

EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE REPORT

Q1 2022 (1 JANUARY 2022 – 31 MARCH 2022)



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1. EASTLINK CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S MESSAGE

9 May 2022

This report covers the Q1 2022 quarterly period (1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022).

After a reduction in the number of cases raised with the EastLink Customer Advocate during Q3 2021 and Q4 2021 (due to the temporary re-imposition of government pandemic restrictions and a significant reduction in traffic on EastLink during those two quarters), the number of cases raised during Q1 2022 (57) has returned to the nominal level (50 to 60 cases per quarter).

ECA cases continue to be closed quickly. During Q1 2022, the average elapsed time to close cases during the quarter was 2.3 days, which is at the midpoint of the nominal range.

EastLink conducted its annual customer satisfaction survey during Q1 2022. Survey results included these positive indicators:

- > EastLink's Adjusted Net Promoter Score returned to its record high of +46%, following a marginal drop last year.
- > EastLink continues to have significantly higher levels of overall satisfaction than the other freeways and tollways measured by the survey.
- > Agreement with the brand statement "EastLink is time better spent" remained unchanged at its record high of 78%.
- > Overall satisfaction with each of EastLink's tolling products increased, most notably:
 - > EastLink toll invoice – increased from 6.66 out of ten to 7.21 (new record high)
 - > EastLink trip pass – increased from 7.46 out of ten to 7.71 (new record high).
- > Satisfaction with the EastLink website also increased across five out of six separate measures, with the sixth measure unchanged. Four of the six measures are at new record highs.
- > 81% of EastLink account holders who called the EastLink call centre in the past 12 months rated the EastLink call centre "excellent" or "above average" compared to other call centres used (this is a new measure introduced in this year's survey).

EastLink is aware of the on-going impact on the local community of the pandemic restrictions and lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.

Accordingly, during Q1 2022, EastLink provided sponsorship funding to a range of sports, arts and cultural initiatives, to help the local community return to a sense of normality:

- > Ringwood Diving Club's EastLink Diving Championships (29–30 January)
- > The Waterfront Festival, Frankston (19–20 February)
- > Frankston BMX Club Summer Championship (11 February – 27 May)
- > The Backyard in March, Ringwood (13–27 March)
- > The Big Picture Fest, Frankston (14–20 March)
- > Get Into Golf EastLink Community Golf Day, Ringwood (25 March)
- > Frankston Arts Centre Season 2022 (January – November).

If you are experiencing financial hardship and are seeking assistance in relation to any EastLink debt, please phone EastLink's customer services team in Melbourne on (03) 9955 1400 during business hours Monday to Friday (closed public holidays).

For more information about EastLink's hardship policy (which outlines available options and how to request hardship assistance), visit www.eastlink.com.au/hardship.

For more information about the role of the EastLink Customer Advocate, visit www.eastlink.com.au/customeradvocate.

Doug Spencer-Roy
EastLink Customer Advocate



2. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASES DURING THE QUARTER

2.1 CASES RAISED

39% of the cases raised during Q1 2022 related to toll invoices. This is marginally below the nominal range (40%-46%).

Table 1: ECA cases raised

ECA CASES RAISED	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Q1 2022
Toll invoice	4	10	6	20
Toll invoice SMS/email message	0	1	1	2
Account charge	0	3	1	4
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle etc	1	0	1	2
Account charge for an LPN error	1	1	0	2
Account closure	0	1	0	1
Trip pass	2	0	0	2
Debt recovery	1	1	0	2
Customer service	8	4	5	17
Hardship	0	1	1	2
Debris damage	1	0	0	1
Road maintenance	0	1	0	1
Wildlife	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	18	24	15	57

2.2 CASES CLOSED

All of the cases raised during Q1 2022 have been closed.

Table 2: ECA cases closed

ECA CASES CLOSED	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Q1 2022
Q1 2022 cases closed (as at date of report)	18	24	15	57
Q1 2022 cases still open (as at date of report)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	18	24	15	57

2.3 CASE FINDINGS

In 42% of cases although EastLink was not at fault and there was no valid complaint, I arranged for EastLink's customer service team to assist the customer with their predicament via expedited service.

30% of cases were fully upheld, and a further 9% of cases were partially upheld.

In 19% of cases the complaint was rejected with no practical customer service assistance identifiable.

