

VAGO

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Managing Disruptions Affecting Victoria's Public Transport Network

March 2025

Independent assurance report to Parliament
2024–25:10



Managing Disruptions Affecting Victoria's Public Transport Network

Independent assurance report to Parliament

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5 March 2025



Victorian Auditor-General's Office

The Hon Shaun Leane MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Melbourne

The Hon Maree Edwards MP
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Melbourne

Dear Presiding Officers

Under the provisions of the *Audit Act 1994*, I transmit my report *Managing Disruptions Affecting Victoria's Public Transport Network*.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
5 March 2025

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout Victoria. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their continuing culture, and to Elders past and present.

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Audit snapshot

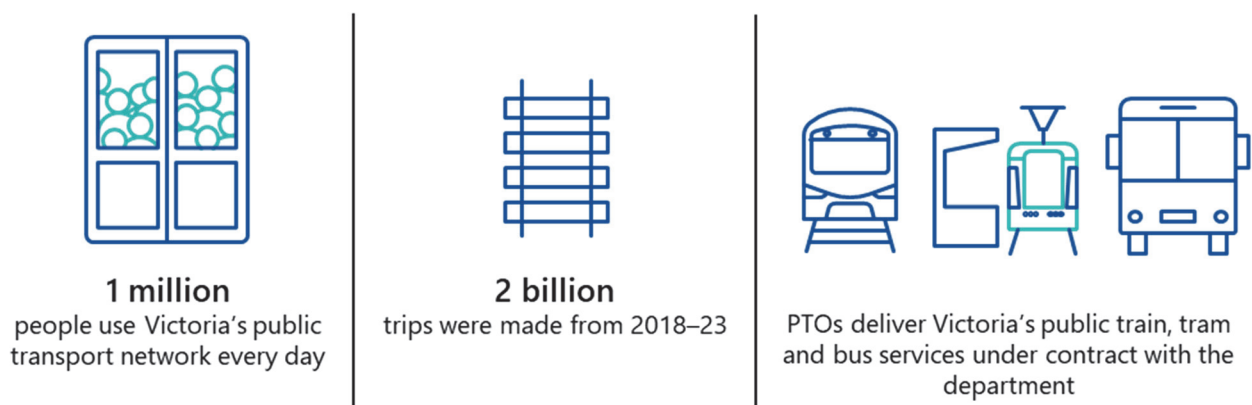
Are transport bodies and public transport operators minimising the impact of disruptions affecting passengers on Victoria's public transport network?

Why we did this audit

The public transport network plays a vital role in the lives of Victorians. An estimated 1 million people use Victoria's public transport network every day to get to school, work, healthcare and to connect with their community. We conducted this audit to see if transport bodies and public transport operators (PTOs) are minimising the impact of disruptions affecting passengers on Victoria's public transport network.

We examined the Department of Transport and Planning (the department), which plans, builds and operates Victoria's public transport network. This includes Transport for Victoria, which is responsible for coordinating, operating and maintaining Victoria's public transport network. We examined the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA), which delivers the state's transport infrastructure program (excluding the Suburban Rail Loop project). We also examined PTOs, which deliver Victoria's public train, tram and bus services under contract with the department.

Key background information



Source: VAGO.

What we concluded

Transport bodies and PTOs have minimised the impact of disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network. Despite a steady increase in planned disruptions during the audit period, the department, VIDA (and its Big Build contractors) and PTOs minimised the impact on passengers through effective scheduling and management.

PTOs have prepared for and responded to unplanned disruptions, including emergencies, in line with their legal obligations under the *State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)*, *Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan* (the Sub-Plan) and contracts with the department.

However, the department has not always met its obligations to provide support as the lead support agency in emergencies affecting public transport, as designated by the SEMP and Sub-Plan. This means while the department has effective controls to ensure PTOs respond appropriately, it may not always provide effective oversight and support to PTOs to minimise impacts on passengers.

1.

Our key findings

What we examined

Our audit followed 3 lines of inquiry:

1. Are transport bodies and public transport operators (PTOs) prepared to manage disruptions impacting Victoria's public transport network?
2. Do transport bodies and PTOs effectively respond to disruptions impacting Victoria's public transport network?
3. Do transport bodies and PTOs learn from disruptions impacting Victoria's public transport network?

To answer these questions, we examined:

- the Department of Transport and Planning (the department)
- the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA)
- VicTrack
- Metro Trains Melbourne (Metro Trains)
- V/Line
- Yarra Trams
- 2 public bus operators:
 - Kinetic
 - CDC Victoria.

The audit examined the management of disruptions between 1 July 2021 and 31 January 2024, when the widespread reliance on public transport returned after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Identifying what is working well

In our engagements we look for what is working well – not only areas for improvement.

Sharing positive outcomes allows other public agencies to learn from and adopt good practices. This is an important part of our commitment to better public services for Victorians.

Background information

Public transport disruptions can be unplanned or planned.

Unplanned disruptions can be caused by:

- significant events on the network, including:
 - trespassers
 - ill passengers
 - rallies
 - service obstructions
 - staff errors
- service cancellations
- infrastructure faults
- emergency services requests.

Public transport network emergencies can be directly related to the network, such as:

- infrastructure or communication failures
- power outages at major transport hubs.

Emergencies affecting the public transport network can also be due to other emergencies, such as severe weather events and telecommunication outages.

Planned disruptions can be due to:

- scheduled asset maintenance by PTOs
- the occupation of parts of the public transport network for major transport infrastructure projects under:
 - Victoria's Big Build
 - projects led by other parties, such as the department, Metro Trains or the Suburban Rail Loop Authority.

Planned disruptions can also occur due to major events, such as sports, concerts, festivals and public gatherings, but these were outside the scope of this audit.

Roles and responsibilities in Victoria's public transport network

Victoria's public transport network uses different transport modes and multiple operators. Figure 1 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the main entities in Victoria's public transport network.

Figure 1: Roles and responsibilities in Victoria’s public transport network

Entity	Roles and responsibilities
Transport bodies	
the department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes Transport for Victoria, which is the statutory office responsible for coordinating, providing, operating and maintaining Victoria’s public transport and road system Plans, builds and supports an integrated, sustainable and safe public transport network Minimises the impact of emergencies across the public transport network through effective preparation, coordination, response and recovery
VIDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees the activities of Victoria’s Big Build (excluding the Suburban Rail Loop project) Works with PTOs and Big Build contractors to coordinate occupying the public transport network for Big Build planned disruptions Works with the department to assess the cumulative impact of disruptions to public transport network and users
VicTrack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owns Victoria’s rail land, buildings and infrastructure Provides the telecommunication network that supports trains and trams
Public transport operators	
Metro Trains	Operates Melbourne’s metropolitan train network under agreement with the department
V/Line	Operates regional train and coach services under agreement with the department
Yarra Trams	Operated Melbourne’s metropolitan tram network under agreement with the department until 30 November 2024
Bus operators	Operate public bus services across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria under agreement with the department

Source: VAGO analysis of auditee documents.

This audit included 2 of the 46 public bus operators:

- Kinetic, which operates a third of services across metropolitan Melbourne
- CDC Victoria, which operates services in:
 - the inner-east, north-west, and western suburbs of Melbourne
 - Ballarat, Geelong and Mildura.

The legislative framework for managing public transport emergencies

A legislative framework supports agencies to manage emergencies to Victoria’s public transport network. This includes the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (the Act), *State Emergency Management Plan* (SEMP) and the *SEMP Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan* (the Sub-Plan).

The Act outlines requirements to make sure vital critical infrastructure is resilient. If this infrastructure is affected by disruptions, it could impact the supply of an essential service, including transport to Victoria, or the economic or social wellbeing of Victoria. This infrastructure includes:

- VicTrack’s transport telecommunication network
- the rail network
- the tram network.

Under the Act, the Emergency Management Commissioner prepares and issues the SEMP. The SEMP outlines arrangements for mitigating, responding to and recovering from emergencies, and it specifies agencies’ roles and responsibilities in emergency management. During the audit period, the SEMP was reviewed and/or updated several times. We used the SEMP published in November 2023 in our analysis. This SEMP has since been updated as of November 2024.

The SEMP lists the department as:

- the control agency for responding to public transport emergencies
- the lead support agency to coordinate and manage public transport during other emergencies.

The Sub-Plan addresses how specific emergencies affecting public transport should be managed and governed. The relevant Sub-Plan for the audit period was published in 2021. This has since been updated as of October 2024.

For completeness, the SEMP and the Sub-Plan outline arrangements for responding to lower-level incidents that are not classified as emergencies. However, these are managed by PTOs in line with their contractual arrangements with the department, rather than as SEMP or Sub-Plan requirements.

Emergency

The Act defines an emergency as the actual or imminent occurrence of an event that in any way:

- endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria
- destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria
- endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria.

What we found

This section focuses on our key findings, which fall into 3 areas:

1. Transport bodies and PTOs have a sound framework for managing unplanned disruptions and emergencies, but there are some inconsistencies for the department.
2. While PTOs have effectively responded to unplanned disruptions and emergencies, the department has not always provided support in line with its obligations.
3. Transport bodies, PTOs and Big Build contractors effectively schedule and manage planned disruptions to minimise the impact on passengers.

