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EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE REPORT

Q2 2026 (1 APRIL 2026 – 30 JUNE 2026)

ConnectEast Pty Ltd
ABN 99 101 213 263

CONTENTS

1. EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

29 July 2026

This report covers the Q2 2026 quarterly period (1 April 2026 – 30 June 2026).

For the eighth consecutive quarter, the number of cases raised in Q2 2026 (34 cases) remains lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter).

The majority of cases raised during Q2 2026 related to toll invoices (68%). This is similar to most quarters. There is nothing unusual about the mix of cases in Q2 2026.

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q2 2026 (3.8 calendar days) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.8 calendar days). Three cases in Q2 2026 took a relatively long time to close. Excluding these three cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q2 2026 would fall to 2.3 calendar days.

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q2 2026 ($378) was 65% less than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($1,075). (However, the longer term average was magnified by a single case in Q4 2025, in which a refund of $2,472 was provided to the customer's account. Excluding Q4 2025, the longer term average was $774.)

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

- The number of payment plans created during Q2 2026 (1,837 plans created) was 58% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,164 plans created).
- The average value of payment plans created during Q2 2026 ($247) was 21% lower than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($313).
- The number of fines withdrawn by EastLink due to hardship during Q2 2026 (2,528 fines withdrawn) was 30% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,943 fines withdrawn). However, the 12% reduction on the previous quarter marks the first quarter by quarter decline since Q4 2024.
- The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q2 2026 (96 people assisted) was 9% lower than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (105 people assisted).
- The average number of fines withdrawn per person during Q2 2026 (26 fines withdrawn per person) was 44% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (18 fines withdrawn per person), and the second highest number on record.

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 include new hardship indicators – account status and debtor trips. This will allow significant changes in community hardship to be tracked into the future.

Following extensive engagement with community legal centres, EastLink has published a revised EastLink Hardship Policy and a new Quick Guide to EastLink Hardship Assistance. To find out more and download, visit www.eastlink.com.au/hardship.

If you are experiencing financial hardship or family violence and finding it hard to pay EastLink tolls or EastLink fines, you can apply to EastLink for hardship assistance. Please use the online form at www.eastlink.com.au/hardship 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 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

During Q2 2026, the majority of cases related to toll invoices (68%).

Table 1: ECA cases raised

ECA CASES RAISED	Apr 2026	May 2026	Jun 2026	Q2 2026
Toll invoice	13	6	3	**22**
Toll invoice communications	0	1	0	**1**
Account charge	1	0	2	**3**
Account closure	0	0	1	**1**
Deceased account	0	1	0	**1**
Website	0	0	1	**1**
Hardship assistance	1	0	1	**2**
Payment plan	0	0	1	**1**
Infringements (fines)	0	1	1	**2**
TOTAL	**15**	**9**	**10**	**34**

2.2 CASES CLOSED

All of the cases raised during Q2 2026 have been closed. The last of these cases to close was received on 29/6/2026. Following investigation, the customer's complaint was rejected, and the case was closed on 29/6/2026. The customer was notified on 29/6/2026.

Table 2: ECA cases closed

ECA CASES CLOSED	Apr 2026	May 2026	Jun 2026	Q2 2026
Q2 2026 cases closed (as at date of report)	15	9	10	**34**
Q2 2026 cases still open (as at date of report)	0	0	0	**0**
TOTAL	**15**	**9**	**10**	**34**

2.3 CASE FINDINGS

In 12% of cases during Q2 2026, 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.

29% of cases in the quarter were fully upheld, and a further 24% of cases were partially upheld.

In 32% 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	Apr 2026	May 2026	Jun 2026	Q2 2026
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	0	0	4	**4**
Complaint upheld	5	4	1	**10**
Complaint partially upheld	7	1	0	**8**
Complaint rejected	3	3	5	**11**
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	0	1	0	**1**
TOTAL	**15**	**9**	**10**	**34**

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	Apr 2026	May 2026	Jun 2026	Q2 2026
Refunds & credits awarded	$235	$125	$18	**$378**

2.4 ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE CASES

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q2 2026 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.

Three cases in Q2 2026 took a relatively long time to close (23 calendar days, 22 calendar days and 12 calendar days):

> 23 calendar days – This was a case involving a motorist with an account issued by another tollway operator. The delay was initially due to waiting to receive information that had been requested from the other tollway operator, and then delayed further due to the workload of the ECA at the time.

