



# Closing the Accessibility Gap

**How the accessibility of public transport can be improved through innovation to customer service standards and information provision.**

**A report by the Public Transport Ombudsman  
September 2013**

**Summary report**

## **About the PTO**

The Public Transport Ombudsman Limited (PTO) is 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 can handle most public transport related issues, including service delivery, ticketing, infrastructure and rolling stock, land, Authorised Officers, operator staff and contractors.

Before we can investigate a complaint, the consumer must have raised it with the operator.

We will provide impartial advice, information and referral in response to enquiries and complaints that haven't been raised with the operator.

## **Executive Summary - From the Ombudsman**

We know that the accessibility of public transport is a key issue for people with disabilities, the elderly, young people, and parents with young children, people living in regional or rural areas and for people from non-English backgrounds.

It is my view that there is an obligation on all of us to work toward creating a truly accessible public transport system, where customer service and practical immediate solutions are valued as highly as long-term plans for changes to infrastructure and compliance with relevant standards.

### **Why publish a report?**

Through the investigation of many complaints, it is clear that compliance with legislation, regulations and standards is vitally important. However, if it is the singular focus of an industry and the only means used for measuring the accessibility of services, the enormous potential for improvements through innovations in customer service and information provision can be missed.

The recommendations in this report are based on the experience my office has gained through the investigation of individual complaints and systemic issues and the regular discussions my office has with Victorian commuters, the agencies that represent their views and the public transport industry itself.

**Janine Young**

**Public Transport Ombudsman**

# Summary of Recommendations

## Recommendation 1

The PTO recommends the industry develop an agreed definition of accessibility in the context of public transport services.

We found inconsistencies in how operators have defined accessibility. Some operators take a broad view while others focus on disability access, compliance with DSAPT and funding arrangements with the state government.

## Recommendation 2 & 2a

Develop standardised, industry wide training for all front line staff which is regularly reviewed.

Operator staff need to be well supported and well trained in the specific technical requirements of the role and how to communicate with people in a positive and respectful way. Training must be ongoing and requires regular refreshing and auditing to make sure it is effective.

## Recommendation 3

The PTO recommends a review of internal Authorised Officer training to assess whether gaps exist in current training regarding interacting with people who may have accessibility needs that are not immediately apparent including behavioural and cognitive conditions such as autism, acquired brain injuries, mental illness or physical disabilities.

### Recommendation 4 & 4a

The PTO recommends creating better integration between complaint teams and accessibility areas to ensure the root cause of accessibility complaints is identified and resolved.

Operators should also comprehensively review the current approach to responding to complaints about accessibility to ensure that the issues raised and the impact to the consumer are appropriately responded to and resolved.

### Recommendation 5 & 5a

The PTO recommends the industry, in consultation with key stakeholders, develop standards for the provision of direct assistance. Practical minimum standards should include the type of direct assistance that will and will not be provided, on what mode of transport and when.

The PTO also recommends regular auditing of staff adherence to the minimum standards.

### Recommendation 6

The PTO recommends the industry develop a one stop guide to using public transport in Victoria, accessible in a number of different formats.

This guide should incorporate all relevant information about boarding, disembarking and travelling, accessibility considerations and the minimum standards for the provision of direct assistance across all modes.

### Recommendation 7 & 7a

The PTO recommends the industry develop best practice standards for making manual public announcements. Standards should be developed in consultation with key stakeholders and be publicly available.

These standards should promote consistency across all public transport operators, be implemented within agreed timeframes and regularly audited.

### Recommendation 8

The PTO recommends the industry develop a best practice standard for how real time information about changes to services (including disruptions, delays and cancellations) is communicated. This standard should be used in conjunction with the standard for manual announcements outlined in Recommendation 7.

### Recommendation 9

The PTO recommends an updated guide to myki basics be developed, in consultation with community stakeholders.

The guide should be made available in a number of formats including printed, electronic and video - including Auslan interpreting and voiceover information.

### Recommendation 10

The PTO recommends all myki brochures be made available online.

All current and future brochures relating to the ticketing system should be made available in electronic format on the PTV website.

### Recommendation 11

The PTO recommends PTV develop a standard training module about concessions and passes and a pocket sized ready reference guide for frontline staff about entitlements provided by concessions and travel passes.

### Recommendation 12

The PTO recommends PTV explore the possibility of providing proactive and direct assistance for consumers applying for travel passes who do not have the support of carer or other person.

### Recommendation 13

The PTO recommends the provision of standardised, practical and intuitively located 'out of service' advice, through signs and announcements.

### Recommendation 14

The PTO recommends changes to infrastructure, whether it involves colour schemes, seating or major works, should be undertaken following consultation with key stakeholders, to ensure that accessibility is built into the design.

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### September 2013

This document is available for downloading from our website.

You can also download a copy of the full report from our website.

Please contact us if you require other accessible formats.

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