The full list of our recommendations, including agency responses, is at the end of this section.

Consultation with agencies

When reaching our conclusions, we consulted with the audited agencies and considered their views.

You can read their full responses in Appendix A.

Key finding 1: Transport bodies and PTOs have a sound framework for managing unplanned disruptions and emergencies, but there are some inconsistencies for the department

The department's internal and contractual arrangements with PTOs for managing unplanned disruptions

The department's operational response team monitors the transport network in real time, coordinating with PTOs to assess the potential impact of unplanned disruptions. When the potential impact is significant, the department has procedures and internal criteria to guide decision-making for escalating the disruption to the department's formal emergency management structure.

The department manages unplanned disruptions through contractual arrangements with PTOs. We found that PTOs have policies, plans and procedures to manage unplanned disruptions and emergencies. PTOs also provide monthly reports to the department that outline the cause and impact of significant incidents.

Unplanned disruption

An unplanned event affecting a timetabled service that means the PTO cannot achieve service delivery at a station or a stop.

Transport bodies' and PTOs' roles for managing emergencies under the SEMP and Sub-Plan

The SEMP and Sub-Plan outline the roles of transport bodies and PTOs in managing unplanned disruptions and emergencies affecting Victoria's public transport network. The Sub-Plan outlines 3 response levels to incidents and emergencies and roles and responsibilities for responding to each. This includes:

- the department to act as the control agency during public transport emergencies
- the department to provide oversight and coordination as the lead support agency to coordinate and manage public transport during other emergencies
- PTOs to manage incidents (or level 1 responses) as part of business-as-usual arrangements and to act as response support agencies under the Sub-Plan during level 2 and 3 emergencies.

Incident

In the Sub-Plan, an incident is defined as an event, occurrence or set of circumstances that:

- has a definite duration
- calls for human intervention
- has a set of concluding conditions that can be defined
- is or will be under the control of an individual who has the authority to make decisions about the means by which it will be brought to a resolution.

The department's internal arrangements for managing emergencies

The department has an emergency management plan that aligns with the Act and outlines its obligations under the SEMP. The plan outlines a clear internal command and coordination structure.

In line with the Sub-Plan, the department's plan identifies its role as either control agency or lead support agency in coordinating emergencies affecting public transport. It also outlines the role of the Public Transport Coordination Group (PTCG) to coordinate the activities of multiple transport operators as support agencies. The department has developed terms of reference for this.

The PTCG is convened to provide the subject matter expertise, situational awareness and intelligence required for coordinating a response to a major disruption affecting public transport. However, the PTCG terms of reference do not align with the Sub-Plan's requirements. This may result in uncoordinated and inconsistent oversight and support for PTOs during emergencies.

PTO and VicTrack emergency management planning and preparedness

In line with the Sub-Plan, we found that:

- each audited PTO has an emergency and crisis management plan that is consistent with its contractual requirements
- VicTrack has a telecommunication emergency management framework in line with its role under the Sub-Plan.

As owners or operators of vital critical infrastructure, the Act requires the department (Transport for Victoria), VicTrack, Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams to do resilience exercises in a 12-month resilience improvement cycle.

We found that each auditee either:

- completed its mandated annual resilience exercises
- received an exemption from the minister responsible for public transport during the audit period.

Key finding 2: While PTOs have effectively responded to unplanned disruptions and emergencies, the department has not always provided support in line with its obligations

PTO responses to unplanned disruptions and emergencies

We analysed a sample of unplanned disruptions and emergencies that impacted passengers during the audit period. We assessed if PTOs managed these service disruptions in line with their contracts and the Sub-Plan. We found that PTOs did respond effectively by implementing actions to maintain service continuity. This included:

- notifying the department and passengers about network disruptions
- providing advice on alternative travel options
- providing safe, alternative transport during disruptions, which was mostly through replacement buses.

Working well: PTOs effectively respond to unplanned disruptions to minimise the impact on passengers

PTOs have responded to unplanned disruptions in line with their legislative and contractual requirements. This includes notifying the department and passengers about network disruptions, providing advice on alternative travel options as well as alternative services.

The department's support obligations and response to relevant emergencies

The SEMP requires the department to act as the control agency for public transport emergencies or play the lead support role for public transport during emergencies controlled by other agencies.

During the audit period, there were no emergencies where the department was the control agency. But there were 14 emergencies where, according to the SEMP, the department was the lead support agency for public transport.

The Sub-Plan outlines the department's specific oversight and support arrangements when it is the lead support agency for level 2 or 3 regional or statewide responses. The arrangements outline when it will and may activate various emergency management groups.

Based on the evidence the department gave us, it did not always provide oversight and support in line with the Sub-Plan because:

- it did not convene its regional emergency management team during any of the level 2 emergencies
- it did not activate its emergency coordination team (state tier) in 5 of 6 level 3 emergencies
- it did not convene the PTCG in one of the 6 level 3 emergencies, although it did in half of the level 2 emergencies despite that not being a mandated requirement under the Sub-Plan.

This means the department did not always provide oversight and support to PTOs and the incident controller in line with its obligations under the Sub-Plan. This increases the risk of uncoordinated and inconsistent public transport responses and greater impact on passengers.

Key issue: There is a risk that the department is not always providing suitable oversight and support to PTOs and the incident controller

The department has not always provided support and oversight in line with its obligations under the Sub-Plan, which increases the risk of uncoordinated and inconsistent responses to public transport disruptions.

Addressing this finding

To address this finding, we made one recommendation to the department about reviewing and updating its policies and procedures to make sure it provides consistent support and oversight of emergencies in line with its obligations in the SEMP and Sub-Plan.

Key finding 3: Transport bodies, PTOs and Big Build contractors effectively schedule and manage planned disruptions to minimise the impact on passengers

Scheduling planned disruptions outside peak times

Over the audit period, there was a steady increase in planned disruptions and the total network occupation time. Much of this was related to Victoria's Big Build, which is delivering more than 180 major road and rail projects. Despite this, the department, VIDA (and its Big Build contractors) and PTOs have worked effectively to schedule and manage planned disruptions.

VIDA manages planned Big Build disruptions with an awareness of the department's and PTOs' scheduled works. It has clear principles for planning and scheduling planned disruptions and maintains a disruption schedule. It also works with the department to oversee and assess cumulative impacts of disruptions, including those related to passengers.

We found that Big Build-related disruptions were mostly scheduled outside peak travel times. PTOs completed planned network maintenance and infrastructure works while their network was occupied for Big Build projects. This helped to minimise the impact of disruptions on passengers and the cumulative impact of planned disruptions.

Planned disruption

Under the PTO franchise or contractual agreements, a planned disruption is a planned deviation from a PTO's master timetable that is reflected in the reference daily timetable submitted to the department.

Working well: PTOs are scheduling planned disruptions outside of peak travel times, which minimises the impact on passengers

While the number of planned disruptions increased over the audit period, most planned disruptions occurred overnight and on weekends. PTOs coordinated infrastructure projects and asset maintenance with Big Build-related network occupations.

PTO responses to planned disruptions

We analysed a sample of 10 planned disruptions related to Big Build projects, PTO asset maintenance and infrastructure-related projects. We assessed if:

- the timing and coordination of each disruption minimised the potential impact on passengers
- PTOs met their main contractual requirements around managing planned disruptions.

We found that:

- 5 of the 6 sampled Big Build–related disruptions either occurred during or spanning weekends, including overnight
- one Big Build disruption took place during weekdays due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in 2021
- all 4 PTO maintenance and infrastructure-related projects either occurred during or spanning weekends, including overnight.

We also found that for all disruptions, PTOs:

- prepared disruption management strategies, which included contingencies if disruptions spanned normal timetable hours
- provided alternative transport during timetable hours, or altered their timetable for longer disruptions with department approval by:
 - shortening the affected service
 - adding additional run time
 - bypassing the City Loop.

We also found that Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams provided alternative transport for all planned disruptions that impacted passenger services during standard timetable hours. This was usually bus replacements.

Stable passenger complaints

The department receives public transport service delivery complaints that may relate to planned and/or unplanned disruptions. Between July 2021 and January 2024, the number of service delivery complaints per passenger did not significantly increase for any public transport mode. This includes complaints about Metro Trains, whose network and services were the most impacted by planned disruptions, including Big Build projects.

See the next page for our recommendation, including the department's response.

2.

Our recommendation

We made one recommendation to address our findings. The Department of Transport and Planning has accepted this recommendation.

Agency response

Finding: The Department of Transport and Planning has not always responded to level 2 and 3 emergencies affecting the public transport network in line with its obligations under the *Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan*

Department of Transport and Planning	1	Review why it did not always meet its obligations as a lead support agency under the <i>State Emergency Management Plan</i> and <i>Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan</i> . Where necessary, the Department of Transport and Planning should update its policies and procedures to ensure it always meets its obligations in the future (see Section 4).	Accepted
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3.