Table 3: ECA case findings

ECA CASE FINDINGS	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Q1 2022
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	9	8	7	24
Complaint upheld	5	7	5	17
Complaint partially upheld	1	3	1	5
Complaint rejected	3	6	2	11
TOTAL	18	24	15	57

Most cases involved complaints about modest sums – in particular, the fee component of a toll invoice but not the toll component, or the image processing fee component but not the toll component. In general, it is not the trip or toll that is disputed, but whether the trip is able to be charged to a valid account or pass, or if the trip is subject to additional fees such as the toll invoice fee or image processing fee.

This means that the refunds and credits awarded can vary significantly from month to month, depending on whether there are any of the more unusual, higher value cases during the month, and whether those complaints are upheld or rejected.

Table 4: ECA case findings – refunds & credits

ECA CASE FINDINGS – REFUNDS & CREDITS	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Q1 2022
Refunds & credits awarded	\$59	\$227	\$404	\$690

2.4 ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE CASES

The average elapsed time to close ECA cases during the quarter was 2.3 days. This elapsed time includes weekend days and public holidays.

Table 5: Elapsed time to close ECA cases

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Q1 2022
Average time to close cases (days)	2.9	2.0	1.9	2.3

Case Study – motorist seeking details about another vehicle

A motorist complained that EastLink’s customer service team had refused to provide the details of a truck, following an alleged incident in which the motorist claimed a ladder had fallen from the truck and caused damage to the motorist’s vehicle.

The complaint was reviewed in the context of the Australian Privacy Act 1988 and the EastLink Privacy Policy (which is published on the EastLink website).

This review indicated that EastLink is unable to provide upon request by a member of the public the personal information of someone who has driven on EastLink.

In particular, personal information specifically includes vehicle details such as licence plate number.

While EastLink has on-going concerns about debris and the securing of loads, there was no error by EastLink’s customer service team in this case.

There are existing channels and procedures in place for, and used by, authorities such as Victoria Police and WorkSafe Victoria, as well as motor vehicle insurance providers, to formally apply to EastLink for information in relation to incidents on EastLink.

3. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE TRENDS

3.1 HISTORICAL TRENDS

In Q1 2022, a total of 57 cases were raised with the EastLink Customer Advocate.

Chart 1 shows the number of cases raised in each quarter since the commencement of the EastLink Customer Advocate role at the start of Q3 2019.

The chart shows a wave of additional cases during the first half of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic first emerged and impacted the economy. It also indicates that the nominal case rate is in the 50 to 60 cases per quarter range.

The number of cases in Q1 2022 (57 cases) is a return to the nominal case rate following the two previous quarters (Q3 and Q4 2021) in which the number of cases was significantly lower than the nominal case rate due to the temporary re-imposition of government pandemic restrictions and a significant reduction in traffic on EastLink during those two quarters.

