



Media release

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

Monday 9 October 2017

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Complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW from the Mid North Coast increase

According to EWON's 2016/2017 Annual Report released today, complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) from the Mid North Coast region* of NSW increased by 8% in 2016/2017, rising from 824 to 894.

The Mid North Coast region was one of seven NSW regions that experienced complaint increases. Complaints rose between 1% and 10% in the other six regions.

EWON received 14% more complaints from the Mid North Coast in the second quarter 2016/2017 than in the same period in 2015/2016. In the third quarter, complaints were 12% higher than they were in the same quarter in previous year.

"The increase in complaints from the Mid North Coast region was particularly pronounced in the fourth quarter when they were 29% higher than they were for the same period in the previous financial year," Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young explained.

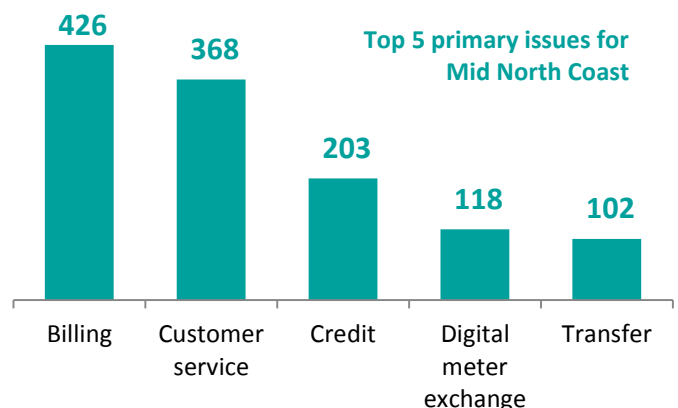
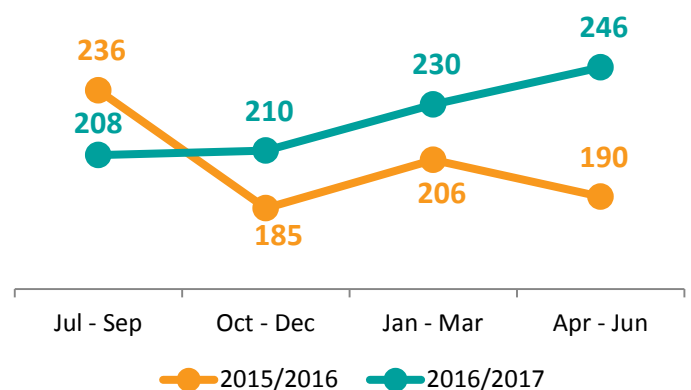
This upward trend is consistent with the NSW overall.

"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 2014/2015.

The top three complaint issues customers in the Mid North Coast raised with EWON were about billing, customer service and credit, consistent with NSW as a whole. Digital meter exchange was the fourth biggest complaint

Complaints by quarter from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017 for Mid North Coast

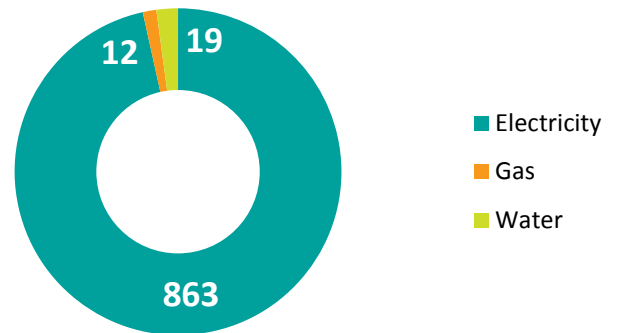


Complaints by Industry for Mid North Coast

issues in the region, whereas it was the fifth biggest for NSW overall.

Affordability-related complaints from the region were marginally higher than they were for the rest of the state, at 23% of all complaints compared to 21% for NSW overall.

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 Mid North Coast reporting region includes the Bellingen, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Mid-Coast, Nambucca, Port Macquarie-Hastings 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.