

# EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE REPORT

Q4 2020 (1 OCTOBER 2020 – 31 DECEMBER 2020)



## CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASES DURING THE QUARTER</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Cases raised	4
2.2	Cases closed	4
2.3	Case findings	4
2.4	Elapsed time to close cases	5
<b>3.</b>	<b>CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	Historical trends	6
<b>4.</b>	<b>CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE EXAMPLES</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1	Customer A (SMS message toll invoice reminders)	7
4.2	Customer B (cloned vehicle)	7
4.3	Customer C (outstanding toll invoice debt)	8
4.4	Customer D (overdue notice)	8

## 1. EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

---

10 February 2021

**This report covers the Q4 2020 quarterly period (1 October 2020 – 31 December 2020).**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the Victorian economy, increasing unemployment and underemployment, and many businesses have closed.

During Q4 2020, Melbourne was recovering from the impact of its second wave of COVID-19 infections which had taken up almost the whole of the previous quarter.

Restrictions were steadily reduced by the State Government, and EastLink traffic volumes continued to recover from the lows experienced during the second wave.

However, there continues to be little direct evidence of any significant change in the number of complaints to the EastLink Customer Advocate arising from the impact of COVID-19.

Only a few of the cases raised have made any mention of COVID-19 or financial hardship.

Regrettably, however, I continue to anticipate that the economic impact of COVID-19 will inevitably result in more EastLink customers experiencing financial hardship during 2021, in particular once support programs such as the Government's JobKeeper, the banking industry's debt repayment concessions, and real estate rent relief come to an end.

I am therefore pleased to report that EastLink has donated \$100,000 to Peninsula Community Legal Centre, to assist local people experiencing disadvantage during these difficult times.

Peninsula Community Legal Centre is an independent not-for-profit provider of free legal services to communities in EastLink's southern corridor.

The services provided by Peninsula Community Legal Centre include free advice on most legal issues, such as family law, family violence, fines, tenancy and rooming house advocacy.

I can also report that EastLink will be making significant donations to five more community service providers over the coming months.

These donations demonstrate that EastLink recognises that some local people living in the EastLink corridor have been directly affected and are experiencing financial hardship, mental health issues and family violence

**If you have been directly affected by COVID-19 and are seeking additional assistance from EastLink, please phone EastLink's customer services team in Melbourne on (03) 9955 1400 during business hours Monday to Friday (closed public holidays).**

For more information about EastLink's hardship policy (which outlines available options and how to request hardship assistance), visit [www.eastlink.com.au/hardship](http://www.eastlink.com.au/hardship).

For more information about the role of the EastLink Customer Advocate, visit [www.eastlink.com.au/customeradvocate](http://www.eastlink.com.au/customeradvocate).

**Doug Spencer-Roy**  
EastLink Customer Advocate



## 2. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASES DURING THE QUARTER

### 2.1 CASES RAISED

34% of the cases raised during Q4 2020 related to toll invoices.

Table 1: ECA cases raised

ECA CASES RAISED	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Q4 2020
Toll invoice	3	6	9	18
Toll invoice SMS message	0	1	0	1
Toll invoice payment	1	0	0	1
Account payment	0	2	2	4
Account charge	2	1	0	3
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle or cloned vehicle	0	1	2	3
Tags	0	1	1	2
Tolls	0	1	0	1
Trip pass	0	0	2	2
Debt recovery	0	1	0	1
Customer service	2	4	11	17
Website	0	1	2	3
Hardship assistance	1	0	1	2
Landscaping	0	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>59</b>

### 2.2 CASES CLOSED

All of the cases raised during Q4 2020 have been closed.

Table 2: ECA cases closed

ECA CASES CLOSED	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Q4 2020
Q4 2020 cases closed (as at date of report)	9	20	30	59
Q4 2020 cases still open (as at date of report)	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>59</b>

### 2.3 CASE FINDINGS

In 69% of cases although EastLink was not at fault and there was no valid complaint, I arranged for EastLink's customer service team to assist the customer with their predicament. 10% of cases were fully upheld, and a further 8% of cases were partially upheld. In 12% of cases the complaint was rejected with no practical customer service assistance identifiable. No cases were referred to a third party.

