



Media release

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

Monday 9 October 2017

Embargoed until 12am Wednesday 11 October 2017

Complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW from the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Central Coast areas increase

According to Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) 2016/2017 Annual Report released today, complaints from the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Hawkesbury and Wollondilly Local Government Areas increased by 6% in 2016/2017, rising from 1,600 in 2015/2016 to 1,702 in the reporting period.

EWON's Sydney Surrounds* region was one of seven in NSW that experienced complaint increases. Complaints rose between 1% and 10% in the other six regions.

Complaints from the region rose significantly in the final quarter of 2016/2017, compared to the same period the previous year.

"EWON received 34% more complaints from the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Hawkesbury and Wollondilly areas in the fourth quarter 2016/2017 than we did for that period in 2015/2016," Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young explained.

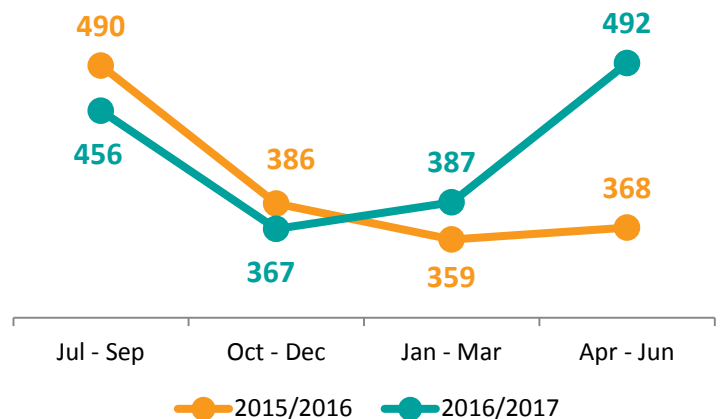
This upward trend is consistent with the rest of the State.

"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 said.

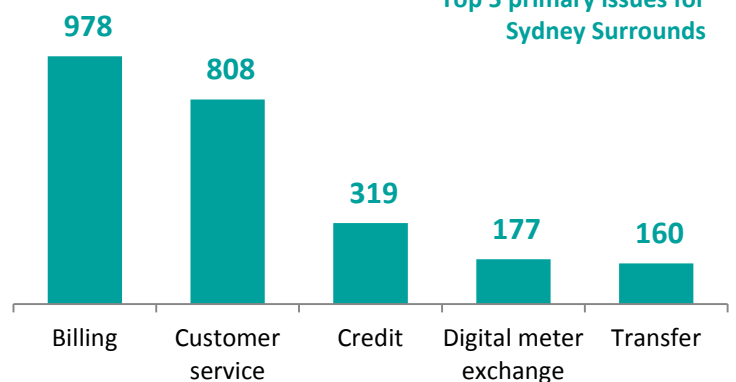
The 1% decrease in complaints to EWON in 2016/2017 for NSW as a whole is much less pronounced than the 22% fall reported in 2015/2016 and the 19% decrease in 2014/2015.

The top three complaint issues customers raised with EWON from Sydney Surrounds were about billing, customer service and

Complaints by quarter from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017 for Sydney Surrounds



Top 5 primary issues for Sydney Surrounds



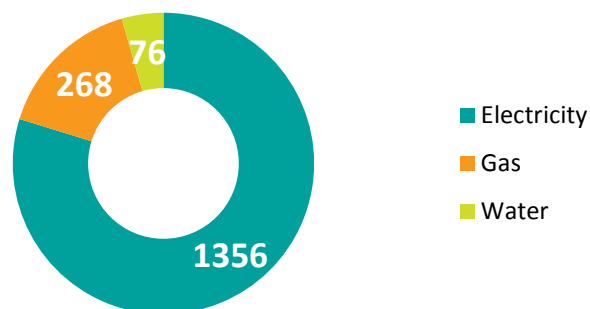
credit, consistent with NSW as a whole.

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.

Complaints by Industry for Sydney Surrounds



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%

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.