> 22 calendar days – This was a case involving a motorist with an account issued by another tollway operator. The delay was due to waiting to receive information that had been requested from the other tollway operator

> 12 calendar days - The delay was due to the workload of the ECA at the time.

Excluding these three cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q2 2026 would fall to 2.3 calendar days.

Table 5: Elapsed time to close ECA cases

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Apr 2026	May 2026	Jun 2026	Q2 2026
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	3.9	6.9	0.9	**3.8**

Case Study – account suspended

The customer – who holds a tolling account with another tollway operator – complained about EastLink toll invoices while they claimed to have an automatic payment difficulty with their account.

The account was suspended for two separate, extended periods. Their vehicle continued to travel on tollways while the account was suspended.

Six EastLink toll invoices were issued and not paid. Six EastLink overdue notices were issued and not paid. 30 courtesy reminders were sent by email and text message – payment not made.

EastLink's customer service team had already waived the overdue fee component of the six EastLink overdue notices as a gesture of goodwill, and informed the customer to pay the outstanding amount or arrange a payment plan.

The ECA did not find any error by EastLink. The customer was reminded to pay the outstanding amount or arrange a payment plan. A final extension of due date was provided. The customer was advised they need to contact the other tollway operator about their tolling account.

3. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS

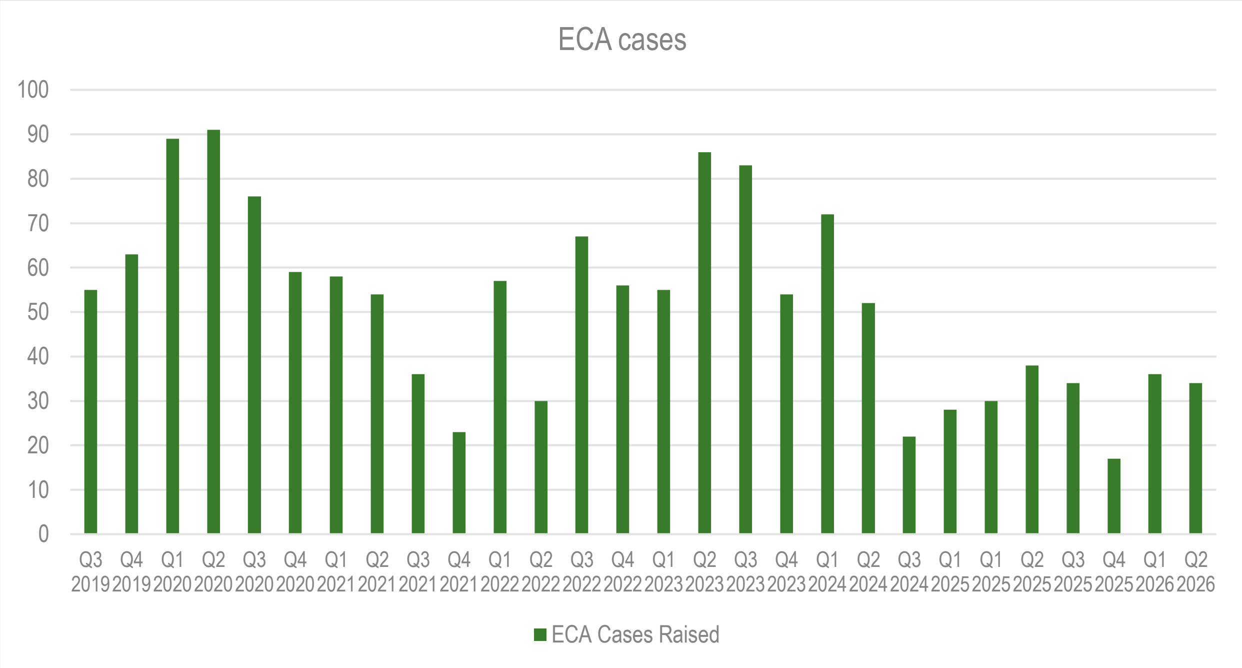
3.1 HISTORICAL TRENDS

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 eighth consecutive quarter, the number of cases raised in Q2 2026 (34 cases) remains lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter).

