



Energy & Water  
Ombudsman NSW  
Free, fair and independent

# Media release

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

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## Complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW increase by 11% in the Murrumbidgee region of NSW

Complaints to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) increased from the Murrumbidgee region\* of NSW in 2017/2018, rising 11% from 2016/2017 to 534.

According to EWON's Annual Report released today, billing complaints rose 16% in 2017/2018 and continue to be the most significant complaint issue raised with EWON, present in 60% of all complaints from the Murrumbidgee region. Billing issues include high and estimated bills, billing errors and problems with opening and closing accounts.

Complaints related to energy affordability, including payment difficulties, debt collection, credit default listings and disconnections, increased by 60% in the Murrumbidgee region, and were present in 35% 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," explained Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young.

The report also shows a three percent 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 42% of complaints in this 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," Ms Young said.

Electricity accounted for 79% of EWON's complaints in 2017/2018, and has increased by 20% from 2016/2017. Gas complaints fell by nine percent and are present in 20% of cases from the Murray region and water complaints decreased by 58% and account for one percent of all complaints in this 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](mailto:jacquelineh@ewon.com.au).**

*\*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.*