Preparing for unplanned disruptions and emergencies affecting public transport

The SEMP and Sub-Plan outline the roles of the department and PTOs in managing unplanned disruptions and emergencies affecting Victoria's public transport network. The department fulfils its role through its internal arrangements and contracts with PTOs. The department, VicTrack and PTOs have emergency management arrangements that are consistent with the Sub-Plan. For PTOs, these arrangements also comply with their contractual requirements.

In line with the Act, all PTOs operating vital critical infrastructure have met legislated resilience testing requirements to make sure they are prepared for emergencies.

Covered in this section:

- The department manages unplanned disruptions through internal arrangements and contracts with PTOs
- The SEMP and Sub-Plan outline the department's and PTOs' roles and responsibilities in managing public transport emergencies
- Transport bodies and PTOs have emergency management arrangements that are consistent with the Sub-Plan, but there are some inconsistencies for the department
- Transport bodies and PTOs have met their vital critical infrastructure requirements for emergency preparedness

The department manages unplanned disruptions through internal arrangements and contracts with PTOs

Monitoring and escalating unplanned disruptions

The department's operational response team operates morning to evening with a duty officer on call overnight to:

- actively monitor and work with PTOs and the wider department to identify, record and, where appropriate, escalate unplanned disruptions (also referred to as incidents) impacting services
- gather situational awareness of unplanned disruptions, and identify potential consequences and mitigation activities to minimise the impact to the community, customers and businesses
- provide awareness of disruptions and, where necessary, coordination across the department, PTOs and emergency service agencies
- internally escalate significant and major incidents impacting the transport network.

PTOs notify the operational response team of unplanned disruptions in real time. The operational response team assesses the nature and potential impact of each notified incident against internal reporting criteria.

If the potential impact meets certain criteria as a ...	then ...	and this may include ...
significant incident	the operational response team	escalating to the department's
major incident	notifies key internal stakeholders	formal emergency management structure via the State Agency Commander.

PTO contractual requirements

The department manages unplanned disruptions through contractual arrangements with PTOs.

The department's contracts with PTOs outline requirements to prepare policies, plans and procedures about managing unplanned disruptions.

Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams must have network readiness plans, record actual service times and report monthly on unplanned disruptions.

Kinetic and CDC Victoria's contracts include these requirements except recording actual service times.

PTO monthly contractual performance reports give the department oversight of how effectively PTOs are managing unplanned disruptions. PTOs must report to the department:

- the target monthly performance and the actual monthly performance, which for rail and tram operators includes analysis on the causes of delays and non-delivery of services
- a summary of any significant incidents and their cause and impact.

We found that all PTOs provided these reports in line with their contractual requirements.

The SEMP and Sub-Plan outline the department's and PTOs' roles and responsibilities in managing public transport emergencies

Roles and responsibilities

A legislative framework supports agencies to manage public transport disruptions due to emergencies to Victoria's public transport network.

The legislative framework includes the Act, the SEMP and the Sub-Plan.

The SEMP outlines the state-level arrangements for emergency management in Victoria, including the roles and responsibilities of agencies. The SEMP lists the department as:

- the control agency for responding to public transport emergencies
- the lead support agency to coordinate and manage public transport during other emergencies.

The Sub-Plan complements the SEMP by outlining the arrangements for mitigating, responding to and recovering from public transport disruptions due to emergencies. It provides specific information about managing and governing public transport disruptions, including where the department is either the control agency or a support agency.

The Sub-Plan outlines 3 response levels to public transport emergencies (see Figure 2) and roles and responsibilities for responding to each. These response levels align with the 3 emergency management tiers outlined in the SEMP.

Figure 2: Sub-Plan response levels to public transport emergencies

Sub-Plan response level	Examples	Potential impact on transport services	Response involves
1 (PTO response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service cancellation • Rolling stock or infrastructure faults 	Full or partial suspension of services for a limited time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single PTO • Little or no consequences to the community • Normal resumption of services within 4 hours
2 (Regional tier activated)	Small-scale outages impacting signals and communication	Service disruptions for more than 4 hours outside planned disruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple PTOs • Medium-term impact on critical infrastructure
2 (Area of operations activated)	Small-scale outages impacting signals and communication that span several regions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-term impact on the community
3 (State tier activated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread and protracted communications outage • Major infrastructure failure 	Extended service disruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant economic, social or environmental impact on Victoria • Major impact on the routine functioning of the community • Whole-of-government response

Source: VAGO analysis of the Sub-Plan.

Under the Sub-Plan, the department passes control of level 1 responses to PTOs where the expected impacts are minimal. PTOs manage level 1 responses as part of business-as-usual arrangements, activating their emergency and crisis management plans in consultation with the department. Level 1 responses are outside the scope of the SEMP but are in the Sub-Plan for completeness.

For emergencies that require level 2 and 3 responses, the department is involved as either the control agency or support agency:

- Part 5 of the Sub-Plan lists the department as the control agency for a specific set of public transport disruptions that relate to the network. This could include:
 - infrastructure, communication or power failure at transport hubs
 - network issues due to infrastructure faults or PTO issues
 - loss of critical train or tram controlling or signalling systems.
- Part 6 of the Sub-Plan lists the department as the lead support agency for emergencies that affect or might affect public transport services to:
 - a 'moderate extent' at a regional or area level (level 2 responses)
 - a 'large extent' at a state tier level (level 3 responses).

During the audit period, there were no emergencies that took place where the department was the control agency. But there were 14 emergencies where the department was the lead support agency as per its roles and responsibilities in the SEMP (see Section 4).

The Sub-Plan outlines that in situations where the department is the lead support agency for level 2 or 3 regional or statewide responses, it will, or may, convene specific groups to provide oversight and support.

A level 2 response requires the department to ...	and may include ...	whereas a level 3 response requires the department to ...
convene the regional emergency management team to provide oversight and support with the Area of Operations Controller or Regional Agency Commander	the department convening the PTCG when multiple PTOs are responding	convene the regional coordination team to provide oversight and support with the Regional Agency Commander participating in the regional emergency management team.
	the department's emergency coordination team monitoring the incident and providing support	activate its emergency coordination team (state tier) to provide support. convene the PTCG to coordinate the activities of multiple PTOs.

Transport bodies and PTOs have emergency management arrangements that are consistent with the Sub-Plan, but there are some inconsistencies for the department

The department's emergency management plan

The department has an emergency management plan that outlines its obligations under the Act and the SEMP.

The plan outlines a clear internal command and coordination structure. It assigns responsibility for leading department-wide emergency coordination and state-level integration to its resilience and emergency coordination branch through the State Agency Commander.

The State Agency Commander is responsible for representing and advocating on behalf of the department at the state level within Victoria. This is regardless of if the department is a control, lead or support agency.

In line with the Sub-Plan, the emergency management plan lists the department as a support agency in coordinating public transport emergencies.

It also outlines PTCG's role to coordinate the activities of multiple transport operators as support agencies. When activated, the PTCG must report to the department's executive coordination team on the transport network's operational status.

PTCG's terms of reference

The PTCG's terms of reference describe the group as a transport sector emergency management team convened under the department's emergency management plan or the Sub-Plan. The department convenes the PTCG to help reduce the impacts of predicted or actual significant transport disruptions that affect multiple PTOs. Members include:

- the department
- Victoria Police
- Metro Trains
- Yarra Trams
- V/Line
- Southern Cross Station
- bus operators
- Bus Association Victoria
- VicTrack.

The PTCG's terms of reference state that it will be activated to coordinate the transport sector in relation to:

- readiness for, response to and recovery from a disruption, emergency and/or threat that significantly impacts public transport or other transport services (level 3 emergencies)
- level 2 emergencies with potential to escalate to level 3.

The Sub-Plan states that ...	But ...	The PTCG's terms of reference ...
during a level 3 response where the department is the statewide control agency, management of the response is likely to include the coordination of PTO activities through the PTCG.	during a level 3 response where the department is a support agency at the state tier, the department will convene the PTCG.	do not make a distinction between whether the department is the control or a support agency.
for level 2 responses where the department is the control agency, it will activate the PTCG to coordinate the activities of multiple PTOs (as support agencies).	for level 2 responses where the department is a support agency, the department may convene the PTCG to coordinate the activities of multiple PTOs who are responding as support agencies.	

This is consistent with the department's emergency management plan but not with the Sub-Plan.

Note: The updated Sub-Plan, released in October 2024, refers to the PTCG as the Transport Coordination Group.

PTOs and VicTrack emergency and crisis management planning

In line with the Sub-Plan, the department contractually requires that each PTO maintains and activates an emergency and crisis management plan.

These plans outline the roles and responsibilities for the department and PTOs to mitigate and respond to emergencies as outlined in the Sub-Plan, particularly for level 1 emergencies.

We found that each of the audited PTOs have current emergency and crisis management plans that are consistent with their contractual requirements and align with the Sub-Plan.

Specific to its telecommunication role under the Sub-Plan, VicTrack has a telecommunication emergency management framework. This framework assists VicTrack to plan for, respond to and recover from an emergency that impacts public transport communications.

