



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW
Free, fair and independent

Quarterly Activity Report

Complaints, Case Studies and Community

1/1/2018 to 31/3/2018



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Introduction

Welcome to the EWON Quarterly Report for the period 1/1/2018 to 31/3/2018.

Our complaint environment

During the quarter we received 5,653 complaints, a 4.2% decrease when compared to the same period in the previous year, and a 17.9% drop when compared to last quarter. At the date of this report, the 2017/2018 forecast for total complaints received is around 26,500, up from the 26,000 projected when the budget was finalised in April 2017.

The most prominent source of complaints this quarter has been complaints about high energy bills. This is followed by complaints about poor customer service and complaints about providers failing to respond to customers. The regular appearance of those last two issues in our top 10 is disappointing. It goes without saying that an increased focus on positively responding to customers would obviate the need for them to come to EWON.

Themes of this report

Our quarterly reports usually focus on one or two significant energy issues or trends that have emerged through complaints across that quarter which affect many customers. This report is different as we have looked at multiple issues that attract ongoing complaints, and cause significant distress to affected customers. As we receive a regular numbers of complaints about these issues, we have gone back the past year for case studies, rather than our usual practice of sourcing case studies exclusively from just this quarter. These issues are:

1. Customers having difficulty obtaining language assistance where they require it. Australia is increasingly multicultural and many customers do not speak English as a first language. It is essential that providers make it as easy as possible for these customers to engage with them.
2. Common hot water systems. Complaints about common hot water systems make up only 5% of gas complaints but, due to their complexity, make up a higher proportion of investigated cases.
3. Complaints about direct debits and what can go wrong when unauthorised debits are made.
4. Complaints about inadequate information being provided by comparison sites, leaving some customers on higher cost deals than before switching.
5. Rebates not being applied to customer accounts. This not only leaves the customer worse off, it puts the provider at greater risk of costs they may incur when that customer is unable to pay their account.
6. Providers not properly handling accounts of deceased customers.
7. Online portals which support energy packages but when accessed by customers are not aligned with their expectations.
8. Digital meter delays, which now include complaints relating to meters not being installed to replace aged or failed meters, or at a new home, leaving the customer connectionless.
9. Privacy.

While the above energy related issues may be of broader interest, in the water section we have separated the complaints into two classes:

1. Complaints about large water providers.
2. Complaints about water providers who supply water to a small number of customers under the Water Industry Competition Act.

We have also included our usual section on complaints from customers of exempt entities, as well as information about our stakeholder management.

We welcome any feedback about this report. For further information, or to discuss any aspect of it, please contact our office. Contact details are on the cover of this report.

Complaint Activity January – March 2018

Overview

Complaints received by EWON this quarter decreased by 4.2% in comparison to the same period in 2017 (5,653 compared to 5,901). When compared with last quarter, there has been a decrease in complaints of 17.9% (5,653 compared to 6,888), driven by a 14.0% drop in electricity complaints, a 32.3% drop in gas complaints and a 14.9% drop in water complaints.

Electricity: The 4,247 electricity retail complaints represent an increase of 8.5% when compared with Q3 2016/2017, when there were 3,915. However, it represents a 14.4% decrease from last quarter’s count of 4,965 complaints. Similarly, the 203 distribution cases opened is a reduction of 25.4%, when compared with 272 in the same quarter last year, and a reduction of 14.2% compared to last quarter. Overall electricity complaints increased by 4.1%, 4,544 this quarter compared to 4,364 in the corresponding 2017 quarter and decreased by 14.0% compared to last quarter.

Gas: The number of gas retail complaints received this quarter (890) decreased by 29.4% in comparison to the corresponding period in 2017 (1,260) and by 31.4% compared with last quarter (1,299). As well, the number of gas distribution complaints (43) fell by 44.9% in comparison to the equivalent period last year (78) and by 46.9% compared to last quarter (81). Overall, gas complaints (937) decreased by 30.2%, compared to 1,343 in January – March 2017 and by 32.3% when compared to 1,386 last quarter. This was due to a decline in complaints about delays in new connections and a reduced level of complaints about estimated bills as retailers began accepting customer self reads.

Water: The number of water complaints received this quarter (166) decreased by 11.2% compared to the corresponding period in 2017 (187) and by 14.9% compared to last quarter. High bills were the largest source of water complaints.

Exempt entities: EWON received 22 complaints from customers of exempt entities this quarter compared to 30 in the same quarter in 2017 and 28 last quarter. Most of these received were electricity related (20).

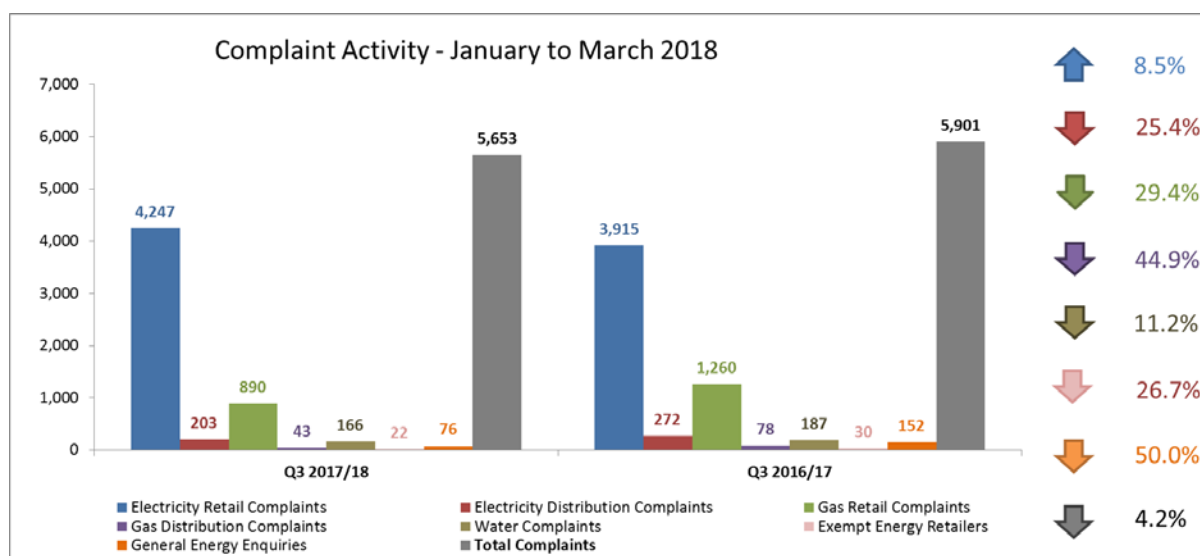


Table 1 provides more detailed information about the number of complaints received from January to March 2018, in comparison to the previous three quarters and the corresponding period in 2017.

