

# Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

ANNUAL REPORT 2001-2002



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## CASE STUDIES

SEE CENTRE SECTION

'...a creative approach to payment options will go a long way to assist low income customers stay connected to essential services.'

Clare Petre, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

## REFLECTION

### A MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

When EWON was established in 1998, electricity disconnections for arrears were around 24 000 in New South Wales. Over the following two years disconnection rates rose significantly to around 27 000 then 31 000, and have remained at similar levels.

Many customers contact EWON for assistance, and I have previously raised concerns since large numbers of disconnections involve low income families with children. Disconnection, particularly for long periods, can mean severe hardship as well as safety issues for those still affected.

Utility providers have responded by trying to increase the availability of payment options for customers. These include direct debit and smooth pay arrangements, as well as the option for people to make small regular deductions for utility accounts from their Centrelink payments.

There is no single answer for consumers who struggle to pay their electricity or gas bills and who face disconnection of supply, but a creative approach to payment options will go a long way to assist low income customers stay connected to essential services.

As part of our response to customers who are facing disconnection, we have taken an active interest in EAPA (Energy Accounts Payment Assistance) – a scheme through which customers can receive vouchers to the value of \$30 each to help with payment of bills. Originally only for assistance with electricity accounts, the scheme has been extended to gas accounts from July 2002.

EWON has identified significant problems in the distribution of EAPA vouchers to customers in need, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. It has been particularly disheartening that the EAPA scheme is regularly and significantly underspent. It is hoped that a current review of the scheme will lead to greater access to assistance with utility accounts for individuals and families throughout the state.

Choice of electricity or gas provider has become a focus for many customers in New South Wales, but for others this is of less concern than simply trying to keep up with payment of their utility bills. EWON has worked closely with utility providers to respond to the needs of all customers, whether they are on negotiated or standard contracts, and I acknowledge those companies that are striving for a creative, positive, and flexible approach to customer issues.

During this year EWON's jurisdiction was extended to cover electricity issues for residents of boarding houses, residential parks, and small businesses supplied by a shopping complex or similar third party rather than directly through a retailer. EWON can now also deal with issues in relation to marketers of electricity and gas. This expanded jurisdiction has resulted in a comprehensive coverage by EWON of electricity and gas issues that impact on utility consumers.

**Clare Petre**  
**Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW**

## HIGHLIGHTS

### PEAKS FOR THE YEAR 2001 - 2002

- Handling 4908 matters during the year, a 13% increase over the previous year
- Finalising 71% of customer matters within 14 days
- Expanding our service to include all energy retailers and marketers who deal with small domestic and business customers
- Liaising with government, industry and advocacy groups to exercise new jurisdiction in relation to complaints and enquiries from residents of residential parks and boarding houses
- Commissioning an independent review of the scheme, which reported positive feedback from stakeholders and high customer satisfaction with EWON's investigation of their complaints
- Expanding our public relations and community development work to reach regional and remote communities
- Continuing our campaign to improve access and awareness of our service for consumers speaking languages other than English
- Building on links developed with community groups and government agencies, including EAPA agencies, financial counsellors, Department of Housing and Centrelink
- Improving our relations with member providers through joint community projects, staff visits, training sessions and industry forums
- Introducing a range of brochures and fact sheets to provide information about our service and utility issues important to consumers
- Strengthening contacts between EWON and other energy ombudsman schemes through the Australia and New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (ANZEWON)
- Increasing media coverage of EWON's activities by 400%
- Participating in a review of the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme

Our vision is to provide high quality, independent dispute resolution for energy and water consumers in NSW, and to contribute toward raising overall standards of customer service in the industry.

## MISSION

PROFILE, VISION, VALUES

### EWON profile

EWON is an independent body established to investigate complaints for customers of electricity and gas providers in New South Wales and member water providers.

Consumers can approach EWON about a range of matters, including:

- provision, or failure to provide energy or water services
- disconnection or restriction of supply
- billing disputes
- quality of supply
- provider actions that impact on land or other property
- transfers between energy providers
- electricity and gas marketing.