Chart 1: ECA cases trend



The majority of cases raised during Q2 2026 related to toll invoices (68%) – see Table 6. This is similar to most quarters (Q4 2025 being a lone outlier). There is nothing unusual about the mix of cases raised in Q1 2026.

Table 6: ECA cases trend

ECA CASES	2024		2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Toll invoice	10	18	22	19	20	3	23	22
Toll invoice communications	1	0	1	3	2	0	0	1
Toll invoice payment	0	1	1	0	0	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	4	3	1	3	3	1	2	3
Account charge for a sold vehicle	2	1	1	1	2	1	6	0
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Account charge for an LPN error	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0

ECA CASES	2024		2025				2026	
Account communications	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Account suspension	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account closure	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Deceased account	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tags	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
Tolls	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Tolling class	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Trip pass	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Debt recovery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Customer service	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Payment options	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Website	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	1
Hardship assistance	1	1	0	3	2	0	0	2
Payment plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Third party scam	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Infringements (fines)	0	0	1	3	2	2	1	2
Incident response	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Debris damage	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
Abandoned vehicle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Road maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signage	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Litter	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Noise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speed limit	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Graffiti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscaping, public artworks	1	2	0	0	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	0	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	**22**	**28**	**30**	**38**	**34**	**17**	**36**	**34**

As outlined earlier in Section 3.1, for the eighth consecutive quarter, the number of cases in Q2 2026 (34 cases) remains lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter).

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				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	8	12	10	11	4	6	5	4
Complaint upheld	6	7	8	7	4	3	4	10
Complaint partially upheld	4	3	8	4	11	2	13	8
Complaint rejected	4	5	4	13	15	5	9	11
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	1
Insufficient details provided	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0
TOTAL	**22**	**28**	**30**	**38**	**34**	**17**	**36**	**34**

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q2 2026 ($378) was 65% less than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($1,075) – see Table 8. (However, the longer term average was magnified by a single case in Q4 2025, in which a refund of $2,472 was provided to the customer's account. Excluding Q4 2025, the longer term average was $774.)

The mean average refund/credit per case during Q2 2026 ($11) was less than a quarter of the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($47). (Excluding Q4 2025, the longer term average was $26.)

Table 8: ECA case findings – refunds & credits trend

ECA CASES – REFUNDS & CREDITS	2024		2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Refunds & credits awarded	$905	$1,035	$1,085	$527	$367	$2,883	$724	$378
Mean average per case (all cases)	$41	$37	$36	$14	$11	$170	$20	$11

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q2 2026 (3.8 calendar days) was higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.8 calendar days) – see Table 9.

Table 9: Elapsed time to close ECA cases trend

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	2024		2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.8	2.8	3.8

4. HARDSHIP INDICATORS AND HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE

This section includes hardship indicators (sections 4.1 and 4.2) as well as hardship assistance data (sections 4.3 and 4.4).

4.1 ACCOUNT STATUS

This is a new indicator for reporting. It shows the proportion of EastLink accounts that have active, low balance, pending suspension and suspended status – see Table 10.

An increase in the proportion of accounts that are pending suspension or suspended would be an indicator of increasing hardship in the community.

Table 10: Account status

Account status	2024		2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Active	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	86.4%
Low balance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.8%
Pending suspension	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.1%
Suspended	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.7%

4.2 DEBTOR TRIPS

This is a new indicator for reporting. It shows the proportion of EastLink trips that are charged to the vehicle's owner via an EastLink toll invoice, as there was no valid arrangement to pay the toll – see Table 11.

While many customers are known to use EastLink toll invoices as a casual user toll payment option, an increase in the proportion of trips that are debtor trips would be an indicator of increasing hardship in the community.

Table 11: Debtor trips

Trip status	2024		2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Debtor trips	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.3%

4.3 PAYMENT PLANS

The number of payment plans created during Q2 2026 (1,837 plans created) was 58% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,164 plans created) – see Table 12.

The average value of payment plans created during Q2 2026 ($247) was 21% lower than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($313).

Table 12: Payment plans created

PAYMENT PLANS CREATED	2024		2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Payment plans created	1,107	1,076	1,216	1,346	1,373	629	1,403	1,837
Total value of plans created	$367,300	$325,471	$417,163	$367,104	$428,079	$208,155	$421,918	$453,515
Average value of plan created	$332	$302	$343	$273	$312	$331	$301	$247

4.4 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 and family violence, EastLink can request withdrawal of EastLink fines.

