



Media release

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

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Affordability-related complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW from the Illawarra above NSW average

According to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW's (EWON) 2016/2017 Annual Report released today, affordability issues factored in 23% of complaints received from the Illawarra region*, compared to 21% for all of NSW.

"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 evident in the Illawarra region," Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young, said.

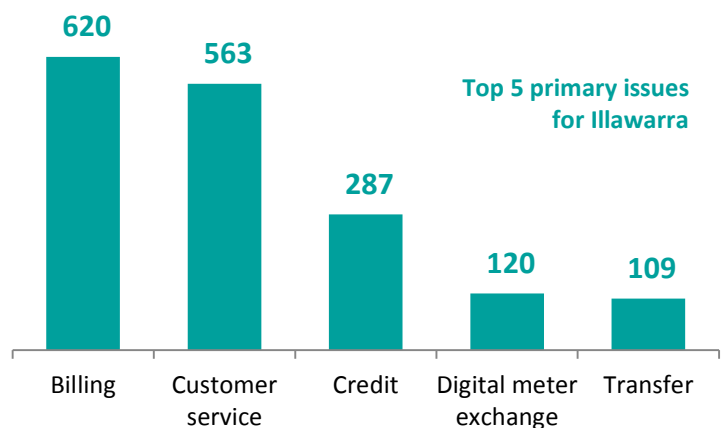
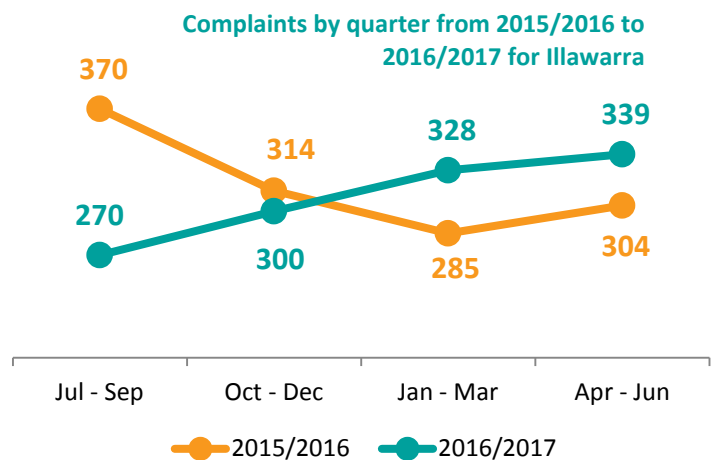
Complaints to EWON from the Illawarra fell by 3% between 2015/2016 and 2016/2017, from 1,273 to 1,237. However they rose in the second half of 2016/2017 compared to the same period the previous year.

"EWON received 15% more complaints from the Illawarra region in the third quarter 2016/2017 than we did for that period in 2015/2016. In the fourth quarter, they were 11% higher compared to the same quarter in previous year," Ms Young explained.

This upward trend is consistent with the NSW as a whole.

"While our complaints for all of NSW fell marginally overall, 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 last 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

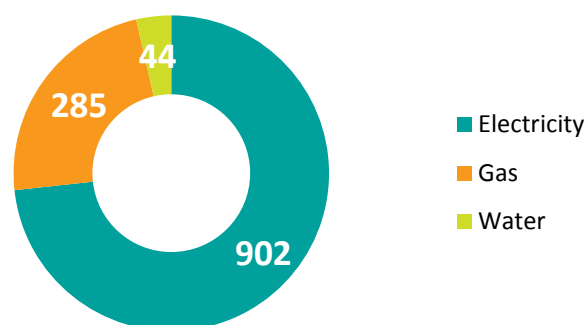


Complaints by Industry for Illawarra

2014/2015.

The top three complaint issues customers raised with EWON in the Illawarra region were about billing, customer service and credit, consistent with NSW as a whole.

Ms Young is concerned about energy affordability, particularly in light of 1 July 2017 price increases.



“Affordability issues, payment difficulties, high bills, increasing debt and disconnection of supply have become the norm for NSW consumers experiencing financial vulnerability.”

“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 Illawarra reporting region includes the Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee and Wollongong 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.