



Media release

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

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Energy affordability a key issue for customers in the Murrumbidgee region

According to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) 2016/2017 Annual Report released today, affordability issues factored in 25% of complaints received from the State's Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee region," Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young, said.

Average complaints per 10,000 people in the region were also slightly higher in the region at 35, compared to the NSW average of 34.

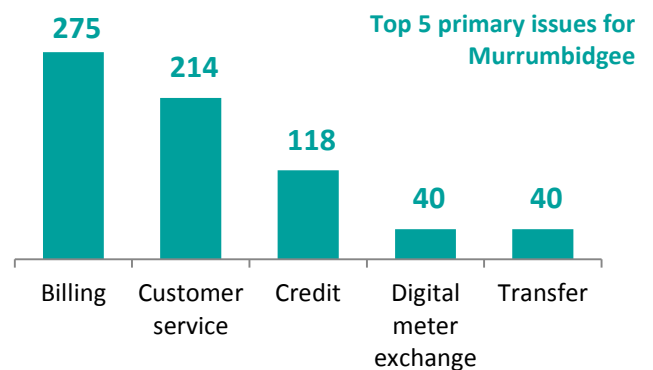
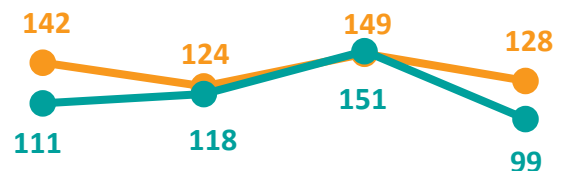
Despite this, complaints to EWON from the Murrumbidgee region fell for the third year in a row, down 13% in 2016/17 to 479 from 543 in 2015/2016. Between 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 complaints from the region fell 17%, following a 22% decrease in 2014/2015, from the high of 848 complaints in 2013/2014.

This is consistent with the complaint trend for NSW overall, where the 1% is much less pronounced than the 22% fall reported in 2015/2016 and the 19% decrease in 2014/2015.

In contrast to the Murrumbidgee region, complaints for NSW as a whole trended upwards during the period.

"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.

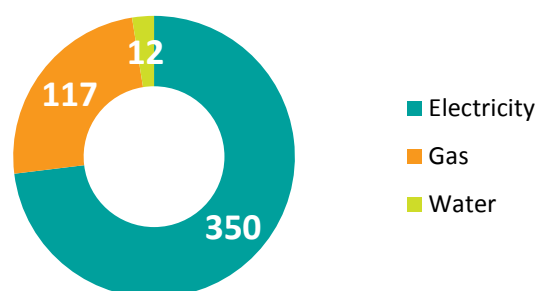
Complaints by quarter from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017 for Murrumbidgee



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 from the Murrumbidgee region raised with EWON were billing, customer service and credit, consistent with NSW as a whole. Digital meter exchange was the fourth biggest complaint issues in the region, whereas it was the fifth biggest for NSW overall.

Complaints by Industry for Murrumbidgee



“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 Murrumbidgee reporting region includes the following Local Government Areas: Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra–Gundagai, Griffith, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Temora and Wagga Wagga.

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.