The number of fines withdrawn by EastLink due to hardship during Q2 2026 (2,528 fines withdrawn) was 30% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,943 fines withdrawn) – see Table 13. However, the 12% reduction on the previous quarter marks the first quarter by quarter decline since Q4 2024.

The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q2 2026 (96 people assisted) was 9% lower than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (105 people assisted).

The average number of fines withdrawn per person during Q2 2026 (26 fines withdrawn per person) was 44% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (18 fines withdrawn per person), and the second highest number on record.

Table 13: EastLink fines withdrawn due to hardship

FINES WITHDRAWN DUE TO HARDSHIP	2024		2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Fines withdrawn	3,813	825	935	1,424	1,827	1,908	2,866	2,528
People assisted	132	59	81	106	124	92	139	96
Average fines withdrawn per person	29	14	12	13	15	21	21	26

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 (SOLD VEHICLE)

Customer A was sent an EastLink toll invoice (not paid) and an EastLink overdue notice using the contact details provided by the vehicle registration authority. Customer A claimed the vehicle had been sold but did not provide any evidence to EastLink despite being asked. The vehicle registration authority was contacted and confirmed the vehicle had been sold but that the new owner was not known and that the vehicle registration had been cancelled. The ECA cancelled the EastLink overdue notice.

5.2 CUSTOMER B (ACCOUNT SHOULD HAVE BEEN CHARGED)

Customer B made two trips on EastLink very shortly after adding their vehicle to a tolling account issued by another tollway operator. The trips were not able to be charged to the tolling account. Customer B was sent an EastLink toll invoice (not paid) and an EastLink overdue notice. The ECA's investigation revealed that the trips should have been charged to the tolling account, however the actual cause of this problem was not able to be identified in this case. It is possible the vehicle validation data was delayed unexpectedly during a system upgrade outage at the other tollway operator. Customer B paid the overdue notice while waiting for the ECA's finding, so the payment was refunded.

5.3 CUSTOMER C (INADEQUATE RESPONSE FROM ANOTHER TOLLWAY OPERATOR)

Customer C – who has a tolling account issued by another tollway operator – travelled twice on the same day. The first trip led to an EastLink toll invoice (not paid) and overdue notice. The second trip was charged to the tolling account. A request was made to the other tollway operator for the precise date and time at which the vehicle was added to the account. Despite reminders, the other tollway operator took a long time to respond, and when they finally did, they did not provide the requested information, so it was still not able to be determined whether the EastLink toll invoice was issued correctly. As the case was dragging on without a resolution, the ECA cancelled the EastLink overdue notice and apologised to the customer for the delay.

5.4 CUSTOMER D (RENTAL VEHICLE BRIEFLY ON AN ACCOUNT)

Customer D – who has a tolling account issued by another tollway operator – added a rental vehicle to their account 10 minutes prior to travelling on EastLink, and then removed it from their account the following day. EastLink was unable to charge the trip to the tolling account and issued an EastLink toll invoice (not paid) and overdue notice. Investigation revealed that the vehicle validation data was never received by EastLink from the other tollway operator. The EastLink overdue notice was cancelled.

Customer D had also been nominated by a rental agency as the driver of a second rental vehicle, resulting in another EastLink toll invoice being sent to Customer D. Customer D contacted EastLink to reject the nomination. The rental agency then re-nominated Customer D and a duplicate EastLink toll invoice was sent to customer D. Investigation revealed that the rental agency did not provide any evidence that Customer D had rented this second rental vehicle, despite this being requested by EastLink following Customer D's rejection of the initial nomination. The ECA cancelled the EastLink toll invoice.

5.5 CUSTOMER E (TRIP PASSES PURCHASED BUT TOO LATE FOR FIRST TRIP)

Customer E travelled on EastLink twice, then purchased two EastLink trip passes. The first trip was more than three days prior to the trip pass purchase, while the second trip was less than three days prior to the trip pass purchase. This meant the first trip resulted in an EastLink toll invoice, and the second trip was consumed by one of the EastLink trip passes. Customer E is a very infrequent user of EastLink, so most likely won't use EastLink again before the remaining trip pass expires. The ECA cancelled the EastLink toll invoice.

For further information:

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