### Our values

- Independence
- Fairness
- Accessibility
- Integrity
- Respect
- Social purpose

### We are committed to

- dealing with customer issues in a way that is fair, just, reasonable and timely
- reducing barriers to accessing EWON due to language, geographic location, physical or mental capacity, or financial status
- guarding our independence strongly, while maintaining good working relations with members and other stakeholders
- keeping customers and members informed of the progress of our investigations
- making optimal use of technology and other resources to assist in quality complaint handling, referral and reporting
- fostering effective relations and referral links with relevant organisations, including members, other complaint handling bodies, government agencies, and consumer, small business and community organisations
- being financially accountable to members and operationally accountable to members, consumers and the wider community.

## PEOPLE

WHO'S WHO AT EWON

**Ombudsman**  
Clare Petre

### Finance, Administration & IT

<b>Business Manager</b> Helen Swan	<b>Information Technology</b> Robin Davies David Vaile*
<b>Finance &amp; Administration</b> Terence Lau Lynden McCluskey Chris Meyer	

### Investigations

<b>Manager Investigations</b> David Rapley* Keith Brooke*	<b>Investigation Officers</b> Carole Ashworth Linda Brown Kirsten Cameron Stephen Carroll Sue Chippendale Diana Covell Lorraine Dartnell Rosemary Dean Naomi Englebrecht Ellena Galtos Fay Golding	 Veronica Marrott Leeann Morris Margy Robinson Karen Sharpe Frances Smyth Seema Srivastava Su-fern Tan Helen Trent Julie Turnbull Kim Isaacs* Megan Philips*
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### Public Relations & Policy

<b>Manager Public Relations &amp; Policy</b> Mark Aiken	<b>Policy &amp; Service Development</b> Melissa Russell Anne Stringer Amanda Hamilton-Foster*
<b>Public Relations &amp; Community Development</b> Anthony Fisk Caitlin Perry Kerry Thrupp	

\* Left during the year  
# Acting in position

# CONTACTS

## WHO CONTACTS EWON

Total customer contacts received by EWON in 2001 - 2002

Open at the beginning of the period	216
Opened during the period	4971
Closed during the period	4908
Open at the end of the period	279

### Gender



### Customer status



### Method of contact



### Location



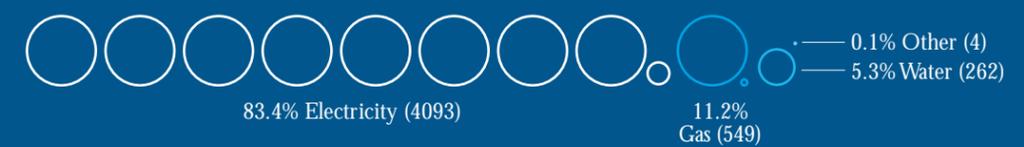
# OUTCOMES

## HOW EWON HANDLES MATTERS

### Matters by category



### Matters by subject



### How EWON dealt with matters\*



### Timeframes for matter finalisation

	2001 - 2002		2000 - 2001	
Within 2 days	2610	53.2%	2180	50.2%
Within 7 days	3203	65.3%	2729	62.8%
Within 14 days	3548	72.3%	3124	71.9%
Within 30 days	3960	80.7%	3518	81.0%
Within 90 days	4591	93.5%	4025	91.0%
More than 90 days	317	6.5%	319	9.0%

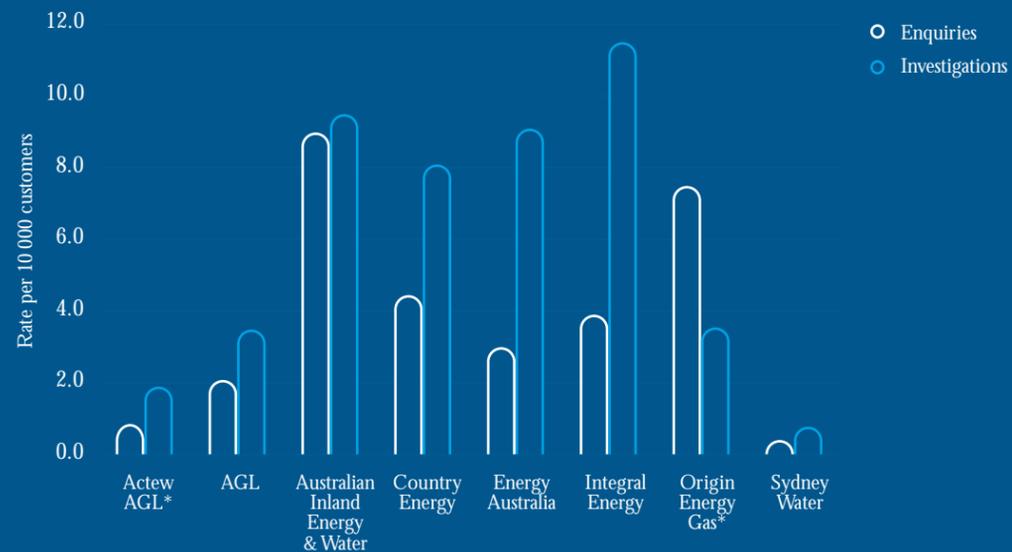
\*There can be more than one result per matter.

