

# **TCO Review**

**1 March 2016 to 31 August 2016**

**Michael Arnold  
Tolling Customer Ombudsman**

# **TOLLING CUSTOMER OMBUDSMAN REVIEW**

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## **Introduction**

This is a period in which toll road operators and customer should be aware that a third party has attempted to take control of the name of the “Tolling Customer Ombudsman” without the authority or consent of the toll operators or myself as the Tolling Customer Ombudsman.

This is despite the fact that the name “Tolling Customer Ombudsman” has been used since 2008 as part of dispute resolution of complaints made by toll road customers to toll operators. A system that has seen thousands of disputes resolved between the toll operators and their customers.

Proceedings have been initiated by me as the Tolling Customer Ombudsman to resolve this situation. Further information will be provided in due course. In the interim, all complaints should be addressed to the website details provided by toll operators.

## **Transurban’s acquisition of AirportlinkM7**

With Transurban’s acquisition of the AirportlinkM7 toll road, concerns have been raised by customers over their lack of choice of Queensland toll account providers. The obligation will be on Transurban to provide a quality service to all Queensland toll road users. Changes have been made by Transurban to enhance their operations in respect to all their toll roads which will, I anticipate, meet the challenge.

## **Motor vehicle classifications**

By way of information, EastLink, on 18 July 2016, altered the tolling class that was previously assigned to approximately 4,100 Ford Falcon Utes with model year post 1998 which were linked to EastLink accounts prior to its Observed Vehicle Class project last year. These vehicles were previously assigned class “CAR”, and will be corrected to class “LCV”.

EastLink was to be contacting the affected customers and providing them with one month’s advance notice of the change occurring. There was not any retrospective charging of under-tolled trips that had already been made.

This means that Ford Falcon Utes with model year post 1998 were classed LCV as they had cab chassis construction, two axles and a vehicle mass between 1.5 and 4.5 tonnes, which met the definition of LCV class.

Following its Observed Vehicle Class project last year, where such vehicles had been more recently linked to EastLink accounts or EastLink trip passes, they had been assigned the correct LCV class.

EastLink are liaising with VicRoads and CityLink on the change.

CityLink has also worked on a similar alteration for CityLink account holders, with a similar consultative process.

### **Telephone and online communication channels**

Transurban has responded to the TCO's previous Review. Transurban advised that it experienced a larger than expected number of calls from its go via customers at the start of the review period. A number of measures have since been implemented to minimise the impact from events such as this on its customers, including the ability to mobilise staff from across all Transurban brands to assist with these calls.

Transurban has recently launched a new website, initially for its Roam Express brand, featuring enhanced usability based on feedback received from customers. The website will, in turn, be the basis for each of its brands.

Transurban also changed the way its customers log into their online accounts for the Roam, Roam Express and CityLink brands. These changes, as well as increasing security, allow customers to self-manage access details and reset passwords and login details without the need to contact the toll operator by telephone.

### **Advanced technology**

In addition to the above, the performance of Transurban's websites has been optimised with what is intended to be vastly improved page loading times.

Also, in the near future, Transurban's customers (initially CityLink) will be able to manage their accounts via a mobile telephone app. This allows an enhanced customer experience along with new ways of communicating with its customers.

It made the point that electronic tolling had always utilised high levels of technology to toll customers. This technology is evolving and allowing it to develop new product types for its customers, along with ensuring customers are charged the correct rate for their type of vehicle.

### **Administration fees**

Transurban confirmed administration fees associated with issuing toll invoices or toll notices were charged in accordance with the relevant State Governments agreement with Transurban. These fees are required to reflect the actual cost associated with issuing these invoices/notices and are regularly audited to ensure compliance.

### **Escalation of toll collection**

In respect to the issue of the escalation of toll collection under the Queensland legislation, Transurban has commenced new strategies to help assist its customers in account management. Primarily, the amount of time prior to referral to enforcement agencies has been increased. This allows greater time for it to contact the customer in instances the payment of a toll invoice or notice is not received. These proactive methods are intended to have measurable results and successfully reduce the number of customers receiving infringement or penalty notices.

## Communication

Toll operators are continuing to develop how they communicate with customers, in particular customers who do not have an active arrangement for travel. This includes new ways of invoicing customers utilising the information maintained by registration authorities. Toll operators recommend to customers to have an active tolling arrangement prior to travel, ensuring any communication sent is to the address details provided directly to the toll operator.