VicTrack also has a crisis management plan that supports the framework. It outlines requirements for its crisis management team to use immediately before, during and after a crisis. This includes clear actions and roles and responsibilities.

Transport bodies and PTOs have met their vital critical infrastructure requirements for emergency preparedness

Vital critical infrastructure exercises for emergency preparedness

Under the *Ministerial Guidelines for Critical Infrastructure Resilience*, the Minister for Emergency Services (delegated to the minister responsible for public transport) designates certain transport services as vital critical infrastructure. This is also designated by the Governor in Council under section 74E of the Act. This designation seeks to make sure the public transport network is resilient and operates during emergencies.

The Act enables the Minister for Emergency Services to:

- protect designated critical infrastructure during emergencies
- give directions to infrastructure owners or operators to carry out safeguarding measures.

The minister responsible for public transport has designated trains and trams as vital critical infrastructure but not buses. As owners or operators of vital critical infrastructure, part 7A of the Act requires the department (Transport for Victoria), VicTrack, Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams to undertake resilience exercises in a 12-month resilience improvement cycle. This includes:

- a statement of assurance
- emergency risk management planning and documentation
- an exercise (unless otherwise agreed to by the minister responsible for public transport)
- an audit.

The department (Transport for Victoria), Metro Trains, V/Line, Yarra Trams and VicTrack completed their mandated annual resilience exercises or received an exemption from the minister throughout the audit period.

As buses are not vital critical infrastructure, bus operators do not need to undertake resilience exercises. This means that they may not test their emergency preparedness and resilience as rigorously as train or tram operators.

4.

Responding to unplanned disruptions and emergencies affecting public transport

The department has not always effectively responded to unplanned disruptions and emergencies impacting public transport. While the department has minimised the impacts through effective contractual requirements with PTOs, it has not always met its support obligations under the Sub-Plan.

Covered in this section:

- The number of significant unplanned disruptions has remained stable and the average duration has decreased
- PTOs effectively respond to unplanned disruptions and emergencies in line with contractual arrangements and the Sub-Plan
- The SEMP requires the department to play the lead support role for public transport during emergencies, but it has not always met its obligations

The number of significant unplanned disruptions has remained stable and the average duration has decreased

Frequency and duration of significant unplanned disruptions

We analysed the significant unplanned disruptions recorded in the department's operational response team incident log during the audit period.

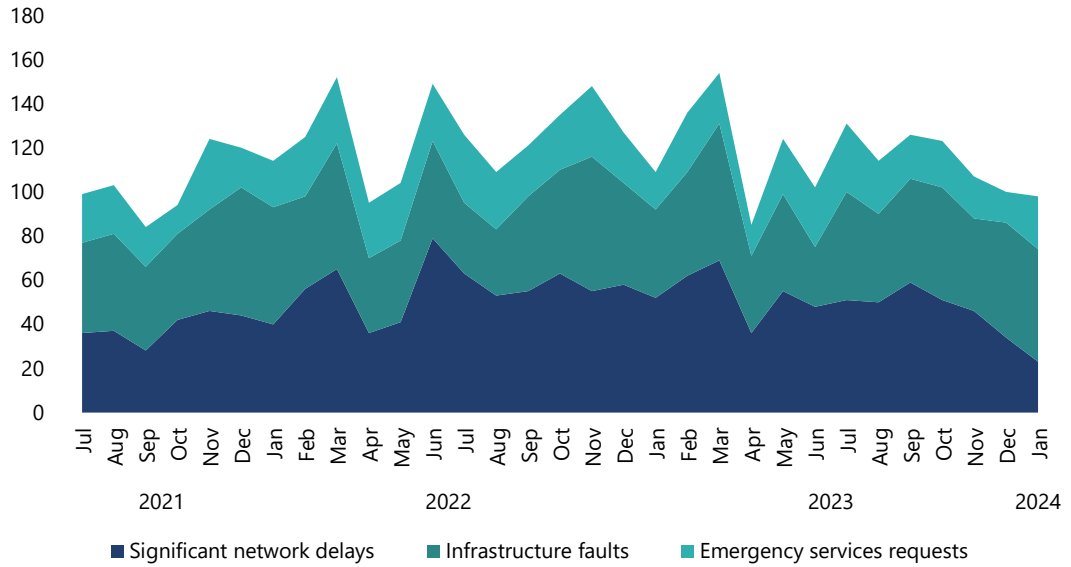
The main causes of disruptions in the operational response team incident log were:

- significant network delays (41 per cent), which includes trespassers, ill passengers, rallies, service obstructions, signals passed at danger and staff errors
- infrastructure faults (37 per cent)
- emergency services requests (19 per cent).

A smaller number of recordable disruptions were due to severe weather and other factors.

As shown in Figure 3, despite month-to-month fluctuations, the number of unplanned disruptions in the operational response team incident log remained stable during the audit period. There was no noticeable increase due to any cause, including infrastructure faults and significant network delays.

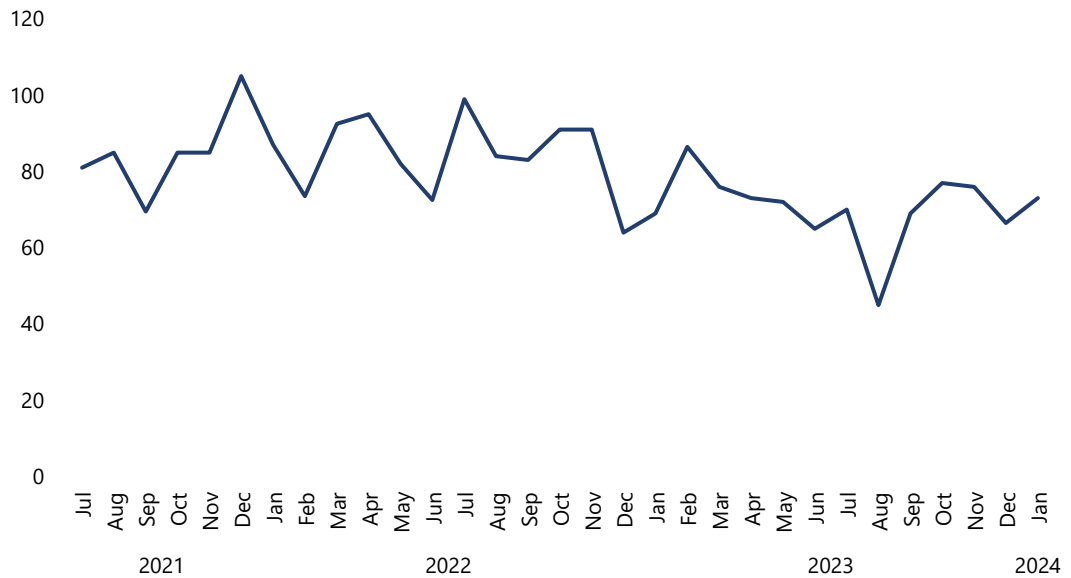
Figure 3: Number of significant unplanned disruptions recorded from July 2021 to January 2024



Source: VAGO analysis of the department's operational response team incident log spreadsheet.

Within the audit period, unplanned disruptions recorded within the operational response team incident log typically lasted an hour, with a median duration of 1 hour 18 minutes. Despite month-to-month fluctuations, the median duration has trended downward, decreasing approximately 42 seconds a month (refer to Figure 4). However, 10 per cent of logged unplanned disruptions lasted over 6 hours.

Figure 4: Median duration (minutes) of significant unplanned disruptions from July 2021 to January 2024



Source: VAGO analysis of the department's operational response team incident log spreadsheet.

PTOs effectively respond to unplanned disruptions and emergencies in line with contractual arrangements and the Sub-Plan

Sample selection

We analysed a sample of unplanned disruptions and emergencies that impacted public transport to assess if PTOs managed service disruptions in line with their contracts and the Sub-Plan.

We selected the sample from the department's operational response team's incident log. The sample consisted of:

- 9 level 1 incident responses affecting Metro Trains, V/Line, Yarra Trams and Kinetic
- one level 2 emergency response caused by an Optus outage affecting Metro Trains' communication network
- 8 separate disruptions affecting Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams during a severe weather event that VAGO assessed to meet the criteria of a level 2 emergency response.

The designated response levels align with the response definitions in the Sub-Plan.

CDC Victoria was not in our sample because it could only provide records of unplanned disruption data for November 2023. The operational response team's incident log did not contain any disruptions for CDC Victoria.

PTO responses to level 1 incidents

As outlined in the Sub-Plan, PTOs respond to incidents affecting their services as part of their day-to-day business in line with their contractual arrangements (described in Section 3).

During the 9 sampled level 1 disruptions, we found that PTOs acted to maintain service continuity. In summary:

- PTOs notified the department and passengers of all disruptions
- Yarra Trams and Kinetic modified routes during 4 disruptions
- V/Line provided replacement buses during all its sampled disruptions
- Metro Trains provided replacement buses during 2 of the 3 sampled disruptions but not during an unplanned disruption lasting 3 hours because trains were still operational at a reduced frequency.

PTO responses during level 2 emergencies

As part of our sample, we assessed the Optus outage on 8 November 2023, which was classified as a level 2 emergency. The outage disrupted Metro Trains' network for approximately 13 hours but did not disrupt other public transport services.

