

EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE REPORT

Q4 2025 (1 OCTOBER 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025)



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1. EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

10 February 2026

This report covers the Q4 2025 quarterly period (1 October 2025 – 31 December 2025).

The number of cases raised in Q4 2025 (17 cases) was much lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter), and was the lowest on record.

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q4 2025 (3.8 calendar days) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.6 calendar days).

This is attributed to the single case highlighted in Section 2.4, which took a relatively long time to close (36 calendar days). Excluding this one case, the average time to close ECA cases during Q4 2025 would fall to just 1.8 calendar days, well within the longer term average.

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q4 2025 (\$2,883) was three times the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$960).

This is also attributed to the same single case highlighted in Section 2.4, in which a refund of \$2,472 was provided to the customer's account.

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

- > The number of payment plans created during Q4 2025 (629 plans created) was just over half of the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,209 plans created). This is attributed to a temporary reduction in the number of toll invoices able to be issued during the quarter.
- > The average value of payment plans created during Q4 2025 (\$331) was 12% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$295).
- > The number of fines withdrawn by EastLink due to hardship during Q4 2025 (1,908 fines withdrawn) was 29% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,474 fines withdrawn). There has now been sustained growth each quarter since Q4 2024.
- > The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q4 2025 (92 people assisted) was the same as the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (92 people assisted).
- > The average number of fines withdrawn per person during Q4 2025 (21 fines withdrawn per person) was 40% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (15 fines withdrawn per person), and the second highest number on record.

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.

EastLink is currently engaging with local community legal centres as we draft updates to our hardship policy.

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

The cases raised during Q4 2025 were very mixed, with no particular type dominating.

Table 1: ECA cases raised

ECA CASES RAISED	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Q4 2025
Toll invoice	0	2	1	3
Account charge	0	1	0	1
Account charge for a sold vehicle	0	0	1	1
Account charge for an LPN error	1	0	1	2
Tags	1	0	1	2
Trip pass	0	1	0	1
Website	1	0	0	1
Third party scam	1	0	0	1
Infringements (fines)	0	2	0	2
Incident response	1	0	0	1
Debris damage	1	0	0	1
Speed limit	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	7	6	4	17

2.2 CASES CLOSED

All of the cases raised during Q4 2025 have been closed. The last of these cases to close was received on 24/11/2025. Following investigation, the customer's complaint was upheld, the customer's account was credited with the disputed amount, and the case was closed on 30/12/2025. The customer was notified on 9/1/2026. The delay in notification was to allow for confirmation that the customer's remaining debt following the account credit was not related to the dispute.

Table 2: ECA cases closed

ECA CASES CLOSED	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Q4 2025
Q4 2025 cases closed (as at date of report)	7	6	4	17
Q4 2025 cases still open (as at date of report)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	7	6	4	17

2.3 CASE FINDINGS

In 35% of cases during Q4 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.

18% of cases in the quarter were fully upheld, and a further 12% of cases were partially upheld.

In 29% of cases the complaint was rejected with no practical customer service assistance identifiable.

One customer was referred to another tollway operator or other body.

Table 3: ECA case findings

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Q4 2025
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	2	1	3	6
Complaint upheld	1	2	0	3
Complaint partially upheld	1	1	0	2
Complaint rejected	3	1	1	5

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Q4 2025
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	0	1	0	1
Insufficient details provided	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	7	6	4	17

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	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Q4 2025
Refunds & credits awarded	\$214	\$2,643	\$26	\$2,883

2.4 ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE CASES

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q4 2025 was 3.8 calendar days. This elapsed time metric (calendar days) includes days on weekends and public holidays, and is synonymous with customer wait time.

One case in Q4 2025 took a relatively long time to close (36 calendar days):

- > This was a case involving NSW tollway trips being charged to an EastLink account by the NSW tollway operator. The dispute involved a unique set of circumstances and a detailed assessment by EastLink’s legal team of the terms and conditions that apply to the EastLink account. This legal assessment confirmed that the customer’s dispute should be fully upheld. In this particular case, a refund of \$2,472 was provided to the customer’s account.