Table 1 – Files opened January – March 2018, including previous quarters

Case Subject	Provider Type	Jan 18 – Mar 18	Oct 17 - Dec 17	July 17 – Sep 17	April 17 – June 17	Jan 17 – Mar 17
Electricity	Distributor	203	232	269	251	272
Electricity	Exempt retailer	20	25	45	43	29
Electricity	General enquiry	74	61	121	130	148
Electricity	Retailer	4,247	4,965	4,979	4,534	3,915
Electricity Total		4,544	5,283	5,414	4,958	4,364
Gas	Distributor	43	81	148	134	78
Gas	Exempt retailer	2	3	4	2	1
Gas	General enquiry	2	3	8	10	4
Gas	Retailer	890	1,299	1,271	1,209	1,260
Gas Total		937	1,386	1,431	1,355	1,343
Non energy/ Non water	General enquiry	6	24	21	28	7
Non energy/ Non-water Total		6	24	21	28	7
Water	Distributor	61	47	54	52	63
Water	Exempt retailer	0	0	1	1	1
Water	General enquiry	7	11	11	11	12
Water	Retailer	98	137	165	130	111
Water Total		166	195	231	194	187
Grand Total		5,653	6,888	7,097	6,535	5,901

Customer Complaint Issues

High bill complaints numbered 1,782, down from 2,464 last quarter, but still remaining the largest issue, representing 13.8% of all issues raised this quarter. Despite complaint numbers being at their lowest in five quarters, we nevertheless saw increases in customer service complaints about incorrect advice, customer service complaints about failure to consult or inform, and complaints about credit ratings.

Table 2 – Top 10 issues January – March 2018, including previous quarters

Primary Issue	Secondary Issue	Tertiary Issue	Jan-18 – Mar 18	Oct 17 – Dec 17	July 17 – Sep 17	April 17 – June 17	Jan 17 – Mar 17
Billing	High	Disputed	1,782 (13.8%)	2,464 (16.7%)	1,915 (13.1%)	1,501 (10.9%)	1,562 (12.4%)
Customer service	Poor service		1,367 (10.6%)	1,577 (10.7%)	1,612 (11.0%)	1,338 (9.7%)	1,358 (10.8%)
Customer service	Failure to respond		1,097 (8.5%)	1,194 (8.1%)	1,108 (7.6%)	1,031 (7.5%)	990 (7.9%)
Customer service	Incorrect advice /information		624 (4.9%)	569 (3.9%)	628 (4.3%)	562 (4.1%)	505 (4.0%)
Billing	Estimation	Meter access / not read	564 (4.4%)	609 (4.1%)	581 (4.0%)	557 (4.1%)	606 (4.8%)
Billing	Opening/closing account		560 (4.4%)	714 (4.8%)	550 (3.8%)	544 (4.0%)	483 (3.9%)
Customer service	Failure to consult / inform		479 (3.7%)	398 (2.7%)	320 (2.2%)	289 (2.1%)	276 (2.2%)
Credit	Payment difficulties	Current/ arrears	449 (3.5%)	558 (3.9%)	594 (4.1%)	492 (3.6%)	389 (3.1%)
Billing	Error	Other	378 (2.9%)	386 (2.6%)	308 (2.1%)	285 (2.1%)	299 (2.4%)
Credit	Collection	Credit rating	276 (2.1%)	222 (1.5%)	264 (1.8%)	220 (1.6%)	247 (2.0%)
Total Number of Issues Per Quarter			12,847	14,768	14,630	13,755	12,558

Energy Issues

The breakdown of all energy complaints by case category is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Case breakdown – Energy

Complaint type	Number of complaints	% Total energy complaints
General Enquiry	23	0.4%
Complaint enquiry	1,715	31.3%
Refer to Higher Level	2,279	41.6%
Investigated	1,464	26.7%
Total	5,481	100%

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) customers having difficulty obtaining language assistance

There are a number of requirements on retailers for referring CALD customers to language assistance services in the National Energy Retail Rules. For example:

- Rule 55 states that retailer must refer a residential customer to a relevant interpreter service if a referral is necessary or appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of the customer.
- Rule 25 requires the contact details of interpreter services in community languages be included on customer bills.

However, there appears to be a wide range of different responses to these requirements. Our recent experience is that customers can be discouraged from making a complaint or asking for payment assistance if the retailer does not offer additional assistance to customers having difficulty speaking English.

A disputed high gas bill

Many of the problems encountered by energy consumers can be complex. In this case, the customer requested more information by email due to her difficulties with English and this was not provided by the retailer.

A customer, a native Mandarin speaker with poor English, contacted her retailer to complain about a high quarterly bill for \$696. The customer's retailer arranged for the customer to be contacted to arrange a time to read the meter. The customer was then contacted again by phone but could not understand the caller. The customer asked for an email so she could read, and understand, what she needed to do. The customer did not receive an email and she then received a disconnection warning notice for non-payment of the gas account.

EWON contacted the retailer to request a review of the customer's gas bills. The retailer identified that usage recorded by the customer's hot water meter was contributing towards a significant proportion of the customer's overall charges. The retailer offered to assist the customer by reducing the customer's arrears by 50% and suggested a plumber be engaged to investigate the efficiency of the hot water system, as that was where the increased consumption appeared to be.

The customer accepted this resolution to her complaint and EWON emailed the customer with information about what steps her retailer could take to help her investigate the hot water service.

A disputed high electricity bill

Making a complaint is even more difficult if the customer has difficulty with English and this may discourage all but the most resilient consumers.

A customer contacted his retailer to advise he would be closing his account. The customer was advised by the retailer that the balance of his account was \$257.69, which he paid on the same day. The customer then received a final bill for \$352.38 which he considered too high as he had only just paid the balance. The customer had tried to make a complaint to his retailer before contacting EWON but found the process too difficult without the assistance of a Romanian interpreter.

The matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with a summary of the complaint and advice that the customer needed the assistance of a Romanian interpreter.

The customer returned to EWON advising that he had not been contacted by the retailer as requested. EWON contacted the retailer to obtain further information about the customer's disputed electricity bill. The retailer acknowledged that the customer may not have had the best customer service experience, and offered to waive the balance it said owed on the account, \$352.38. The customer accepted the outcome offered by the retailer as resolution to the complaint.

A non-compliant disconnection of the customer's gas supply for non-payment

The customer was unable to get the gas supply to the property reconnected after disconnection for non-payment, due to language difficulties.

A customer's gas supply was disconnected by his retailer due to non-payment. As the customer could not speak English, the customer's advocate rang the retailer on his behalf to get him reconnected. The advocate offered to arrange payment of the outstanding account; however the retailer refused to reconnect the property without speaking directly to the customer. The customer's advocate then contacted EWON and we obtained customer consent to liaise with the advocate.

An EWON investigation found that the notices warning of the outstanding account balance and risk of disconnection had been sent to the customer's previous address. The retailer applied an appropriate credit to the customer's gas account as a customer service gesture in recognition of its error. The retailer updated the customer's contact details to include his mobile number and the correct postal address.

A customer requesting payment assistance

A customer may appear to be able to speak English, but not have the adequate language skills to be assertive enough to ask for payment assistance or negotiate an affordable payment plan.

A customer and her advocate approached EWON at a community outreach event. The customer spoke some basic English but required her advocate to provide language assistance. The customer advised EWON that she was having trouble with her electricity account and that she needed assistance paying it. The customer had previously received \$250 as a payment towards her account through the EAPA Scheme. The customer had contacted her retailer to discuss the arrears but found it too difficult to negotiate an affordable payment plan.

EWON contacted the retailer to find out what options the customer had for payment of the account. The retailer advised that the current debt was \$260 and that the customer had an irregular payment history. The retailer agreed to refer the customer to be assessed for its hardship program. The retailer offered to contact the customer again through an interpreting service to discuss the different payment options available under the hardship program. EWON believes this is a much more effective approach for providing affordability assistance.

