



A message from the Ombudsman

EWON turned 21 this month! As we prepared to celebrate this very significant milestone, I looked back at all we have achieved.

The Energy Industry Ombudsman NSW (EION) was officially launched by the [then] Minister for Energy, the Hon Bob Debus, on 9 June 1998. That financial year EWON's five staff handled 180 complaints from seven members.

When Sydney Water joined the scheme in 1999, EION became EWON. Today, we have 90 staff and will receive around 26,500 complaints this financial year. Our current membership of 78 is expected to reach 350 over the next two years, owing to the expansion of EWON's jurisdiction to include exempt entities operating embedded energy networks.

Our 2018/2019 Annual Report to be released in October will celebrate EWON's key achievements over 21 years in detail. Keep an eye out for it.

Deputy Ombudsman announced

Not only has there been significant change over the last two decades, the pace of change has increased substantially. Since June 2018 we've seen an unprecedented number of new rules implemented to better protect energy consumers. This is being driven by intense scrutiny of the sector by politicians, regulators, the media, and importantly by technological developments.

The pace of change has put increasing pressure on EWON to contribute to policy debate and engage with stakeholders, often at a high level. To address this need, the role of Deputy Ombudsman, previously filled between 2004 and 2007, has been reinstated. I am very proud to announce that Helen Ford (formerly GM Governance, Awareness and Policy), is now Deputy Ombudsman. Many of you will have met Helen and know what an asset she is to EWON. I am very confident that as Deputy Ombudsman, Helen will be instrumental in guiding EWON through these challenging times.

Welcome to new members

We now have 12 approved exempt entity members and another 67 memberships in progress. The 12 members operate 20 sites and represent 1,600 customers. When the additional applications are finalised another 34,800 customers will have access to the same level of consumer protections that customers of authorised retailers have.

There is still a lot of work to do to bring all exempt entities into our membership, but we are well placed to achieve it.

Janine Young
Ombudsman | Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

CASES RECEIVED: JANUARY TO MARCH 2019

6,596

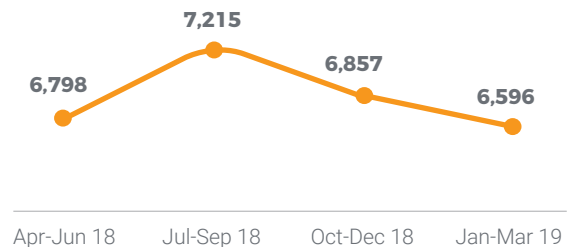
1,693

Complaint investigations

4,903

Enquiries, complaints and referrals

COMPLAINTS BY QUARTER

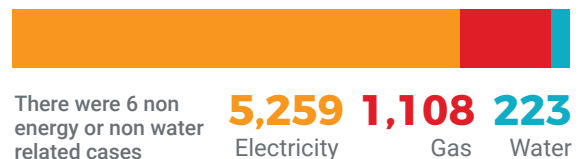


KEY ISSUES

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| BILLING | 3,773 |
| CUSTOMER SERVICE | 2,458 |
| CREDIT | 1,309 |
| DIGITAL METER EXCHANGE | 660 |
| TRANSFER | 595 |
| MARKETING | 104 |

There may be more than 1 issue per complaint.

COMPLAINTS BY INDUSTRY



There were 6 non energy or non water related cases

EWON's case data varies in accordance with case progression and figures in this newsletter reflect case status as at 15 June 2019.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols

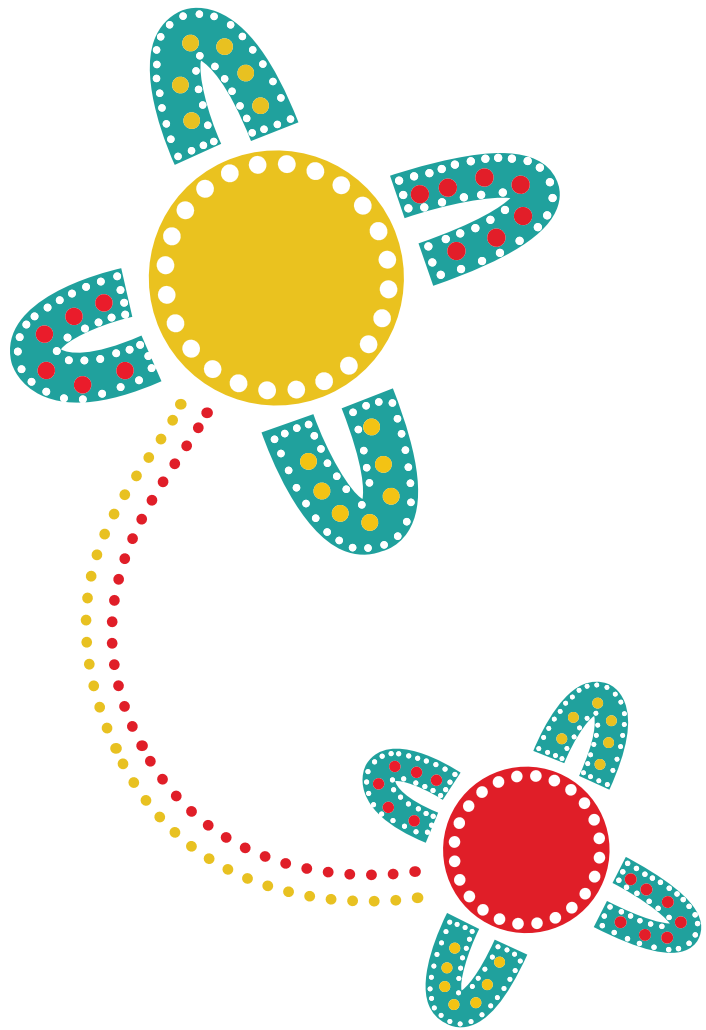
EWON developed cultural protocols to give our staff an understanding and appreciation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and how to interact and work with people in communities in a respectful and effective way.

Cultural protocols are customs, lores, values and codes of behaviour that are important to a cultural group. Observing these protocols demonstrates respect for the cultural traditions, history and diversity of that community. It also acknowledges that the protocols of this community are equally valid as those of other communities.

Cultural protocols include:

- information about Aboriginal identity including significant dates, events and ceremonies
- the importance of community, elders and traditional owners and custodians
- culturally appropriate language and how to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including building rapport and trust, listening, avoiding direct questions, language, sorry business, tips for communicating over the phone and face-to-face.

We value cultural diversity and are committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in NSW through our extensive community outreach program and by providing culturally sensitive assistance over the phone.



Watch this space!

As part of our commitment to accessibility, EWON is working on an exciting project to promote our services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In May 2019, EWON staff teamed up with comedian Sean Choolburra for a photoshoot and to record community service announcements for radio. As Sean is such a well-known and respected member of the community, his involvement in EWON's communications and engagement work will be a great way to increase awareness and trust of our service.

The campaign will be launched in the coming months – watch this space!



Customers of embedded networks can contact EWON for assistance

It's important that customers living in embedded networks know that they have many of the same rights as customers of traditional networks and authorised retailers do.

Embedded network operators must ensure that there are clear procedures in place for customers to make a complaint. All embedded network operators and exempt sellers that service residential customers in NSW must be members of EWON. This means residents living in embedded networks can contact us about any issue they have with the services provided and we can assist them in the same way we do other customers.

As well as having access to dispute resolution services, the embedded network needs to be safe for customers to use, the fees/charges for network services must be priced according to a guideline published by the Australian Energy Regulator and the electricity meters must comply with specific standards depending on when the embedded network was established.

Not sure if you're an embedded network customer?

Embedded networks are private electricity networks which supply multiple homes or businesses in a specific area. Examples of embedded networks include residential complexes, retirement villages, residential parks, shopping centres and office buildings.

Embedded networks are connected to the National Energy Market at a single point, usually called the 'parent connection point'. An embedded network operator, owner or manager purchases electricity or gas to supply in the network from an authorised energy retailer.