Table 3: ECA case findings

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Q4 2020
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	6	13	22	41
Complaint upheld	1	3	2	6
Complaint partially upheld	1	2	2	5
Complaint rejected	1	2	4	7
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>59</b>

Most cases involved complaints about modest sums – in particular, the fee component of a toll invoice but not the toll component. (In general, with toll invoice complaints, it is not the trip or toll that is disputed, but whether the trip is able to be charged to a valid account.)

This means that the refunds and credits awarded can vary significantly from month to month, depending on whether there are any of the more unusual, higher value cases during the month, and whether those complaints are upheld or rejected.

Table 4: ECA case findings – refunds & credits

ECA CASE FINDINGS – REFUNDS & CREDITS	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Q4 2020
Refunds & credits awarded	\$828	\$231	\$72	\$1,131

## 2.4 ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE CASES

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during the quarter was 2.5 days. This elapsed time includes weekend days and public holidays.

Table 5: Elapsed time to close ECA cases

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Q4 2020
Average time to close cases (days)	3.7	1.5	2.7	2.5

### Case Study – wrong type of pass purchased

The customer complained that they had received an EastLink toll invoice and overdue notice for travel when they had actually already paid for a “weekend pass”. The customer provided a copy of the receipt for the weekend pass purchase.

However, EastLink does not sell weekend passes.

Weekend passes are sold by Transurban Linkt and are valid for travel on CityLink only (not EastLink).

This was explained to the customer.

The additional cost of the overdue notice compared to the original toll invoice was waived, and the due date was extended to provide further assistance.

The customer was advised to contact Transurban Linkt for any enquiry about the weekend pass.

### 3. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS

#### 3.1 HISTORICAL TRENDS

In Q4 2020, a total of 59 cases were raised with the EastLink Customer Advocate, which is a decrease of 22% compared to the previous quarter – see Table 6.

Table 6: ECA cases trend

ECA CASES	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Service request	5	1	2	0	0	0
Toll invoice	24	27	44	31	31	18
Toll invoice SMS messages	0	0	1	3	0	1
Toll invoice payment	0	0	1	3	2	1
Account notice	1	2	0	0	1	0
Account payment	2	0	4	4	0	4
Account charge	1	2	2	10	8	3
Account charge for a sold vehicle	1	2	4	3	1	0
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle etc	0	3	3	5	2	3
Account charge for an LPN error	1	0	0	0	0	0
Account suspension	0	1	0	0	0	0
Account closure	1	0	1	0	1	0
Deceased account	0	0	1	0	0	0
Tags	2	0	2	1	1	2
Tolls	0	1	1	1	1	1
Tolling class	0	1	0	1	1	0
Trip pass	1	2	0	2	0	2
Rental vehicle toll payment	4	2	1	2	0	0
Debt recovery	1	1	0	0	2	1
Customer service	2	7	13	13	14	17
Website	0	3	0	1	0	3
Hardship assistance	0	2	1	3	4	2
Payment plan	0	0	1	0	0	0
Infringements (fines)	2	3	4	3	2	0
Incident response	0	1	0	0	0	0
Debris damage	1	0	0	0	0	0
Road maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	0
Signage	1	0	0	0	0	0
Litter	1	0	0	0	0	0
Noise	0	0	0	1	0	0
Speed limit	0	0	0	1	0	0
Graffiti	0	0	0	0	2	0
Landscaping	0	2	2	0	3	1
EastLink Trail	1	0	0	0	0	0
Privacy	1	0	0	1	0	0
Problem with another tollway operator	1	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown (withdrawn, insufficient details)	1	0	0	1	0	0
Police search	0	0	1	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>59</b>

The number of complaints that were fully upheld or partially upheld decreased from 14 to 11 (-21%). The number of complaints that were rejected decreased from 11 to 7 (-35%) – see Table 7.