A customer with complex issues requesting payment assistance

A customer with some basic English skills may still lack the confidence to negotiate complex or difficult conversations with their energy retailer. If a retailer refuses to accept a call from an interpreting service, we would expect the retailer to follow up with that customer to see what assistance can be provided.

A customer contacted EWON through an interpreter service for advice about a quarterly electricity bill she had received for \$472. The customer's husband had recently been in hospital after a health emergency which had left her needing some assistance paying her electricity account. The customer's husband was also receiving dialysis and had a CPAP machine, and was in the process of having a doctor fill in the forms to apply for rebates relating to these devices.

EWON suggested that the customer contact her retailer in the first instance to discuss payment options.

The customer returned to EWON as the retailer had refused to accept her telephone call via an interpreting service. The customer could speak some basic English but did not have the confidence to negotiate with her retailer without assistance. EWON contacted the retailer who advised that the customer's applications for rebates had been received and all appropriate rebates would be applied to her next bill. The retailer also advised that it would offer an affordable payment plan. The customer paid the outstanding amount and EWON provided the customer with information about the retailer's hardship program and the NSW Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme.

Common hot water systems

EWON complaints from customers about common hot water systems make up about 5% of the overall number of gas complaints EWON receives each year. They are often difficult to resolve, involving complex billing calculations or arising from business to business processes between gas retailers and gas distributors. These complexities result in common hot water complaints making up a disproportionate number of EWON's longer term investigations. The issues experienced by customers with common hot water systems include:

- billing errors by gas retailers, particularly relating to the common factors and multipliers used to convert hot water usage (decalitres) to gas usage (Megajoules);
- malfunctions in the meter data logger (MDL) devices used by the gas distributor to remotely read inaccessible hot water meters; and
- significant delays in the replacement of faulty hot water meters.

A high bill complaint reveals underlying issues with the common hot water system

This demonstrates the complexity that can arise, but also that the response from both retailer and distributor should have been timelier.

A customer advised that she had moved into her premises eight months prior and established a gas account. She did not receive invoices for a long period of time until she received two bills, both for \$353. The customer complained to her retailer about the bill and she subsequently received a third bill for \$463. The customer contacted EWON to complain about the billing of her gas account. As there was unobstructed access to the gas and hot water meters, the customer provided EWON with her own meter readings.

EWON referred the customer's complaint to a higher level at the retailer. The retailer contacted the customer and asked her to take another set of readings. The retailer assessed that based on the customer's own meter readings, the MDL had become misaligned with the meters. The retailer requested that the distributor visit the building to check the alignment of the MDL. The distributor advised that this action would take two months. The customer also provided the retailer with her concession details because the NSW gas rebate was not appearing on her bills.

The customer contacted EWON again a month later because she had received a gas bill for over \$900 based on her own meter readings. EWON contacted the retailer and requested a response to the complaint. The customer paid the amounts owing. The distributor visited the customer's home and advised that there appeared to be a problem with the customer's hot water service, and that the hot water meter was also recording cold water usage. The customer hired a plumber to fix this issue. The distributor visited the building again two months later to align the MDL and obtain meter readings. A further month later, the retailer then advised EWON that the distributor was amending the meter data based on the readings taken during the site visits.

The retailer received the amended meter readings from the distributor and rebilled the customer back to the start of the account. This occurred nearly almost four months after the distributor's final visit to the property, and resulted in a credit on her account of \$436. The customer finally received amended bills ten months after contacting EWON.

A high bill complaint reveals the complexity of billing for hot water usage

The calculations made to convert the litres of hot water that a customer uses to the Megajoules of gas used to heat that water are very complex. In this case an error was made on the customer's first bill that was later corrected. However, it took over 6 months for the customer to obtain an appropriate explanation for the amended bill.

A customer contacted EWON and advised that he did not receive a bill from his gas retailer for nine months. The customer had called his retailer on multiple occasions and was told that his bill was not ready to be sent. The customer eventually received his gas bill and was asked to pay a backbill of 6

months. The customer paid this and then received a second bill which cancelled the previous bill he had received and paid. The customer checked the second bill and noted that the common factor, the number used to calculate the number of Megajoules used to heat the hot water used by the customer, had been changed from 0.5432 to 5.4320, resulting in an increase in his charges for gas usage. The customer received a letter of apology from the retailer for the revised bill with no explanation for the changes. The customer also checked with his neighbour who was billed on a common factor of 0.5432. The customer complained to his retailer and he was told that the bill was correct. EWON referred the customer's complaint to a higher level at the retailer.

The customer returned to EWON advising that he had been contacted again by the retailer who advised it had clarified the billing information with the distributor. The retailer stated that the billing was correct, but provided no explanation. The retailer had also told him he could contact the distributor directly to clarify this information.

EWON contacted the retailer and requested further information, including the customer's billing history and the meter data recorded by the distributor. Following our review, EWON advised the customer that the approach taken by the retailer resulted in an accurate bill. The number of Megajoules used by a customer with a hot water meter was calculated by first multiplying the number of decalitres recorded by the hot water meter by 10 to get the number of litres used. This number was then multiplied by the common factor. In this case, it was the retailer's practice to multiply the common factor by 10 before itemising it on the customer's bill. Based on this information, we advised the customer that the first bill he received contained an error because the common factor had not been multiplied by 10. This error was corrected on the second bill which increased the number of Megajoules he was charged for using. The customer was satisfied with EWON's explanation and confirmation that the amended billing by the retailer was correct.

Faulty hot water meter

A lengthy delay before the fault with the customer's meter was identified and replaced.

A customer contacted EWON to complain that the billing of his hot water usage by his gas retailer had been erratic and inaccurate. The customer had previously contacted his retailer to request a review of the billing of his gas account. The retailer reviewed the billing and advised the customer that the charges he had received were accurate. The customer believed that the hot water system may be faulty.

EWON referred the customer's complaint to a higher level at the retailer. The customer returned to EWON as the complaint was not resolved to the customer's satisfaction.

EWON contacted the retailer to obtain further information about the complaint. The retailer requested that the customer provide a recent photograph of the meter showing the meter reading to enable the distributor to verify the previously recorded meter readings. The retailer advised that the customer's hot water meter was not accessible and the meter was read remotely using a MDL. EWON obtained photographs from the customer, who had provided photographs previously to the retailer. EWON advised the retailer that the customer's readings did not align with the meter readings on which he had been billed.

The retailer advised EWON that it had sought further information about the meter readings from the gas distributor. EWON then received advice from the distributor that, based on the readings provided, an appointment had been made with the customer to check the alignment of the MDL. During this visit, the distributor found the customer's hot water meter to be faulty. The distributor then had to wait for new hot water meters to be in stock before the meter could be replaced. The faulty meter was not replaced until nine months after the customer first approached EWON. The retailer amended the customer's billing based on this new information and provided the customer with an appropriate goodwill credit reflective of the inconvenience caused by the delays in initial complaint response then meter replacement.

Direct debit complaints

Authorising a third party to access bank accounts requires a high level of customer trust. When an error occurs it is essential that it be rectified as quickly as possible. Delays leave the customer without access to their money and can result in added costs if, for example, the account is overdrawn. It is particularly frustrating for customers when, after an initial error is resolved, further errors occur.

On-going incorrect withdrawals

The continued failure to resolve errors in direct debiting resulted in this retailer losing a customer.

