

## Ombudsman's Overview

### *Issues watch: credit-related disconnection of energy supply*

In this issue of Res Online we cautiously welcome a quarterly fall in credit-related energy disconnection cases, the first for the 2013-14 year. However, with no clear driver for the fall, it's hard to know what to make of it. We understand a number of smaller energy retailers have now completed their large-scale reviews of arrears and that one large energy retailer hadn't been completing disconnections for non-payment of arrears. What we hope is that the fall in EWOV cases is a sign energy retailers are taking a more customer-focused approach to affordability issues, before starting the disconnection process. We've provided some suggestions from our case experience on actions we think would help reduce these cases further. How the quarterly fall fits into the overall picture of credit-related disconnection cases for the full 2013-14 year will be explored in our 2014 Annual Report to be released later this year.

### *Systemic issues*

Under the EWOV Charter, we have a responsibility to identify potential systemic issues and, as appropriate, report these to relevant companies and regulators. In the April to June 2014 quarter we closed 11 systemic issue investigations, all in energy. Res Online includes summaries of these issues and [how they were addressed](#).

### **Contributions to public consultations**

We also [provided input](#) to three public consultations in the April to June 2014 quarter, including on the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Access to Justice Draft Report.

### **Your content suggestions are welcome at any time**

If there's something you'd like to see in Res Online, feel free to let Matt Helme, EWOV's Research and Communications Manager, know: [rct.ewov@ewov.com.au](mailto:rct.ewov@ewov.com.au)

... what we hope is that the fall in EWOV cases is a sign energy retailers are taking a more customer-focused approach to affordability issues.



Cynthia Gebert  
Energy and Water Ombudsman  
(Victoria)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Gebert'.

