



Media release

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

Monday 9 October 2017

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Complaints to the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW for the Northern region of NSW increase

According to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) 2016/2017 Annual Report released today, complaints from the State's Northern region* increased by 5% from 2015/2016.

Energy affordability was a significant issue for the region's residents, factoring in 28% of complaints, 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, which is evident in the Northern region of the State," Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young, said.

"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.

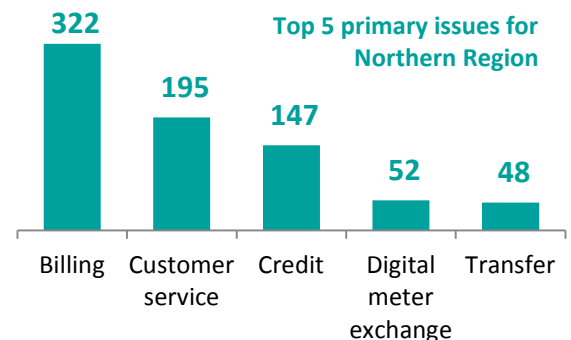
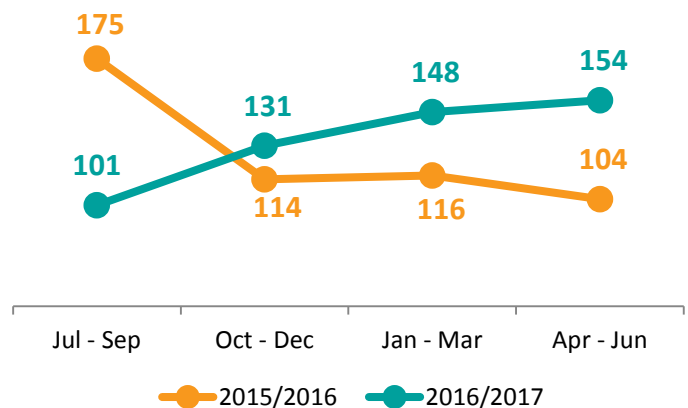
Complaints to EWON from the Northern region began to rise in the second quarter 2016/2017, increasing by 14% over the same period the previous year. Complaints were 27% higher in the third quarter than they were in the same period the previous year and then increased even more significantly in the final quarter.

"EWON received 48% more complaints from the Northern region in the fourth quarter 2016/2017 than we did for that period in 2015/2016," Ms Young explained.

This upward 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

Complaints by quarter from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017 for Northern Region

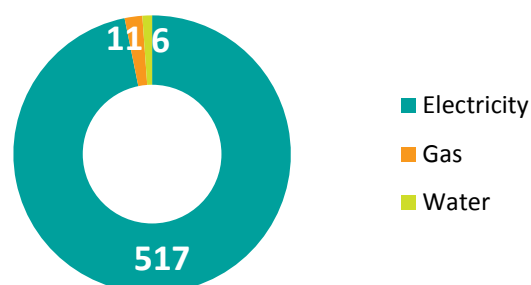


the same period in the previous financial year, establishing a strong upward trend” Ms Young explained.

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.

The top three complaint issues customers raised with EWON in the Northern region were about billing, customer service and credit, consistent with NSW as a whole. Digital meter exchange was the fourth biggest complaint issue in the region, whereas it was the fifth biggest for NSW overall.

Complaints by Industry for Northern Region



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 Northern reporting region includes the following Local Government Areas: Armidale, Clarence Valley, Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Guyra, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains Moree Plains, Narrabri, Tamworth Regional, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha.*

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.