As per section 6 of the Sub-Plan, Metro Trains effectively managed the service disruption by exercising its emergency management plan. In line with this plan and its contractual requirements, Metro Trains:

- notified the department of the disruption to services
- notified the department and passengers of the disruption/s via station announcements, its websites and social media platforms (the department also notified passengers via the Public Transport Victoria app)
- managed service continuity by providing safe alternative transport options between affected stations.

As part of our sample, we also assessed a severe weather event on 21 November 2022. The severe weather event:

- caused 8 separate disruptions due to fallen trees or debris, each lasting between 44 minutes and almost 7 hours
- impacted Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams.

Based on documents from PTOs and the department outlining their responses, PTOs responded to both emergencies in keeping with their contractual obligations and the Sub-Plan.

In summary, PTOs activated their emergency management plans and:

- notified the department and passengers of the disruption/s via station announcements, their websites and social media platforms (the department also kept passengers informed through various communication channels including the Public Transport Victoria app and website, public radio, announcements and interactive voice response messages)
- managed service continuity by providing safe alternative transport options between affected stations:
 - Metro Trains and V/Line deployed replacement buses
 - Yarra Trams changed routes.

The SEMP requires the department to play the lead support role for public transport during emergencies, but it has not always met its obligations

Department oversight and support during level 2 and 3 emergencies

The department is required to provide oversight and support during public transport emergencies as per the SEMP and the Sub-Plan (see Section 3). During the audit period, there were no emergencies that took place where the department was the control agency. But the department was the lead support agency for 14 emergencies. These included:

- 8 level 2 emergencies
- 6 level 3 emergencies.

Based on the evidence the department provided, it did not always provide oversight and support in line with its obligations under section 6 of the Sub-Plan because:

- it did not activate its regional emergency management team during any of the level 2 emergencies
- it did not activate its emergency coordination team (state tier) in 5 of 6 level 3 emergencies
- it did not activate the PTCG in one of the 6 level 3 emergencies, although it did in half of the level 2 emergencies despite that not being a mandated requirement under the Sub-Plan.

This means the department did not always provide oversight and support to PTOs and the incident controller in line with its obligations under the Sub-Plan. This increases the risk of uncoordinated and inconsistent responses to public transport emergencies that impact passengers.

Department oversight and support during the Optus outage and a severe weather event

Under the SEMP, the department was the lead support agency for the Optus outage on 8 November 2023, which was classified by the department as a level 2 emergency. As a support agency for a level 2 emergency, section 6 of the Sub-Plan requires the department to activate its regional emergency management team and possibly its emergency coordination team (state tier). Given the high impact of the Optus outage, the department activated its incident coordination team, effectively meeting its requirement under the Sub-Plan.

Where multiple PTOs respond, the department may activate the PTCG to coordinate their activities. The department did not need to activate the PTCG during the Optus outage because Metro Trains was the only PTO involved.

Our sample also included a set of level 1 incidents related to a severe weather event on 21 November 2022. Section 6.2.2 of the Sub-Plan outlines the department's support agency requirements, listing typical level 2 emergencies as 'severe weather events with significant quantity of widespread fallen trees or debris'. The Sub-Plan also states that the transport disruption from these scenarios is anticipated to take longer than 4 hours.

As the severe weather event matched the criteria for a level 2 emergency in the Sub-Plan, the department would have been required to:

- convene the regional emergency management team
- consider activating the PTCG
- provide support as required through its emergency coordination team (state tier).

However, the department had already activated a statewide transport cell as a support agency for the October 2022 floods across Victoria. The cell included a departmental State Agency Commander and State Duty Officer, which operated out of the Emergency Management Victoria state control centre.

The department used this transport cell to coordinate and oversee the transport response to the 21 November severe weather event as well.

5.

Managing planned disruptions

Transport bodies, PTOs and Big Build contractors have coordinated and managed planned disruptions to the Victorian public transport network to minimise the impact on passengers. They have scheduled most planned disruptions outside peak times, and PTOs have coordinated asset maintenance and other infrastructure-related projects with Big Build-related network occupations.

While Victoria's Big Build has increased planned disruptions to the metropolitan rail network, transport bodies, Metro Trains and Big Build contractors have effectively scheduled and managed these to minimise the impact on passengers.

Covered in this section:

- The number of planned disruptions and the total network occupation time has increased
- Transport bodies, PTOs and Big Build contractors have worked together to schedule planned disruptions to minimise the impact on passengers
- PTOs have managed planned disruptions in line with contractual requirements
- Despite the increase in planned disruptions and total network occupation time, passenger complaints have remained stable

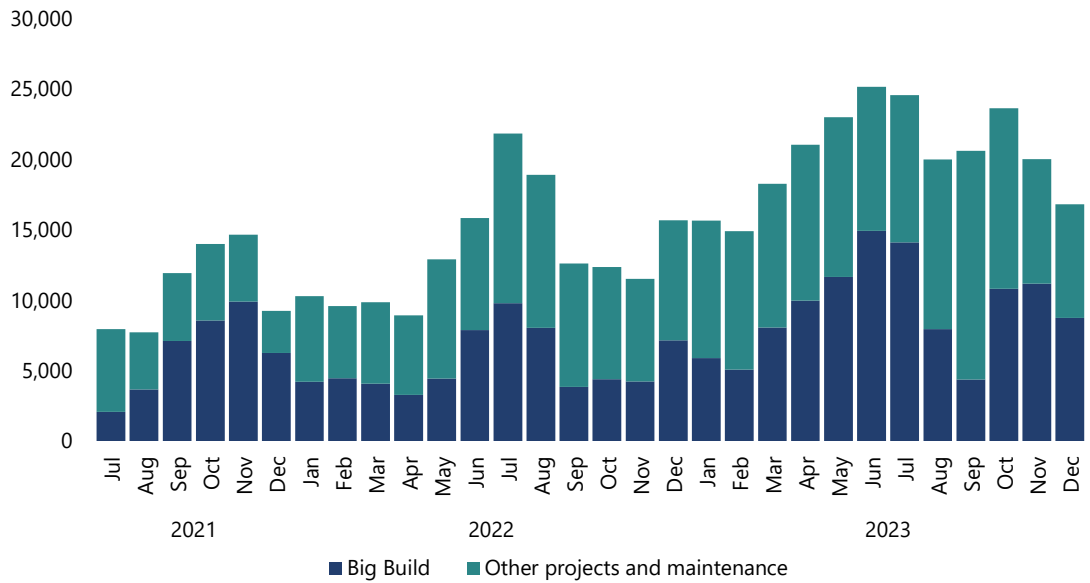
The number of planned disruptions and the total network occupation time has increased

Planned disruptions

Over the audit period, there was a steady increase in planned disruptions and the associated total network occupation time (that is, the hours that the network was occupied for planned works) (see Figure 5). Departmental and/or PTO projects, including asset maintenance and infrastructure-related projects, caused the majority of planned disruptions (79 per cent). These types of disruptions make up 54 per cent of network occupation time.

Victoria's Big Build, which is delivering over 180 major road and rail projects, has a significant impact on the public transport network. While only 21 per cent of planned disruptions relate to the Big Build, (see Figure 5) they contribute to 46 per cent of network occupation time. Big Build-related disruptions result in frequent, and often extended, disruptions to rail services. On average, Big Build-related disruptions take 26.5 hours, while other planned disruptions take 8 hours.

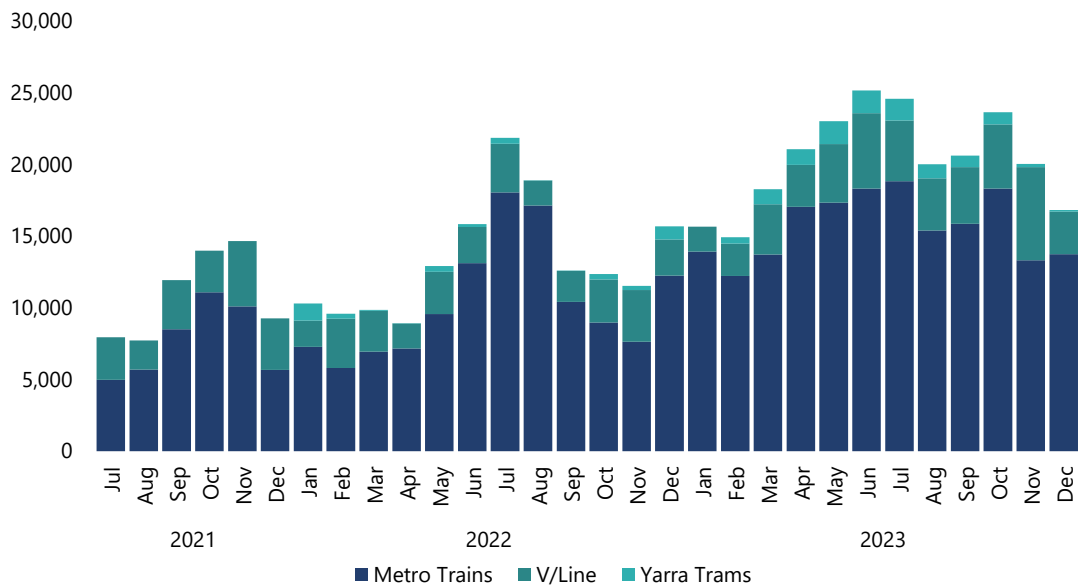
Figure 5: Network occupation time (hours) of planned disruptions from July 2021 to December 2023



Source: VAGO analysis of VIDA planned disruption data.