# Cases, Complaints, Enquiries - a Snapshot

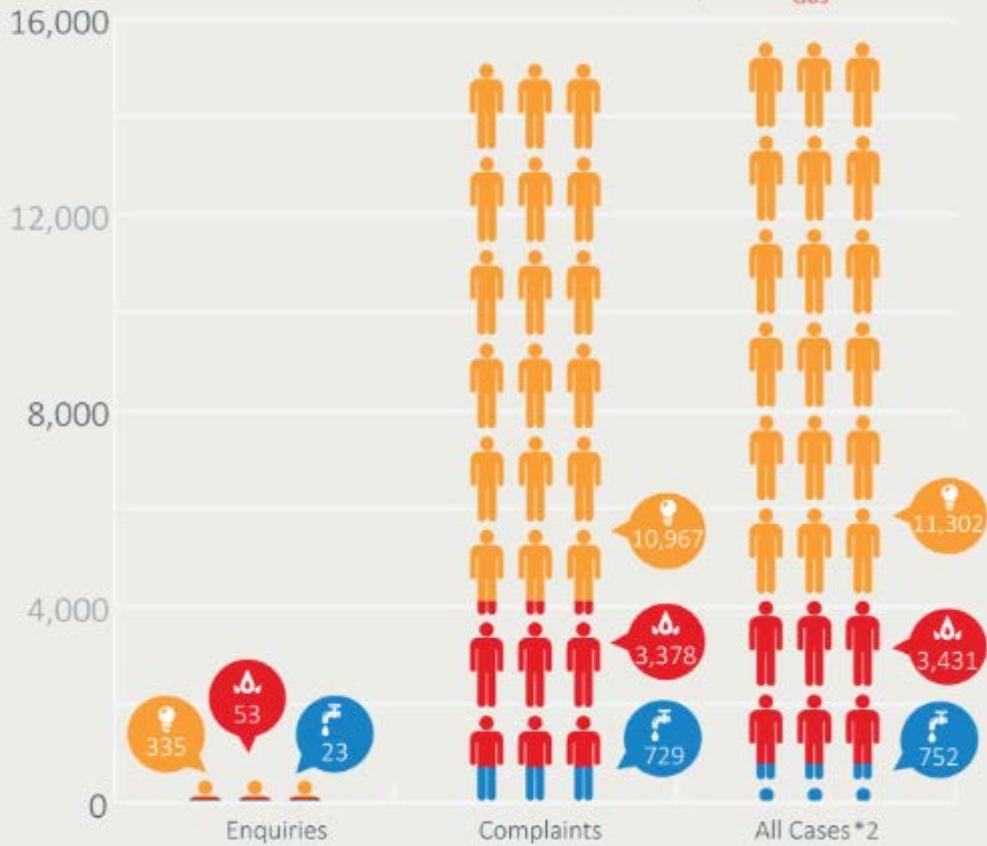
## A Snapshot



Cases customers lodged from  
**April 2014**  
to **June 2014**

## Cases Customers Lodged

**Number** of Cases customers lodged from  
**April 2014 to June 2014:**

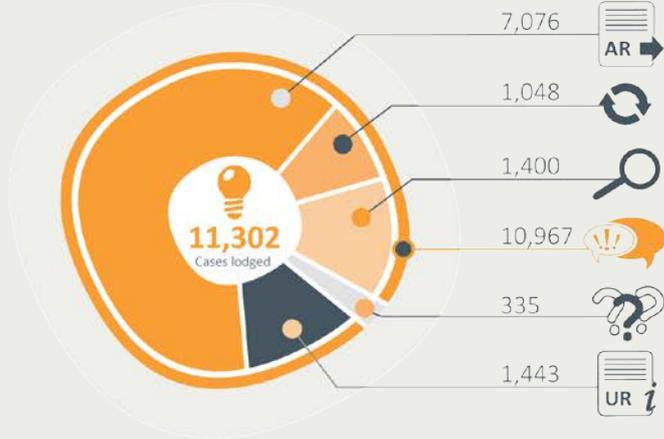


\*1 Gas includes Natural Gas and LPG cases

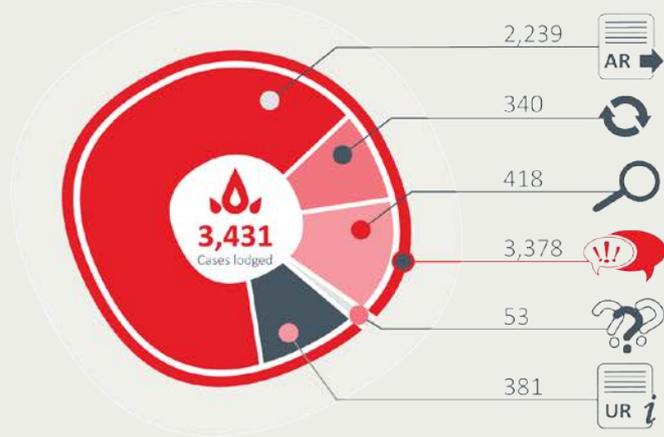
\*2 This does not include 25 Dual Fuel and 106 other industry cases

## Cases, Complaints, Enquiries - Industry

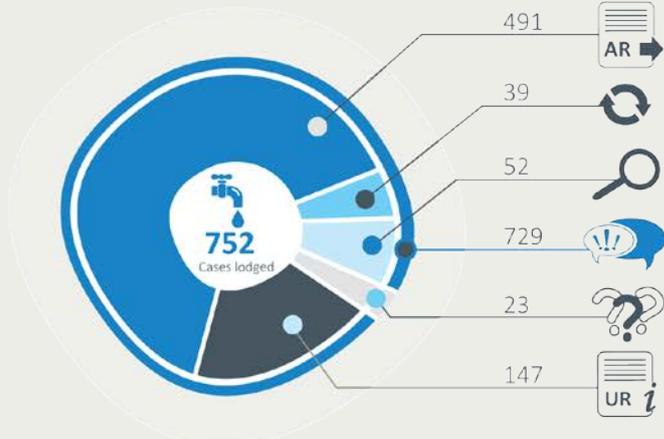
### Electricity

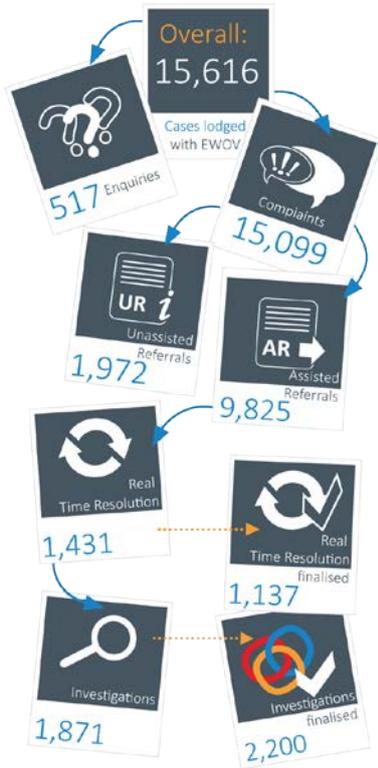


### Gas



### Water





Complaints



Enquiries



Unassisted Referrals



Assisted Referrals



Real Time Resolutions



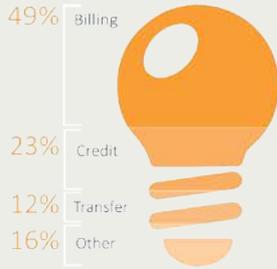
Investigations

# Trends

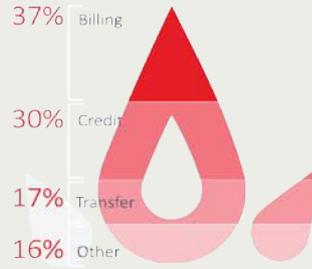
From 1 April 2014 to 30 June 2014

Please refer to company individual line graphs for more details

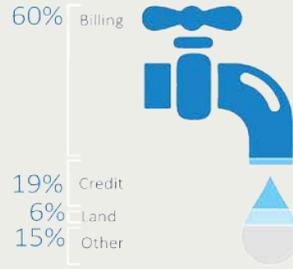
## Electricity Overall:



## Gas Overall:



## Water Overall:



### Electricity Retail Sector



### Natural Gas Retail Sector



### Metropolitan Retail Water Sector



### Electricity Distribution Sector



### Natural Gas Distribution Sector



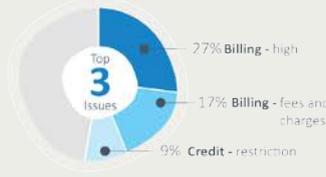
### Metropolitan Wholesale Water Sector



### LPG (Liquefied Petroleum GAS) Retail Sector



### Regional Urban Water Sector



### Rural Water Sector



### Rural Urban Water Sector



## Case Trends

1 April 2014 to 30 June 2014 quarter compared with 1 April 2014 to 30 June 2013 quarter

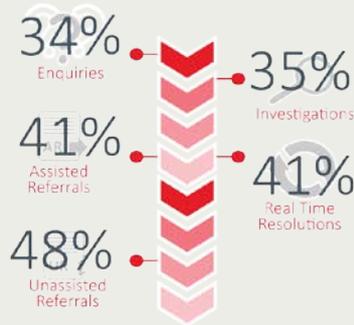
Overall:



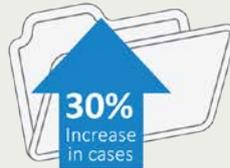
Electricity Overall:



Gas Overall:



