

EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE REPORT

Q2 2022 (1 APRIL 2022 – 30 JUNE 2022)



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1. EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

26 July 2022

This report covers the Q2 2022 quarterly period (1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022).

Following a return to the nominal case rate level (50 to 60 cases per quarter) in Q1 2022 after two quarters of reduced cases, Q2 2022 once again saw a reduction in the case rate.

The number of cases in Q2 2022 (30 cases) compared to the nominal case rate reflects a reduction in the number of toll invoices and overdue notices issued by EastLink during the quarter compared to the previous quarter. (This temporary reduction was due to operational factors and has already returned to normal at the date of this report.)

The elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q2 2022 (3.5 days) was slightly higher than the nominal range. This is attributed in part to the EastLink Customer Advocate taking some personal leave during the quarter. While temporary arrangements were in place to ensure that new cases were addressed, this had a slight impact on the average time to close cases.

Furthermore, three cases in Q2 2022 (a relatively high 10% of the total) took an unusually long time to close: 20 days, 17 days and 11 days respectively. The delay in two of these three cases was due to third party tollway operators taking time to respond to requests for details about travel on their tollways by EastLink account holders. In the third case, the customer took time to provide some information that the EastLink Customer Advocate requested to help investigate the case. Excluding these three cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q2 2022 would fall to 2.1 days.

Protection of customer data is of critical importance.

During Q2 2022, EastLink has been completing software development for some changes to the EastLink website that will further enhance the security of customer data and transactions.

For example, six digit PIN codes will be replaced by passwords to login to EastLink accounts at the EastLink website.

When the new changes go live in late Q3 2022, the first time a login is made to an EastLink account at the EastLink website using the correct six digit PIN code, the website will require the customer to create a new password for the EastLink account. The new password will need to satisfy minimum criteria, such as a minimum length.

EastLink is aware of the on-going impact on the local community of the pandemic restrictions and lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.

Accordingly, EastLink continues to provide sponsorship funding to a range of sports, arts and cultural initiatives, to help the local community return to a sense of normality. During Q2 2022, this included:

- > Frankston BMX Club Summer Championship (11 February – 27 May)
- > Ringwood Gift 1600m, Ringwood (3 April)
- > Gluttony On Tour, Croydon Park (6–10 April)
- > Ringwood Saints Baseball Club's school holiday program (11–14 April)
- > South Side Festival, Frankston (6–15 May)
- > Frankston Arts Centre Season 2022 (January – November).

If you are experiencing financial hardship and are seeking assistance in relation to any EastLink debt, 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.

For more information about the role of the EastLink Customer Advocate, visit www.eastlink.com.au/customeradvocate.

Doug Spencer-Roy
EastLink Customer Advocate



2. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASES DURING THE QUARTER

2.1 CASES RAISED

50% of the cases raised during Q2 2022 related to toll invoices.

Table 1: ECA cases raised

ECA CASES RAISED	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Q2 2022
Toll invoice	7	3	5	15
Account charge	2	2	0	4
Customer service	4	0	0	4
Payment options	1	0	0	1
Hardship	3	1	0	4
Infringements (fines)	0	0	1	1
Police enquiry	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	17	7	6	30

2.2 CASES CLOSED

All of the cases raised during Q2 2022 have been closed.

Table 2: ECA cases closed

ECA CASES CLOSED	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Q2 2022
Q2 2022 cases closed (as at date of report)	17	7	6	30
Q2 2022 cases still open (as at date of report)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	17	7	6	30

2.3 CASE FINDINGS

In 40% of cases although EastLink was not at fault and there was no valid complaint, the EastLink Customer Advocate arranged for EastLink's customer service team to assist the customer with their predicament via expedited service.

30% of cases were fully upheld, and a further 10% of cases were partially upheld.

In 13% of cases the complaint was rejected with no practical customer service assistance identifiable.

The complainant was referred to another party in two cases (7% of the total):

- > In a complaint about charges on a Transurban Linkt account, the customer was referred to contact Linkt directly.
- > In a complaint about a speeding infringement, the customer was referred to contact Victoria Police / Fines Victoria directly, as well as being informed about the Road Safety Camera Commissioner.

