

TCO REVIEW

1 March 2010 – 31 August 2010

**Michael Arnold
Tolling Customer Ombudsman**

TOLLING CUSTOMER OMBUDSMAN REVIEW

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Introduction

I am pleased to present my report as the Tolling Customer Ombudsman on the operation of CityLink, EastLink, Hill M2, Roam and Roam Express over the past six months. This period has seen the complaint level remain constant. This is a reflection of the operators' continuing ability to resolve the complaints that come to them in a timely manner.

Experience has shown that issues that come before me often relate to communication and the ready availability of information to customers of the toll road operators. This continues to be the case. An examination of the statistics show a large proportion of the complaints relate to account management. Discussions with operators indicate that they are continually monitoring and adjusting their processes so that they can better interact with their customers in relation to account management. It is hoped that this will lead to a reduction in the complaints of this nature.

Interstate Travellers

Interstate travellers, particularly those who do not have toll roads in their home state, do experience difficulty. I quote from one complaint:

"This morning 15 July we received a phone call from a very helpful [Name of operator] lady saying that they in good faith are willing to refund our payment to [Name of operator], understanding our frustration and disappointment. But advised us to pay the extra charges, then appeal to you for some understanding. This we have done with annoyance, as we were tourists and unaware of procedures in [Name of State]. This has left us with stress and annoyance at the treatment we received. Also have now paid extra moneys and are out of pocket after trying to do the right thing, and have received such arrogance from [Name of operator], that we are not keen to visit [Name of capital city] again. We have also contacted [Name of State] police and explained our dilemma and warned them that [Name of operator] has threatened us by putting our case into their hands with a \$100.00 fine. Thanks for listening and hope you can see our point of view."

I appreciate that toll roads are well identified and signposted but road users from States without toll roads can become confused at the end of a long driving trip. Consideration could be given to produce some articles about the benefits of the use of toll roads in road service magazines published by the NRMA, RACQ, RAASA and RACWA, to assist these interstate travellers in respect to their tolling obligations.

Compensation for toll road users

Issues have again been raised in respect of compensation for toll road users for poor service.

The TCO cannot award compensation for such things as distress or inconvenience but can recommend that compensation be paid by toll road operators for actual monetary loss or poor service in the form of toll credits.

The object of such recommendation is to appropriately recognise the circumstances of each particular case and reinforce the necessity for good service, rather than be precedents for future complainants. Toll road operators, on their own initiative, compensate their clients in instances of poor service and this is a good practice.

Road Traffic Management

Road traffic management, in a period in which extensive road works is done on toll roads over an extended period, can raise causes for complaint. It is unavoidable that there will be frustration for motorists in the term of the works. However, it is important that there be comprehensive public information programs and advance warnings of changes in order to limit the disruption for motorists travelling on toll roads. Such process will have the benefit not only for motorists but also of relieving stress on the toll road operators' customer service divisions.

Noise Abatement

Road traffic management, particularly in the course of road works, raises the question of noise abatement. Toll road operators are conscious of the problem but, again, community awareness and sensitivity to local concerns are matters that always should be addressed.

Conclusion

The past six months has seen the establishment of more toll roads and discussion about the construction of additional roads in the future. This will present challenging service issues for operators in the future, with community expectation of a high level of efficient operation. Lessons learnt from past complaints are invaluable in putting in place processes and safeguards for the future.



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CityLink
EastLink
Roam
Roam Express

Category	March 10	April 10	May 10	June 10	July 10	August 10
Account Management	3		11	6	4	3
	7	5	9	4	3	8
	4	2	3	4	3	4
					1	
Tolling/Billing		1	1			1
				4	3	4
	1	2	1	1	4	3
		2	2		2	3
Damage to Vehicle			1			
Infringement / Late toll invoice			1		1	
Infrastructure/Signage Traffic Management/ Safety			1			
Service				1	1	1
Vehicle Classification	1					
Enquiry/Copy to TCO only/Outside jurisdiction						
					1	
TOTAL	3	1	14	7	6	5
	8	5	10	8	6	12
	5	4	4	5	8	7
	-	2	2	-	3	3
Resolved/Closed by Customer Resolutions/ Outside jurisdiction	2	1	14	7	6	4
	8	5	9	8	6	10
	5	4	4	5	7	4
		2	2		3	2
Pending	1					1
			1			2
					1	3
						1