Excluding this one case, the average time to close ECA cases during Q4 2025 would fall to just 1.8 calendar days.

Table 5: Elapsed time to close ECA cases

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Q4 2025
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	1.7	7.8	1.5	3.8

Case Study – request to increase speed limit on EastLink

The Customer requested an increase in the speed limit on EastLink from 100km/h to 110km/h.

This request was rejected on safety grounds, and the Customer was informed that EastLink has no plans to approach the Department of Transport to seek a change to the speed limit.

It was explained to the Customer that an increase from 100km/h to 110km/h would result in passenger vehicle stopping distance being +15% to +17% longer, according to published studies.

This significant increase in stopping distance would put motorists as well as EastLink’s incident response and maintenance workers at risk. It would also impact sub-contractors, roadside assistance services, tow truck operators and emergency service workers who work along EastLink every day.

3. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS

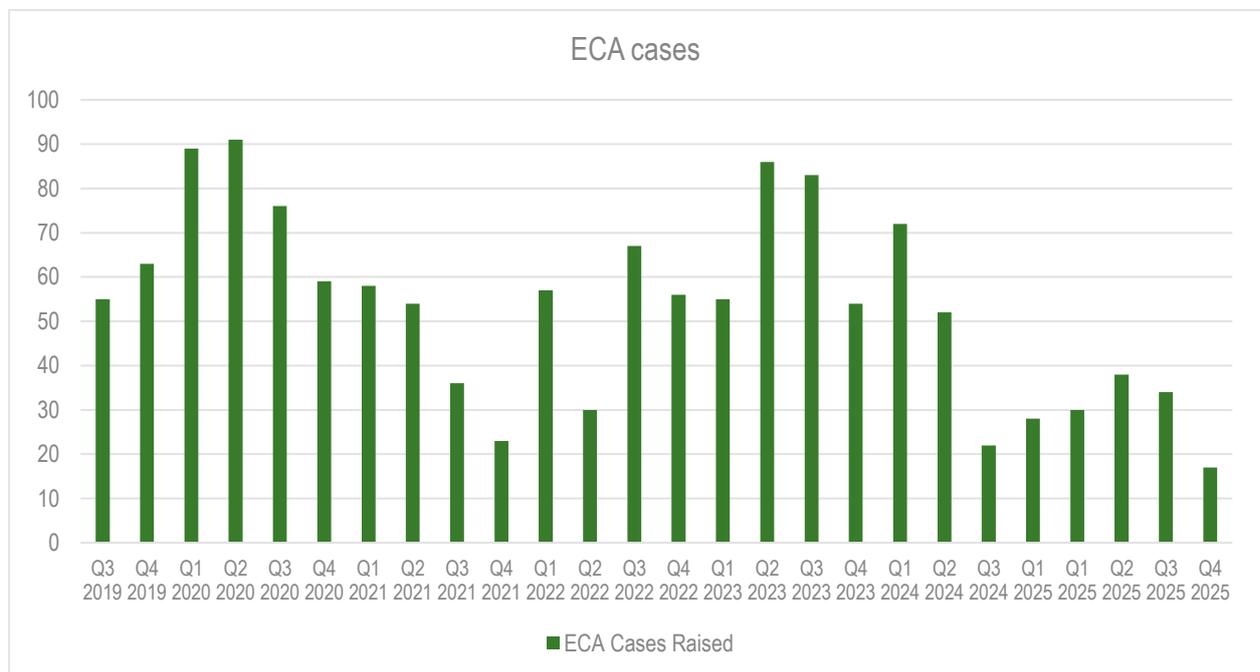
3.1 HISTORICAL TRENDS

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.

The number of cases raised in Q4 2025 (17 cases) was much lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter), and was the lowest on record.

Chart 1: ECA cases trend



The cases raised during Q4 2025 were very mixed, with no particular case type dominating – see Table 6. This is different from previous quarters in which cases related to toll invoices dominated.

