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EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE REPORT

Q3 2026 (1 JULY 2026 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2026)



ConnectEast Pty Ltd
ABN 99 101 213 263

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1. EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

23 October 2026

This report covers the Q3 2026 quarterly period (1 July 2026 – 30 September 2026).

For the ninth consecutive quarter, the number of cases raised in Q3 2026 (31 cases) remains lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter).

The most common type of cases raised during Q3 2026 related to toll invoices (35%). This is a significantly lower proportion compared to most quarters, in which a clear majority of cases typically relate to toll invoices. Aside from that, there is nothing particularly unusual about the mix of cases raised in Q3 2026.

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q3 2026 (4.6 calendar days) was 59% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.9 calendar days). This is attributed to four cases in Q3 2026 which took a relatively long time to close, instead of more typically two or three cases per quarter. Excluding these four cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q3 2026 would fall to 3.2 calendar days.

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q3 2026 ($2,751) was 175% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($1,000), although slightly lower than the peak Q4 2025 amount ($2,883).

The following hardship indicators have not changed significantly from the previous quarter, which indicates there is no discernible change in the level of hardship in the EastLink customer base:

- EastLink accounts pending suspension increased from 1.1% to 1.2%.
- EastLink accounts suspended decreased from 2.7% to 2.5%.
- Debtor trips unchanged at 3.3% of all trips.

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

- The number of payment plans created during Q3 2026 (1,623 plans created) was 28% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,269 plans created). However, Q3 2026 experienced a decline of 12% compared to the previous quarter Q2 2026.
- The average value of payment plans created during Q3 2026 ($264) was 12% lower than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($301).
- The number of fines withdrawn by EastLink due to hardship during Q3 2026 (3,193 fines withdrawn) was 82% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,759 fines withdrawn). This Q3 2026 figure is an all-time record high.
- The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q3 2026 (158 people assisted) was 58% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (100 people assisted). This Q3 2026 figure is an all-time record high.
- The average number of fines withdrawn per person during Q3 2026 (20 fines withdrawn per person) was 18% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (17 fines withdrawn per person). However, Q3 2026 experienced a decline of 23% compared to the previous quarter Q2 2026.

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 Q3 2026, approximately three-quarters of cases related to:

> Toll invoices (35%)

> Account charges (19%)

> Account charges for sold vehicles (19%)

Table 1: ECA cases raised

ECA CASES RAISED	Jul 2026	Aug 2026	Sep 2026	Q3 2026
Toll invoice	2	4	5	**11**
Account charge	2	0	4	**6**
Account charge for a sold vehicle	2	4	0	**6**
Account closure	0	0	1	**1**
Tolling class	2	0	0	**2**
Customer service	1	0	0	**1**
Website	1	0	0	**1**
Hardship assistance	0	0	1	**1**
Infringements (fines)	2	0	0	**2**
TOTAL	**12**	**8**	**11**	**31**

2.2 CASES CLOSED

All of the cases raised during Q3 2026 have been closed. The last of these cases to close was received on 22/9/2026. Following investigation, the customer's complaint was rejected, and the case was closed on 2/10/2026. The customer was notified on 2/10/2026.

Table 2: ECA cases closed

ECA CASES CLOSED	Jul 2026	Aug 2026	Sep 2026	Q3 2026
Q2 2026 cases closed (as at date of report)	12	8	11	**31**
Q2 2026 cases still open (as at date of report)	0	0	0	**0**
TOTAL	**12**	**8**	**11**	**31**

2.3 CASE FINDINGS

In 10% of cases during Q3 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.

23% of cases in the quarter were fully upheld, and a further 29% of cases were partially upheld.

In 35% 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	Jul 2026	Aug 2026	Sep 2026	Q3 2026
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	2	0	1	**3**
Complaint upheld	2	2	3	**7**
Complaint partially upheld	2	3	4	**9**

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Jul 2026	Aug 2026	Sep 2026	Q3 2026
Complaint rejected	5	3	3	**11**
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	1	0	0	**1**
TOTAL	**12**	**8**	**11**	**31**

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	Jul 2026	Aug 2026	Sep 2026	Q3 2026
Refunds & credits awarded	$501	$515	$1,735	**$2,751**

2.4 ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE CASES

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q3 2026 was 4.6 calendar days. This elapsed time metric (calendar days) includes days on weekends and public holidays, and is synonymous with customer wait time.