A customer experienced ongoing issues with trying to establish a satisfactory payment plan with her retailer via bill smoothing and direct debit. On three separate occasions the retailer direct debited wrong amounts from her accounts on wrong dates. She continuously contacted the retailer to rectify this and it deposited the money back into her accounts only for it to happen again, weeks later. The matter was initially referred to the retailer at a higher level for resolution. The customer then returned to EWON as she was not satisfied with the retailer's response to her complaint. She said that the retailer had not apologised and was not prepared to discuss the fees she had incurred from her bank due to the lack of funds when other direct debits occurred.

After contact from EWON the retailer offered to waive the customer's arrears in recognition of the poor customer service provided. The customer accepted this offer as it covered the fees she had incurred, and also indicated that she was transferring to another retailer after her poor experience.

Unauthorised direct debits

An initial error in direct debiting for the full arrears rather than authorised amounts was compounded by further direct debits on an account for which there was no authorisation at all.

A customer advised that she had a direct debit set up for her electricity and gas accounts of \$100 and \$50 respectively but that her retailer had taken \$2,004.74 from her account without consent on 23 August 2017. This resulted in her account having a negative balance and caused numerous other problems. She contacted her retailer when she became aware of the situation. The customer said that the service representative was very dismissive, rude and unhelpful. The customer requested that the funds be returned and was advised this would be done after 5pm that afternoon, a Friday. This was not done and she subsequently made many calls to the retailer to try and make them return her money, without success. This caused great hardship and embarrassment and she then approached EWON for assistance in getting the retailer to return her money and also to pay the costs associated with other direct debits being declined.

This matter was investigated and the customer's money was refunded. The retailer also agreed to pay the customer \$300 for the inconvenience caused.

The customer returned to EWON because, when she was arranging for the refund with the retailer, she had provided a different account number for the funds to be returned to. She was also assured that direct debit authority had been cancelled. There were then two more direct debits totalling \$340 from the new account, for which no authority to direct debit had ever been given.

EWON contacted the retailer about this latest direct debit. The retailer again apologised and said that it was a human error. The money was returned and an extra \$200 was provided to the customer in recognition of the further inconvenience experienced. The customer's account was placed on hold to allow the customer to establish an ongoing agreed payment arrangement for the arrears.

Ongoing direct debit errors

After an initial error was acknowledged a more serious error occurred when the direct debit was reinstated without authorisation after a customer had cancelled the arrangement.

The customer transferred retailers and established a bill smoothing arrangement of \$52 to be deducted each Friday. She came to EWON because, as well as the authorised Friday deduction, the retailer was also deducting the same amount every Wednesday.

EWON arranged for the latest deduction of \$52 to be returned to the customer and the retailer paid \$150 as a customer service gesture. The direct debit was cancelled and the customer agreed to pay manually once she received her first bill.

The customer then returned to EWON as the retailer had taken a further three payments from her account. When EWON asked why there had been further deductions the retailer explained that the direct debit arrangement had been cancelled then mistakenly reinstated and so the missed deductions were all taken at once. The retailer also indicated that the direct debit arrangement had again been cancelled. The retailer refunded the money, bringing the account into credit, and also indicated that the matter would be referred internally for review by the billing team.

Multiple withdrawals on same day

When an error is made in the direct debit process it is essential that it is corrected in a timely fashion to reduce the risk of adverse impacts on the customer.

A customer advised that she received her final bill for \$213 from her retailer. She entered into a payment arrangement to pay \$71 per week over 3 weeks to finalise the account. On the day her first instalment was due to be paid, four separate withdrawals, each of \$71, were made. She attempted to get the money refunded and was advised that this would be raised as an urgent request and the funds would be back in her account within 12 - 24 hours, but this did not occur. She then contacted the retailer again and was advised that the money would be in her account by the end of the day. She then received an email stating that the refund would take 7-10 days and that it would be \$142 rather than \$213. This left her without funds and she had to borrow money for food.

EWON arranged for \$213 to be refunded urgently to the customer and a hold was placed on the account. The also retailer provided a small credit as a customer service gesture. The customer agreed to pay the final balance in four instalments through Bpay.

Comparison sites

Comparison and switching services can play an important role in assisting customers to find the best market contract for their circumstances. Relevant information must be clearly provided to customers of such services.

Disclosure by switching sites

In this case there was inadequate disclosure on the part of the comparison site.

A customer changed retailers through a switching site offer. When the contract arrived, he checked the terms, which had not been disclosed prior to signing up for the offer. He found that the new contract had significantly higher rates than his previous retail contract. He sent in a cancellation notice within the 10-day cooling off period and tried numerous times to gain confirmation that he had cancelled but received no response from the retailer. He called EWON seeking assistance in gaining confirmation of his cancellation of the contract.

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level.

Discount availability

EWON is receiving a number of complaints about offers that have restrictions on the applications of the discount and the transparency of such offers.

A customer was part of a club that offers special deals for senior customers. He was comparing energy offers and the club offered a 37% discount with a particular energy retailer. He identified that the retailer had high rates and that the discount was not available on the first and last bill. The customer felt that the offer was misleading and that the details were hidden in fine print. The customer felt that this was not an ethical way to run a business. The customer had not taken out a contract and just wanted his concerns noted by EWON.

This matter was treated as a complaint enquiry and the Ombudsman has written to the retailer about this product seeking action to address multiple customer concerns.

Disclosure by switching sites

If a retailer is accepting customers from a switching site there is an added responsibility to ensure that the customer has provided explicit informed consent for the new contract.

A customer changed retailers based upon information provided by a switching site offer. She said that she did not receive a welcome pack and that the first information on the rates she was paying came with the first invoice. When she compared rates, she found that the usage charges were significantly higher than her previous rates and that the discount was not applied to the first bill. She said that if she had been able to compare the rates she would have cancelled the contract in the cooling off period. She had contacted the retailer but did not get a satisfactory response. She then sought EWON's assistance in gaining a cancellation of her contract. This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level. The customer was not contacted by the retailer and a facilitated contact was arranged. This also failed and the customer asked EWON to investigate her complaint.

The retailer made an offer to the customer, through EWON, to resolve the customer's concern. The retailer offered to apply the pay on time discount of \$121 and provide a \$50 goodwill gesture which reduced the arrears to \$155. The customer agreed to this offer and indicated that she would transfer her account.

Rebate errors

Customers who are eligible for rebates are potentially financially vulnerable. When a customer has provided all of the relevant information, the process should be automatic. If a rebate is not applied when this error is identified, the correction should be given the highest priority.

No rebate applied

Where there has been an error identified this should be rectified quickly and not need EWON's intervention.

A customer transferred retailers 12 months previously. He provided his pension card details, however the NSW Low Income Household Rebate (LIHR) had not been applied to his account. He had contacted his retailer a number of times and was assured the rebate would be applied. When his latest bill arrived without the LIHR. He came to EWON seeking assistance to have the rebate applied

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with the customer's agreement, knowing he could re-contact EWON if necessary.

Incorrect information provided on how to get the rebate

Customers apply for the NSW Low Income Household Rebate by providing their details to their retailer. This is normally done by phone and should not require a form or application to Centrelink which is a Federal body.

A customer supplied her retailer with her concession card details. The retailer responded with an e-mail informing the customer that she needed to contact Centrelink to apply for the NSW Low Income Household Rebate. Centrelink, correctly, told the customer she had to apply to the retailer. She contacted her retailer again who said that it would send her a form. She contacted EWON as the form had not arrived and she was confused. EWON informed her that the process should be automatic and that the rebate should apply from the moment that she provided her details to the retailer.

