



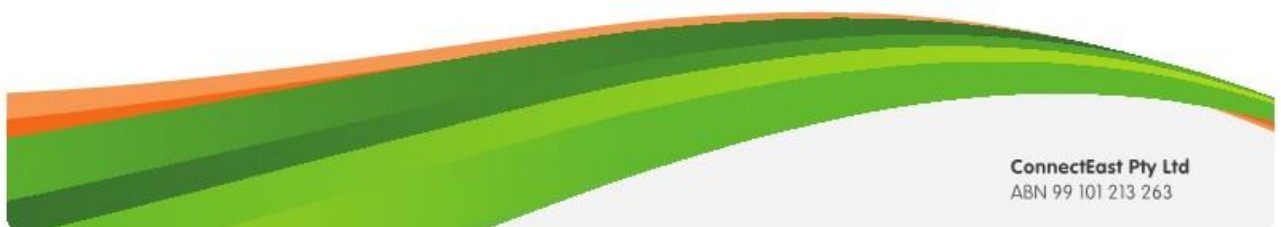
EastLink
Time better spent.

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EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE REPORT

Q1 2025 (1 JANUARY 2025 – 31 MARCH 2025)



ConnectEast Pty Ltd
ABN 99 101 213 263

CONTENTS

1.	EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE	3
2.	CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASES DURING THE QUARTER	4
2.1	Cases raised	4
2.2	Cases closed	4
2.3	Case findings	4
2.4	Elapsed time to close cases	5
3.	CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS	6
3.1	Historical trends	6
4.	HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE	9
4.1	Payment plans	9
4.2	Fines withdrawn due to financial hardship	9
5.	CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE EXAMPLES	10
5.1	Customer A (toll invoices while account suspended)	10
5.2	Customer B (vehicle details incorrectly specified for trip pass)	10
5.3	Customer C (vehicle details incorrectly specified for tolling account)	10
5.4	Customer D (vehicle not removed from tolling account)	10
5.5	Customer E (toll invoice not paid by its due date)	11

1. EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

29 April 2025

This report covers the Q1 2025 quarterly period (1 January 2025 – 31 March 2025).

The number of cases raised in Q1 2025 (30 cases) was significantly lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter), and it was the fourth lowest number recorded for any quarter to date.

The elapsed time to close EastLink Customer Advocate (ECA) cases during Q1 2025 (2.7 calendar days) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.4 calendar days), although the same as the previous quarter Q4 2024 and within the normal range of variation.

Three cases in Q1 2025 took a relatively long time to close (14 calendar days, 13 calendar days and 11 calendar days respectively):

- > In the first of these cases, the delay was attributed to waiting for a third party tollway operator to provide information to assist with investigation of the case. In this case the complaint was partially upheld.
- > In the second of these cases, the delay was attributed to the ECA taking longer than usual to consider the merits of the customer's complaint, which was complex in nature. In this case the complaint was partially upheld.
- > In the third of these cases, the delay was attributed to waiting for a third party vehicle registration authority to provide information to assist with investigation of the case. In this case the complaint was upheld.

Excluding these three cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q1 2025 would fall to just 1.6 calendar days.

80% of the cases raised during Q1 2025 related to toll invoices, which is significantly higher than the longer term average for this case type over the preceding seven quarters (49%). However, there is no indication of a specific or systemic customer service failure contributing to this increase, and the 24 cases raised in relation to toll invoices during Q1 2025 had a broad range of outcomes.

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q1 2025 (\$1,085) was almost exactly the same as the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$1,095).

The following hardship assistance data is sourced from EastLink's hardship team:

- > The number of payment plans created during Q1 2025 (1,216 plans created) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,034 plans created). The average value of payment plan created during Q1 2025 (\$343) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$272).
- > The number of fines withdrawn by EastLink due to hardship during Q1 2025 (935 fines withdrawn) was lower than the longer term average over the preceding six quarters (1,294 fines withdrawn). The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q1 2025 (81 people assisted) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding six quarters (74 people assisted).