# COMPARISON

## MATTERS BY PROVIDER

In the interests of greater transparency and more informative communication, EWON has reported on the number of matters received on a provider by provider basis. This initiative is supported by all of EWON's standard retail supplier members.

### Matters finalised by standard retail providers Rate per 10 000 customers 2001 – 2002



\* Joined 1/2/02

TransGrid, the NSW electricity transmission company was the subject of 2 enquiries and 1 investigation.

#### Second Tier Retailers

ENERGEX (joined 1/9/01) was the subject of 5 enquiries and 1 investigation. No matters were lodged for AGL Electricity (joined 1/5/02), Pulse (joined 1/10/01), Origin Energy Electricity or EnergyOne (both joined 19/6/02).

#### Exempt Retailers

Residential parks and other exempt retailers were the subject of 14 complaints.

# ISSUES

## CUSTOMER ISSUES RAISED BY INDUSTRY

### Categories of issues raised – All (9739 Issues\*)



### Electricity (8261 Issues\*)



### Gas (1030 Issues\*)



### Water (448 Issues\*)



\*There can be more than one issue per matter.

# MESSAGES

Geoff Lilliss, Chairperson EWON Board  
The challenges for the Board this year revolved around full retail competition and effectively resourcing operations to deal with the challenges presented by a contestable market place.

An operational review of EWON in 2001 evaluated the overall performance of the scheme. The findings were extremely positive with the performance at an extremely high standard and EWON held in high regard by the majority of members.

I would like to congratulate the Board and Council for operating in a cooperative and productive manner. The agreeable working relationship between the Board and Council, in addition to industry and member confidence ensures that the interests of customers are well represented.

Lionel Bowen AC, Chairperson  
EWON Council

In another year of growth and change EWON's jurisdiction has expanded, and greater public awareness of the scheme has led to increased requests for assistance from utility customers. It is pleasing to report that the EWON Council, representing both consumer and industry interests, has continued to work closely with the Ombudsman to support the work of her office.

The dedication of the Ombudsman and her staff, and the commitment of the Council and EWON Board, have ensured public acceptance and endorsement, and earned EWON a reputation in the community for independence and fairness.

The Hon Kim Yeadon MP  
Minister for Energy

In 2001-2002 the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW continued to help people through a multitude of issues such as billing, disconnections and payment extensions. The majority of matters were finalised within seven days.

Customer protection is an important issue for the NSW Government, particularly in the new, competitive market. It is vital to have an independent body to look at issues that the community may have with utilities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Clare Petre, and her staff for their excellent work over the last year.

The Hon John Aquilina MP  
Minister for Fair Trading

The Energy & Water Ombudsman, her staff, the Board and the Council provide valuable assistance to consumers in New South Wales. This year EWON dealt with almost 5000 complaints from energy and water customers – an increase of 13% from last year.

During the year the Department of Fair Trading has worked closely with EWON. Work has progressed on a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations. I congratulate EWON on continuing to provide an inexpensive, speedy and effective dispute resolution service for NSW energy and water consumers.

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

## WORKING TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND AWARENESS

EWON has maintained a high level of community involvement throughout the year. We focussed on developing our links with stakeholders, working in regional NSW, and improving access to EWON for non-English speaking communities, in particular the Chinese, Vietnamese and Italian-speaking communities.

