



Media release

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

Monday 9 October 2017

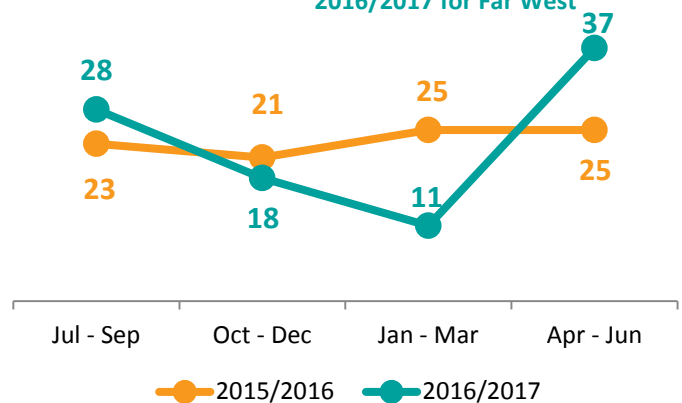
Embargoed until 12am Wednesday 11 October 2017

Energy affordability a bigger issue for customers in the Far West than other areas of NSW

According to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW's (EWON) 2016/2017 Annual Report released today, affordability issues factored in 46% of complaints received from the State's Far West region*, compared to 21% for NSW as a whole.

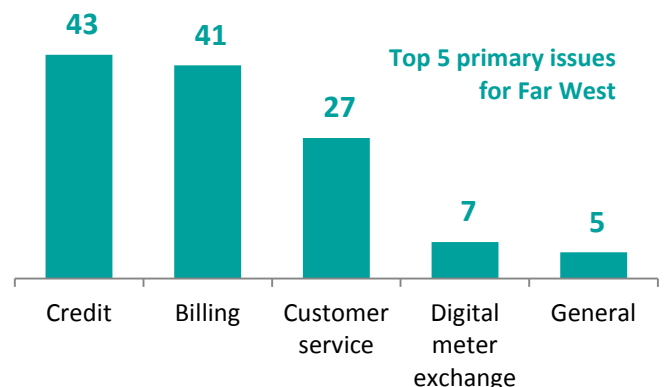
"Affordability issues, payment difficulties, high bills, increasing debt and disconnection of supply have become the norm for NSW consumers experiencing financial vulnerability and this is particularly pronounced in the Far West region. I've visited Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Menindee and seen first hand the impact energy affordability is having on people there." Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young, said.

Complaints by quarter from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017 for Far West



Average complaints per 10,000 people in the region were also high at 43, well above the NSW average of 34.

Complaints to EWON from the Far West region remained consistent between 2015/2016 and 2016/17 at 94. Between 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 complaints numbers fell 15%. However, in the fourth quarter 2016/2017 complaints numbers were 48% higher than they were for same period the previous year. This trend is consistent with the rest of NSW.

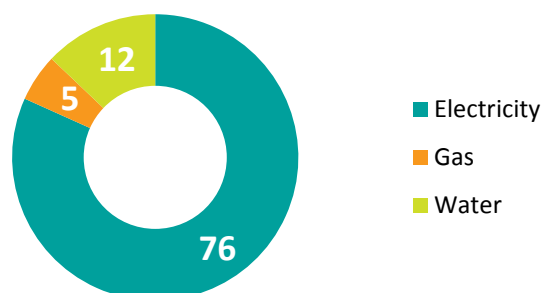


"While our complaints for NSW overall fell marginally, they steadily rose throughout 2016/2017 and continue to increase. We received 21% more complaints in the April to June quarter than we did in the same period in the previous financial year, establishing a strong upward trend" Ms Young explained.

The 1% decrease in complaints to EWON in 2016/2017 for NSW as a whole is much less pronounced than the 22% fall reported in 2015/2016 and the 19% decrease in 2014/2015.

Complaints by Industry for Far West

After affordability (or credit) issues, billing and customer service were the two most significant complaint issues customers from the far west region raised with EWON. For NSW as a whole billing was the biggest issue, followed by customer service and then credit. Digital meter exchange was the fourth biggest complaint issues in the region, whereas it was the fifth biggest for NSW overall.



“The array of energy offers makes it difficult for customers to find the best deal. Customers on low or fixed incomes in particular, continue to tell us they were not able to take advantage of discounted offers because of compulsory pay-on-time or direct debit conditions. It is promising to see that retailers are now starting to address this,” said Ms Young.

Cases received for each region in 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 with percentage increase or decrease

EWON region	Complaints per 10,000 people	2016/2017	2015/2016	% change
Sydney Outer	29	6,917	7,340	-6%
Sydney Inner	49	6,292	6,173	2%
Hunter	35	2,053	1,864	10%
Sydney Surrounds	36	1,702	1,600	6%
Illawarra	31	1,237	1,273	-3%
Mid North Coast	31	894	824	8%
Central West	45	855	944	-9%
South Eastern	38	783	726	8%
Richmond-Tweed	31	685	677	1%
Northern	31	534	509	5%
Murrumbidgee	35	479	543	-12%
Murray	42	466	564	-17%
North Western	38	353	376	-6%
Far West	43	94	94	0%
TOTAL	-	23,613	23,760	-1%

**EWON’s Far West reporting region includes the Broken Hill, Central Darling and Unincorporated NSW Local Government Areas.*

**To arrange an interview with the Ombudsman or request high resolution images, contact:
Mia Lauzé, Manager Communications & Outreach - 0408 602 503 / mial@ewon.com.au.**