

TCO REVIEW

1 March– 31 August 2011

**Michael Arnold
Tolling Customer Ombudsman**

TOLLING CUSTOMER OMBUDSMAN REVIEW

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Introduction

I am pleased to present a further report as the Tolling Customer Ombudsman (TCO) on the operation of CityLink, EastLink, Hill M2, Roam and Roam Express over the past six months. This Review foreshadows the entry of Queensland Motorways Limited (**go via**) into the scheme, which will add to the national coverage of the TCO scheme.

There have been a number of issues that have come before the TCO for consideration in the last six months which I shall now outline.

Road Safety

An issue was raised in relation to road safety for motorists using tollways whilst they were undergoing maintenance. Particular concern was expressed about motorists ignoring the speed warnings on works in progress or hazard signs, putting other motorists in jeopardy including spraying them with loose gravel.

I appreciate that some of the proposed steps involve the cooperation of other agencies, such as the Police force and the Road Traffic Authority (RTA), but toll road operators do have obligations to their customers that include the taking of reasonable steps to ensure safety wherever possible.

One customer made suggestions about road safety measures, some of which if implemented could provide additional safety for motorists. I have passed these on to the toll road operators for consideration.

Toll Charges

The TCO does not have jurisdiction to deal with the level of tolls fixed by toll road operators. Complaints, however, have been received contending that certain fees are anomalous. They usually centre on the respective costs and benefits of day passes and e-TAG usage. Toll road operators should make it clear in their documentation the relative costs of using different toll payment options so that customers can make an informed decision when choosing how to pay.

Delay in BPAY payments

There have been problems caused by the delay in the processing of BPAY payments for toll invoices.

In the course of my investigation, the following was established:

BPAY questions and answers provide:

“How long will it take for the payment to go through?”

As long as you make a payment before your financial institution’s cut-off time (this is the time at the end of the business banking day when you need to make a payment by for it to be processed overnight), the biller will acknowledge the payment as having been made that day.

If you make a payment after your financial institution’s cut-off time, the biller will acknowledge the payment as having been made on the next banking business day (this does not include weekends or public holidays).

Sometimes it can take a biller a number of days to apply a payment to your account.

If you are unsure of your Internet or phone banking cut-off times or require more information, please contact your financial institution directly.

“If I make a payment on the weekend when will my payment be received?”

If you make a payment on the weekend or a public holiday your payment will be processed on the next business banking day.”

Accordingly, toll road operators who accept BPAY payments as well as their customers are on notice that there may be delays in the payment of an account. It would appear reasonable for both the toll road operators and their customers to take this into account.

A customer would be well advised not to leave payment of the account until the due date. However, toll road operators should allow a period of grace for a BPAY payment to be processed before moving to the next enforcement or collection step in its process.

Transfer of Registration of Motor Vehicles and NEVDIS

It would appear that there is a systemic problem in relation to the notification of change of ownership of NSW registered vehicles being used on Victorian toll roads by the new owners. According to information that I have received, the NSW DRIVES database does not communicate with the Victorian Registration database. As an alternative, an intermediate database NEVDIS allows States to view other States’ registration details and toll road operators rely on the NEVDIS system. It appears that neither the RTA nor VicRoads will take responsibility for the updating of the NEVDIS system. Further, NEVDIS themselves take no responsibility and rely on information from the other States.

Accordingly, although the NSW RTA system may be up-to-date, the Victorian system may not be for NSW transfers as the intermediate database NEVDIS can still show a previous owner as the registered owner. The consequence being that as the Victorian registration database shows the previous NSW owner as the registered owner, it is this person who is charged the toll.

I understand a particular person ascertained the name and address of the new owner and obtained some relief by completing the toll road operator’s vehicle nomination forms, although not all previous owners take this course.

I understand that concerns have been raised with Victoria Police, Civic Compliance Victoria, toll road operators, the Victorian Minister for Roads, the NSW Minister for Roads, the NSW Ombudsman's office and the Victorian Ombudsman's office in order to resolve the matter but to no avail.

I will make my own representations to the relevant authorities but I would appreciate feedback from toll road operators as to problems they may have encountered because of this issue.

Conclusion

The TCO looks forward to responses from the toll road operators in relation to these issues in a timely manner.

The TCO also anticipates a cooperative arrangement with **go via** in the future and the opportunity it provides for the interoperability of the toll road operators' systems.

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

Yours sincerely,



Michael Arnold
Tolling Customer Ombudsman

CityLink
EastLink
Roam
Roam Express

Category	March 11	April 11	May 11	June 11	July 11	Aug 11
Account Management	9	7	7	6	6	4
	6	8	5	4	4	2
	9	3	2	4	3	5
		1		1	1	
Tolling/Billing	2	5	2	1	4	3
	3	2	2	2	3	3
	2	2		3		2
		2	2	1	1	1
Damage to Vehicle						
Infringement / Late toll invoice	2	1	1		1	
	2					
		1				
Infrastructure/Signage Traffic Management/ Safety			1			
Customer Service						
				1	1	1
		1				
Vehicle Classification						
						1
Enquiry/Copy to TCO only/Outside jurisdiction			1			
TOTAL	13	13	12	7	11	7
	11	10	7	6	7	6
	11	6	2	8	4	8
	-	4	2	2	2	1
Resolved/Closed by Customer Resolutions/ Outside jurisdiction	13	13	12	7	11	7
	11	10	7	6	6	6
	11	6	2	8	4	8
	-	4	2	2	2	1
Pending						
					1	