### Building links with our stakeholders

#### Social Workers

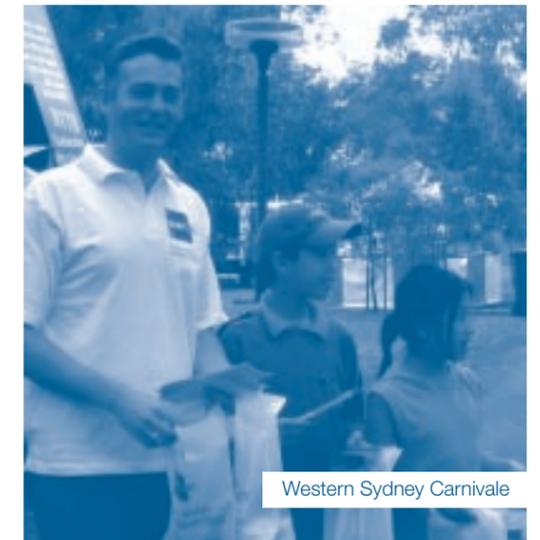
EWON conducted a number of information sessions for Centrelink Social Workers who provide an important service for people in financial crisis. EWON made presentations to area meetings at Blacktown, Queanbeyan, Liverpool and Wollongong.

#### Department of Housing

A significant number of consumers who contact EWON live in public housing. During the year, the Ombudsman met with senior managers of the NSW Department of Housing to discuss ways of improving contact and referral processes to assist residents who experience problems with electricity or gas accounts, or supply.

#### Community organisations

EWON has had increasing contact with the wide range of important community organisations that distribute Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) to people facing



Western Sydney Carnival

difficulties in paying their energy bills. As part of our contact with EAPA agencies, EWON conducted information sessions for The Smith Family, meeting with the staff of their rural assistance line.

We have continued to work with a range of agencies throughout NSW to improve access for utility consumers to EWON and to listen to community concerns about utility services. In the past year we have worked with agencies including:

- Financial Counsellors' Association of NSW
- Neighbourhood Centres
- Youth Networks (YAPA, YAA)
- Tenants' Union of NSW
- Welfare Rights Centre
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- NSW Council of Social Service.

## Residential parks

EWON liaised with government, industry and advocacy groups to coordinate the extension of our jurisdiction to include complaints about electricity from residents in residential parks and boarding houses.

EWON provided NSW residential park operators with an information package outlining our role as a provider of independent dispute resolution. We also produced a fact sheet for residents and worked with advocacy groups to distribute the information to park residents.



Delegation of Philippine regulators and academics

## Regional NSW

### Kempsey

EWON met with community leaders following contact from the Kempsey Koori community about issues relating to electricity billing and disconnections. At the invitation of the community, EWON organised forums that brought together community members, EWON and the local electricity provider, Country Energy, to discuss issues of concern.

EWON participated in the first orientation day at the Kempsey TAFE with a stall providing information for students who were moving out of home and setting up their first energy account.

## Far West NSW

During an awareness raising visit by EWON to Far West NSW, people in Wilcannia expressed a need for further information on EAPA and advice about raising issues with their local electricity provider. As a result, EWON and Australian Inland Energy and Water were invited to meet with the Wilcannia Working Group. We look forward to working with Australian Inland Energy and Water to address the issues raised by this isolated community.

## Women on Wheels

In June 2002 EWON joined *Women on Wheels 2*, the NSW Department of Women's bus tour of the North Coast and Northern Tablelands of NSW. Over seven days, EWON visited 27 towns to hold information sessions, join 'yarn-ups' with Aboriginal women, visit neighbourhood centres and women's health clinics and attend business women's breakfasts. EWON was also able to share information with the other 25 government and community agencies participating in the tour.

## Other regional visits

In conjunction with visits to our provider members, EWON made contact with local MPs, community organisations, neighbourhood centres and relevant government offices. This



Women on Wheels 2

'I've been pleasantly surprised how well accepted [EWON] has been by all parties – industry and community and customers.'

Board Member response to the 2001 Independent Review of the EWON Scheme

year, we developed contacts in Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan and Broken Hill to try to improve access for regional consumers to our service.



Commissioners from Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) Ghana



Italian community group

## EWON in the Italian speaking community

After consultation with the Italian speaking community, EWON designed an awareness campaign to reach first generation Italian speakers through the media, and community networks. Information about EWON's services was published in Italian and translations included on our website. To reach people through their existing networks, EWON held information sessions at Italian community social groups in Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle.