Table 3: ECA case findings

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Q2 2022
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	9	3	0	12
Complaint upheld	4	3	2	9
Complaint partially upheld	2	1	0	3
Complaint rejected	1	0	3	4
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	1	0	1	2
TOTAL	17	7	6	30

Most cases involved complaints about modest sums – in particular, the fee component of a toll invoice but not the toll component, or the image processing fee component but not the toll component. In general, it is not the trip or toll that is

disputed, but whether the trip is able to be charged to a valid account or pass, or if the trip is subject to additional fees such as the toll invoice fee or image processing fee.

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	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Q2 2022
Refunds & credits awarded	\$250	\$233	\$28	\$511

2.4 ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE CASES

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during the quarter was 3.5 days. This elapsed time includes weekend days and public holidays.

Table 5: Elapsed time to close ECA cases

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Q2 2022
Average time to close cases (days)	4.1	3.6	1.8	3.5

Case Study – motorist complaint about a road safety infringement notice (excessive speed) for travel on EastLink

A motorist complained about a road safety infringement notice (excessive speed) issued by Victoria Police for travel on EastLink, specifically questioning Victoria Police’s right to issue infringement notices for travel on a privately operated tollway.

The motorist was informed:

ConnectEast is the Responsible Road Authority and operator of EastLink as set out in the EastLink Project Act 2004 (the Act).

In accordance with the Act, EastLink is deemed to be a highway within the meaning of the Road Safety Act 1986.

As the enquiry relates to the issuing of an infringement notice for a traffic offence by Victoria Police / Fines Victoria, the motorist should contact Victoria Police / Fines Victoria directly.

Other options that may be available to the motorist could be considered, such as contacting the Road Safety Camera Commissioner or seeking their own legal advice.

3. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS

3.1 HISTORICAL TRENDS

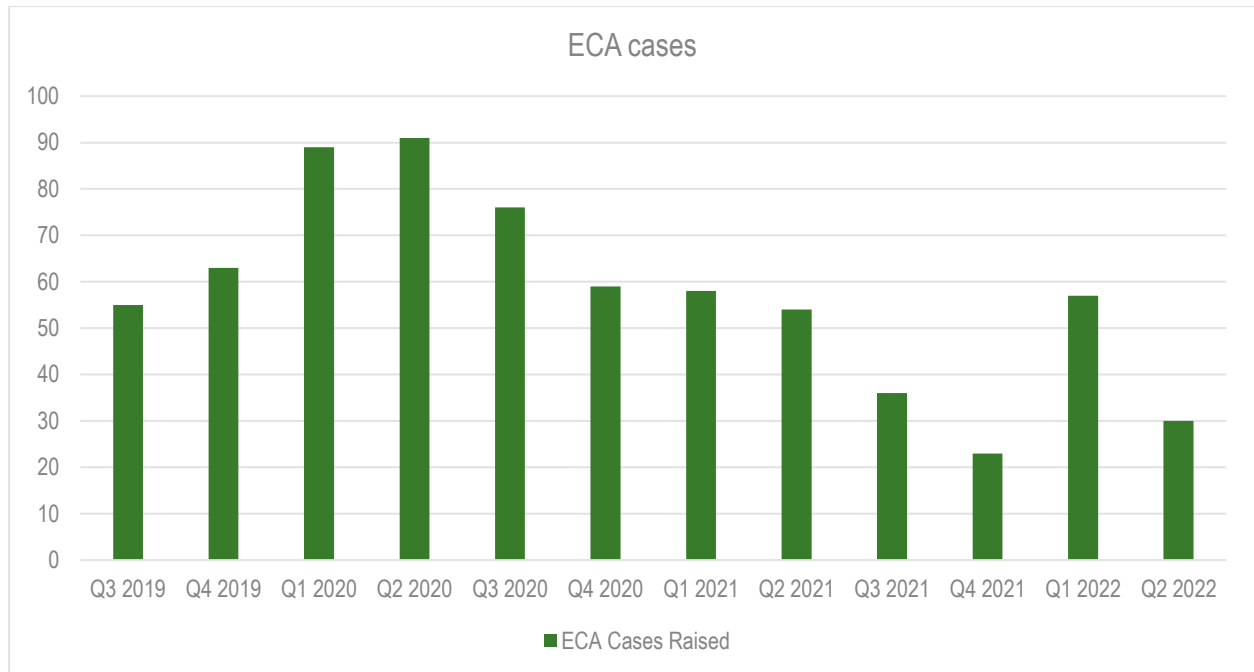
In Q2 2022, a total of 30 cases were raised with the EastLink Customer Advocate.