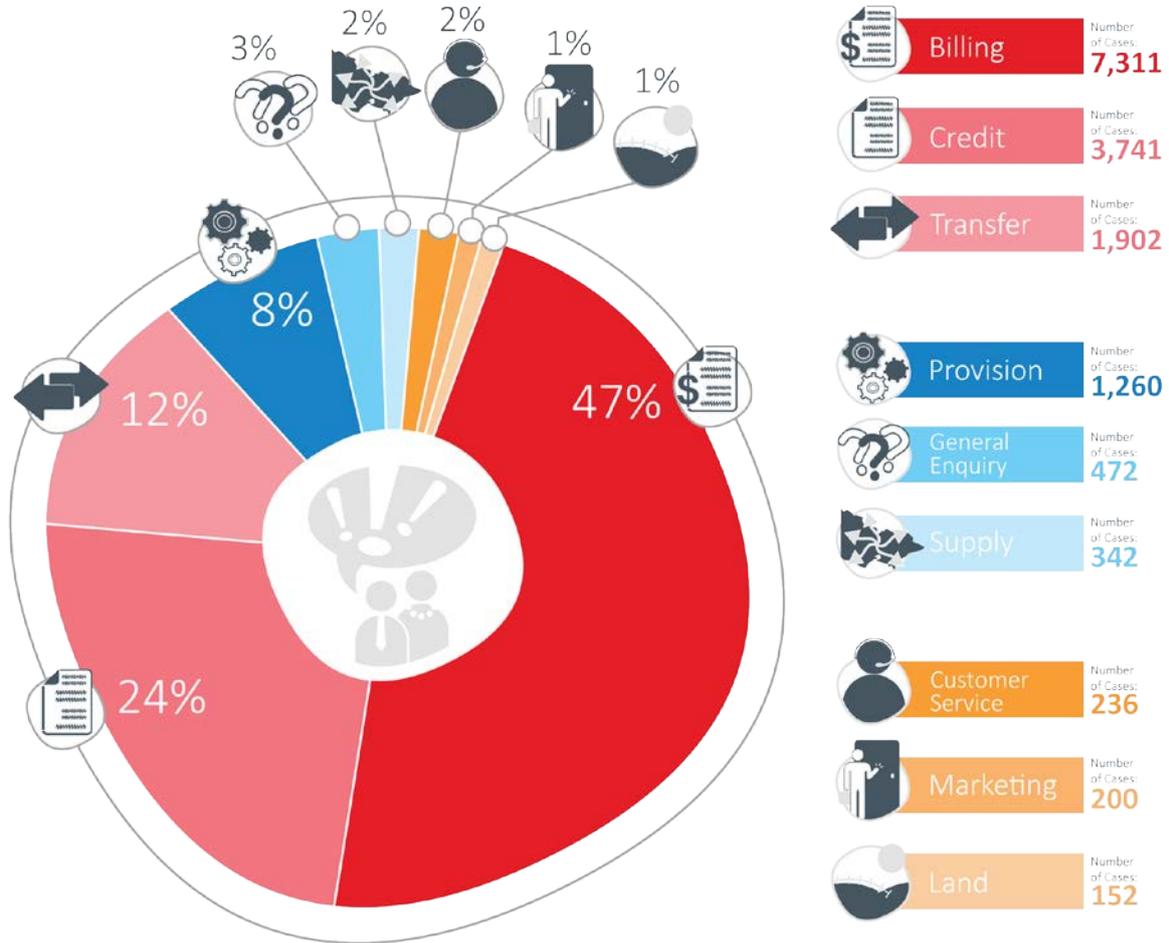
Water Overall:



# Most Common Issues

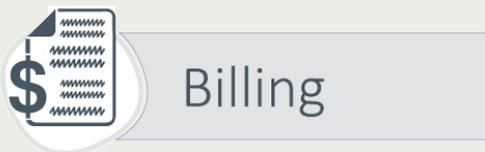
The Issues Customers Complained About Across Electricity, Gas and Water

Most Common Issues (overall) from 1 April 2014 to 30 June 2014.



Click on the following links for more detail on the most common issues

Click on the following links for more detail on the most common issues



## 47% Billing

In the April to June

2014 quarter, 7,311 customers raised billing as their main issue:

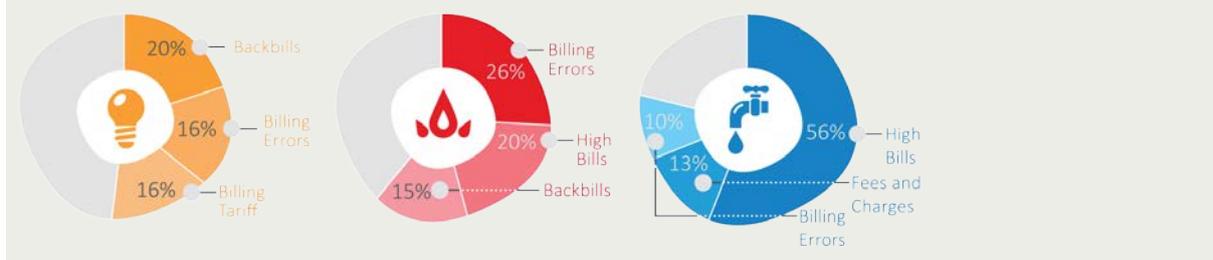
- down 44% from 12,960 in the April to June 2013 quarter, and
- down 24% from 9,633 customers in the January to March 2014 quarter.



### Most Common Billing Issues - By Industry

Of the 7,311 customers, 5,575 were electricity customers, 1,278 gas customers, 451 water customers and 7 dual fuel customers.

75% of billing complaints were resolved through our Assisted Referral and Real Time Resolution processes. 11% of billing complaints required an Investigation.



### Case Study

Water leak generates a very high disputed bill

Accustomed to receiving a quarterly water bill of around \$350 for using 40 to 60 kilolitres of water, the customer was surprised to receive a bill of \$5,417.45, based on usage of 1,079 kilolitres.