EWON also ran a series of advertisements on Italian radio, participated in radio interviews and enjoyed positive coverage in the Italian press. The feedback from the Italian community was very positive, with many people learning for the first time about EWON's services. They also said that the provision of both written and spoken information in Italian about EWON was clear and easy to understand.

## Non-English speaking communities

We aim to reduce cultural and language barriers to accessing EWON for non-English speaking communities. Following awareness campaigns for the Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic-speaking communities, this year's campaign focussed on the needs of the Italian community, while maintaining relationships established with other language groups during previous campaigns. Activities included:

- presentations to the Chinese-Australian Services Society, Chinese Community Network Meeting, and the Vietnamese Community Workers' Interagency
- information stalls at the Hurstville Chinese Community Expo, Marrickville Indonesian Festival, St George Migrant Information Day and the Brighton-Le-Sands Greek Festival.

# MEMBERS

## WORKING WITH UTILITY PROVIDERS

### Our members

This year has seen the most significant growth in membership and jurisdiction of the scheme since EWON began in 1998. The introduction of full retail competition and changes to New South Wales legislation have seen EWON's coverage extend to include:

- newly licensed electricity and gas retailers (see inset)
- electricity and gas marketers
- electricity on-sellers (customers who on-sell electricity to domestic or small business consumers).

During the past twelve months, EWON's membership has expanded from seven to fourteen utility providers. All of these new members are licensed to retail electricity or gas to consumers in the competitive market. In addition, EWON can now deal with customer issues regarding energy marketers, as well as the provision of electricity by on-sellers. On-sellers include residential parks, boarding houses and strata corporations.



EWON staff and Country Energy



EWON and Country Energy visit West Kempsey

EWON's experience with existing members shows that fair and reasonable outcomes for consumers are best achieved cooperatively with the utility providers. To build closer working relations with the new providers and the industry as a whole, EWON is committed to:

- holding annual forums to give members an opportunity to discuss industry issues with both EWON and other utility providers
- conducting induction sessions for new member contacts and other staff of utility providers on how EWON operates
- participating in industry meetings, including credit managers' forums and customer committees
- liaising with providers and supplying written material on changes to operational procedures
- visiting our members to discuss issues with frontline staff.

'We know how to handle a systemic issue better and we're prepared to work together...'

Provider response to the Independent Review of the EWON scheme

During the past year EWON has worked with member companies to build and develop relations with local communities. In particular, EWON was able to foster positive links with regional and isolated communities in conjunction with local rural providers. Our community development activities in Kempsey, the Far West and northern NSW were supported by the local provider within each region.

The information gathered from local communities will assist EWON to contribute toward improving customer service standards in NSW. EWON plans to expand our work with utility providers to build relationships with other communities.

### New members of EWON

ActewAGL Retail

AGL Electricity

ENERGEX Retail

EnergyOne

Origin Energy Electricity

Origin Energy LPG

Pulse Energy



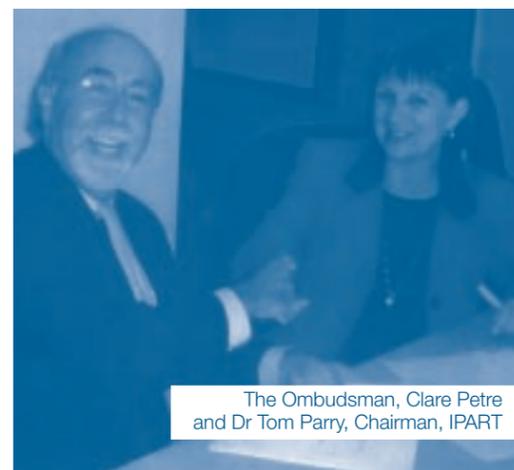
EWON visiting Hunter Water sewerage facilities

# UTILITY ISSUES

## SUBMISSIONS AND POLICY ISSUES RAISED BY EWON

EWON has worked closely with stakeholders to provide feedback on a range of utility issues, based on complaints received from customers. This year, EWON contributed to policy development in a number of areas including the introduction of Full Retail Competition for electricity and gas (further information on page 18), and the extension of our jurisdiction arising from the introduction of the *Electricity Supply (General) Regulation 2001*.

EWON was able to identify a range of emerging issues through contact with consumer and industry stakeholders, our community work and issues raised through customer complaints. In addition to full retail competition, particular issues of focus this year were payment options and access to emergency assistance.



