

TCO REVIEW

1 MARCH 2007 – 31 AUGUST 2007

**Michael Arnold
Transurban Customer Ombudsman**

TRANSURBAN CUSTOMER OMBUDSMAN REVIEW

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Introduction

This is my second six-monthly review in my capacity as the Transurban Customer Ombudsman. As the Transurban Ombudsman I deal with complaints in relation to customers of CityLink in Victoria and Hills M2, Roam and Roam Express in New South Wales.

The Review

I am once again pleased to recognise the role that the Transurban Customer Resolutions Department plays in the resolution of the overwhelming majority of complaints made by Transurban Customers and in the complaints that come to me as Ombudsman.

Complaint handling is a process that requires understanding and sensitivity and a recognition that complete customer satisfaction cannot always be achieved. Consequently, there are matters that come before me which require a Resolution Adviser to re-examine a previously held position. This can cause tensions but good spirit is shown in resolving complaints. The customer dispute resolution process would be assisted by the production of short, simple question and answer pamphlets about commonly raised complaints. These could go out with customer accounts, late toll notices, and in response to a complaint at the initial stage.

Complaints

Camera Surveillance

Customers, in recent times, have raised questions about the extent of CityLink and other responsible road authorities' camera surveillance of their roads.

These questions are usually raised in the context of an incident in which the customer has been involved which the customer views as dangerous and in breach of the road traffic laws or their vehicle has been damaged. Requests are made to retrieve camera footage to assist in civil proceedings for damages sustained to their vehicles or to assist in a laying of a complaint through Victoria Police.

Following such complaints, I attended CityLink's Traffic Control Room that has a sophisticated Automatic Incident Detection system which monitors the traffic on its roads at all times. It does not monitor roadways that are not controlled by CityLink.

The objective is to detect, monitor and respond to incidents that will have a significant impact on the use of the roadways and the safety of its customers. There is liaison between Victoria Police in the event of such an incident or an emergency situation.

However, CityLink operates and manages its incident responses in accordance with a State Government agreement. This agreement has a defined list of categories which imposes limits on its incident detection systems. There are obvious privacy issues.

CityLink retains footage and can retrieve copies of camera footage of such incidents and this can be made available to Victoria Police. However, CityLink does not automatically retain individual incidents, such as a traffic infringement, which do not fall within the limits of its agreement with the State Government. CityLink does monitor unusual and suspicious behaviour, however, it is not responsible for traffic safety and compliance regulations which fell within the jurisdiction of the Victoria Police.

The lack of clarity about the availability of the footage is a matter that could be resolved for customers.

I would recommend to the responsible road authorities, the information provided to their customers with their accounts should, from time to time, outline the policy on retrieval of camera footage.

Multi-language Toll Notices

A complaint has been received in relation to a toll notice for a motor vehicle travelling on a roadway without a pass. The motorist did not read English and forwarded the invoice to his son.

The son tried to pay the account directly with CityLink but the account was in transit to Civic Compliance. The son then rang Civic Compliance but because it had not received the documentation he could not pay. The son complained on the basis that he should have been able to pay the invoice before it had reached Civic Compliance. He was also concerned that the toll notice did not contain any translation or explicitly direct non-English speaking people to a telephone number where they can receive a translation. He makes the point, unless there is adequate translation people like his father will have difficulty understanding notices received. Such people must rely on others, such as members of their family, who are not always available to provide assistance regarding such matters.

The point that is made has some validity but the practicality of achieving an outcome in a cost effective way is subject to question. However, consideration should be given to addressing the problem.

Tolling System

Complaints are still received from customers who do not understand the relationship between their e-TAG, the terms of the e-TAG usage for different vehicles and tolling procedures. Information reminding customers of this relationship should be provided on a regular basis, at least every two years, with the customer account. This would lessen the number of complaints about charges that the customers believe they should not have incurred in the ordinary course of travel on tolled roadways.

Conclusion

The continuing resolution of disputes in a timely manner must be the objective of any dispute resolution scheme. I believe that the Transurban Customer Ombudsman must be an integral part of such a scheme.

Below is a table of complaints and outcomes for the reporting period.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Arnold', written in a cursive style.

Michael Arnold
Transurban Customer Ombudsman

August 2007

	March 07	April 07	May 07	June 07	July 07	August 07
Billing/Tolling					1	
	2	2			3	3
						1
Infringement/ Late toll invoice	1	1	6	4	3	4
Damage to Vehicle					1	1
Infrastructure						1
			1			2
Service levels			1	1		
Traffic Management			1			
			1			
			2			
Account Management	2		5	2	5	2
	6	1	3	3	5	1
	1		1		2	
Website		1			1	
Enquiry only	1					
	1		1			1
TOTAL	4	2	13	7	11	8
	9	3	5	3	8	5
	1	-	4	-	2	3
Resolved/Closed by Customer Resolutions	4	2	11	7	8	2
	9	3	5	3	7	3
	1		4		2	3
Pending			2		3	6
					1	2

Key:

CityLink
Roam
Roam Express