Planned disruptions mostly affected the metropolitan rail network (76 per cent) and to a lesser extent the regional rail network (21 per cent) (see Figure 6). Similarly, disruptions associated with the Big Build mostly affected Metro Trains' services on the metropolitan rail network (72 per cent).

Figure 6: Network occupation time (hours) of planned disruptions by PTO from July 2021 to December 2023



Source: VAGO analysis of VIDA planned disruptions data.

Transport bodies, PTOs and Big Build contractors have worked together to schedule planned disruptions to minimise the impact on passengers

Roles, responsibilities and governance

The department, PTOs, VIDA (and its Big Build contractors) have worked together effectively to coordinate and manage planned disruptions to the public transport network. These include:

- Big Build–related disruptions
- asset maintenance and infrastructure-related projects by:
 - the department
 - PTOs.

The department primarily manages planned disruptions through its contracts with PTOs. It prepares the network for planned disruptions as part of its management and oversight role. This includes:

- supporting network planning
- assessing and minimising the cumulative impact of planned disruptions to the public transport network.

The department leads 2 key governance bodies that plan and assess the schedule of planned disruptions with relevant transport bodies and PTOs:

- the Planned Disruption Assessment Group: This is a high-level planning group between the department and VIDA that oversees the 12-month schedule of planned disruptions. It is responsible for providing strategies to minimise the impacts of planned disruptions on communities, PTOs and projects. The department and PTOs have multiple governance bodies that report into this group
- the Multi Modal Operator Group: This is the department's governance committee for the rail works program and includes the department, Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams. It is responsible for ensuring a transport-user focus when coordinating planned disruptions.

VIDA manages planned disruptions associated with Victoria's Big Build. It does this at a project level through its 3 transport-focused project offices (Level Crossing Removal Project, Major Roads Projects Victoria and Metro Tunnel Project).

VIDA maintains and distributes a schedule of planned disruptions to the network to the department, PTOs and its project offices. It provides cumulative oversight and assessment of both Big Build–related and other planned disruptions to the network. It regularly reports these to the Planned Disruption Assessment Group.

VIDA coordinates with the department through VIDA project office coordination committees and project-specific network occupation working groups.

**Scheduling
planned
disruptions**

VIDA has principles for planning and scheduling planned disruptions, which it established with Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams as network operators.

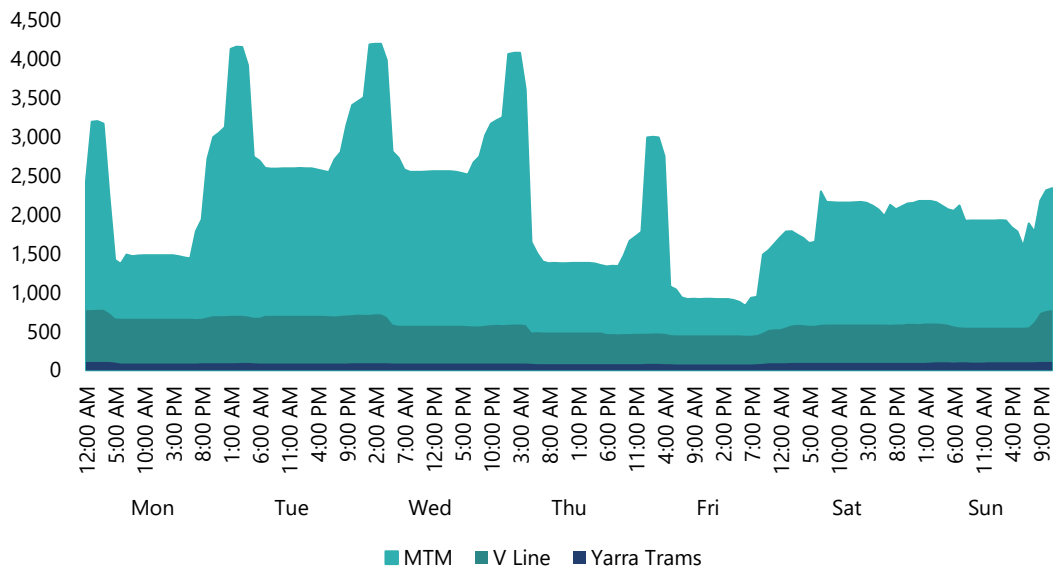
The scheduling follows an order of priority to minimise the impact of disruptions. This starts with aligning works with other planned disruptions, completing works outside of service hours (overnight), then using weekends. VIDA will cause a major disruption that interrupts peak services as a last resort.

Operationally, the department and VIDA manage scheduling planned disruptions through contractual arrangements with PTOs and Big Build contractors. The department's contracts with Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams outline service continuity arrangements for planned disruptions to minimise the impact on passengers and maximise efficiencies. VIDA requires Big Build contractors to:

- gain approval from Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams for any network occupation
- adhere to PTOs' policies and procedures.

We reviewed the scheduling of planned disruptions across the audit period. We found that most occurred outside peak travel times (between last and first service, or on weekends) (see Figure 7). The main exceptions were level crossing removal projects, which spanned peak service hours due to their necessary duration.

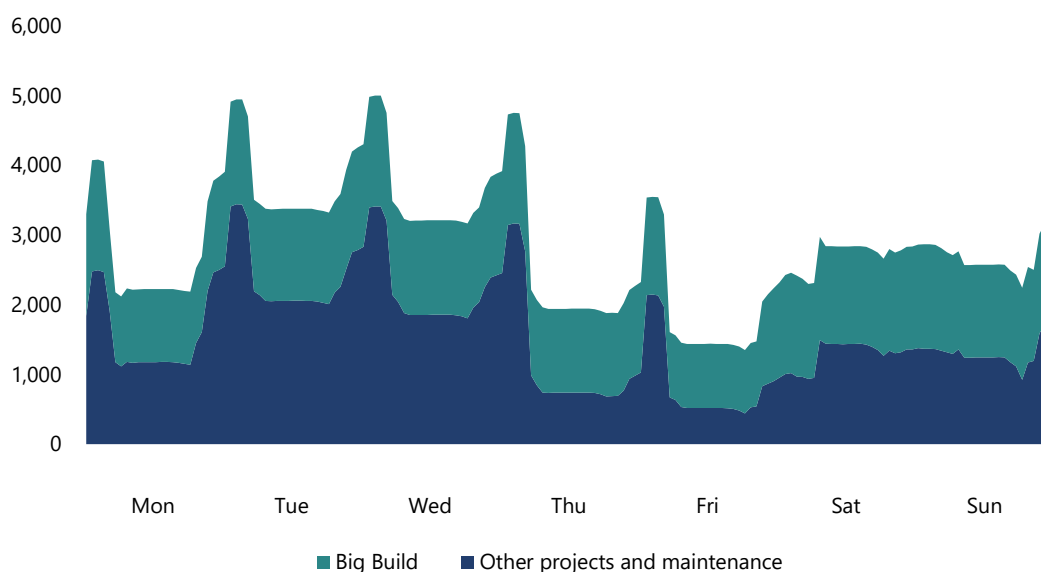
Figure 7: Distribution of planned disruptions across a week by PTO from July 2021 to December 2023



Source: VAGO analysis of VIDA planned disruptions data.

Our analysis also found that PTOs have mostly scheduled asset maintenance and infrastructure upgrades to overlap with Big Build planned disruptions (see Figure 8). This has helped minimise the impact of these types of disruptions on passengers and the cumulative impact of planned disruptions overall.

Figure 8: Distribution of planned disruptions across a week by occupation type from July 2021 to December 2023



Source: VAGO analysis of VIDA planned disruptions data.

PTOs have managed planned disruptions in line with contractual requirements

Meeting contractual requirements

We analysed a sample of 10 planned disruptions related to the Big Build, asset maintenance and infrastructure projects. The PTOs we looked at were Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams. We assessed if:

- the timing and coordination of each disruption minimised the potential impact on passengers
- PTOs met their main contractual requirements around managing planned disruptions.

We found that:

- Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams always met their main contractual obligations, including providing alternative transport during timetable hours
- 5 of the 6 sampled Big Build-related disruptions and all maintenance and infrastructure projects either occurred during or spanning weekends, including overnight. However, a 4-day Metro Tunnel Project occupation of the Mernda train line occurred during weekdays (including during timetable hours). This disruption occurred during the day because COVID-19 lockdown restrictions had suspended all night network transport
- all PTOs had disruption management strategies, which included contingencies, where disruptions spanned normal timetable hours
- for longer disruptions, the department approved PTOs altering their timetable by either shortening the affected service, adding additional run time, or bypassing the City Loop
- the department approved all disruptions in advance.