Companies that on-sell this electricity to customers in embedded networks are called exempt sellers. This is because they are exempt from the normal requirement to have an authorisation from the Australian Energy Regulator to sell electricity or gas. Embedded network customers buy energy that is supplied to their individual home or business from the exempt seller. This is metered at a point usually called a 'child connection point'.

Default Market Offer commencing 1 July

The Australian Energy Regulator set an annual price based on the average level of electricity consumption for each distribution region, called the Default Market Offer (DMO).

From 1 July 2019, electricity retailers must not set their standing offer prices any higher than the DMO. Electricity retailers must also clearly communicate and advertise the difference between their market offers and the DMO. This will ensure customers get clear information about the relative value of an electricity offer.

FAQs

Q: I have a standing offer on a flat tariff, will this affect me?

A: It is likely your bill will decrease but how much you save will vary depending on which retailer you are with. The price change will come into effect 1 July 2019 and customers will be notified by their retailer of the change resulting from the introduction of the DMO.

Q: What if I am on a standing offer that is currently below the DMO?

A: There will be no change to your bill.

Q: What if I am on a market offer?

A: The DMO will not affect you.

Q: What if I have a time of use tariff?

A: The DMO does not apply to time of use tariffs.

Q: Will this affect me if I have solar?

A: No, the DMO does not apply to solar customers.

Q: I own a small business – will the DMO apply to me?

A: Yes, the DMO will apply to small business customers on a standing offer with a flat rate tariff.

If you're not sure if you are on the best contract, visit energymadeeasy.gov.au or the NSW Government's switching service, available at any Service NSW centre or at energyswitch.service.nsw.gov.au to seek the best market offer available for you.

See aer.gov.au/news-release/aer-issues-default-market-offer-decision for more information.



Energy Switch now covers gas

Energy Switch is a new website developed by the NSW Government through Service NSW. Energy Switch was originally developed as an electricity only price comparator website, however, it now covers gas as well.

Energy Switch uses the same retailer information as Energy Made Easy to compare offers, however, it can also

kick start the switching process. If a customer indicates they are interested in progressing with an offer, the retailer will receive the customer's contact information and will follow up with them directly.

Visit energyswitch.service.nsw.gov.au to get started.

Record numbers at our Woy Woy Bring Your Bills Day

Over 200 residents from the Woy Woy area on the NSW Central Coast visited the Coast Community Connections centre on Thursday 11 April 2019 to attend EWON's biggest ever Bring Your Bills Day.

Over 100 people received help with energy issues, either from EWON or from one of the four energy retailers there on the day. Many people queued to speak to their retailer hoping to be offered an affordable payment plan or receive other assistance, such as having rebates applied to their account or receive Energy Account Payment Assistance.

We were joined by 20 other services, including Revenue NSW, the Office of Environment and Heritage, the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, Service NSW, the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul and the Department of Human Services. Residents received help with issues ranging from tenancy, financial and legal issues to outstanding fines, cancelled licences and much more.

EWON's outreach team has spent some time with the Central Coast community and that has obviously paid off. But we also have Coast Community Connections to thank for the success of the Bring Your Bills Day. Its help with planning the event was outstanding – from the lovely scones donated by the Woy Woy Country Women's Association and Salvo's catering, to the 'giving area' and the space for children to play, and most importantly a clothing and goods market with one special feature – no check out!

EWON now runs monthly 'Bring Your Bills' sessions in Woy Woy. Residents can book appointments to receive one-on-one support from our Investigations Officer, close to home in a place they feel comfortable. For more information about these sessions and to look for a Bring Your Bills Day near you, visit ewon.com.au/events.



Upcoming Events

Miranda - Hub Expo

Tuesday 9 July



Fairfield - Local Court Open Day

Wednesday 31 July



Liverpool - Local Court Open Day

Wednesday 1 August



Hunter Homeless Connect (Newcastle)

Wednesday 7 August



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