Chart 1 shows the number of cases raised in each quarter since the commencement of the EastLink Customer Advocate role at the start of Q3 2019.

The chart shows a wave of additional cases during the first half of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic first emerged and impacted the economy. It also indicates that the nominal case rate is in the 50 to 60 cases per quarter range.

The number of cases in Q2 2022 (30 cases) compared to the nominal case rate reflects a reduction in the number of toll invoices and overdue notices issued by EastLink during the quarter compared to the previous quarter. (This temporary reduction was due to operational factors and has already returned to normal at the date of this report.)

Chart 1: ECA cases trend



50% of the cases raised during Q2 2022 related to toll invoices, which is a slightly higher proportion than the nominal range – see Table 6.

Table 6: ECA cases trend

ECA CASES	2020		2021				2022	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Toll invoice	31	18	19	23	16	10	20	15
Toll invoice SMS/email message	0	1	2	1	3	0	2	0
Toll invoice payment	2	1	2	1	0	2	0	0
Account notice	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Account payment	0	4	1	0	2	0	0	0
Account charge	8	3	3	7	1	1	4	4
Account charge for a sold vehicle	1	0	4	0	1	1	0	0

ECA CASES	2020		2021				2022	
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle etc	2	3	1	0	0	1	2	0
Account charge for an LPN error	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Account suspension	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account closure	1	0	3	1	1	0	1	0
Deceased account	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tags	1	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Tolls	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tolling class	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Trip pass	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	0
Rental vehicle toll payment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Debt recovery	2	1	2	2	0	0	2	0
Customer service	14	17	7	5	5	4	17	4
Payment options	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Website	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0
Hardship assistance	4	2	5	8	1	0	2	4
Payment plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Infringements (fines)	2	0	1	1	2	1	0	1
Incident response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Debris damage	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Abandoned vehicle	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Road maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Signage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Litter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Noise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speed limit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graffiti	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscaping	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
EastLink Trail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wildlife	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Privacy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Problem with another tollway operator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown (withdrawn, insufficient details)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Police enquiry	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	76	59	58	54	36	23	57	30

As outlined earlier in section 3.1, the number of cases in Q2 2022 (30 cases) was significantly less than the nominal range (50 to 60 cases).

The number of complaints in all but one category of case findings was correspondingly less in Q2 2022 compared to Q1 2022 – see Table 7.

The exception is that two cases were referred (to another tollway operator etc.), whereas usually no cases need to be referred.

Table 7: ECA case findings trend

ECA CASES	2020		2021				2022	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	48	41	29	20	14	7	24	12
Complaint upheld	6	6	7	13	10	5	17	9

ECA CASES	2020		2021				2022	
Complaint partially upheld	8	5	8	9	1	6	5	3
Complaint rejected	11	7	14	11	8	5	11	4
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Insufficient details provided	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	76	59	58	54	36	23	57	30

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q2 2022 (\$511) was slightly lower than the nominal range – see Table 8.

Table 8: ECA case findings – refunds & credits trend

ECA CASES – REFUNDS & CREDITS	2020		2021				2022	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Refunds & credits awarded	\$737	\$1,131	\$2,789	\$2,103	\$647	\$781	\$690	\$511

The elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q2 2022 (3.5 days) was slightly higher than the nominal range – see Table 9. This is attributed in part to the EastLink Customer Advocate taking some personal leave during the quarter. While temporary arrangements were in place to ensure that new cases were addressed, this had a slight impact on the average time to close cases.

Furthermore, three cases in Q2 2022 (a relatively high 10% of the total) took an unusually long time to close: 20 days, 17 days and 11 days respectively. The delay in two of these three cases was due to third party tollway operators taking time to respond to requests for details about travel on their tollways by EastLink account holders. In the third case, the customer took time to provide some information that the EastLink Customer Advocate requested to help investigate the case.

Excluding these three cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q2 2022 would fall to 2.1 calendar days.

Table 9: Elapsed time to close ECA cases trend

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	2020		2021				2022	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Average time to close cases (days)	1.3	2.5	2.8	2.1	1.9	2.8	2.3	3.5

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 (USING THE WRONG WEBSITE)

Customer A complained that the website was unable to find EastLink toll invoices for their two vehicles and was displaying an error message.

