

**MEDIA RELEASE: PUBLIC TRANSPORT OMBUDSMAN 2015 ANNUAL REPORT****EMBARGOED UNTIL 1AM, 19 NOVEMBER 2015**

ROOM TO IMPROVE: 14% INCREASE IN OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATIONS

The Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO), Treasure Jennings has today called for improvements to the 'penalty fare' system following a trial period which saw an increase in complex complaints made to the independent umpire.

A 'penalty fare' is where consumers can choose to pay an on the spot fine of \$75 as an alternative of a fine of up to \$223.

The recommendation formed part of the Public Transport Ombudsman's 2014/15 Annual Report, released today.

The report provides an important snapshot of consumer concerns, progress on previous years and opportunities for improvement.

The top five issues identified by consumers in 2014/15 are the same as for the previous year – myki, the issuing of infringement notices, staff, service delivery, infrastructure and rolling stock.

Key findings in the report include:

- 626 investigations were conducted by the PTO, a 14% increase from 548 in 2013/14
- 4079 consumers contacted the PTO compared with 4142 in the previous year
- 38 of the investigations related to penalty fares and 43 investigations related to Authorised Officer conduct (compared with 23 in the previous year)
- There were 853 complaints regarding service delivery, a decrease of 70
- Issues relating to myki are down for the second consecutive year (by 8%)
- Complaints specifically about service cancellations are down by 41% but concerns regarding the communication of timetable changes are up by 51%

Ms Jennings praised instances where system improvements were identified with operators and proactively resolved.

Quotes

"The Public Transport Ombudsman plays an important consumer protection role, providing a free and informal access to justice pathway for consumers with complaints about public transport.

"The data shows that even with the introduction of a customer advocate within Public Transport Victoria, many consumers are still turning to the Public Transport Ombudsman for an independent and fair outcome when their complaint remains unresolved.

"This year has also seen the trialling of the penalty fare option – an on-the-spot \$75 payment offered as an alternative to a fine of up to \$223. The introduction of the penalty fares as an enforcement measure led to a marked increase in the complexity of complaints being brought to the PTO.

"The Public Transport Ombudsman spoke to 189 consumers with complaints about the penalty fare option. If it is to be retained, it can be improved.

About the PTO

The Public Transport Ombudsman is a not-for-profit, independent dispute resolution body providing free, fair and informal service for the resolution of complaints about Victorian public transport operators who are members of the PTO scheme.

The members are Public Transport Victoria, BusVic, Metro Trains, Southern Cross Station, Transdev, V/Line, VicTrack and Yarra Trams.

The 2014/15 Public Transport Ombudsman report can be downloaded from <http://www.ptovic.com.au/>

If you would like to speak to the Ombudsman about this information please call Sophie Scully on 8623 2121 to arrange a phone appointment.

The PTO can be contacted by customers in the following ways:

Free call	1800 466 865
National Relay Service	TTY Users 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 466 865 Speak and Listen 1800 555 727 then ask for 1800 466 865
Interpreter Service	131 450
Email	enquiries@ptovic.com.au
Web	www.ptovic.com.au