On examination, 41 of the 59 cases raised during Q4 2020 were in fact found to be requests for customer service with no valid complaint, rather than unresolved customer complaints – see Table 7. For example: a customer seeking to update their account contact details; a customer enquiring about the status of a payment plan and wanting to pay for a recent trip; a customer seeking to remove a vehicle from an account; or a customer seeking to transfer a toll invoice to an account. Such cases are forwarded to the EastLink customer service team for expedited service.

Table 7: ECA case findings trend

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	21	25	44	43	48	41
Complaint upheld	13	9	15	15	6	6
Complaint partially upheld	12	18	14	10	8	5
Complaint rejected	8	11	14	22	11	7
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	1	0	2	0	3	0
Insufficient details provided	0	0	0	1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>59</b>

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q4 2020 (\$1,131) was within the usual range – see Table 8.

Table 8: ECA case findings – refunds &amp; credits trend

ECA CASES – REFUNDS & CREDITS	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Refunds & credits awarded	\$738	\$590	\$1,707	\$974	\$737	\$1,131

The elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q4 2020 was almost double the previous quarter – see Table 9. This was because of unusually long delays to a very small number of cases, for example:

- > One case took 24 days to close due to a wait for information requested from the State's Traffic Camera Office.
- > Another case took 15 days to close due to a wait for information requested from another tollway operator.
- > A landscaping case took 11 days to close as a number of site visits had to be scheduled and conducted.

Table 9: Elapsed time to close ECA cases trend

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Average time to close cases (days)	4.0	2.8	2.2	1.8	1.3	2.5

## 4. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE EXAMPLES

This section only shows a very brief summary of each case example. The detailed circumstances of every case are unique, so these case examples should not be read as precedents for other cases.

### 4.1 CUSTOMER A (SMS MESSAGE TOLL INVOICE REMINDERS)

Customer A was receiving SMS message toll invoice reminders for a vehicle not known to him.

Investigation revealed that VicRoads currently has the wrong mobile phone number recorded for the vehicle.

Customer A was advised of this, and the mobile phone number was added to EastLink's "do not SMS toll invoice reminders" list, to be reviewed in one year's time.

### 4.2 CUSTOMER B (CLONED VEHICLE)

Customer B complained about image processing fees being charged to his EastLink account even though a tag is carried in his vehicle and the tag is beeping correctly. Customer B provided a photo of his vehicle as proof of tag installation.

Investigation revealed that Customer B's vehicle had been cloned (another motorist illegally using Customer B's licence plate number).

Customer B was advised of this, and credits were provided to the customer's account to negate the tolls and image processing costs incurred by the other vehicle.

Customer B contacted VicRoads to arrange a new licence plate number for his vehicle.



#### 4.3 CUSTOMER C (OUTSTANDING TOLL INVOICE DEBT)

Customer C was wanting to open an EastLink account but complained about three outstanding toll invoices which EastLink needed to be paid prior to allowing the account opening to proceed.

Investigation revealed that Customer C's previous Transurban Linkt account had been suspended, resulting in EastLink toll invoices being issued, which were not paid.

However, it was discovered that one of the toll invoices should not have been issued as the Transurban Linkt account had been reactivated from suspension immediately prior to the travel on EastLink.

The erroneous toll invoice was cancelled, and as a gesture of goodwill the other two toll invoices were also cancelled.

Customer C could then proceed with opening an EastLink account.

#### 4.4 CUSTOMER D (OVERDUE NOTICE)

Customer D complained about receiving an overdue notice for a toll invoice that had already been paid.

Investigation revealed that the overdue notice was issued 5 hours prior to the payment being received. The overdue notice was therefore issued correctly.

Customer D received the overdue notice by postal mail some days after payment was made due to the postal delivery time.

**For further information:**

**Doug Spencer-Roy, EastLink Customer Advocate**  
(03) 9955 1700 | [EastLinkCustomerAdvocate@connecteast.com.au](mailto:EastLinkCustomerAdvocate@connecteast.com.au)  
[www.eastlink.com.au/customeradvocate](http://www.eastlink.com.au/customeradvocate)

© Copyright 2020 ConnectEast Group. All Rights Reserved.