The Ombudsman, Clare Petre and Dr Tom Parry, Chairman, IPART

### Payment options

EWON continues to work with utility providers, the government and other stakeholders to expand the range of payment methods available to utility customers. The past year has seen increased support for options including sustainable payment plans, direct debit and smooth pay/even pay arrangements, Centrepay (small regular deductions from Centrelink payments), and trials of pre-payment meters.

EWON is committed to ensuring that disconnection or restriction of energy and water supply is used as a last resort. Through customer complaints, EWON has identified credit issues as they emerge and discussed with providers and stakeholders ways of reducing disconnections and restrictions. We have also facilitated meetings between providers and community groups to discuss the impacts disconnection and credit practices have on local communities. By increasing the options available to pay utility accounts, and working with providers and the community in relation to credit practices, EWON hopes that the number of customers facing disconnection or restriction of supply will decrease.

'There's a very high quality of staff at the policy level.'

Government stakeholder response to the Independent Review of the EWON Scheme

### Access to emergency assistance

Customers facing financial hardship may need access to emergency assistance. This assistance can help customers avoid disconnection or restriction, and reduce the level of debt to help customers pay the balance by instalments. The main form of assistance available to energy customers in financial crisis is through the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme.

EWON has used information gained through community consultation and from customer complaints to contribute towards improving the effectiveness of the EAPA Scheme.

EWON continues to participate in the EAPA Scheme Working Group and has

made a submission to a review of the scheme. In our submission we highlighted the difficulties a number of customer groups face in accessing emergency assistance, including people in rural and regional areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and people who speak languages other than English. EWON has also worked with the Energy Concessions Steering Group to prepare for the extension of EAPA to include gas accounts.

### Other utility issues

EWON has provided submissions and information on a range of other issues, including:

Issue	Action
Access for all eligible customers to life support rebates and pensioner concessions under full retail competition	Participation in the Energy Industry Concessions Group and the Energy Concessions Steering Group
Fee for customers to be transferred under Retailer of Last Resort provisions	Submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)
Resupply of electricity to permanent residents of caravan parks	Submission to the Department of Fair Trading on a Code of Practice. Joined the Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) Residential Parks Consultation Group
Reconnection of small retail customers under full retail competition	Submission to the NSW Treasury's Market Implementation Group (MIG)
Review of the Sydney Water Customer Contract	Submission to IPART and presentation to a consultative forum
New Gas Supply (Natural Gas Competition) Regulation 2001	Submission to the Ministry of Energy and Utilities (MEU)

'EWON will continue to closely monitor complaints on full retail competition, and report issues as they arise to the Minister for Energy, regulators and other stakeholders.'

EWON Report on Full Retail Competition

## FULL RETAIL COMPETITION

### REPORTING ON THE CUSTOMER RESPONSE

#### Full retail competition

From 1 January 2002 households and small business customers were able to choose their energy provider. Prior to the introduction of full retail competition, EWON worked with the NSW Government, industry stakeholders and consumer representatives to develop consumer protection measures for the competitive market. The measures adopted include:

- a right for customers to remain on a regulated standard contract with their existing retailer
- a right for customers to access financial support programs
- a regulated process that retailers are obliged to follow before they can disconnect supply to a customer
- a code of practice to regulate the marketing practices of retailers
- guaranteeing supply to customers in the event that their retailer becomes insolvent
- a right for small retail customers on negotiated contracts to access EWON.

The Ministry of Energy and Utilities reports that 113 931 customers entered into a negotiated contract in the first six months of competition. During this period, EWON received 326 matters related to full retail competition. The main issues were access to the competitive market, marketing practices, cooling off periods and termination fees.

#### Access to the competitive market

Some customers reported difficulty in obtaining information and quotes from retailers. Some customers felt excluded from the market because they were unable to find a retailer prepared to offer them a negotiated contract, which they believe was due to their level of usage, geographic location, or payment and credit history.

#### Marketing practices

Some customers believed the information provided by energy marketers was incorrect or misleading. In particular, disputes were raised over issues including contract price and the amount of likely savings, the length of the contract, payment options available, and whether the customer had agreed to enter into a contract at all (involuntary transfers).