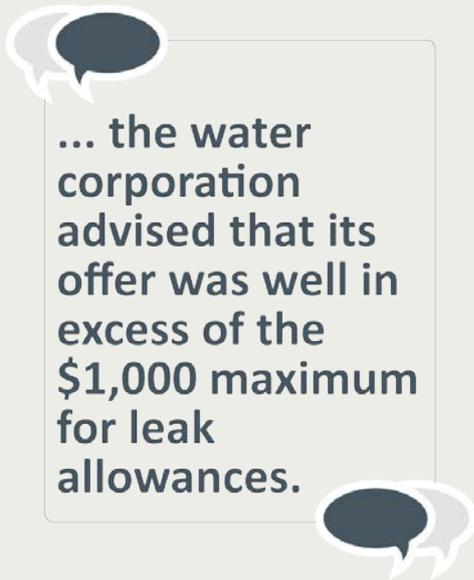
Following her contact with the water corporation, a check reading of the meter at her property was arranged. This verified the meter reading on which the bill was based. The water corporation suggested she have a plumber check for leaks. The customer did this and the plumber found and fixed a leak. She then applied to the water corporation for an allowance for an undetected leak.

The water corporation offered her a billing reduction of \$2,387.51, but the customer wasn't satisfied with this offer and contacted EWOV. When the Assisted Referral failed, because the customer continued to be dissatisfied with the water corporation's offer, we decided the complexity of the complaint warranted an Investigation.

Responding to our Investigation, the water corporation confirmed its actions and advised that its offer was well in excess of the \$1,000 maximum for leak allowances under the Guideline for Unexplained High Usage and Undetected Leak Enquiries. It said it subsequently offered the customer a further reduction bringing the amount owed down to \$2,500 if she paid it immediately.

When the customer still didn't pay, it extended the payment time by two months and offered her a payment plan. At the time EWOV opened its Investigation, the customer had paid \$350 only, the portion of the bill she wasn't disputing.

Our Investigation included a documentation review, including call notes, a sequential timeline, the plumber's report, the leak allowance application and correspondence between the water corporation and the customer. We also considered the industry Guideline and concluded that the water corporation had applied an allowance in excess of the maximum amount of \$1,000. We did not identify any special customer circumstances that would warrant an additional waiver. We explained all of this to the customer, who accepted our independent review and advice. The water corporation applied credits totalling \$2,971.41 to reduce the arrears to \$2,150. The customer agreed to pay this amount within three weeks. The complaint was closed on this basis. (2014/17090)



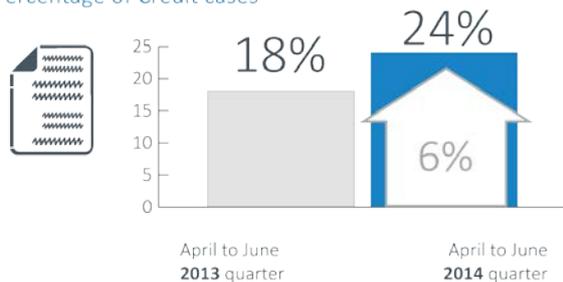
Credit

24% Credit

In the April to June 2014 quarter, 3,741 customers raised credit as their main issue:

- down 17% from 4,506 customers in the April to June 2013 quarter, and
- down 18% from 4,543 in the January to March 2014 quarter.

Percentage of Credit cases

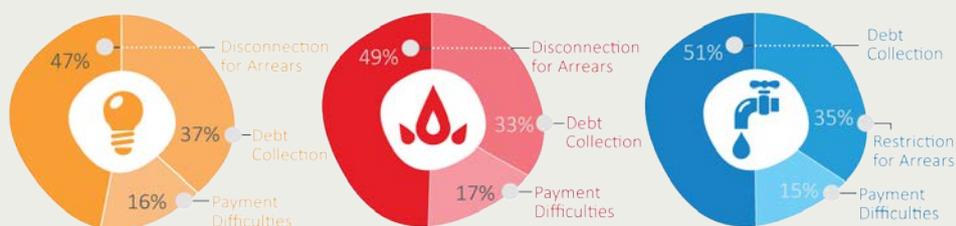


Number of customers whose main issue was Credit



## Most Common Credit Issues- By Industry

Of the 3,741 customers, 2,560 were electricity customers, 1,026 gas customers, 142 water customers and 13 dual fuel customers.