If you are experiencing financial hardship and are seeking assistance in relation to any EastLink debt, please email hardship@connecteast.com.au or phone EastLink's customer services team in Melbourne on (03) 9955 1400 during business hours Monday to Friday (excluding 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

Most of the cases raised during Q1 2025 related to the following:

- > Toll invoices (80%)

Table 1: ECA cases raised

ECA CASES RAISED	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Q1 2025
Toll invoice	12	6	4	22
Toll invoice communications	1	0	0	1
Toll invoice payment	1	0	0	1
Account charge	0	1	0	1
Account charge for a sold vehicle	0	0	1	1
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle etc	1	0	0	1
Website	1	0	1	2
Infringements (fines)	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	16	8	6	30

2.2 CASES CLOSED

All of the cases raised during Q1 2025 have been closed. The last of these cases was closed on 4/4/2025, with the customer notified of the ECA's finding on the same day.

Table 2: ECA cases closed

ECA CASES CLOSED	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Q1 2025
Q1 2025 cases closed (as at date of report)	16	8	6	30
Q1 2025 cases still open (as at date of report)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	16	8	6	30

2.3 CASE FINDINGS

In 33% of cases during Q1 2025, although EastLink was not at fault and there was no valid complaint, the ECA arranged for EastLink's customer service team to assist the customer with their predicament via expedited service.

27% of cases in the quarter were fully upheld, and a further 27% of cases were partially upheld.

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

No customers were referred to another tollway operator or other body.

No customer provided insufficient details to allow the case to be investigated (despite specific information requested and reminders sent).

Table 3: ECA case findings

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Q1 2025
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	6	2	2	10
Complaint upheld	5	1	2	8
Complaint partially upheld	1	5	2	8
Complaint rejected	4	0	0	4
TOTAL	16	8	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 usually 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	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Q1 2025
Refunds & credits awarded	\$260	\$189	\$636	\$1,085

2.4 ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE CASES

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during the quarter was 2.7 calendar days. This elapsed time metric (calendar days) includes days on weekends and public holidays, and is synonymous with customer wait time.

Table 5: Elapsed time to close ECA cases

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Q1 2025
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	1.9	4.0	3.0	2.7

Case Study – vehicle added to tolling account incorrectly, and customer's inappropriate verbal behaviour

Customer with an interstate tolling account added a vehicle to the tolling account with the wrong state of registration specified.

A tolling tag was not detected at one EastLink toll point, which resulted in an EastLink toll invoice as the vehicle registration was not able to be matched (wrong state).

A tolling tag was detected at other toll points resulting in correct charges to the interstate tolling account.

When evidence was provided that the error had been corrected (state updated on the vehicle registration with the interstate tolling account), EastLink customer services team had waived the toll invoice as a gesture of goodwill.

There was no error by EastLink.

The ECA answered the various questions posed by the customer.

The ECA also informed the customer that the customer's verbal behaviour in the recordings of calls with EastLink customer service operators was unacceptable, including: insulting, sexist, misogynistic and threatening.

3. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS

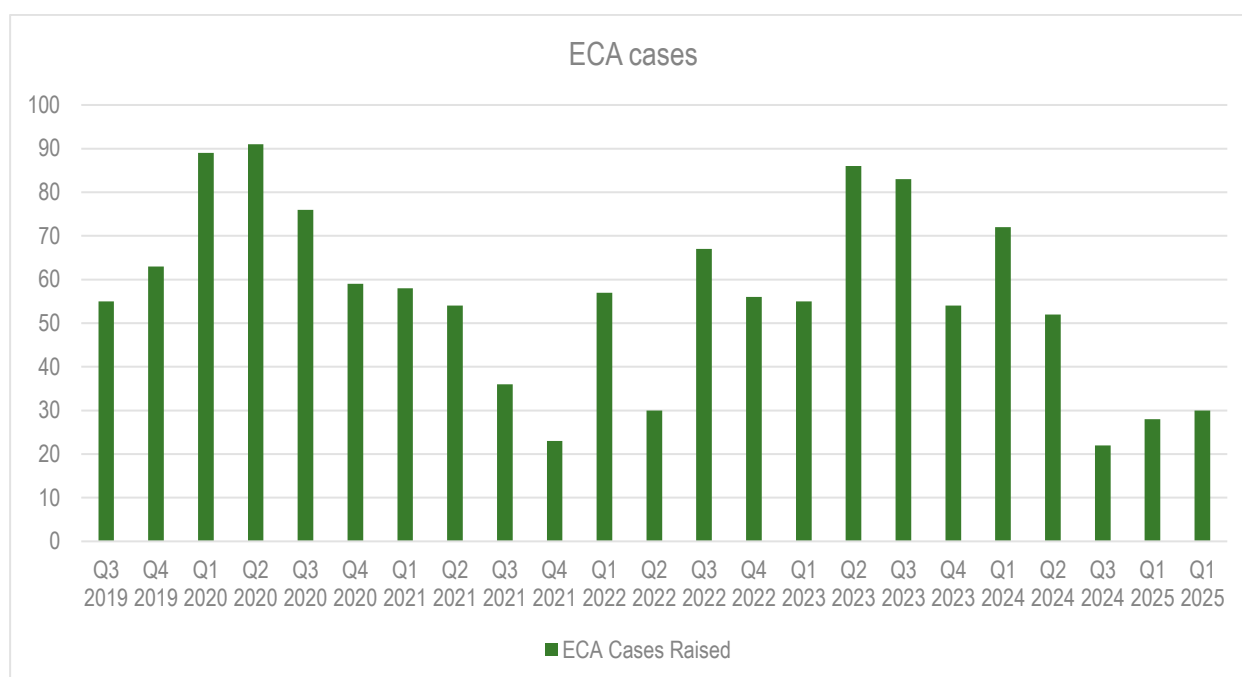
3.1 HISTORICAL TRENDS

Chart 1 shows the number of cases raised in each quarter since the commencement of the ECA 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. More recent waves in the middle quarters of 2023 and in Q1 2024 are attributed to increases in cost of living pressures. The chart also indicates that the nominal case rate is in the 50 to 60 cases per quarter range.

For the third consecutive quarter, the number of cases raised in Q1 2025 (30 cases) was much lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter), and it was the fourth lowest number recorded for any quarter to date

Chart 1: ECA cases trend



80% of the cases raised during Q1 2025 related to toll invoices, which is significantly higher than the longer term average for this case type over the preceding seven quarters (49%) – see Table 6.

However, there is no indication of a specific or systemic customer service failure contributing to this increase. Of the 24 cases raised in relation to toll invoices during Q1 2025, there was a broad range of outcomes:

- > 7 of these toll invoice cases were of finding type “complaint upheld”
- > 6 of these toll invoice cases were of finding type “complaint partially upheld”
- > 7 of these toll invoice cases were of finding type “service expedited (no valid complaint)”
- > 4 of these toll invoice cases were of finding type “complaint rejected”

Table 6: ECA cases trend

ECA CASES	2023			2024				2025
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Toll invoice	35	35	31	39	15	10	18	22
Toll invoice communications	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
Toll invoice payment	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	1
Account notice	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account payment	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Account charge	6	9	5	2	2	4	3	1
Account charge for a sold vehicle	1	0	1	1	6	2	1	1
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle etc	3	5	2	1	1	0	1	1
Account charge for an LPN error	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Account suspension	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account closure	4	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Deceased account	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tags	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0
Tolls	2	2	1	2	0	0	0	0
Tolling class	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trip pass	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Debt recovery	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Customer service	11	24	4	8	12	1	0	0
Payment options	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Website	0	1	3	4	2	1	1	2
Hardship assistance	7	2	1	0	3	1	1	0
Payment plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third party scam	0	1	0	3	2	0	0	0
Infringements (fines)	4	0	1	3	2	0	0	1
Incident response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Debris damage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandoned vehicle	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Road maintenance	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0
Signage	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Litter	1	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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscaping, public artworks	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
EastLink Trail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wildlife	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Privacy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown (withdrawn, insufficient details)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Police enquiry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CCTV request	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance claim	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	86	83	54	72	52	22	28	30

As outlined earlier in section 3.1, the number of cases in Q1 2025 (30 cases) much lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter), and it was the fourth lowest number recorded for any quarter to date.

The distribution of these cases across each category of case findings was not particularly unusual in Q1 2025 compared to previous quarters – see Table 7.