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with the customer's agreement, knowing she could re-contact EWON if necessary.

Failure to apply rebate

If a rebate is not applied because of an error on the part of a retailer then it has a responsibility to fully rectify that error.

A customer advised that she had an electricity account for two and a half years, but the retailer had not applied the Low Income Household Rebate for this period of time. She called her retailer who advised it would pay the rebate going forward and apply a credit for the last 12 months. The retailer told her that it had had all the details it needed to be able to pay the rebate for two and a half years but were unable to say why it had not done so. She came to EWON seeking to have the rebate applied back to when she had provided the retailer with the appropriate details. This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level. The customer returned to EWON as the retailer had told her it would investigate but had not re-contacted her. She had received an invoice that indicated the rebate had been paid but she could not understand how it had been applied.

Via EWON's investigation, the retailer responded that it had applied \$1,088 credit to the customer's account and that it could not identify why the rebate had not been applied in the first instance. The retailer offered a further \$430 which ensured that the rebate was backdated to the customer's point of application.

Failure to apply rebate

If the failure to apply the rebate is an error on the part of the retailer then there should not be an artificial limit placed upon the backdating.

An advocate found that a customer was not receiving the rebate to which he was eligible due to an error made by the retailer. The retailer acknowledged the error but it advised that it was only able to reimburse the customer backdated one year. When, after three months no reimbursement had been paid, she contacted EWON.

When the advocate contacted EWON she said that as the error was on the part of the retailer, the customer should be entitled to be reimbursed for the full term of the account. The advocate considered the lack of action taken to resolve the matter and the lack of contact was poor customer service.

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with the customer's agreement, knowing he could re-contact EWON if necessary.

Deceased Estates

Finalising the affairs of a deceased family member is stressful and can often cause further grief. Difficulties arising about closing accounts can, and do, increase the stress and cause distress. Failures of this process are serious and should trigger the need for further training and possibly a review of policies and procedures.

Incorrect billing for early termination fee after account closure

Incorrect billing of an early termination fee and direct debits that were attempted after the account was closed were compounded by further customer service oversights.

An advocate's mother passed away and he contacted her electricity retailer to close her account. He provided the necessary documentation and there was agreement on the date the account was to be closed. The account was closed eight days after the agreed date and a final bill was issued and paid. The retailer then issued a further bill with charges for another month and a half. These were dishonour charges for direct debits attempted after the account was closed and an early termination fee. The advocate had attempted to negotiate these charges but then received a further bill for \$150. This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level. The retailer did not contact the customer so a facilitated contact was arranged. The customer returned to EWON when the issue was not resolved.

An investigation was opened, however the customer called EWON and indicated that the retailer had resolved the outstanding issues and had apologised. The matter was then closed.

Failure to close account

The failure to close the account was distressing but the continued requests to speak to the customer were significantly worse.

An advocate noted the account was in the name of her deceased grandmother who passed away. Her grandfather was appointed as executor of the estate after probate was granted and his lawyer sent a copy of probate, the death certificate and other documents to the retailer asking for its assistance to close the deceased account and open a new account in the name of the executor. Four months later this had still not taken place. Each time she or the executor called the retailer to try and resolve the matter, they were asked if the retailer could speak with the account holder.

Unsurprisingly, the executor found this very distressing. There was no balance outstanding as the executor had arranged payment for all invoices that continued to be received in his deceased wife's name. The advocate came to EWON seeking assistance to have the deceased's account closed and reopened in the name of her grandfather.

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with the customer's agreement, knowing she could re-contact EWON if necessary.

Extreme distress

Sensitivity is needed when death is traumatic and unexpected. In this case the advocate was caused severe distress when she received a bill for energy usage for two months after her son had died.

An advocate's son died in traumatic circumstances. She contacted her son's electricity retailer and closed the account. She then received a bill for a two-month period dated after her son's death. She was of the opinion that the retailer had agreed to cancel the account from the date of her son's death and was distressed to receive the bill.

EWON contacted the retailer and it waived the full balance of the account.

Wrong process to close an account

Retailers need to have as standard practice simple processes in place to deal with deceased estates. Expecting families to take on the account in their own name is not appropriate.

An advocate contacted the retailer to advise that the account holder (her father) had passed away. She offered to provide a death certificate and requested that the account be closed. She was advised by the retailer that it would not close the account unless she accepted liability for the account and financial responsibility for the supply address.

She did not want to take financial responsibility for an account she was not responsible for and required a final bill to be issued in her father's name so she could arrange payment of the account from her father's estate, which could not occur if the account was in another name. She spoke with the retailer several times and it advised it could not accept the death certificate to close the account. She did not understand this, as every other organisation had accepted it for accounts in her father's name to be closed. She considered that the retailer's process was unreasonable and that it was causing her considerable distress. She approached EWON to gain assistance in closing her father's account.

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with the customer's agreement, knowing she could re-contact EWON if necessary.

Online Portals

New technology has the potential to deliver significant benefits to consumers, including assisting customers to engage with their own energy consumption and participate in the market more fully. As customers take up these offerings, there is the potential for increased complaints where the information on the customer's bill is different to the information available online.

Discrepancy between account and online portal

The time lag between the retailer contacting the customer over an unpaid bill and the updating of the online portal led to confusion.

A customer was contacted by his retailer because of an unpaid gas bill. He checked the retailer's online portal which indicated that he had a zero balance. He complained to EWON and the matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level. The customer returned to EWON after a resolution was not reached.

EWON investigated and established that the customer's payment had been dishonoured, which was not reflected online. The retailer offered to honour the pay on time discount. The customer was satisfied with this outcome, however felt that the issue was exacerbated by the information on the online portal which indicated that he had paid the bill and had a zero balance.

Dissatisfaction with app

The information provided on the app was inaccurate.

A customer contacted EWON to provide feedback about his retailer's mobile app which displayed consumption. The customer said that the app was showing extremely high usage. He contacted the retailer and was initially told that he did not understand how the app worked. The retailer then contacted the customer and admitted that the information on the app was inaccurate and did not reflect current, or even historic, usage. It informed him that the information would remain on the app until the next quarterly read was provided. The customer felt that if accurate information was not available, then no information was preferable to wrong data.

The customer just wanted to have his dissatisfaction recorded and did not require an investigation.

This matter was treated as a complaint enquiry.

Dissatisfaction with online processes

This customer couldn't register for online access.

A customer attempted to register his account for online access. He made several attempts but the website kept timing out, making registration impossible. The customer then had a webchat with a customer service assistant who said it was a temporary problem. The customer tried again later and again failed. A second webchat indicated that this was a persistent problem.

The customer did not want EWON to take the matter any further; he just wanted to record his view that advertising a service that does not work is misleading.

This matter was treated as a complaint enquiry.

Digital meter delays

Since 1 December 2017, retailers have had responsibility for metering installation in NSW, an important responsibility, particularly where a customer has no supply. When the lack of supply is caused by a damaged meter the process for replacement needs to be undertaken with the greatest of urgency. For the connection of a new supply, the process needs to be undertaken in a quick and efficient manner. EWON is now receiving many complaints about delays in both these circumstances.

Damaged meter delay

Retailers need expeditious processes for the replacement of damaged meters, especially where customers are left without supply.