Chart 1: ECA cases trend

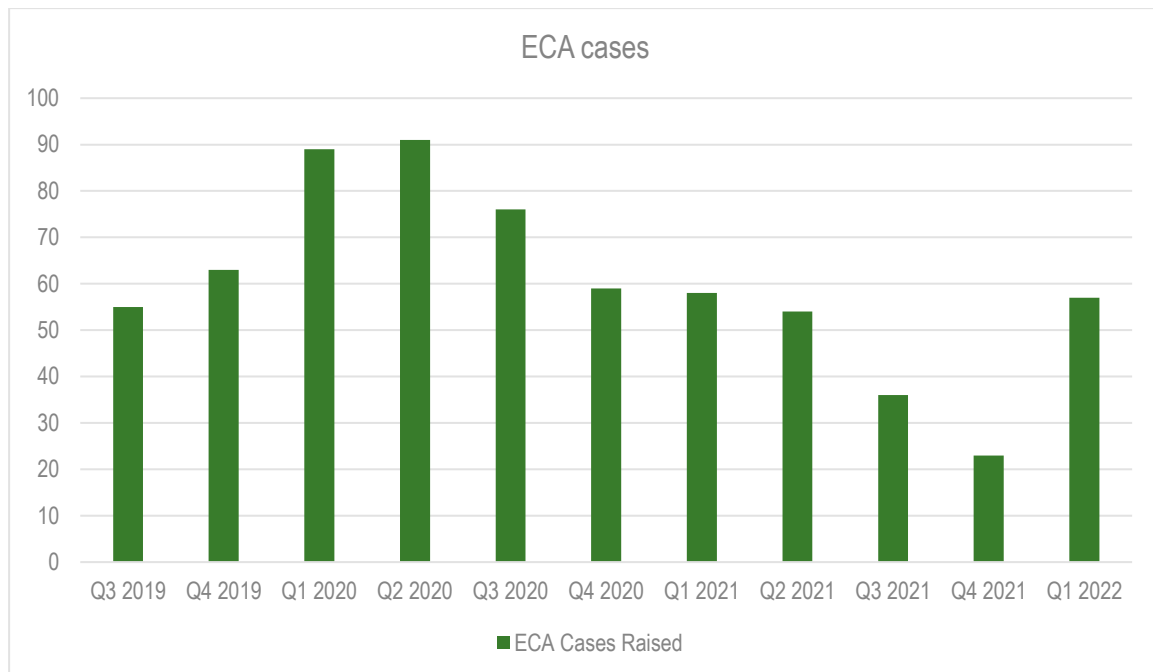


Table 6 shows the breakdown of cases across all case types over the past two years, with no surprises or emerging trends obvious.

Table 6: ECA cases trend

ECA CASES	2020			2021				2022
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Toll invoice	31	31	18	19	23	16	10	20
Toll invoice SMS/email message	3	0	1	2	1	3	0	2
Toll invoice payment	3	2	1	2	1	0	2	0
Account notice	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0
Account payment	4	0	4	1	0	2	0	0
Account charge	10	8	3	3	7	1	1	4
Account charge for a sold vehicle	3	1	0	4	0	1	1	0

ECA CASES	2020			2021			2022	
Account charge for stolen plates/vehicle etc	5	2	3	1	0	0	1	2
Account charge for an LPN error	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Account suspension	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Account closure	0	1	0	3	1	1	0	1
Deceased account	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tags	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	0
Tolls	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Tolling class	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Trip pass	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	2
Rental vehicle toll payment	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Debt recovery	0	2	1	2	2	0	0	2
Customer service	13	14	17	7	5	5	4	17
Payment options	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Website	1	0	3	0	1	0	1	0
Hardship assistance	3	4	2	5	8	1	0	2
Payment plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Infringements (fines)	3	2	0	1	1	2	1	0
Incident response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Debris damage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Abandoned vehicle	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Road maintenance	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Signage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Litter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Noise	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speed limit	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graffiti	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscaping	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	0
EastLink Trail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wildlife	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Privacy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Problem with another tollway operator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown (withdrawn, insufficient details)	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Police enquiry	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	91	76	59	58	54	36	23	57

As outlined in section 3.1, the number of cases in Q1 2022 marked a return to the nominal case rate following the two previous quarters in which the number of cases was significantly lower than the nominal case rate. Q2 2021 was the last quarter to have number of cases within the nominal case rate.

It is therefore worth comparing Q1 2022 to Q2 2021 in Table 7.

The total number of complaints that were fully upheld or partially upheld during Q1 2022 (22) was the same as during Q2 2021 (22).

The number of complaints that were rejected during Q1 2022 (11) was also the same as during Q2 2021 (11).

The number of complaints that were found to be requests for customer service with no valid complaint during Q1 2022 (24) was 20% higher than during Q2 2021 (20). Such cases are forwarded to the EastLink customer service team (or other department where appropriate) for expedited service.

On balance, there is little overall difference in case findings between Q1 2022 and Q2 2021. Q1 2022 is a return to normality.

Table 7: ECA case findings trend

ECA CASES	2020			2021				2022
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Service expedited (no valid complaint)	43	48	41	29	20	14	7	24
Complaint upheld	15	6	6	7	13	10	5	17
Complaint partially upheld	10	8	5	8	9	1	6	5
Complaint rejected	22	11	7	14	11	8	5	11
Referred to another tollway operator etc.	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
Insufficient details provided	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	91	76	59	58	54	36	23	57

The total amount of refunds and credits during Q1 2022 was \$690, which is towards the lower end of the nominal range – see Table 8.

Table 8: ECA case findings – refunds & credits trend

ECA CASES – REFUNDS & CREDITS	2020			2021				2022
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Refunds & credits awarded	\$974	\$737	\$1,131	\$2,789	\$2,103	\$647	\$781	\$690

The elapsed time to close ECA cases during Q1 2022 (2.3 days) was at the mid point of the nominal range – see Table 9.