## Changes of address

Toll road users are again reminded of the obligation to notify road transport authorities of changes of address. This will enable toll invoices to be received in a timely manner and be challenged by customers in the event of a dispute.

Administration difficulties can arise in rectifying problems at a later stage. A customer has raised the need for legislative change to alleviate the situation.

## Conclusion

The Tolling Customer Ombudsman will continue to encourage resolution of complaints made by toll road customers to toll road operators by way of agreement between the parties. The Tolling Customer Ombudsman is an alternative dispute resolution, not an adversarial one usually involved in litigation.

Statistics indicate that there has only been a limited number of Decisions required over the 12 years of the operation of the Tolling Customer Ombudsman. It is expected that this is a tradition that will continue in the future, with the co-operation of toll road customers and toll road operators.

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



**Michael Arnold**  
**Tolling Customer Ombudsman**

|                           |
|---------------------------|
| AirportlinkM7             |
| CityLink                  |
| EastLink                  |
| E-way                     |
| Go Via                    |
| M5 South-West<br>Motorway |
| Roam                      |
| Roam Express              |

| Category                              | Mar 16 | April 16 | May 16 | June 16 | July 16 | Aug 16 |
|---------------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Account Management                    | 1      | 2        | -      | -       | -       | -      |
|                                       | 11     | 16       | 11     | 11      | 11      | 9      |
|                                       | 3      | 4        | 2      | 5       | 7       | 2      |
|                                       | -      | -        | 2      | 2       | 1       | 1      |
|                                       | 39     | 42       | 35     | 36      | 33      | 37     |
|                                       | -      | -        | -      | -       | -       | 1      |
|                                       | 2      | 5        | 1      | 8       | 5       | 6      |
| 3                                     | 2      | 4        | 5      | 4       | 5       |        |
| Billing/Tolling                       | 9      | 14       |        |         |         |        |
|                                       | 4      | 12       | 5      | 10      | 2       | 6      |
|                                       | 7      | 3        | 2      | 3       | 2       | 2      |
|                                       | -      | -        | 1      | -       | -       | -      |
|                                       | 26     | 27       | 27     | 21      | 21      | 22     |
|                                       | -      | -        | -      | 2       | 1       | 1      |
|                                       | 4      | 2        | 5      | 8       | 5       | 7      |
| 7                                     | 6      | 6        | 11     | 5       | 2       |        |
| Service                               |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       | -      |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       | 1      |          |        | 1       | 1       |        |
|                                       | -      |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
| Damage to Vehicle                     |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
| Infrastructure/<br>Traffic Management | 1      |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
| Vehicle Classification                |        |          |        |         | 1       |        |
|                                       |        |          | 1      | 3       | 4       |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        | 1        |        |         |         |        |
|                                       |        |          |        |         |         |        |

| Category                                | Mar 16 | April 16 | May 16 | June 16 | July 16 | Aug 16 |
|---|--------|----------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Website                                 |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         | 1       | 1      |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
| Enquiry/Copy to TCO only                |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
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|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
| TOTAL                                   | 10     | 16       | -      | -       | -       | -      |
|   | 16     | 28       | 16     | 21      | 14      | 16     |
|   | 10     | 7        | 5      | 11      | 13      | 4      |
|   | -      | -        | 3      | 2       | 1       | 1      |
|   | 66     | 70       | 62     | 58      | 55      | 59     |
|   | -      | -        | -      | 2       | 1       | 2      |
|   | 6      | 7        | 6      | 16      | 10      | 13     |
|   | 10     | 8        | 10     | 16      | 9       | 7      |
| Resolved/Closed by Customer Resolutions | 10     | 16       | -      | -       | -       | -      |
|   | 16     | 28       | 16     | 21      | 14      | 16     |
|   | 10     | 7        | 5      | 11      | 13      | 4      |
|   | -      | -        | 3      | 2       | 1       | 1      |
|   | 66     | 70       | 62     | 58      | 55      | 59     |
|   | -      | -        | -      | 2       | 1       | 2      |
|   | 6      | 7        | 6      | 16      | 10      | 13     |
|   | 10     | 8        | 10     | 16      | 9       | 7      |
| Pending                                 |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
|   |        |          |        |         |         |        |
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