Four cases in Q3 2026 took a relatively long time to close (20 calendar days, 13 calendar days, 13 calendar days and 12 calendar days):

- 20 calendar days – This was a case involving a motorist with an account issued by another tollway operator. EastLink contacted the other operator for more details in relation to this case. Despite follow-up reminders, the other operator did not provide any of the requested details. When the case duration reached 20 days, the ECA decided to bring the EastLink side of the case to a close with the information that was available to EastLink at that time. There was no error by EastLink. However, as a gesture of goodwill and in recognition of the case duration and lack of response from the other operator, the overdue fee component of each overdue notice was waived. See Section 5.4 for more details.
- 13 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.
- 13 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.
- 10 calendar days – This was a case involving a motorist with an EastLink account. The delay was due to the complexity of the case.

Excluding these four cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q3 2026 would fall to 3.2 calendar days.

Table 5: Elapsed time to close ECA cases

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Jul 2026	Aug 2026	Sep 2026	Q3 2026
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	3.2	5.9	5.3	**4.6**

3. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS

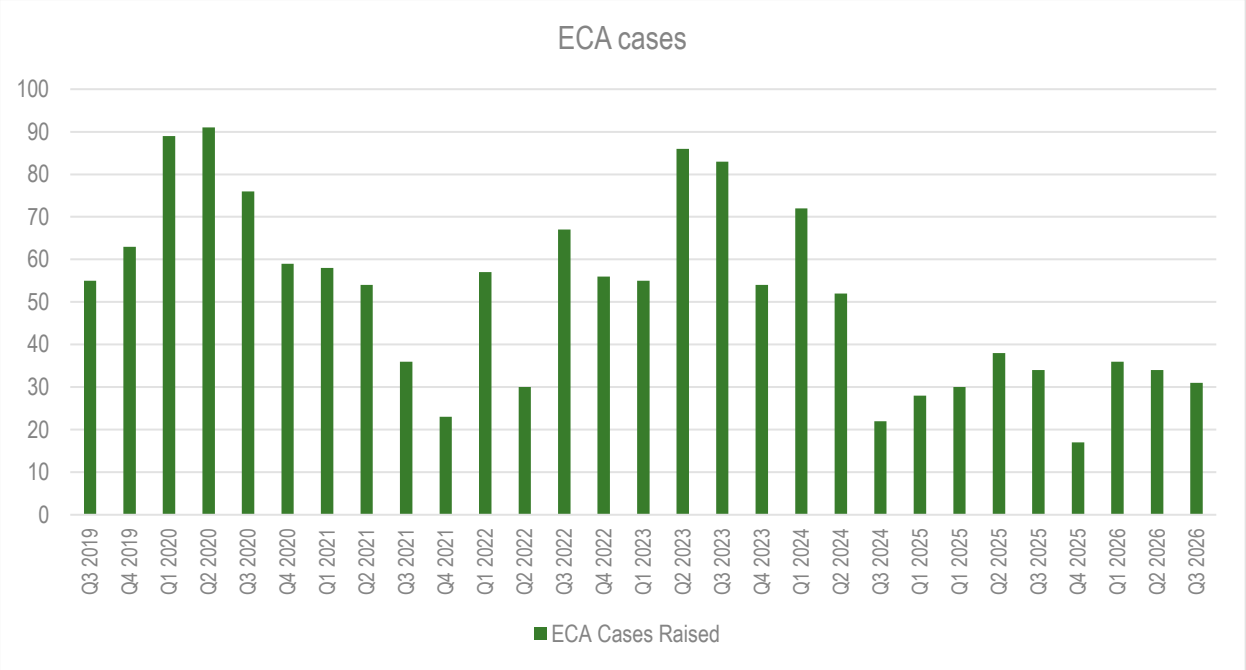
3.1 HISTORICAL TRENDS

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. The more recent wave around the middle quarters of 2023 and Q1 2024 is attributed to the emergence at that time of cost of living pressures (fuel price, rent price, electricity price, inflation and mortgage rate increases). 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 Q3 2026 (31 cases) remains lower than the nominal case rate (50-60 cases per quarter). This suggests that moving forward, for future quarterly reports, the nominal case rate should be adjusted to 30-40 cases per quarter.

Chart 1: ECA cases trend



The most common type of cases raised during Q3 2026 related to toll invoices (35%) – see Table 6. This is a significantly lower proportion compared to most quarters, in which a clear majority of cases typically relate to toll invoices. Aside from that, there is nothing particularly unusual about the mix of cases raised in Q3 2026.