Three cases in Q1 2022 took an unusually long time to close: 13 days, 11 days and 10 days respectively. The delay in two of these three cases was due to the vehicle registration authority taking time to respond to requests for details about vehicle registered owners. In the third case, it took time for copies of EastLink's call recordings to be provided to the ECA.

Excluding these three cases, the average time to close ECA cases during Q4 2021 would fall to 1.8 calendar days.

Table 9: Elapsed time to close ECA cases trend

ELAPSED TIME TO CLOSE ECA CASES	2020			2021				2022
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Average time to close cases (days)	1.8	1.3	2.5	2.8	2.1	1.9	2.8	2.3

4. CUSTOMER ADVOCATE CASE EXAMPLES

This section only shows a very brief summary of each case example. The detailed circumstances of every case are unique, so these case examples should not be read as precedents for other cases.

4.1 CUSTOMER A (LICENCE PLATE READ INCORRECTLY)

Customer A complained that the tolls for another person's vehicle were being charged to Customer A's EastLink account.

Investigation revealed that the other person's vehicle has a licence plate that in some circumstances is read incorrectly as Customer A's vehicle. The problem was exacerbated by two factors: due to vehicle configuration the vehicle's second licence plate was not visible when passing tolling gantries; and although the vehicle was carrying the other person's tolling tag, the tag was not installed correctly.

EastLink reversed the incorrect charges from Customer A's account.

As the other person is also an EastLink account holder, EastLink contacted the other person about the tag installation issue, and proactively sent the other person a new tag holder. However, the other person did not correct the tag installation issue and the problem continued for Customer A.

EastLink then worked with Customer A to create a customised solution for Customer A that ensures the vehicle's travel is no longer charged to Customer A's account.

4.2 CUSTOMER B (MINIMUM TOP UP AMOUNT TOO LARGE)

Customer B phoned to complain about the minimum account top up amount (\$35 for pre-paid tag accounts) being too large for his personal circumstances.

It was explained to Customer B how it is possible to make account top ups as low as \$1 using the EastLink website.

During that conversation, Customer B complained about a previous account suspension, in which it was claimed that no notice had been given.

Customer B was informed about EastLink's account suspension process, which involves a suspension warning notice up to two weeks prior to suspension, upon which a suspension notice is also sent. It was recommended to Customer B that they contact EastLink's customer service team to verify that their contact details are up to date.

Following the conversation with Customer B, the customer advocate contacted EastLink's customer relations to determine whether there are any other issues with Customer B's account.

EastLink's customer relations team detected that Customer B had recently used a tag in his vehicle that had been previously recorded by Customer B as "lost". The customer relations team cancelled the image processing fee for this travel and reinstated the tag so that it is recorded as "active" again and no longer recorded as "lost".

4.3 CUSTOMER C (REMINDERS ABOUT A 'PAID' TOLL INVOICE)

Customer C complained about receiving reminders for an EastLink toll invoice that had already been paid.

Investigation revealed that a recent EastLink toll invoice sent to Customer C had indeed been paid, and that no subsequent reminders had been sent by EastLink.

However, the investigation also revealed that the Transurban Linkt website indicated an unpaid Transurban Linkt toll invoice for travel by the same vehicle on Transurban's CityLink tollway.

It was therefore possible / likely that Customer C was receiving reminders from Transurban Linkt to pay the Transurban Linkt toll invoice.

Customer C was re-assured that there was no outstanding amount due to EastLink, however Customer C should contact Transurban Linkt directly in relation to the apparently unpaid toll invoice for travel by Customer C's vehicle on Transurban's CityLink tollway.

4.4 CUSTOMER D (HEAVY VEHICLE TOLLS INCORRECTLY CHARGED FOR CAR+CARAVAN)

Customer D complained that his car+caravan had been charged heavy vehicle tolls on his EastLink account when using the Toowomba Bypass tollway in Queensland.

Following the complaint, EastLink contacted Transurban (the tolling operator for Toowomba Bypass).

Transurban investigated the matter and confirmed that four tolls charged to Customer D's vehicle had been incorrectly charged, and that Transurban would refund the corresponding over-charge amount directly to Customer D's EastLink account.

4.5 CUSTOMER E (DISPUTED ACCOUNT CHARGES)

Customer E disputed three EastLink trips that had been charged to Customer E's EastLink account.

Investigation revealed that toll point tag detection data records confirmed that Customer E's tag was detected in the vehicle during the disputed trips, and that there was no error by EastLink.



For further information:

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