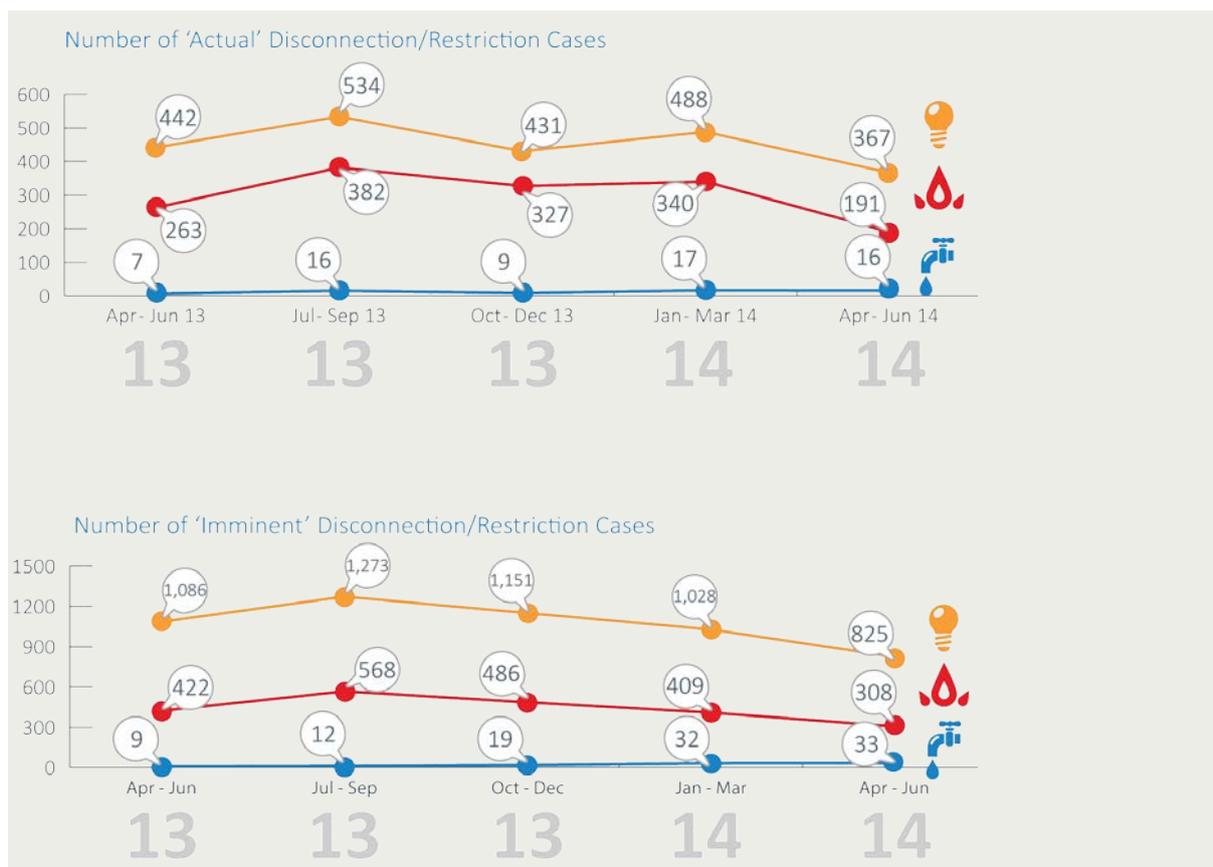
## Disconnection/Restriction cases

**Electricity:** 23% of all electricity cases were about credit—most commonly supply disconnection for arrears (47%), debt collection (37%) and payment difficulties (16%).

**Gas:** 30% of all gas cases were about credit—most commonly supply disconnection for arrears (49%), debt collection (33%) and payment difficulties (17%).

**Water:** 19% of all water cases were about credit—most commonly debt collection (50%), supply restriction for arrears (35%) and payment difficulties (15%).

See [Issues Watch](#) on credit-related Disconnection/Restriction cases.



## Case Study

Customer default-listed even though she paid the debt

The customer complained that her electricity retailer default-listed her in late June 2014 for \$449.21 owing from her previous premises, even though the debt was paid in early May 2014. The account was jointly held by the customer and her husband, but the credit default listing related to her only. She said that the retailer had told her the listing was made in error and would be lifted, but this hadn't happened.

The complaint was initially registered by EWOV as an Assisted Referral. When the retailer didn't act within the required timeframe, the customer rang it for an update. She was dissatisfied to be told that it could update the listing to show the debt had been paid after being listed, but it couldn't remove the listing altogether. The customer recontacted us and the complaint was escalated to Real Time Resolution (RTR). Responding to contact by our RTR Team, the retailer said the default listing would be removed and a request to that effect had been sent to the credit reporting body. After the customer's repeated checks revealed the default had not been removed, she recontacted us and the complaint was escalated to an Investigation.

The retailer's initial response to our Investigation was that the default listing had been updated to show the debt had been paid, but it wouldn't remove it because it had followed proper procedures before taking the listing action. During the Investigation, we discovered a difference between the customer's and the retailer's accounts of when the default listing was applied—whether before or after the arrears had been paid. We asked the customer to substantiate her claim that the listing was made after payment was made. The customer supplied us with a copy

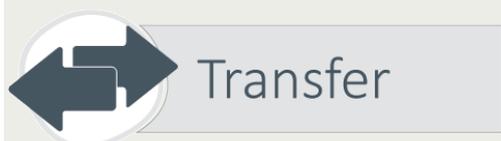
of the credit report to confirm this.

The retailer apologised to the customer. It confirmed the default listing would be removed within ten business days and provided a direct contact to enable her to confirm this had happened. The complaint was closed on this basis. (2014/19308)

In the Issues Watch section of this issue of Res Online we discuss the fall in the April to June 2014 quarter in cases about credit-related energy supply disconnection, including some recent case studies.

[Click here](#)

The account was jointly held by the customer and her husband, but the credit default listing related to her only.

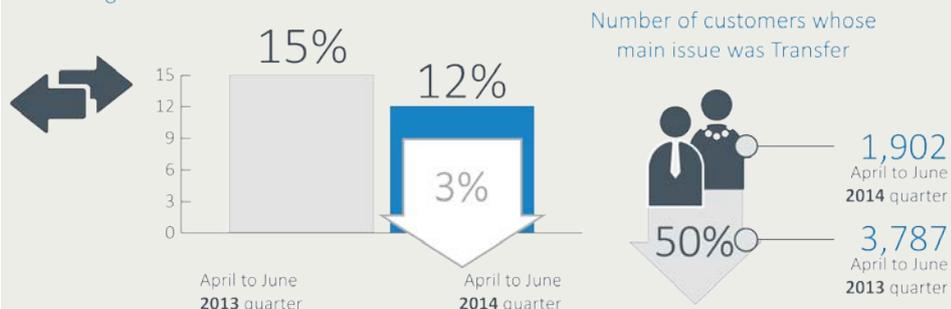


### 12% Transfer

In the April to June 2014 quarter, 1,902 customers raised transfer (switching from one electricity or gas retailer to another) as their main issue of complaint:

- down 50% from 3,787 customers in the April to June 2013 quarter, and
- down 26% from 2,572 customers in the January to March 2014 quarter.