Table 6: ECA cases trend

ECA CASES	2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Toll invoice	39	15	10	18	22	19	20	3
Toll invoice communications	0	1	1	0	1	3	2	0
Toll invoice payment	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Account notice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account payment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account charge	2	2	4	3	1	3	3	1
Account charge for a sold vehicle	1	6	2	1	1	1	2	1
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Account charge for an LPN error	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2

ECA CASES	2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Account suspension	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account closure	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Deceased account	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tags	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Tolls	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tolling class	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trip pass	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Debt recovery	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Customer service	8	12	1	0	0	0	0	0
Payment options	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Website	4	2	1	1	2	1	0	1
Hardship assistance	0	3	1	1	0	3	2	0
Payment plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third party scam	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Infringements (fines)	3	2	0	0	1	3	2	2
Incident response	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Debris damage	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Abandoned vehicle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Road maintenance	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signage	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Litter	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Noise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speed limit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Graffiti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscaping, public artworks	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	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	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Police enquiry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CCTV request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance claim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	72	52	22	28	30	38	34	17

As outlined earlier in Section 3.1, the number of cases in Q4 2025 (17 cases) was much lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter), and was the lowest on record.

The distribution of these cases across each category of case findings does not indicate anything out of the ordinary – Table 7.

Table 7: ECA case findings trend

ECA CASE FINDINGS	2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	31	27	8	12	10	11	4	6
Complaint upheld	13	7	6	7	8	7	4	3
Complaint partially upheld	14	9	4	3	8	4	11	2
Complaint rejected	14	6	4	5	4	13	15	5
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1
Insufficient details provided	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	72	52	22	28	30	38	34	17

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q4 2025 (\$2,883) was three times the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$960) – see Table 8.

The mean average refund/credit per case during Q4 2025 (\$170) was more than six times the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$27).

Both of these results are attributed to the single case highlighted in Section 2.4, in a which a refund of \$2,472 was provided to the customer’s account.

Table 8: ECA case findings – refunds & credits trend

ECA CASES – REFUNDS & CREDITS	2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Refunds & credits awarded	\$1,307	\$1,492	\$905	\$1,035	\$1,085	\$527	\$367	\$2,883
Mean average per case (all cases)	\$18	\$29	\$41	\$37	\$36	\$14	\$11	\$170

The elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q4 2025 (3.8 calendar days) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.6 calendar days) – see Table 9.

This is attributed to the single case highlighted in Section 2.4, which took a relatively long time to close (36 calendar days).

Excluding this one case, the average time to close ECA cases during Q4 2025 would fall to just 1.8 calendar days, well within the longer term average.

Table 9: Elapsed time to close ECA cases trend

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	2.8	2.1	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.8

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 Q4 2025 (629 plans created) was just over half of the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,209 plans created) – see Table 10. This is attributed to a temporary reduction in the number of toll invoices able to be issued during the quarter.

The average value of payment plans created during Q4 2025 (\$331) was 12% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (\$295).

Table 10: Payment plans created

PAYMENT PLANS CREATED	2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Payment plans created	1,178	1,169	1,107	1,076	1,216	1,346	1,373	629
Total value of plans created	\$283,100	\$310,302	\$367,300	\$325,471	\$417,163	\$367,104	\$428,079	\$208,155
Average value of plan created	\$240	\$265	\$332	\$302	\$343	\$273	\$312	\$331

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.

The number of fines withdrawn by EastLink due to hardship during Q4 2025 (1,908 fines withdrawn) was 29% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,474 fines withdrawn). There has now been sustained growth in every quarter since Q4 2024 – see Table 11.

The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q4 2025 (92 people assisted) was the same as the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (92 people assisted).

The average number of fines withdrawn per person during Q4 2025 (21 fines withdrawn per person) was 40% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (15 fines withdrawn per person), and the second highest number on record.

Table 11: EastLink fines withdrawn due to hardship

FINES WITHDRAWN DUE TO HARDSHIP	2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Fines withdrawn	528	963	3,813	825	935	1,424	1,827	1,908
Individual people assisted	53	91	132	59	81	106	124	92
Average fines withdrawn per person	10	11	29	14	12	13	15	21

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 (TAG FAILURE & IMAGE PROCESSING FEES)

Customer A complained that their tag had failed and \$224 of image processing fees had been charged to the account. While EastLink's customer service team had already provided a partial refund, Customer A thought this was unfair. Customer A should have contacted EastLink earlier (tag not beeping at toll points, and fees listed on account statements). After the ECA was contacted by Customer A, the tag was received by EastLink and testing confirmed that the tag had failed. Customer A's account history was considered in detail (including EastLink tolls spend rate and customer's management of the account) and the remaining image processing fees were also refunded as a gesture of goodwill.