Table 6: ECA cases trend

ECA CASES	2024	2025				2026		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Toll invoice	18	22	19	20	3	23	22	11
Toll invoice communications	0	1	3	2	0	0	1	0
Toll invoice payment	1	1	0	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	3	1	3	3	1	2	3	6
Account charge for a sold vehicle	1	1	1	2	1	6	0	6

ECA CASES	2024	2025				2026		
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account charge for an LPN error	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Account communications	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Account suspension	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account closure	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Deceased account	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Tags	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
Tolls	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Tolling class	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Trip pass	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Debt recovery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Customer service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Payment options	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Website	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	1
Hardship assistance	1	0	3	2	0	0	2	1
Payment plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Third party scam	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Infringements (fines)	0	1	3	2	2	1	2	2
Incident response	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Debris damage	0	0	2	0	1	0	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	1	0	0	0	0	0
Litter	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Noise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speed limit	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Graffiti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscaping, public artworks	2	0	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	**28**	**30**	**38**	**34**	**17**	**36**	**34**	**31**

As outlined earlier in Section 3.1, for the eighth consecutive quarter, the number of cases in Q3 2026 (31 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		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	12	10	11	4	6	5	4	**3**
Complaint upheld	7	8	7	4	3	4	10	**7**
Complaint partially upheld	3	8	4	11	2	13	8	**9**
Complaint rejected	5	4	13	15	5	9	11	**11**
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	0	0	2	0	1	3	1	**1**
Insufficient details provided	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	**0**
TOTAL	**28**	**30**	**38**	**34**	**17**	**36**	**34**	**31**

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q3 2026 ($2,751) was 175% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($1,000), although slightly lower than the peak Q4 2025 amount ($2,883) – see Table 8.

The mean average refund/credit per case during Q3 2026 ($89) was more than double the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($43), although 48% lower than the peak Q4 2026 amount.

Table 8: ECA case findings – refunds & credits trend

ECA CASES – REFUNDS & CREDITS	2024	2025				2026		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Refunds & credits awarded	$1,035	$1,085	$527	$367	$2,883	$724	$378	**$2,751**
Mean average per case (all cases)	$37	$36	$14	$11	$170	$20	$11	**$89**

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q3 2026 (4.6 calendar days) was 59% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (2.9 calendar days) – see Table 9.

This is attributed to:

> Larger than normal number of cases which took a relatively long time to close (four cases in Q3 2026 instead of more typically two or three cases per quarter); and

> One of those four cases taking 20 days to close, which is toward the upper end of this metric historically.

> (See section 2.4 for more details.)

Table 9: Elapsed time to close ECA cases trend

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	2024	2025				2026		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Average time to close cases (calendar days)	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.8	2.8	3.8	**4.6**

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 recently introduced 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. Comparing Q3 2026 with Q2 2026, no significant change is evident.

Table 10: Account status

Account status	2024	2025				2026		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Active	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	86.4%	**86.5%**
Low balance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.8%	**9.8%**
Pending suspension	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.1%	**1.2%**
Suspended	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.7%	**2.5%**

4.2 DEBTOR TRIPS

This is a recently introduced 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. Comparing Q3 2026 with Q2 2026, there is no change.

Table 11: Debtor trips

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

4.3 PAYMENT PLANS

The number of payment plans created during Q3 2026 (1,623 plans created) was 28% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,269 plans created). However, Q3 2026 experienced a decline of 12% compared to the previous quarter Q2 2026 – see Table 12.

The average value of payment plans created during Q3 2026 ($264) was 12% lower than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters ($301).

Table 12: Payment plans created

PAYMENT PLANS CREATED	2024	2025				2026		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Payment plans created	1,076	1,216	1,346	1,373	629	1,403	1,837	**1,623**

PAYMENT PLANS CREATED	2024	2025				2026		
Total value of plans created	$325,471	$417,163	$367,104	$428,079	$208,155	$421,918	$453,515	**$429,232**
Average value of plan created	$302	$343	$273	$312	$331	$301	$247	**$264**

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 Q3 2026 (3,193 fines withdrawn) was 82% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (1,759 fines withdrawn) – see Table 13. This Q3 2026 figure is an all-time record high.

The number of people assisted with fines withdrawn during Q3 2026 (158 people assisted) was 58% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (100 people assisted). This Q3 2026 figure is an all-time record high.

The average number of fines withdrawn per person during Q3 2026 (20 fines withdrawn per person) was 18% higher than the longer term average over the preceding seven quarters (17 fines withdrawn per person). However, Q3 2026 experienced a decline of 23% compared to the previous quarter Q2 2026.