#### Ending a contract

The *Electricity Supply (General) Regulation 2001* gives customers the right to terminate a contract without penalty if they provide notice to the retailer within a ten day 'cooling off' period after entering into the contract. However, EWON received complaints from customers who had difficulty in exercising their right to cool off, because the retailer had not processed their cancellation notice promptly. Some customers who wanted to cancel their contract after the cooling off period reported that they were unaware that termination fees would be applied, or they believed the amount of the termination fee was excessive.

## FULL RETAIL COMPETITION

### CASE STUDIES

#### Who is my provider?

Ms K was surprised to receive a \$100 cheque in the post for refund of her security deposit from her gas provider. When she rang to query this, her gas provider advised that her account had been transferred to another company. Ms K insisted she had not requested any transfer and asked for her account to be reopened.

Ms K's provider stated that they could not do this as they no longer had her account. They did not know the identity of the new provider, and suggested she would have to contact other companies to locate her account. Ms K rang several gas providers to ask if they held her account, but without success. With growing frustration and concern, she spoke with her original provider who referred her to EWON.

EWON's investigation found that another provider had transferred Ms K's account in error. Ms K's details were immediately transferred back to her original provider and her account was reinstated.

Ms K's provider confirmed the reinstated account in writing and advised that Ms K could bank the security deposit refund cheque, as this would have been refunded to her shortly due to her good account record.

EWON raised this case with the Ministry of Energy, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, and the gas marketing company. EWON submitted that while mistakes in account transfers might occur, customers must be able to find out easily where their account is held. The regulatory authorities agreed to ensure such a system is in place for customers.

#### Crossing over

After being approached by an energy marketer, Mrs Y agreed to transfer her gas and electricity accounts over to the new provider. The marketer informed Mrs Y that she had ten days to change her mind and withdraw from the contract. Following consultation with her family Mrs Y decided she did not want to go through with the transfer. Four days after she signed the contract Mrs Y sent a withdrawal form to the company to terminate the contact she had entered into. Mrs Y also sent an email advising of her decision to terminate the transfer.

Three weeks later Mrs Y contacted her gas provider to check the status of her account. She was told that her account had been transferred to the energy company that had recently approached her. This provider informed Mrs Y they had not received her withdrawal letter or the email notification. She was asked to submit a written explanation to their contracts section if she wanted to resolve the matter. Feeling very upset, Mrs Y contacted EWON.

EWON contacted the provider and discussed the lost documentation. The provider agreed to cancel Mrs Y's contract without charging termination fees. Mrs Y's accounts were transferred back to her original provider without delay. The provider apologised for the inconvenience caused and agreed not to charge Mrs Y for any energy usage while she was on the contract. Mrs Y was relieved that her withdrawal was accepted without any cost.

# STRUCTURE

## SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION

### Members of EWON

ActewAGL Retail  
AGL Electricity Limited  
AGL Retail Energy Limited  
Australian Inland Energy and Water  
Country Energy  
ENERGEX Retail Pty Ltd  
EnergyAustralia  
Ferrier Hodgson Electricity  
t/a EnergyOne  
Integral Energy Australia  
Origin Energy LPG Limited  
Origin Energy Electricity Limited  
Pulse Energy Pty Ltd  
Sydney Water Corporation  
TransGrid

### Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has corporate governance responsibilities and represents the electricity, gas and water members of EWON.

Geoff Lilliss, *Chairperson*  
Terri Benson, Sandro Canale,  
Denise Dawson, Linda Heane,  
Rod Howard, Kevin Murray  
Helen Swan, *Company Secretary*

### Council

The Council is chaired by an independent chairperson and comprises equal representation of industry and consumer interests. The Council is responsible for maintaining the Ombudsman's independence and acting as an intermediary between the Ombudsman and the Board.

Lionel Bowen, *Independent Chairperson*  
Trish Benson, *Public Interest Advocacy Centre*  
Ron Craggs, *Country Energy*  
John Degen, *State Chamber of Commerce NSW*  
Chris Dodds, *NSW Council of Social Service*  
Simon Draper, *Integral Energy*  
Margaret Kilby, *Ryde-Eastwood Financial Counselling Service*  
Robert Petersen, *AGL*  
Colin Ridley, *Sydney Water*

### Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

The Ombudsman and staff receive, investigate and facilitate resolution of customer complaints.