5.2 CUSTOMER B (THIRD PARTY SCAM)

Customer B – an EastLink account holder – complained about two credit card transactions on the same date (\$55 and \$88.54) and both labelled "Tolls and Violation Charges South Melbourne". Investigation revealed that Customer B's EastLink account payments over a two month period around the date of the disputed credit card transaction have all been \$70 each, not \$55 or \$88.54. Furthermore, EastLink does not charge for any "violations", and EastLink has no association with "South Melbourne". The disputed credit card transactions have nothing to do with EastLink and may relate to a third party scam. Customer B was advised to contact their card-issuing bank immediately to query these transactions. It was also explained that EastLink does not store or record any credit card details (PCCI DSS compliance), so any misuse of a credit card does not have anything to do with EastLink.

5.3 CUSTOMER C (TUNNEL CLOSURE & TRIP PASS SALES)

Customer C complained about being able to buy two EastLink trip passes on the same day prior to an overnight tunnel closure. On Customer C's second trip that evening, Customer C travelled for 8km along EastLink prior to being diverted off at Canterbury Rd for the tunnel closure. It was explained that tunnel closure information is published in advance: on the EastLink website home page, on every information page on the EastLink website (including <https://www.eastlink.com.au/buy-trip-pass> which is the link that is sent by text message to customers who request it, including Customer C), on digital roadside messages, and in email bulletins to those who have signed up. Trip passes are valid for travel in the preceding 3 days or up to six months after travel, so it would not be appropriate to disable trip pass sales in the day/s leading up to tunnel closures as requested by Customer C. There was no error by EastLink. As a gesture of goodwill, the cost of one trip pass (\$7.77) was refunded to Customer C. Customer C was encouraged to sign up for email bulletins.

5.4 CUSTOMER D (TOLLING ACCOUNT MIS-CONFIGURED)

Customer D – an EastLink account holder – complained about receiving toll invoices from a third party tollway operator, and image processing fees for EastLink trips. EastLink's customer service team had already provided an account credit to cover one toll invoice and an additional goodwill credit. However the problem was not fixed and further toll invoices as well as image processing fees continued to be charged. Investigation revealed that an EastLink operator error had mis-configured the account and the error had not been corrected properly. Customer D had paid the toll invoices to avoid the problem escalating. Customer D's account was credited with an amount of \$163 to cover the cost of all of the toll invoices not yet credited. Customer D's account was also provided with a second goodwill credit, matching the first, as the problem had not been fixed properly first time around. The image processing fees were also waived. The configuration of the EastLink account was fixed, and EastLink's customer relations team will continue to monitor Customer D's account.

5.5 CUSTOMER E (SOLD VEHICLE NOT REMOVED FROM TOLLING ACCOUNT)

Customer E sold their vehicle but did not remove the vehicle from their EastLink account until four months later. Two account statements sent to Customer E after the vehicle was sold – and before the vehicle's new owner made any tollway trips – showed that the vehicle was still linked to the Customer E's account. A third account statement was sent to Customer E after the first 3 tollway trips and before the last two tollway trips. The vehicle's new owner had made 5 tollway trips – all on a third party tollway – and all charged to Customer E's account. There is a prominent message on every statement – check vehicles listed on the statement are up to date. EastLink had already paid the third party tollway operator for the five trips, and those payments are not

refundable. It was also explained to Customer E that the third party tollway operator cannot issue toll invoice/s to the vehicle's new owner (as the vehicle was listed on Customer E's account). Furthermore, EastLink can only contact the registration authority to request vehicle owner details for unpaid trips on EastLink (not third party tollways). There was no error by EastLink. Customer E's account history was considered in detail (including EastLink tolls spend rate and customer's management of the account), and in this case an account credit was not justified.

For further information:

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