Percentage of Transfer Cases

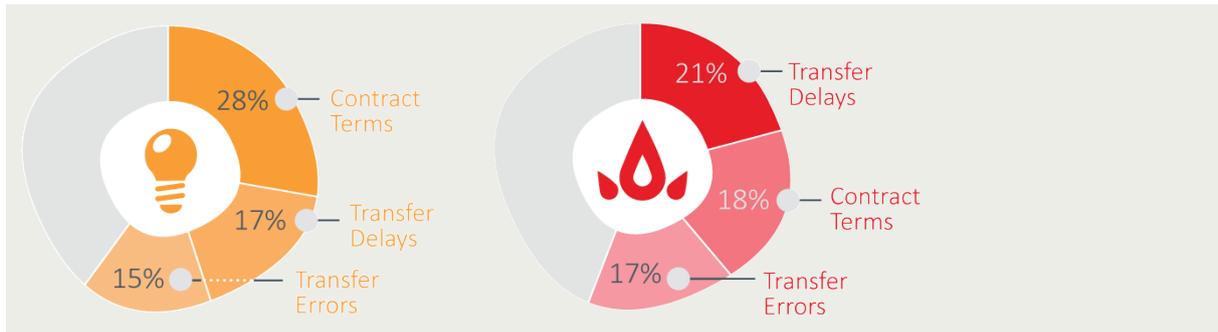


## Most Common Transfer Issues- By Industry

Of the 1,902 customers, 1,307 were electricity customers, 592 gas customers and 3 dual fuel customers.

75% of transfer complaints were resolved through our Assisted Referral and Real Time Resolution processes. 8% of transfer complaints required an Investigation.

- **Electricity:** 12% of all electricity cases were about transfer—most commonly contract terms (28%), transfer delay (17%) and transfer in error (15%).
- **Gas:** 17% of all gas cases were about transfer—most commonly transfer delay (21%), contract terms (18%) and transfer in error (17%).



### Case Study

Customer signs a new contract then has her supply disconnected

The customer complained that the retailer for the previous occupant of her property disconnected her electricity supply without warning in May 2014, even though she had signed up with her current retailer in February 2014. As a result of the disconnection, she incurred costs of around \$700 for hotel expenses, loss of refrigerated goods and an electrician's bill. She said that, following the disconnection, the local distributor advised her to stay in a hotel, for which she'd be compensated. The customer had several contacts with her current retailer, but was unable to reach an agreed resolution, in part because it denied it had authorised her costs.

When the Assisted Referral didn't bring about a resolution, due to our assessment of its complexity, the complaint was escalated for an Investigation by EWOV.

We sought a range of information from the customer's current retailer. The information we received included call recordings showing that its staff had also spoken with the customer about reimbursement of her costs. We confirmed the details of the disconnection with the local distributor, as well as the information it had provided to the customer. We also confirmed that the correct details for the customer's property were in the national electricity database. Our Investigation found that the transfer delay was due to inaction on the part of the customer's current retailer.

The retailer apologised to the customer and provided her with \$500 direct reimbursement to cover the hotel and electrician costs. In addition, the disconnecting retailer waived \$156.56 for usage from February to April 2014, because it couldn't confirm the customer was responsible for usage during the time it was sending 'To the occupier' notices to the address. The complaint was closed on this basis. (2014/21343)

The Investigation into the actual disconnection by the disconnecting retailer is ongoing.  
(2014/21342 & WDP/2014/941)



**As a result of the disconnection, she incurred costs of around \$700 for hotel expenses, loss of refrigerated goods and an electrician's bill.**



## EWOV Issues Watch



### Issues watch: Credit-related energy disconnection

#### Cases fall after three quarters of rises

EWOV registered 1,691 energy disconnection cases (imminent and actual disconnection) in the April to June 2014 quarter—down 25% from 2,265 in the January to March 2014 quarter.

The number of stand-alone Wrongful Disconnection Payment Investigations we opened in the April to June 2014 quarter was also down 33% to 402—from 596 in the January to March 2014 quarter. This is a promising reversal of trend, which we hope to see continue. That said, there was no clear single driver for the fall in EWOV cases and we think it is likely to be the result of a combination of things:

- In 2013, a number of smaller energy retailers completed large scale reviews of arrears—this may have increased EWOV cases for the earlier quarters of 2013-14.
- In the first part of 2014, one large energy retailer wasn't completing disconnections for non-payment.
- Retailers have been using debt collection processes, rather than threatening or completing energy disconnections—as we reported in the last issue of Res Online, debt collection cases have increased and they remain high across electricity and gas.

#### How can energy retailers reduce EWOV disconnection cases?

- Ensure accounts are correctly set up in the first place—including checking the correct supply address is linked to an account, to avoid listing of wrong lot numbers, obsolete addresses or incorrect addresses.
- Where a property is occupied but an account hasn't been set up, ensure clear warning notices are issued so that occupants are aware of possible disconnection if they don't make contact.
- Check for hardship indicators to work out whether customers need extra help—typical hardship indicators include previous disconnection for non-payment, high arrears, an application for a Utility Relief Grant, concession card holder, previous hardship assistance, failed payment plans, self-identification by the customer or a third party (e.g. financial counsellor), multiple reminder and/or disconnection warning notices.
- Before starting the disconnection process, provide customers with all the assistance you're required to—including two payment plans, how to get help from a financial counsellor and advice about energy efficiency, concessions and the Utility Relief Grant Scheme.
- Negotiate affordable payment plans with customers, taking account of their capacity to pay.
- Don't issue reminder and disconnection warning notices while a customer is on a payment plan.
- Put a hold on collection activity on the customer's account, if they ask for a bill or account review.