Table 7: ECA case findings trend

ECA CASE FINDINGS	2023			2024				2025
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	45	49	18	31	27	8	12	10
Complaint upheld	16	14	9	13	7	6	7	8
Complaint partially upheld	9	5	14	14	9	4	3	8
Complaint rejected	10	12	11	14	6	4	5	4
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	6	3	1	0	2	0	0	0
Insufficient details provided	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
TOTAL	86	83	54	72	52	22	28	30

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q1 2025 (\$1,085) was almost exactly the same as the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$1,095) – see Table 8.

The mean average refund/credit per case during Q1 2025 (\$36) was 50% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$24), although it was lower than the two previous quarters Q3 and Q4 2024.

Table 8: ECA case findings – refunds & credits trend

ECA CASES – REFUNDS & CREDITS	2023			2024				2025
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Refunds & credits awarded	\$736	\$573	\$1,619	\$1,307	\$1,492	\$905	\$1,035	\$1,085
Mean average per case (all cases, rounded)	\$9	\$7	\$30	\$18	\$29	\$41	\$37	\$36

The elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q4 2024 (2.7 calendar days) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.4 calendar days), although the same as the previous quarter Q4 2024 and within the normal range of variation – see Table 9.

Three cases in Q1 2025 took a relatively long time to close (14 calendar days, 13 calendar days and 11 calendar days respectively):

- > In the first of these cases, the delay was attributed to waiting for a third party tollway operator to provide information to assist with investigation of the case. In this case the complaint was partially upheld.
- > In the second of these cases, the delay was attributed to the ECA taking longer than usual to consider the merits of the customer's complaint, which was complex in nature. In this case the complaint was partially upheld.
- > In the third of these cases, the delay was attributed to waiting for a third party vehicle registration authority to provide information to assist with investigation of the case. In this case the complaint was upheld.

Excluding these three cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q1 2025 would fall to just 1.6 calendar days.

Table 9: Elapsed time to close ECA cases trend

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	2023			2024				2025
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	3.0	1.4	2.5	2.8	2.1	2.5	2.7	2.7

4. HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE

This is a recently introduced section within the ECA quarterly report, introduced for the first time in Q4 2024.

This section includes hardship assistance data that is sourced from EastLink's hardship team, who administer EastLink's hardship assistance programs.

4.1 PAYMENT PLANS

The number of payment plans created during Q1 2025 (1,216 plans created) was 18% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,034 plans created), and was the highest number recorded in any quarter – see Table 10.

The average value of payment plan created during Q1 2025 (\$343) was 26% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$272), and was the highest amount recorded in any quarter.

Table 10: Payment plans created

PAYMENT PLANS CREATED	2023			2024				2025
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Payment plans created	818	1,007	885	1,178	1,169	1,107	1,076	1,216
Total value of plans created	\$219,580	\$268,666	\$204,248	\$283,100	\$310,302	\$367,300	\$325,471	\$417,163
Average value of plan created	\$268	\$267	\$231	\$240	\$265	\$332	\$302	\$343

4.2 FINES WITHDRAWN DUE TO FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Fines for unpaid EastLink tolls are issued by Victoria Police and administered by Fines Victoria.

For a single vehicle, a maximum of one EastLink fine can be issued per seven day consecutive period.

In cases of financial hardship, EastLink can request withdrawal of EastLink fines.

EastLink commenced withdrawal of EastLink fines due to hardship in July 2023 (which is why data is not available for Q2 2023).

The number of fines withdrawn by EastLink due to hardship during Q1 2025 (935 fines withdrawn) was lower than the longer term average over the preceding six quarters (1,294 fines withdrawn), although within the normal range of variation – see Table 11.

The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q1 2025 (81 people assisted) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding six quarters (74 people assisted), although within the normal range of variation.

The average number of fines withdrawn per person during Q1 2025 (12 fines withdrawn per person) was lower than the longer term average (16 fines withdrawn per person), although within the normal range of variation.

Table 11: EastLink fines withdrawn due to hardship

FINES WITHDRAWN DUE TO HARDSHIP	2023			2024				2025
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Fines withdrawn	n/a	734	898	528	963	3,813	825	935
Individual people assisted	n/a	52	55	53	91	132	59	81
Average fines withdrawn per person	n/a	14	16	10	11	29	14	12

5. 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.