A customer's meter was destroyed in a fire in late December 2017. The necessary electrical repairs were completed and the customer was waiting for a new meter, which her contractor had told her needed to be arranged through her retailer. The retailer told the customer that it would take another month to have a new meter installed. She argued with the retailer and it reduced the wait time by a week.

The customer came to EWON in January 2018 after living in the house without power for twenty days, including over Christmas, and had nowhere else to go. A neighbour had let her run an extension cord to his connection for essentials but had withdrawn it as this was tripping his supply. She was especially frustrated because another neighbour, who was with a different retailer, had his meter (which was also affected by the fire) replaced quickly.

EWON contacted the retailer and pointed out the urgency of the situation. The retailer agreed to contact the metering provider and a meter was installed the next day.

New supply connection delayed

Connecting new supply is a process that needs to be timely as customers need to be able to depend upon dates to change their living arrangements.

A customer had applied for a connection to a new house. He provided the necessary documentation and the installation was approved on 19 January 2018. The customer was told that it would take 10 business days. The customer checked again on 27 January and was assured that the installation would be completed by 2 February. When the customer checked again on 1 February the date of installation had changed to 5 February. The customer had been sleeping in his car and his family in a hotel since 2 February as they had moved out of their previous accommodation. On 5 February the meter installation did not occur and the customer came to EWON.

EWON contacted the retailer and was assured that the meter installation would occur that day. This did not happen and, again, the next day EWON was assured that the installation would occur. The customer recontacted EWON as he was still not connected to the grid so further contact was made with the retailer. The retailer then said that there was no mobile coverage at the customer's site and that a new service order for a type 4A meter was required and that it would take a further 10 days.

EWON pointed out that the matter was urgent as the customer and his family were without power and a home. The retailer agreed to urgently prioritise the installation of the meter. The installation then occurred on 8 February. EWON asked why there had been delays and the retailer identified that the original service order had been rejected and not progressed. The retailer agreed to send the customer a claim form for reimbursement of expenses incurred because of the failure in its process. The customer was aware of his right to contact EWON again if his claim was not satisfactorily addressed.

Replacement of damaged meter

While it is still early days for the new metering arrangements, it is already evident that internal processes and B2B arrangements between retailers and distributors need improvement. The delays in reconnecting this customer were exacerbated by a lack of adequate processes and an unwillingness to prioritise supply restoration.

A customer was disconnected for non-payment on 22 February 2018. A payment plan was agreed to, and a reconnection order was raised. When the distributor went to reconnect, a number of defects were identified. The distributor disconnected at the pole top and required electrical works to be undertaken before it would reconnect. The customer's landlord arranged for the work to be undertaken which was completed 28 February. To reconnect, a new meter was required and the retailer said that the earliest this could occur was 23 March. The customer made many calls to both the retailer and the distributor and could not arrange reconnection. The customer had four children which heightened the urgency of reconnection. The customer contacted EWON on 6 March after 13 days without power.

EWON contacted the retailer who said that the meter request was being treated as a new connection and that the complaint resolution team's only contact with the new connections team was by e-mail. While waiting for the retailer's response, EWON contacted the distributor and asked about a bypass connection as allowed by the National Electricity Rules. The distributor agreed to explore this option. The retailer then indicated that it would try to escalate the meter installation. Two days later no progress had been made but both the retailer and the distributor raised questions about the certificate of compliance that the electrician had completed. There were also questions about whether or not the meter installer could reverse a poll top disconnection.

The distributor indicated that the retailer had requested a bypass connection which the distributor had not actioned. EWON then contacted the retailer who re-iterated that the earliest the meter could be installed was 23 March. EWON indicated that the customer had met all of the requirements for reconnection and that the retailer should be considering payment for alternative accommodation. On EWON's urging the distributor inspected the site and identified that a bypass connection was possible if the retailer again requested it.

EWON again contacted the retailer and, after extremely lengthy discussions which were escalated to manager level, the retailer agreed to request the distributor to undertake a bypass connection. This finally occurred on 9 March. The retailer then informed EWON that the meter would be installed 3 days later. When EWON checked about the meter installation, the retailer said that the date of installation was again deferred to 23 March. The customer was satisfied with this advice, knowing he could return to EWON if it did not occur.

Delays in provision of meters for new connections

EWON is beginning to receive more complaints from builders and electrical contractors complaining about delays in the provision of new meters resulting in a lack of connection to the grid.

The customer was a builder who applied, on behalf of his customer, to a retailer for a new connection and meter installation. The application was approved and a service order was accepted by the meter provider. Nearly a month passed and he had still not been provided with an installation date. He said that each time he called, he was told that the service order would be actioned within 48 hours. He had been promised that the matter has been escalated, however the retailer could not provide him with a connection date.

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with the customer's agreement, knowing he could re-contact EWON if necessary.

Privacy issues

Customers expect retailers to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality and become very concerned when there appear to be breaches of privacy.

Misuse of information

It was inappropriate for the subcontractor to request customer details for the purpose of marketing other products through a related company.

A customer approached EWON about problems encountered in the installation of new digital meter. The customer also complained about the subcontractor of the meter provider, who had taken the customer's personal details as part of the installation and then began marketing a solar system through a related company.

EWON was able to resolve the customer's meter installation problem. In relation to the complaint about a breach of privacy, EWON was able to establish that the subcontractor was no longer engaged by the metering provider. The retailer provided the customer with a \$150 customer service credit. The customer was satisfied with the information provided about the subcontractor and considered all issues resolved.

Request for personal information

A request for payment arrangements should not require the collection of sensitive personal information. The right to a payment arrangement is built into the National Energy Customer Framework. The AER's Sustainable Payment Plans Framework had as its key principle the need for empathy and respect. This is not apparent in this case.

A customer advised that she contacted her retailer to request a payment plan. The representative asked why she wanted a payment plan to which she replied that she was having trouble paying her bills. The retailer told her it needed further information before it could set up a payment plan. She felt compelled to then give a level of personal information which made her uncomfortable. She had asked for time to pay twice previously and had not been asked to give a reason or that level of personal information. The customer said that the retailer had not informed her of any changes to their policy.

This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level with the customer's agreement, knowing she could re-contact EWON if necessary.

Personal details gained and added to account

This customer was not satisfied with the lack of explanation as to how the retailer gained his personal details.

A customer opened an account on behalf of a business. He did not provide the retailer with any personal details in this process. He then received calls on his personal phone and invoices for the business at his residential address. He wanted to find out how the retailer had obtained his personal details and how it came to associate these details with the business account. He also wanted a written apology for the breach of his privacy. This matter was referred to the retailer at a higher level. The customer returned to EWON as he was not satisfied with the retailer's response.

The retailer responded to EWON's questions, indicating that the customer was only ever a contact for the account and was not financially responsible. It provided an apology but could not provide an explanation as to how the customer's personal details were added to the account. The customer indicated that he was relieved to find that he was only ever a contact and that the retailer had apologised. The customer was not satisfied, however, that the retailer could not explain how his details were added to the account. He told EWON that he also intended to take his complaint to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Water Complaints

Water complaints received this quarter (166) decreased by 11.2% (21 complaints) compared to the corresponding period (187) in 2017 and by 14.9% (29 complaints) compared to last quarter (195).

