



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW
Free, fair and independent

Media release

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Complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW increase by seven percent in the Murray region of NSW

Complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) increased from the Murray region* of NSW in 2017/2018, rising seven percent from 2016/2017 to 499.

Population data shows that there were 45 complaints per 10,000 people – the fourth highest number of complaints from any region in NSW.

According to EWON's Annual Report released today, there was an 18% increase in complaints related to customer service, including poor service, failure to respond, incorrect advice or information, and failure to consult or inform customers. These issues are present in 45% of complaints from the Murray region.

"Customer service is often an underlying factor for people contacting EWON, but one that can be largely avoided if providers work constructively with consumers in the first instance," explained Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young.

The report also shows complaints related to energy affordability, including payment difficulties, debt collection, credit default listings and disconnections, increased by 15% from the Murray region, and were present in 33% of all complaints during the period.

"More work is needed to address affordability, including early identification of customers needing support, and tailored approaches which prevent payment difficulties escalating into serious debt," Ms Young said.

Billing complaints fell one percent in 2017/2018 however, they continue to be the most significant complaint issue raised with EWON from the Murray region, present in 57% of all complaints. Billing issues include high and estimated bills, billing errors and problems with opening and closing accounts.

Electricity complaints rose by nine percent and accounted for 84% of EWON's complaints in 2017/2018. Gas complaints increased by 19% and accounted for 15% of complaints to EWON from the Murray region.

"The theme of our Annual Report this year is 'Strengthening consumer protections'. We focus on ensuring all NSW energy customers receive equitable access to free, fair and independent dispute resolution services and that issues that impact on customers are brought to the attention of energy and water providers, government and regulators," Ms Young stated.

For more information or to arrange an interview with the Ombudsman, contact: Jacqui Heywood, Communications Officer – 0426 822 341 / jacquelineh@ewon.com.au.

**EWON's Murray reporting region includes the following Local Government Areas: Albury, Balranald, Berrigan, Edward River, Federation, Greater Hume Shire, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Snowy Valleys, Wentworth, Carrathool, Coolamon and Cootamundra – Gundagai.*