Providing alternative transport arrangements

Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams have contractual requirements to provide alternative transport arrangements during planned disruptions. To extend our sample analysis above, we analysed if PTOs provided alternative transport across all planned disruptions from July 2021 to January 2024.

We found that Metro Trains, V/Line and Yarra Trams provided alternative transport arrangements for all planned disruptions that impacted passenger services during standard service hours. This was usually bus replacements.

Despite the increase in planned disruptions and total network occupation time, passenger complaints have remained stable

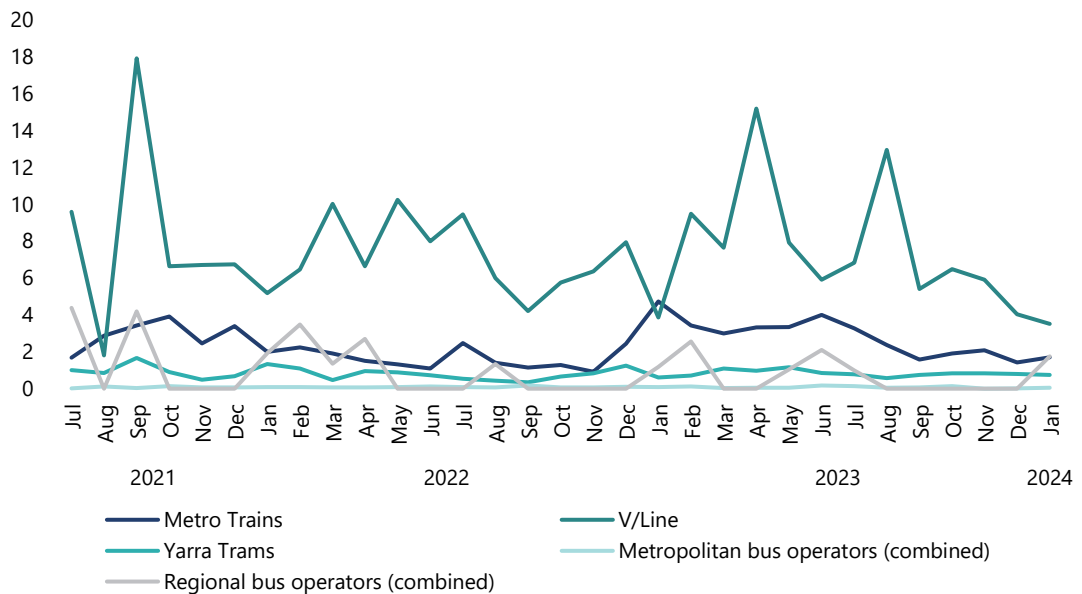
Passenger complaints on public transport service delivery

The department receives public transport service delivery complaints that may relate to planned and/or unplanned disruptions. While the number of planned disruptions increased during the audit period, the number of significant unplanned disruptions remained stable, and their average duration decreased (refer to Section 4).

This means that poor planning and management of planned disruptions and disruption fatigue could have increased complaints about public transport services. But the department's complaints data shows that transport bodies' and PTOs' actions to minimise the impact of planned disruptions on passengers have been effective.

Between July 2021 and January 2024, the number of service delivery complaints per passenger did not markedly increase for any public transport mode. This includes complaints about Metro Trains, whose network and services were the most impacted by planned disruptions, including Big Build projects (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Standardised monthly complaints about public transport services per 10,000 trips from July 2021 to January 2024



Source: VAGO analysis of the department's complaints data.

6.

Appendices

There are 3 appendices covering responses from audited agencies and information about how we perform our work.

Appendix A: Submissions and comments

Appendix B: Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

Appendix C: Audit scope and method

Appendix A:

Submissions and comments

We have consulted with the Department of Transport and Planning (including the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority), Kinetic, CDC Victoria, Metro Trains Melbourne, VicTrack, V/Line and Yarra Trams, and we considered their views when reaching our audit conclusions. As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, we gave a draft copy of this report, or relevant extracts, to those agencies and asked for their submissions and comments.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the relevant agency head.

Responses received

Agency	Page
Department of Transport and Planning (including Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority)	A-2
Kinetic	A-5
Metro Trains Melbourne	A-6
VicTrack	A-7
V/Line	A-8
Yarra Trams	A-9



Department of Transport and Planning

GPO Box 2392
Melbourne, Victoria 3001 Australia

Ref: BSEC-1-25-423

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General of Victoria
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Greaves

Victorian Auditor-General's Office - Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network - Proposed report

Thank you for your letter of 3 February 2025 inviting a response to the *Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network* proposed report (the Report) provided to the Department of Transport and Planning (the Department) and Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA).

The Department, VIDA and our partners plan, build and operate a transport network that keeps people moving now and into the future. Each year, we provide public transport services for more than 500 million passengers, and we're delivering 180 major transport infrastructure projects to build a better transport future for Victoria as part of the Big Build.

I welcome your conclusion that the impact of disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport have been minimised through effective scheduling and management.

Providing accurate and timely information about disruptions on the public transport network is essential to delivering a high quality passenger experience. It is pleasing that the audit confirmed that the Department and its partners are keeping passengers informed about unplanned and planned disruptions, and that customer complaints have remained steady during a period of increased project activity.

I note your finding regarding obligations under the October 2021 *Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan* (Sub-Plan). The Department is committed to fostering a sustainable and efficient emergency management system that minimises the likelihood, effect and consequences of a public transport disruption. While acknowledging that the language in the 2021 Sub-Plan was overly specific, the Department considers that it has provided suitable oversight and support to public transport operators and incident controllers in all instances. This view is supported by independent After-Action Reviews which have not identified deficiencies in the oversight and support provided by the Department, and by the absence of negative feedback or adverse outcomes identified by public transport operators or through this audit.



In 2024, the Department undertook a review and update of the Sub-Plan in accordance with the *Emergency Management Act 2013* and the *Ministerial Guidelines for Preparing State, Regional and Municipal Emergency Management*. The updated Sub-Plan was published in October 2024 and clarifies obligations for the Department as a support agency. The Department accepts your recommendation and has prepared an action plan which is enclosed with this letter.

Yours sincerely



Jeroen Weimar
Secretary

Date: 17 February 2025

Enc: Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network – DTP action plan



DTP action plan

Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network



Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) action plan to address recommendations from *Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network*:

No	VAGO recommendation	DTP response	Due date
1	Review why it did not always meet its obligations as a lead support agency under the <i>State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)</i> and <i>SEMP Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan</i> . Where necessary, the Department of Transport and Planning should update its policies and procedures to ensure it always meets its obligations in the future.	<p>Accepted</p> <p>DTP has amended policies and procedures to clarify obligations under the <i>State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)</i> and <i>SEMP Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan (Sub-Plan)</i>, including via update to Sub-Plan in October 2024. This update was in-progress during the course of the audit and was conducted to clarify arrangements and align with revised role statements under the recently updated SEM (October 2024).</p> <p>DTP continues to review policies, plans and procedures and readiness instructions to ensure it meets its obligations, and will resolve any remaining issues by the next update of the Sub-Plan, due no later than the end of October 2027.</p>	31 October 2027



11 February 2025

Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

RE - Proposed report: Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network

Dear Mr. Greaves,

Thank you for providing the Transport Disruptions - Proposed Report, received on Monday, 3 February 2025. Kinetic has reviewed the findings and welcomes the insights from the audit.

We are pleased that the report recognizes Kinetics' framework, systems, and processes for managing unplanned disruptions across the network. Ensuring reliable operations during such events is something we take great pride in.

It is also encouraging to see that our effective communication and coordination during planned disruptions have been acknowledged, particularly in minimizing the impact on passengers.

While the audit did not include specific recommendations for Kinetic, we remain committed to continuous improvement in how we manage both planned and unplanned disruptions, ensuring passengers receive clear and timely information.

We also welcome the recommendations regarding the Department of Transport and Planning's role in providing greater clarity and support to Public Transport Operators during emergencies. While we do receive support currently from the DTP, strengthening this framework will enhance coordination and accountability across all stakeholders.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the report.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Sowards
CEO, Kinetic

info@wearekinetic.com / wearekinetic.com / 21 Scotchmer St, North Fitzroy VIC 3068



Ref: MTM-874

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor General's Office
35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

BY EMAIL: [REDACTED]

13/02/2025

Dear Mr. Greaves,

Victorian Auditor General's Office proposed report on 'Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network'

Thank you for your letter of 3 February 2025, enclosing the proposed report for the Managing Disruptions Affecting Victoria's Public Transport Network (the Proposed Report).

Metro Trains Melbourne (Metro Trains) was pleased to note that it met its requirements in line with the Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic) and its approach to emergency and crisis planning is consistent with its contractual obligations.

