

TCO REVIEW

1 September 2009 – 28 February 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.

Charges

A question has been raised as to why all of the toll road operators' charges could not be displayed at one location. The issue was raised in the context of making a comparison of the respective operators' toll charges. It was pointed out that each operator had separate pricing arrangements and policies which were available from each company. Each company could not be responsible for the posting of other toll road operators' prices. This explanation was accepted.

However, the toll road operators do publish their charges and comparisons can be made, by customers. It could be convenient for the operators to post them on the Tolling Customer Ombudsman's website for easier access by customers.

A further issue was raised about the difficulty found in using certain websites to pay charges in some instances. A customer cited the Harbour Bridge toll website as easy to follow, by way of example. Improvements in technology and systems should be used by the operators to improve all service features, including the payment of fees and contact. This benefits both customers and operators.

Identification of Number Plates

The identification of number plates has been raised. Motor vehicle owners have a responsibility to ensure that their licence plate number can be clearly read. This point could be emphasized periodically in material provided by the toll road operators to their road users. In particular, there was a misreading of a number plate which was incorrectly allocated to a tractor. The matter was resolved and the particular operator was proactive in

this regard. Operators are aware there may be difficulties in regard to the reading of licence plates so timely reminders to road users will be to the benefit of both the operators and their customers.

Telephone Communications

A number of complaints have again been raised by customers regarding information provided over the telephone about outstanding balances. Allegations have been made about the provision of conflicting information. Care should be taken to provide as complete information as possible so that customers can discharge their debts in full. This advice to customers should include the date of the last recorded travel and a warning as to whether any overdue final notices have been sent (in Victoria) to Civic Compliance. It would be useful to provide a contact point at Civic Compliance so that customers can make immediate contact for arrangements to pay any monies due.

Timeliness of Clearing Debris from Toll Roads

Complaints continue to be made about damage caused by debris or obstruction on toll roads. Toll road operators should continue to monitor the timeliness of the removal of such material in accordance with their road management plans.

Classification of Vehicles

Complaints also continue to be made about the classification of vehicles. There is consistency in regards to the classification of vehicles in Victoria, with CityLink and EastLink applying the same classifications. There are, however, differences in classifications in respect of a small number of vehicles in other States. The differences being the classification of some vehicles as commercial rather than standard. Consideration should be given by the operators to having uniform classifications overall throughout Australia.

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



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CityLink
EastLink
Roam
Roam Express

Category	Sept 09	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09	Jan 10	Feb 10
Account Management	3	6	5	2	3	10
	1	4	5	7	4	5
	7	7	4	3	1	2
	3	1		1		1
Tolling/Billing	3	3	1	1		2
	4	2	1	1	1	3
	2	4	2	2	2	3
			1	1	1	
Damage to Vehicle				1		2
					1	
Infringement / Late toll invoice		2		1		
	1					
Infrastructure/Signage Traffic Management/ Safety			1		1	
	1					
Service				2		
					1	
Vehicle Classification			1		1	
Enquiry/Copy to TCO only/Outside jurisdiction						
						1
TOTAL	6	11	8	7	5	13
	6	6	6	8	6	8
	9	11	6	5	3	5
	4	1	1	2	2	2
Resolved/Closed by Customer Resolutions/ Outside jurisdiction	6	11	8	6	5	8
	6	6	6	8	6	5
	9	11	6	5	2	4
	4	1	1	2	2	2
Pending				1		5
						3
					1	1