Investigation revealed that Customer A was incorrectly using the Transurban Linkt website instead of the EastLink website. (Transurban Linkt is the operator of the CityLink tollway.)

It was confirmed for Customer A that there were indeed two EastLink toll invoices due for payment (one for each of the customer's vehicles). A link to the correct website – the EastLink website – was also provided to Customer A for finding and paying the outstanding EastLink toll invoices.

4.2 CUSTOMER B (CITYLINK 24 HOUR PASSES NOT CHARGED TO A TOLLING ACCOUNT)

Customer B complained that the tolls for individual trips on Transurban's CityLink tollway had been charged to Customer B's EastLink account instead of CityLink 24 hour passes being charged to the account.

It was explained to Customer B that tolling accounts in Victoria are issued by EastLink and Transurban Linkt, and that with a tolling account, the toll for each individual trip on a tollway is charged to the account. As Customer B has an EastLink account, the applicable toll for each individual trip made on CityLink was charged to the EastLink account.

It was explained to Customer B that as an alternative to tolling accounts, Transurban Linkt also offers CityLink 24 hour passes – but these are only valid for travel on CityLink and there is apparently a maximum limit of 12 passes that can be purchased from Transurban Linkt in a 12 month period per vehicle. Customer B was advised to contact Transurban Linkt for the terms and conditions that apply to CityLink 24 hour passes.

Should Customer B wish to use a Transurban Linkt CityLink 24 hour pass in the future, it was explained that Customer B would need to purchase the CityLink 24 hour pass from Transurban Linkt and ensure that any EastLink tag is completely removed from the vehicle during the travel on CityLink that is charged to the 24 hour pass. The EastLink tag would also need to be re-installed in the vehicle after the use of the 24 hour pass (otherwise image processing fees may apply).

Finally, Customer B was advised that their EastLink account was currently suspended and payment was due.

4.3 CUSTOMER C (CLONED VEHICLE)

Customer C complained about receiving EastLink toll invoices although Customer C's vehicle had not travelled on EastLink. Customer C explained that Victoria Police had already contacted Customer C (in relation to another matter) to notify them that their vehicle may have been cloned.

Investigation revealed that Customer C had already paid the disputed EastLink toll invoices, probably to avoid the risk of any progression to infringement penalty notices.

Customer C was asked to provide photos of their vehicle.

By comparing the photos provided by Customer C with the photos captured at EastLink toll points, it was confirmed that Customer C's vehicle had not travelled on EastLink.

Accordingly, EastLink cancelled the four EastLink toll invoices that had been issued to Customer C and arranged for a full refund to Customer C for the payment that had been made.

It was recommended to Customer C that they contact VicRoads to cancel the vehicle registration and arrange for new licence plates for the vehicle.

4.4 CUSTOMER D (FORGOT TO REMOVE RENTAL VEHICLE FROM ACCOUNT)

Customer D complained that their EastLink account had been charged for travel by a rental vehicle after Customer D had returned the rental vehicle. Customer D acknowledged that they had forgotten to remove the rental vehicle from the EastLink account.

Investigation revealed that the error was by Customer D, however the vehicle was removed from the EastLink account by Customer D relatively soon after the disputed toll charges occurred on the account.

Although it was found that EastLink had not made an error, as a goodwill gesture 50% of the disputed toll charges were refunded to Customer D via a credit to the EastLink account.

Customer D was advised that after the credit had been made to the account, their EastLink account remained suspended and that payment was due.

4.5 CUSTOMER E (CITYLINK WEEKEND PASS NOT SUCCESSFULLY PURCHASED)

Customer E complained that over one weekend CityLink tolls had been charged to their EastLink account even though a CityLink weekend pass had been purchased from Transurban Linkt (and the vehicle was not carrying an EastLink tag).

Customer E noted that this was inconsistent with another weekend, during which CityLink tolls were not charged to the account due to another CityLink weekend pass purchase.

Investigation with Transurban Linkt revealed that while one of the CityLink weekend pass purchases had been successfully completed, an attempt at another time to purchase the other CityLink weekend pass was not successful due to a declined card payment.

Customer E was advised that there was no error by EastLink, and the customer should contact Transurban Linkt directly in relation to the unsuccessful attempt to purchase a CityLink weekend pass.

For further information:

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