5.1 CUSTOMER A (TOLL INVOICES WHILE ACCOUNT SUSPENDED)

The ECA reviewed Customer A's unresolved complaint regarding unpaid toll invoices. The review confirmed that the account in question had a history of frequent and lengthy account suspensions and multiple unpaid toll invoices were issued during the periods when the account was suspended. The customer had made multiple payments to cover overdue notices and toll invoices, but outstanding amounts remained unpaid.

The ECA found no errors or duplicated charges by EastLink and recommended that the customer take several actions to better manage their account, including installing tags in vehicles, setting up automatic payments, and promptly responding to EastLink communications. The ECA also emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive account balance to avoid future account suspensions.

This case highlights the importance of proactive account management by customers and timely communication with EastLink to prevent issues related to toll payments and account suspensions.

5.2 CUSTOMER B (VEHICLE DETAILS INCORRECTLY SPECIFIED FOR TRIP PASS)

Customer B was issued an EastLink toll invoice for a vehicle that travelled four times on EastLink. However, the customer had purchased four EastLink trip passes on the same day for a different vehicle, due to a mistake when Customer B specified the licence plate number.

The EastLink Customer Advocate verified the purchase of the trip passes and the travel details and the EastLink toll invoice was cancelled.

This case highlights the importance of accurate licence plate information when purchasing trip passes.

5.3 CUSTOMER C (VEHICLE DETAILS INCORRECTLY SPECIFIED FOR TOLLING ACCOUNT)

Customer C had an EastLink account associated with their vehicle's licence plate. The account balance dropped below zero, and despite multiple notices, no payment was received, leading to the account's suspension.

The customer's vehicle was incorrectly added to an interstate tolling account, resulting in tolls not being charged to the interstate tolling account and instead EastLink issued EastLink toll invoices.

EastLink's customer service team had already informed Customer C multiple times to correct the error on the interstate tolling account, but Customer C had failed to do so.

The vehicle made 26 trips on EastLink without the interstate tolling tag being detected, leading to EastLink toll invoices being issued and subsequently overdue notices due to non-payment.

The investigation found no instances of double charging and attributed the issuing of toll invoices to Customer C's failure to correctly add the vehicle to the interstate tolling account.

As a goodwill gesture, EastLink waived the overdue fee components and extended the due date for the outstanding amounts.

Customer C was instructed to contact the interstate tollway operator to correct the error and make the necessary payments to EastLink.

The case highlights the importance of ensuring vehicle details are correctly registered.

5.4 CUSTOMER D (VEHICLE NOT REMOVED FROM TOLLING ACCOUNT)

Customer D had added and later removed a vehicle from their EastLink account. During the period the vehicle was listed, it incurred charges on both EastLink and another tollway not operated by EastLink.

In Customer D's complaint, Customer D claimed that the vehicle was not their vehicle. However, Customer D was unable to explain why Customer D had added the vehicle to the EastLink account.

The total charges on the other tollway were paid by EastLink to the other tollway operator, without any possibility of a refund as the vehicle was listed on the EastLink account.

EastLink issued multiple account statements to the customer, which detailed the trips and charges for the vehicle.

The vehicle registration authority confirmed that the vehicle was registered to a business not directly related to Customer D (although located in proximity to Customer D's address).

There was no error by EastLink.

However, as a gesture of goodwill, EastLink provided a credit to the EastLink account, equating to 25% of the toll charges.

5.5 CUSTOMER E (TOLL INVOICE NOT PAID BY ITS DUE DATE)

Customer E requested a review of an unresolved complaint with EastLink relating to an EastLink overdue notice, which has an additional fee compared to the original EastLink toll invoice.

Investigation revealed that the vehicle travelled on EastLink on two occasions without being listed on any active tolling account or having purchased EastLink trip passes.

EastLink issued a toll invoice and an overdue notice, neither of which was paid by their due date.

The review found no error by EastLink and concluded that there was sufficient time for the customer to arrange payment.

As a once-off gesture of goodwill, the overdue fee was waived, and the due date for the overdue notice was extended.

The case highlights the importance of timely payment of toll invoices and overdue notices.

For further information:

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