I also welcome your conclusion that while Victoria's Big Build has increased planned disruptions to the metropolitan rail network, Metro Trains (and Big Build contractors) have effectively scheduled and managed these to minimise the impact on passengers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Report.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Raymond O'Flaherty
Chief Executive Officer, Metro Trains Melbourne

c.c. [REDACTED]

METRO TRAINS MELBOURNE
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Melbourne VIC Australia 3001

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OFFICIAL

Our Ref: D/25/2942
Your Ref: 34879 25
3 February 2025

Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Mr Greaves

Re: Proposed report: Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network

VicTrack has reviewed the proposed final report for the audit: *Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network*. We have no further comments or submissions.

We would like to thank [REDACTED] and the audit team for the level of consultation and assistance provided during the audit.

Yours sincerely



Mr Chris Olds
Chief Executive
VicTrack

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OFFICIAL Sensitive



21 February 2025

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
E: [REDACTED]

Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31/35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE 3000

Dear Mr Greaves

Managing Disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network – proposed (final) report for comment

I am writing in relation to Auditor-General's letter received via email on the 15 February 2025.

Thank you for considering V/Line feedback and providing a further updated version of the final report. V/Line are comfortable with these amendments.

Should you have any queries in relation to the above please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Matt Carrick.

Matt Carrick
Chief Executive Officer

OFFICIAL



Reference number: 34879 25
13 February 2025

Andrew Greaves
Auditor General
VAGO
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000

Dear Mr Greaves

Subject: Proposed report: Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network

Thank you for your invitation to provide comments on the report for the audit: *Managing disruptions affecting Victoria's public transport network*.

I can confirm that Yarra Trams has no further comments to make.

Yours sincerely,



Vincent Destot
Chief Executive Officer

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Yarra Journey Makers Pty Ltd
ACN 671 633 159

Appendix B:

Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

Abbreviations We use the following abbreviations in this report:

Abbreviation	Full spelling
the Act	<i>Emergency Management Act 2013</i>
the department	Department of Transport and Planning
Metro Trains	Metro Trains Melbourne
the Sub-Plan	<i>Public Transport Disruption Sub-Plan</i>

Acronyms We use the following acronyms in this report:

Acronym	Full spelling
PTCG	Public Transport Coordination Group
PTO	public transport operator
SEMP	<i>State Emergency Management Plan</i>
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office
VIDA	Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority

Glossary

The following terms are included in or relevant to this report

Term	Explanation
Control agency	An agency that is responsible for coordinating actions against a specific emergency and establishes management arrangements for an integrated response to the emergency.
Emergency	The actual or imminent occurrence of an event that in any way: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria• destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria• endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria.
Incident	An event, occurrence or set of circumstances that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has a definite duration• calls for human intervention• has a set of concluding conditions that can be defined• is or will be under the control of an individual who has the authority to make decisions about the means by which it will be brought to a resolution.
Level of assurance	<p>This is a measure of the confidence we have in our conclusions. The quality and quantity of evidence we obtain affects our level of assurance.</p> <p>We design our work programs with the information needs of our report users in mind. We consider if we need to provide them with reasonable assurance or if a lower level of assurance may be appropriate.</p>
Limited assurance	<p>We obtain less assurance when we rely primarily on an agency's representations and other evidence generated by that agency. However, we aim to have enough confidence in our conclusion for it to be meaningful. We call these types of engagements assurance reviews and typically express our opinions in negative terms. For example, 'nothing has come to our attention to indicate there is a problem.'</p> <p>See our assurance services fact sheet for more information.</p>
Planned disruption	A planned deviation from a PTO's master timetable that is reflected in the reference daily timetable submitted to the department.
Reasonable assurance	<p>We achieve reasonable assurance by obtaining and verifying direct evidence from a variety of internal and external sources about an agency's performance. This enables us to draw a conclusion against an objective with a high level of assurance. We call these performance audits.</p> <p>See our assurance services fact sheet for more information.</p>
Significant unplanned disruption	Significant and major incidents impacting the transport network that meet the department's thresholds for internal notification, monitoring and escalation for unplanned disruptions.
Support agency	Agencies who lead a dedicated functional area and provide services, personnel and materials to assist with control activities.
Unplanned disruption	An unplanned event affecting a timetabled service that means the PTO cannot achieve service delivery at a station or a stop.

Appendix C:

Audit scope and method

Scope of this audit

Who we examined

We examined the following agencies:

Agency	Their key responsibilities
Department of Transport and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes Transport for Victoria, the statutory office responsible for coordinating, providing, operating and maintaining Victoria's public transport and road system• Plans, builds and supports an integrated, sustainable and safe public transport system• Minimises the impact of emergencies across the public transport network through effective preparation, coordination, response and recovery
VIDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversees Victoria's Big Build (excluding the Suburban Rail Loop project)• Works with PTOs and Big Build contractors to coordinate occupying the public transport network for Big Build planned disruptions and following service disruptions• Works with the department to assess the cumulative impact of disruptions to the public transport network and users
VicTrack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Owns Victoria's rail land, buildings and infrastructure• Provides the telecommunication network that supports trains and trams
Metro Trains	Operates Melbourne's metropolitan train network under agreement with the department
V/Line	Operates regional train and coach services under agreement with the department
Yarra Trams	Operated the metropolitan tram network under agreement with the department during the audit period
Kinetic	Operates public bus services across metropolitan Melbourne, under agreement with the department
CDC Victoria	Operates public bus services across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria under agreement with the department

Our audit objective

To determine whether public transport bodies and operators minimise the impact of disruptions affecting passengers on Victoria's public transport network.

Audit period reviewed

The audit examined the management of disruptions between 1 July 2021 and 31 January 2024, when the widespread reliance on public transport returned after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aspects of performance examined

Our mandate for performance audits and reviews includes the assessment of economy, effectiveness, efficiency and compliance (often referred to as the '3Es + C').

In this audit we focused on the following aspects:

Economy	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Compliance
○	●	○	●

Key:

- Primary focus
- Secondary focus
- Not assessed

Conducting this audit

Assessing performance

To form a conclusion against our objective we used the following lines of inquiry and associated evaluation criteria.

Line of inquiry	Criteria
1. Are transport bodies and PTOs prepared to manage disruptions impacting Victoria's public transport network?	1.1 Transport bodies and PTOs have suitable policies, plans, procedures and agreements in place to prepare for and manage public transport disruptions.
	1.2 Transport bodies and PTOs have examples of activities that confirm their policies, plans and procedures are sufficient to prepare for, and manage, public transport disruptions.
2. Do transport bodies and PTOs effectively respond to disruptions impacting Victoria's public transport network?	2.1 Transport bodies and PTOs respond to public transport disruptions to minimise the duration, severity and impact of disruptions on passengers.
3. Do transport bodies and PTOs learn from disruptions impacting Victoria's public transport network?	3.1 Transport bodies and PTOs build on learnings from previous public transport disruptions to reduce the impact of future disruptions.

Our methods

As part of the audit we:

- analysed the department's contractual arrangements with audited PTOs and a selection of Big Build contracts
- analysed the legislative framework for emergencies and the department's internal arrangements, policies, plans and procedures
- analysed transport bodies' and PTOs' policies, plans and procedures and datasets related to unplanned and planned disruptions
- conducted interviews with auditees and carried out site visits of control centres.

Level of assurance

In an assurance review, we primarily rely on the agency's representations and internally generated information to form our conclusions. By contrast, in a performance audit, we typically gather evidence from an array of internal and external sources, which we analyse and substantiate using various methods. Therefore, an assurance review obtains a lower level of assurance than a performance audit (meaning we have slightly less confidence in the accuracy of our conclusion).

Compliance

We conducted our audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* and ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements* to obtain reasonable assurance to provide a basis for our conclusion.

We complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements related to assurance engagements.

We also provided a copy of the report to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance.

Cost and time

The full cost of the audit and preparation of this report was \$621,888.

The duration of the audit was 11 months from initiation to tabling.

Auditor-General's reports tabled in 2024–25

Report title	Tabled
<i>Results of 2023 Audits: Technical and Further Education Institutes</i> (2024–25: 1)	July 2024
<i>Building a Capable and High-performing Public Service Workforce</i> (2024–25: 2)	August 2024
<i>Protecting the Biosecurity of Agricultural Plant Species</i> (2024–25: 3)	October 2024
<i>Responses to Performance Engagement Recommendations: Annual Status Update 2024</i> (2024–25: 4)	October 2024
<i>Auditor-General's Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria: 2023–24</i> (2024–25: 5)	November 2024
<i>Fair Presentation of Service Delivery Performance: 2025</i> (2024–25: 6)	November 2024
<i>Staff Wellbeing in Fire Rescue Victoria</i> (2024–25: 7)	November 2024
<i>Reporting on Local Government Performance: Follow-up</i> (2024–25: 8)	February 2025
<i>Major Projects Performance Reporting 2024</i> (2024–25: 9)	February 2025
<i>Managing Disruptions Affecting Victoria's Public Transport Network</i> (2024–25: 10)	March 2025

All reports are available for download in PDF and HTML format on our website at <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au>

Our role and contact details

The Auditor-General's role

For information about the Auditor-General's role and VAGO's work, please see our online fact sheet [About VAGO](#).

Our assurance services

Our online fact sheet [Our assurance services](#) details the nature and levels of assurance that we provide to Parliament and public sector agencies through our work program.

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