High bills continue to be the most complained about issue for water customers contacting EWON. However, the numbers of complaints about this issue have been declining over recent quarters. Otherwise, complaints to EWON about water providers relate to customer services issues, as can be seen in Table 4 below. The jump in pressure supply issues is because of one incident in an estate serviced by a Water Industry Competition Act (WICA) distributor.

A breakdown of water case types is shown in Table 5.

Table 4 – Water Top 5 issues January – March 2018, including previous quarters

Primary Issue	Secondary Issue	Tertiary Issue	Jan 18 – Mar 18	Oct 17 – Dec 17	Jul 17 – Sep 17	Apr 17 - Jun 17	Jan 17 – Mar 17
Billing	High	Disputed	51	52	56	66	32
Customer service	Poor service		38	27	34	27	37
Customer service	Failure to respond		25	21	27	28	20
Customer service	Incorrect advice / information		15	14	13	19	12
General	Energy / Water		14	28	23	21	28
Supply	Quality	Pressure	14	1	0	2	1

Table 5 – Case breakdown – Water

Complaint type	Number of complaints	% Total water complaints
General Enquiry	0	0%
Complaint enquiry	92	55.4%
Refer to Higher Level	51	30.7%
Investigated	23	13.9%
Total	166	100%

Large water providers

A concealed leak immediately before the property was transferred to a new owner

The customer was unable to access the provider's concealed leak rebate because he could not obtain the necessary documents from a previous owner of the property. EWON asked the provider to review this decision and to be more flexible with the application of the policy to accommodate the exceptional circumstances of the customer.

A customer contacted EWON after receiving a quarterly water bill which was over \$1,300. The customer had recently purchased the property and considered that the water usage charges were too high for a household of four people. The customer contacted the water provider in the first instance and was told that the bills were based on a reading of the meter taken by a meter reader, and the full amount was payable.

The matter was referred to the water provider at a higher level.

The customer returned to EWON a few weeks later as the complaint remained unresolved. EWON contacted the water provider to clarify the details of the customer's complaint. The provider advised EWON that the customer's account commenced on 25 May 2017. The disputed bill covered the period 10 April 2017 to 11 July 2017, which included a time that the customer did not own the property. The provider noted that there was increased water consumption during the disputed period. The provider advised that the customer may be entitled to a concealed leak rebate if he could show that there had been a water leak repaired at the time excess consumption had been recorded.

The customer acknowledged that he had been advised by the water provider that a water leak had occurred on the property before he became the owner. The water provider had asked him to obtain an invoice from the plumber who fixed the leak; the provider could then consider a reduction in the bill under its concealed leak policy. However, the customer advised EWON that he had not been able to obtain a copy of an invoice.

EWON contacted the water provider again to find out if the customer could access a rebate under the concealed leak policy without documentation from the plumber. The provider reviewed the customer's situation and advised EWON that if the customer could provide a copy of the documents for the settlement of the property, it would provide the customer with a credit under its concealed leak policy. The customer provided the documents and the water provider offered to waive \$1,056 from the disputed bill. The customer accepted this outcome to his complaint.

Dispute over water charges for vacant land

The customer complained to the water provider about the rates being charged on vacant land. However, the underlying issue was that the customer was frustrated that the charges set by her local water provider appeared to be higher than those charged by the larger regional provider. EWON's independent advice resolved the complaint.

A customer contacted EWON in December 2017 to dispute a bill she received for \$314.89 for the period 1 August 2017 to 31 October 2017. The bill includes charges for drinking water, sewer service and a recycled water service.

The customer had purchased the vacant block of land in December 2016. The customer noted that there was a water meter on the site but that there had been no water usage. The customer was not planning to develop the site for at least another two years. The customer complained that there should be no charges for a vacant block of land.

The matter was referred to the water provider at a higher level.

The customer returned to EWON as the complaint remained unresolved. The customer acknowledged that the provider had explained to her that she was liable for rates because the property was connected to the network. The customer was still disputing the bill because the charges from her local provider appeared to be excessive compared to the regional water supplier for her area.

EWON contacted the water provider to clarify their understanding of the complaint and to obtain the customer's billing information. EWON reviewed the provider's customer contract, pricing schedule and the customer's charges. EWON explained to the customer that they were required to pay certain fixed charges if the property was connected to the water network. EWON also advised the customer that the review of the billing information revealed that the customer had been billed correctly. EWON also provided more information about the different water providers and how their policies and prices are regulated. The customer accepted this information as resolution to the complaint.

A claim for damages to a car after the water provider's delayed response may have contributed to the size of a pothole

A customer's car was damaged when it hit a pothole in the road. The customer returned to the site of the incident to take photographs and noticed that there was a vehicle owned by the water provider at the site and that there had been a water leak earlier that day. The damage to the vehicle was valued at \$180. The customer lodged a claim for damages with the water provider because she argued that there had been a delay in the provider's response to the water leak which resulted in the enlarging of the pothole. The customer also considered that the water provider had a responsibility to put up signage around the pothole to reduce the risk of someone damaging their car.

The matter was referred to the water provider at a higher level.

The customer returned to EWON after the water provider denied her claim. The customer had also contacted the local council which indicated that the water provider should have repaired any damage related to their work. The customer noted that the water provider had acknowledged that the leaking water pipe may have contributed to the developing pothole, but that many other factors contributed to the situation, such as heavy rainfall at the time of the incident.

EWON contacted the water provider again who advised that the leak that may have contributed to the pothole was from a private pipe, not an asset belonging to the provider. The provider had repaired the water leak as a courtesy to the customer that owned the service and they did not excavate the road. However, to resolve the complaint the water provider offered to pay the customer's \$180 claim ex gratia, which the customer accepted as a resolution to the complaint.

Performance standards for WICA providers

Currently, there are no performance standards built into the WICA regulations or licences. Consumer protection for customers of large water providers, such as Hunter Water and Sydney Water, is built into their operating licences, operated by IPART. These protections mean set rebates for customers of those large providers who experience loss of water pressure or outages above pre-determined thresholds.

Residents of a single estate reported frequent loss of water supply or low water pressure events

The provider responded to complaints in a timely manner noting that the cause of the outage events was external and beyond its control. However, from a customer's point of view, it may be reasonable for utility providers to anticipate problems during developing new stages of an estate.

In February 2018 EWON received 10 complaints from residents of a single estate. The residents complained about frequent events over a period of months where they experienced very low water pressure or no water supply at all.

During the low-pressure events residents reported not being able to use water for any practical purpose such as drinking, flushing the toilet, or having a shower (some of the residents had small children). The residents complained that they had been given limited information about the loss of water supply, however residents had received notification via text message about the low water pressure. The residents advised EWON that the provider had told them that there was a problem with one of the water pumps for the estate, following a number of outages on the electricity network for the area.

EWON contacted the provider to clarify the cause of the water supply problem and to find out what action was being taken to resolve the issue. The provider noted that the events affecting the water supply to residents of the estate had been caused by a number of factors; including outages on the local area electricity network, engineering work being undertaken to expand the water mains that had affected existing residents, and delays by the estate developer completing new infrastructure.

The provider had taken action to respond to complaints, such as offering to waive fixed charges for the period of outages or delivering water to those customers that complained. The provider also advised EWON that one of the central issues affecting water supply – the failure of the network booster pumps following electricity network outages – had been rectified by installing a backup generator with an automatic failover. EWON provided this information to the residents of the estate, which resolved their complaints.