Table 13: EastLink fines withdrawn due to hardship

FINES WITHDRAWN DUE TO HARDSHIP	2024	2025				2026		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Fines withdrawn	825	935	1,424	1,827	1,908	2,866	2,528	**3,193**
People assisted	59	81	106	124	92	139	96	**158**
Average fines withdrawn per person	14	12	13	15	21	21	26	**20**

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 sold their vehicle in December 2023 but did not remove the EastLink tag from the vehicle. EastLink was not notified until July 2026. The tag continued travelling on tollways: making 10 EastLink trips and 97 trips on a third party tollway. Tolls were charged to Customer A's EastLink account. As the tag remained listed on the EastLink account throughout this time of travel, nomination or charging of these trips and charges to the vehicle's new owner is not possible. EastLink had already paid the other tollway operator for the trips on their tollway, and this is not refundable. There was no error by EastLink. A goodwill credit had already been applied by EastLink's customer service team (reimbursing 100% of the EastLink tolls). Rapidly growing tolls in 2026 and the vehicle not being added to any other tolling account may indicate that the vehicle's new owner became aware of and exploited the arrangement. Customer A was advised that no further refund would be provided, and they may wish to report the matter to Victoria Police if they believe the EastLink tag was knowingly misused.

5.2 CUSTOMER B (SOLD VEHICLE)

Customer B sold their vehicle in July 2026 but did not remove the vehicle from their EastLink account. EastLink was not notified until more than one month later. The vehicle continued travelling on tollways, which resulting in 15 EastLink trips and 10 trips on a third party tollway. The tolls were charged to Customer B's EastLink account. As the vehicle remained listed on the EastLink account throughout this time of travel, nomination or charging of these trips and charges to the vehicle's new owner is not possible. EastLink had already paid the other tollway operator for the trips on their tollway, and this is not refundable. There was no error by EastLink. A goodwill credit had already been applied by EastLink's customer service team (reimbursing 100% of the EastLink tolls). Customer B was advised that no further refund would be provided

5.3 CUSTOMER C (PASS PURCHASED FOR A VEHICLE LISTED ON AN ACCOUNT)

Customer C's vehicle is listed on their EastLink account. A pass was purchased from a third party tollway operator to use Customer C's vehicle on the other tollway. Customer C's vehicle travelled on the other tollway. The other operator charged the travel to Customer C's EastLink account in preference to the other operator's pass (in compliance with their own product hierarchy rules). EastLink had already paid the other tollway operator for the trip on their tollway, and this is not refundable. There was no error by EastLink. Customer C was advised to contact the other tollway operator in relation to the other operator's pass and the other operator's tollway travel. If Customer C is unhappy with the outcome, advise Customer C of the other operator's complaint escalation pathway.

5.4 CUSTOMER D (THIRD PARTY TOLLWAY OPERATOR DID NOT RESPOND TO QUESTIONS)

Customer D has an account with a third party tollway operator. Customer D's two vehicles were not listed on Customer D's account when travelling on EastLink without a valid tag detected. One vehicle was carrying a black-listed tag. Many EastLink toll invoices and many EastLink overdue notices were issued for both vehicles. EastLink contacted the other operator for more details in relation to this case. Despite follow-up reminders, the other operator did not provide any of the requested details. When the case duration reached 20 days, the ECA decided to bring the EastLink side of the case to a close with the information that was available to EastLink at that time. There was no error by EastLink. However, as a gesture of goodwill and in recognition of the case duration and lack of response from the other operator, the overdue fee component of each overdue notice was waived. Customer D was advised of payment plan and hardship options. Customer D was advised to contact the other operator about the account issued by the other operator. Customer D has access to the other operator's complaint escalation pathway.

5.5 CUSTOMER E (VEHICLE ASSIGNED INCORRECT TOLLING CLASS)

When adding a vehicle to Customer E's EastLink account, the EastLink customer service operator incorrectly classified the vehicle as Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV) tolling class and issued an HCV tag for the vehicle. However, the vehicle should have been classified as Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) tolling class and an LCV tag issued. The vehicle class mismatch was subsequently identified by EastLink, the customer was notified, and the HCV tag was placed on EastLink's watchlist so that subsequent EastLink travel was charged correctly at LCV rates. Following complaint to the ECA, all historical toll overcharges were refunded for EastLink travel as well as for travel on a third party tollway. An LCV tag was also issued to Customer E.

For further information:

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