Credit-related disconnection cases are those that involve issues around customer capacity to pay their bills and stay on supply (as distinct from supply disconnections for other reasons such as health and safety).

## Disconnection Cases and Issues

### Energy disconnection cases by industry

April 2014 to June 2014 quarter

#### Electricity

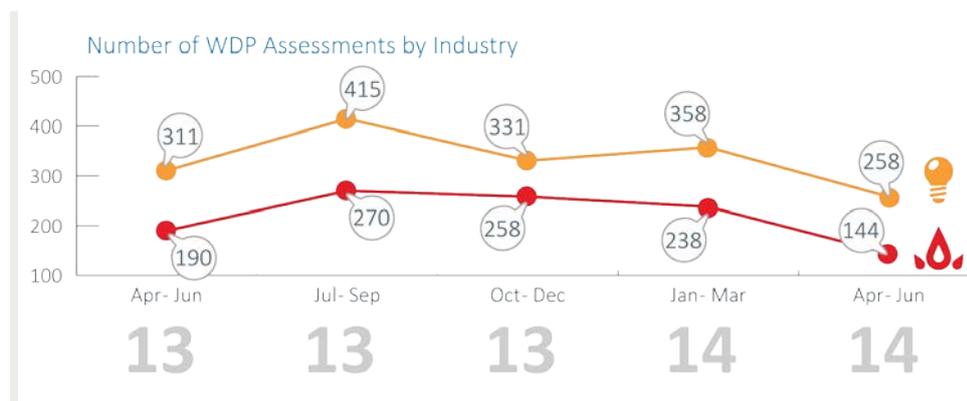
In the April to June 2014 quarter, EWOV received 1,192 cases about credit-related disconnection of electricity supply—down 21% from 1,516 cases in the January to March 2014 quarter.

- 367 cases were about 'actual' disconnection—down 25% from 488 cases.
- 825 cases were about 'imminent' disconnection—down 20% from 1,028 cases.
- We opened 258 stand-alone electricity Wrongful Disconnection Payment (WDP) Investigations—down 28% from 358 in the January to March 2014 quarter.

#### Natural gas

In the April to June 2014 quarter, EWOV received 499 cases about credit-related disconnection of natural gas supply—down 33% from 749 cases in the January to March 2014 quarter.

- 191 cases were about 'actual' disconnection—down 44% from 340 cases.
- 308 cases were about 'imminent' disconnection—down 25% from 409 cases.
- We opened 144 stand-alone natural gas Wrongful Disconnection Payment (WDP) Investigations—down 39% from 238 in the January to March 2014 quarter.



Please refer to the 'Imminent' and Actual' Disconnection/Restriction Case charts in the Credit section [Here](#)

#### What disconnection issues have energy customers complained about most recently?

Many of the imminent and actual disconnection cases we received in the April to June 2014 quarter involved inter-related billing and credit issues—for example, a customer receiving a high, estimated or backbill which they couldn't afford to pay. Customers facing imminent disconnection more often complained about billing issues contributing to the potential disconnection. Customers whose supply was actually disconnected more often complained about affordability issues. Some customers told us that, to get their supply reconnected, they offered the retailer more than what they could afford to pay — but the retailer rejected the offer, seeking a high percentage of arrears or full payment.

Customers who contacted us about imminent disconnection commonly told us:

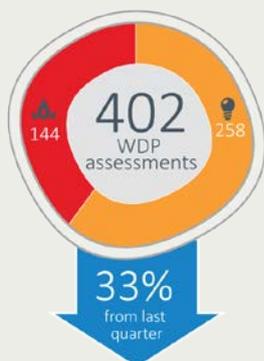
- They were in hardship and couldn't set up a payment plan within their capacity to pay.
- They received disconnection warning notices, even though they were on a payment plan.
- They received a large backbill which they couldn't afford to pay in full or didn't agree was correct.
- They experienced issues after switching retailer—including being confused about which retailer was billing them and receiving "to the occupier" notices from a retailer they didn't recognise as theirs.

Customers who contacted us about actual disconnection commonly told us:

- Their biggest concern was the amount they were being asked to pay to have their supply reconnected—as high as 75% to 100% of the arrears.
- They were asked to make a lump sum payment before a payment plan could be set up.
- They were offered an unaffordable payment plan—significantly higher than previous plans and/or above what they had told the retailer they could afford to pay.

Many of the imminent and actual disconnection cases we received... involved inter-related billing and credit issues.

Number of WDP Assessments Received



Number of WDP Assessments Finalised



## Disconnection Case Studies



### Case Study

#### CREDIT-RELATED ENERGY DISCONNECTION 1

Customer caught up in his retailer's administrative error

In March 2014, the customer received several electricity bills for different parts of the period September 2009 to January 2014. The bills totalled \$2,354.03. He then received a disconnection warning notice seeking payment of \$2,521.32. The customer said he'd paid all of the bills he'd received. A refugee with limited English and on a pension, he said he couldn't afford the amount his retailer was seeking.

We registered the complaint as an Assisted Referral. However, when the customer's authorised representative recontacted us saying that discussions with the energy retailer's higher-level contact didn't achieve a resolution, we escalated it to Real Time Resolution (RTR).

Initially the retailer told us all of the customer's bills were sent to the correct address and on time. It asked that the customer make immediate contact to settle the debt or enter into a payment plan. But, after further discussion with us and review of its records, the retailer advised that while the customer's gas bills had been sent to his current address and had been paid, his electricity bills had been sent to his old address. In mid-March 2014, the retailer had re-issued all of the unpaid electricity bills and sent them to his current address. It admitted that the customer had provided correct address details when setting up his electricity account. Due to an administrative error, his electricity bills had been sent to his old address.