Exempt Retailer Issues

EWON received 22 complaints from customers of exempt entities this quarter.

Seller or network operator	Complaints Received
Residential Park Operator	6
Other Exempt Retailer	16
Total	22

EWON received complaints from residential customers, involving issues such as:

- high bill disputes;
- disputes over the feed-in tariffs offered by exempt retailers for rooftop solar;
- complaints about the prices set by embedded networks for energy consumption;
- a disconnection for non-payment;
- customers unable to access an affordable payment plan;
- price increases;
- faulty metering installations;
- embedded network operators or exempt retailers failing to provide adequate information to new customers; and
- lack of access to retail competition.

This case study will also be included in the regulator's reports that EWON provides to the AEMC and the AER.

A billing dispute following a price increase

Significant price increases will lead to complaints. The complexity of the regulation governing electricity supply to residents of residential parks often means that a complaint is escalated to the tribunal, EWON or the AER.

The customer is a permanent resident of a residential park established as an embedded network. The customer complained to EWON about a price increase from \$0.16 per kWh to \$0.29 per kWh.

The customer receives electricity bills fortnightly and believes that the service availability charges he receives are higher than the residential park operator is allowed to charge under the regulations. The customer was also concerned that the electricity meters for each residential site are accumulation meters, and not time-of-use, and that the operator has not notified residents of the rules governing embedded networks as required by the AER guidelines at the start of a site agreement. The customer had made complaints to both the residential park operator and the AER before contacting EWON about the complaint. The residential park operator has advised the customer that their charges are consistent with the AER guidelines.

EWON reviewed the bills provided by the customer. EWON advised the customer that based on the standing offer rates advertised by his local area retailer, the price increase was within the limits set out with the AER Retail Exempt Selling Guideline and the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Regulation 2015 (NSW).

Stakeholder Engagement

This section gives a summary of significant stakeholder activities by EWON during this quarter.

Members	
Meetings EWON	Staff involved
Member Induction	<i>Ombudsman, General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy, General Manager Investigations, Manager Governance, and Stakeholder Relations Officers</i>
Momentum Energy	<i>Ombudsman</i>
EnergyAustralia	<i>Ombudsman / General Manager Investigations and Investigations Officers</i>
Origin Energy	<i>Ombudsman / General Manager Investigations and Investigations Officers</i>
Red Energy	<i>Ombudsman</i>
Powershop	<i>Ombudsman / General Manager Investigations</i>
Amaysim / Click Energy	<i>Ombudsman</i>
AGL	<i>Ombudsman / Investigations Officers</i>
Simply Energy	<i>Ombudsman / General Manager Investigations</i>
Alinta Energy	<i>Ombudsman and General Manager Investigations</i>
Jemena	<i>General Manager Investigations and Investigations Officers / Manager Policy and Research</i>
CovaU	<i>General Manager Investigations and Investigations Manager</i>
Ausgrid	<i>Ombudsman / Senior Policy Officer</i>
Endeavour Energy	<i>Manager Policy and Research, and Senior Policy Officer</i>
Essential Energy	<i>General Manager Investigations</i>
Locality Planning Energy (LPE)	<i>General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy, Manager Governance, General Manager Investigations, Manager Governance, and Stakeholder Relations Officer</i>
Flow Systems	<i>Ombudsman</i>
Sydney Water	<i>Ombudsman</i>
Hunter Water	<i>General Manager Investigations and Stakeholder Relations Officer</i>

Government and Other Stakeholders

Meetings	Staff involved
EWOV	<i>General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy, Manager Governance, Manager Communications, Manager Policy and Research, and Policy Officer</i>
EWOQ, EWOSA and EWOV	<i>Ombudsman</i>
AER, IPART and Department of Planning and Environment	<i>Ombudsman / General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy, Manager Governance, Manager Policy and Research, and Manager Governance</i>
AER – Exempt Entities Stakeholder Forum	<i>Manager Policy and Research, Manager Governance, and Policy Officer</i>
AEMC	<i>General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy, Manager Governance, Manager Policy and Research, and Manager Governance</i>
NSW Fair Trade Commissioner	<i>Ombudsman</i>
NCOSS	<i>Ombudsman</i>
Choice	<i>Ombudsman and General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy</i>
Energy Consumers Australia	<i>Ombudsman, Manager Policy and Research, and Policy Officers</i>
PIAC	<i>General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy, Manager Governance and Manager Policy and Research</i>

Outreach Events for January 2018

Sun day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 Meeting, Federation of Housing, Office of Environment & Heritage, PIAC & EWON, Sydney (5)	18	19	20
21	22	23 Meeting, Electorate officers Campsie and Lakemba (4)	24	25	26 YABUN, Camperdown (300+)	27
28	29	30	31 Meeting, Salvation Army Doorways Regional Manager Sydney (2)			

Blue indicates general outreach events.

Orange indicates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events.

Outreach Events for February 2018

Sun day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2 BYB , SydWest Multicultural Services, Blacktown (6) Presentation , Miller Housing NSW, Miller (10)	3
4	5 Meeting , Hawkesbury Interagency Group, Windsor (20)	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 Presentation , Northern Beaches Interagency Group Family and Children Services, Seaforth (20)	13	14 Visit , CCAS Financial Counselling, West Ryde (2) Presentation , Ryde Multicultural Interagency, West Ryde (20)	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Meeting , ISAIN (Inner Sydney Aboriginal Interagency Network), Camperdown (15)	23	24
25	26	27 Forum , Carers and consumers, Sutherland Community Centre, Sutherland, (16)	28			

Blue indicates general outreach events.

Orange indicates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events.

Outreach Events for March 2018

Sun day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Bring Your Bills , St Vincent de Paul, Mt Druitt, (6) Presentation , Office of Environment & Heritage staff - with PIAC, Sydney (16)	2 Bring Your Bills , SydWest Multicultural Services, Blacktown (6)	3 Presentation , St Vincent de Paul Member's Festival Day, Pennant Hills, (75)
4	5	6 Presentation , Barriekneal Aboriginal Housing, Lightning Ridge, (13) Bring Your Bills & Family Fun Day , Goodooga, (100+)	7 ADR Meeting - JOIN group at Parramatta Diversity Services, Parramatta, (19) Bring Your Bills & Family Fun Day , Gulargambone, (100+)	8 Bring Your Bills & Family Fun Day , Lake Cargelligo, (100+)	9 EXPO , International Women's Day hosted by SydWest Multicultural Services Blacktown, (150)	10
11	12	13 Bring Your Bills , Orana Inc, Sutherland, (50)	14	15 Resources , Benevolent Society Carers Groups, Sutherland and Greenwood Resources , Bridges Carer and Respite Menai	16	17
18	19	20 Resources , Housing NSW, Lalor Park	21 Bring Your Bills , with Hunter Water and 15 Exhibitors on Harmony Day, Belmont, (10)	22 Bring Your Bills , with Hunter Water and 15 Exhibitors on Harmony Day, Maitland, (10) Resources , Office of Environment & Heritage, Lake Macquarie	23	24
25	26 Meeting , Salvation Army - Regional Representative and Doorways Manager, (3)	27	28 EXPO , Seniors Day at the Royal Agricultural Show - EWON organised marquee - for 8 partners this year, Homebush, (400)	29 Family & Information Day , Trangie Local Aboriginal Land Council, Trangie, (200)	30	31

Blue indicates general outreach events.

Orange indicates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events.