'They are reasonable in their approach from the consumer and industry side. They're not legalistic...and try to treat each case on its merits.'

Council Member response to Independent Review of the EWON Scheme

# COMPLAINT GUIDE

## HOW EWON DEALS WITH MATTERS

### What customers can expect from EWON

EWON is committed to the provision of high quality, independent dispute resolution for energy and water consumers in NSW. EWON deals with complaints in a way that is fair, just and timely.

EWON provides customers with a contact person with whom they can discuss their complaint. If we are not able to help in some matters, we will try to find an organisation that can assist. Generally we expect customers to have tried to sort out the problem first with their provider.

EWON can be contacted by phone, fax, letter, email, website or in person.

Customer matters are classified as either enquiries or investigations.

### Enquiries

Typically, we provide information to customers and/or refer them to their utility provider or other relevant agency.



EWON investigation staff with the Ombudsman

### Investigations

Where the customer has not received a response from their utility provider, or is not satisfied with the outcome, EWON can investigate. Investigations may be upgraded through the following levels:

- **Level 1**, where we contact the company to obtain information, and the matter is resolved within a reasonable time.
- **Level 2**, where there are considerable differences between the parties, or the matter has not been resolved within a reasonable time.
- **Level 3**, where the matter is not resolved at level 2, and has taken significant time to investigate

In rare cases where the matter cannot be resolved, the Ombudsman can make a binding decision (determination) to resolve the matter.

### Customer rights

Customers have the right to:

- be kept informed of EWON's investigation into their complaint
- request that EWON keeps information about their case confidential
- receive a written outcome of the investigation into their complaint
- ask for help if they don't understand information provided by EWON
- obtain interpreter/translator assistance if they have trouble understanding or communicating in English.

# FINANCIALS

POSITION AT 30 JUNE 2002

## Statement of financial position

	2001 – 2002	2000 – 2001
	\$	\$
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash	288 366	617 540
Deposits and prepayments	55 937	117 416
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>344 303</b>	<b>734 956</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
Property, furniture and equipment	273 371	120 982
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>617 674</b>	<b>855 938</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Creditors and accruals	(184 519)	(264 047)
Income in advance and member creditors	(273 655)	(363 556)
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>(458 174)</b>	<b>(627 603)</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>159 500</b>	<b>228 335</b>
<b>Representing:</b>		
<b>Funds and reserves</b>		
Accumulated funds – balance June 30 2002	136 358	213 335
Provisions	23 142	15 000
<b>Total funds and reserves</b>	<b>159 500</b>	<b>228 335</b>

These are draft accounts as at October 2002. A full set of financial accounts can be provided on application.

# FINANCIALS

SUMMARY 2001 – 2002

## Statement of cash flows

	2001 – 2002	2000 – 2001
	\$	\$
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Funding received (members)	2 059 002	1 652 599
Interest received and sundry income	17 134	33 319
Payments to employees, suppliers etc	(2 157 546)	(1 403 487)
<b>Net Cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities</b>	<b>(81 410)</b>	<b>282 431</b>
<b>Cash flows (outflow) from investment activities</b>		
Receipts on sale plant and equipment	-	18 794
Payments for plant equipment and fitout	(247 764)	(58 260)
	(247 764)	(39 466)
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash held</b>	<b>(329 174)</b>	<b>242 965</b>
Cash at beginning of year	617 540	374 575
Cash at end of year	288 366	617 540

## Income and expenditure statement

	2001 – 2002	2000 – 2001
	\$	\$
<b>Income</b>		
<b>Funding received</b>		
Joining fees and start up funding	21 000	12 157
Operational funding provided by members	2 019 229	1 510 465
Interest received and sundry income	17 134	37 794
<b>Gross income</b>	<b>2 057 363</b>	<b>1 560 416</b>
<b>Less expenditure</b>		
Salaries and oncosts	1 380 230	850 595
Operating expenditure	721 226	546 161
Council and board costs	28 158	43 498
Project costs	45 933	52 131
Fitout costs (minor acquisitions and fitout amortisation)	25 325	4 600
Transfer – funding in advance (brought to account)	(74 674)	17 000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>2 126 198</b>	<b>1 513 985</b>
<b>Excess of expenditure over income for the year 2001 - 2002 (2000 - 2001 surplus)</b>	<b>(68 835)</b>	<b>46 431</b>



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