-pandemic numbers (73 and 81 AO complaints in 2018-19 and 2017-18, respectively).

“While the Authorised Officers complaints we’ve seen this year represent a small number of the AO interactions that took place on the system, each complaint is important because of the powers that Authorised Officers have,” Ms Jorgensen said.

Continued.

Ms Jorgensen said Victorians can raise complaints about the conduct of AOs with the relevant public transport operator. If they're not satisfied with the response they get from the operator, they can complain to the Public Transport Ombudsman.

“We will continue to monitor trends in Authorised Officer complaints to make sure emerging issues are raised for action with operators and the Department of Transport and Planning,” she said.

The PTO also saw a substantial increase in Victorians contacting the PTO about fines in 2022-23 (264 cases, up 118% on last year). Ms Jorgensen attributed this to rising patronage and a change in how the PTO handles fines complaints.

“The Public Transport Ombudsman now offers Victorians an additional avenue to raise a complaint about the fairness of a fine,” said Ms Jorgensen.

“If a person has unsuccessfully sought a review of their fine with the Department of Transport and Planning, our office can now look at the Department’s decision in some circumstances”. These include exceptional and special circumstances such as homelessness, mental illness, cognitive disability, family violence or addiction to alcohol or other drugs.

The change in how the PTO handles fines complaints came into effect from August 2022, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Transport and Planning and the Public Transport Ombudsman.

“This arrangement between our office and the Department comes out of a common goal to improve the accessibility and overall fairness of the fines review system,” said Ms Jorgensen, who added that the arrangement facilitates collaboration and dialogue around opportunities to improve the system.

“I’d like to recognise the Department’s openness to feedback from our office, and its commitment to having constructive conversations about fair and reasonable decision making,” Ms Jorgensen said.

For further detail view the [PTO Annual Report 2023](#), which has information about:

- Authorised Officer complaints, their role & powers: page 24
- Fines complaints, and the PTO’s role in the infringement review process: page 28
- Public transport accessibility complaints in 2022-23: page 36

Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO) Scheme members are public transport operators, major transport projects and the Department of Transport & Planning / PTV. See a full list of [PTO Scheme members here](#).

The PTO office is open during standard business hours, or complaints can be lodged out of hours via our website. Visit our contact page or call 1800 466 865.

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