In line with the undercharging provisions in clause 6.2 of the Energy Retail Code, because the error resulted from a failure of the retailer's billing systems, the maximum it could recover from the customer was charges going back nine months. This reduced his arrears to \$767.35. We checked the retailer's calculations and account reconciliation to confirm the amount. We provided this information to the customer's authorised representative, including the retailer's offer of an extended payment plan. The customer was satisfied with this outcome, choosing to pay the reduced arrears in full. The complaint was closed on this basis at RTR. 2014/25781



### Case Study

#### CREDIT-RELATED ENERGY DISCONNECTION 2

Highlighting the benefits of energy efficiency advice

The customer contacted EWOV when her electricity was disconnected in March 2014 for arrears of over \$3,600. She cited a range of payment difficulties, including that her payment plan of \$80 a fortnight had lapsed. She said she'd tried to contact her retailer, but was on hold on her mobile phone for too long. She said she could pay \$100 and fortnightly payments of \$80 thereafter. Assessing the customer's complaint as complex, we opened an Investigation.

Her billing was reviewed and an outstanding balance of \$3,893.57 confirmed. Our discussions with her revealed she used a water bed and keeping the water constantly heated was costing her about \$25 a fortnight. We also showed her how to monitor her usage overall using the meter. By providing some basic but targeted energy efficiency advice, we helped her quickly reduce her

energy consumption by almost half her average usage over the previous two years.

Our review of the customer's account history showed that, although she was accepted onto the retailer's hardship program in June 2013, the retailer hadn't offered her energy efficiency advice and/or an energy audit. We assessed that, had she been given this assistance at that time, she may have been able to reduce her usage much earlier and prevent such a large debt building up.

We also checked the circumstances of the supply disconnection, confirming she was off supply for an hour and 24 minutes. While not acknowledging the disconnection as wrongful, her retailer agreed to pay \$35.42, pro rata of the Wrongful Disconnection Payment of \$250 a day. This payment was credited against her arrears.

In recognition of her history of consistent fortnightly payments and significant recent reduction in usage, the retailer offered to replace her waterbed with a standard bed. It also offered her ongoing hardship assistance — including a temporary fortnightly payment plan of \$100 (to be reviewed in three months), information about how to apply for a Utility Relief Grant, an over-the-phone energy audit, quarterly reviews to discuss her usage and payments, and a direct contact in its hardship team. The customer was satisfied with this outcome. The complaint was closed on this basis. 2014/14619 & WDP/2014/570



## Case Study

### CREDIT-RELATED ENERGY DISCONNECTION 3

It's hard for a retailer to offer help when a customer doesn't make contact

**A financial counsellor contacted EWOV on behalf of a customer after his gas supply was disconnected in mid March 2014 for arrears of \$153.46. The financial counsellor said she'd emailed the customer's gas retailer to explain his situation, but hadn't received a response.**

**In light of our understanding of the customer's payment difficulties, we registered the complaint as an Investigation and organised the reconnection of the customer's gas supply. By this time he had been without gas for 16 days. Responding to our Investigation, the retailer said it had done all the things it was required to before completing the disconnection. After we reviewed the customer's account, bills and call notes, we agreed that was the case. The retailer had issued all required notices, including a bill, reminder notice and disconnection warning notice. Even though it wasn't aware that the customer was experiencing payment difficulties, it had also sent a registered post letter one month before the actual disconnection. It said that, because the customer didn't respond, it wasn't able to complete an assessment of his capacity to pay, organise a payment plan or discuss available assistance.**

**While the retailer acknowledged the customer's situation, it said the email sent by the financial counsellor wasn't received. It also said it was better to phone when a matter is urgent, rather than email. It provided the financial counsellor with its specific financial counsellor phone number. It applied a credit of \$150 to the customer's account arrears, reducing the balance to \$203.63 (the amount he owed was increased by a further bill issued during the Investigation). It agreed to set up a payment plan of \$20 a fortnight via Centrepay and asked the financial counsellor to confirm the date the first payment would be made. The financial counsellor accepted the offer on behalf of the customer and the complaint was closed on this basis. Our separate assessment of whether the disconnection was wrongful found that the disconnection process had been completed**

correctly, so a Wrongful Disconnection Payment (WDP) wasn't applicable. 2014/20885 and WDP/2014/806



By this time  
he had been  
without gas  
for 16 days.



Keeping the  
water (bed)  
constantly  
heated was  
costing her  
about \$25 a  
fortnight.



(The retailer)  
admitted that  
the customer  
had provided  
correct address  
details when  
setting up his  
electricity  
account.



## EWOV Public Submissions

Public submissions made by EWOV from April 2014 to June 2014

*We provided input to three public consultations by regulators, government and an industry association.*

### Productivity Commission

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#### ***Inquiry into Access to Justice Arrangements, Draft Report (May 2014)***

In EWOV's response to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report, we drew on the experience gained from our multi-faceted community awareness program, to support the recommendations to improve the prominence of ombudsmen throughout Australia. We also provided comments on references in the Draft Report to the formation of a national energy ombudsman.

- [Full submission the EWOV website](#)

### Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC)

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#### ***Consultation Paper: National Electricity Amendment (Customer access to information about their energy consumption) Rule 2014 (June 2014)***

We drew on the cases with a consumption data access component that EWOV has received (including illustrative case studies), to highlight issues in standalone data access complaints and associated billing issues (bills that are high, re-issued, erroneous or delayed). We provided information on some of the issues customers have raised following the installation of a Smart Meter—including loss of consumption information that was previously included on their bills. We noted that our cases suggest that the installation of a Smart Meter can generate customer demand for data that isn't yet available—such as where a meter has been installed but is still to be configured. We also provided some insight into consumption data access issues since the widespread introduction of flexible pricing—in particular the emergence of energy web portals, which allow customers to view their electricity consumption data.

- [Full submission the EWOV website](#)

### Office of Living Victoria

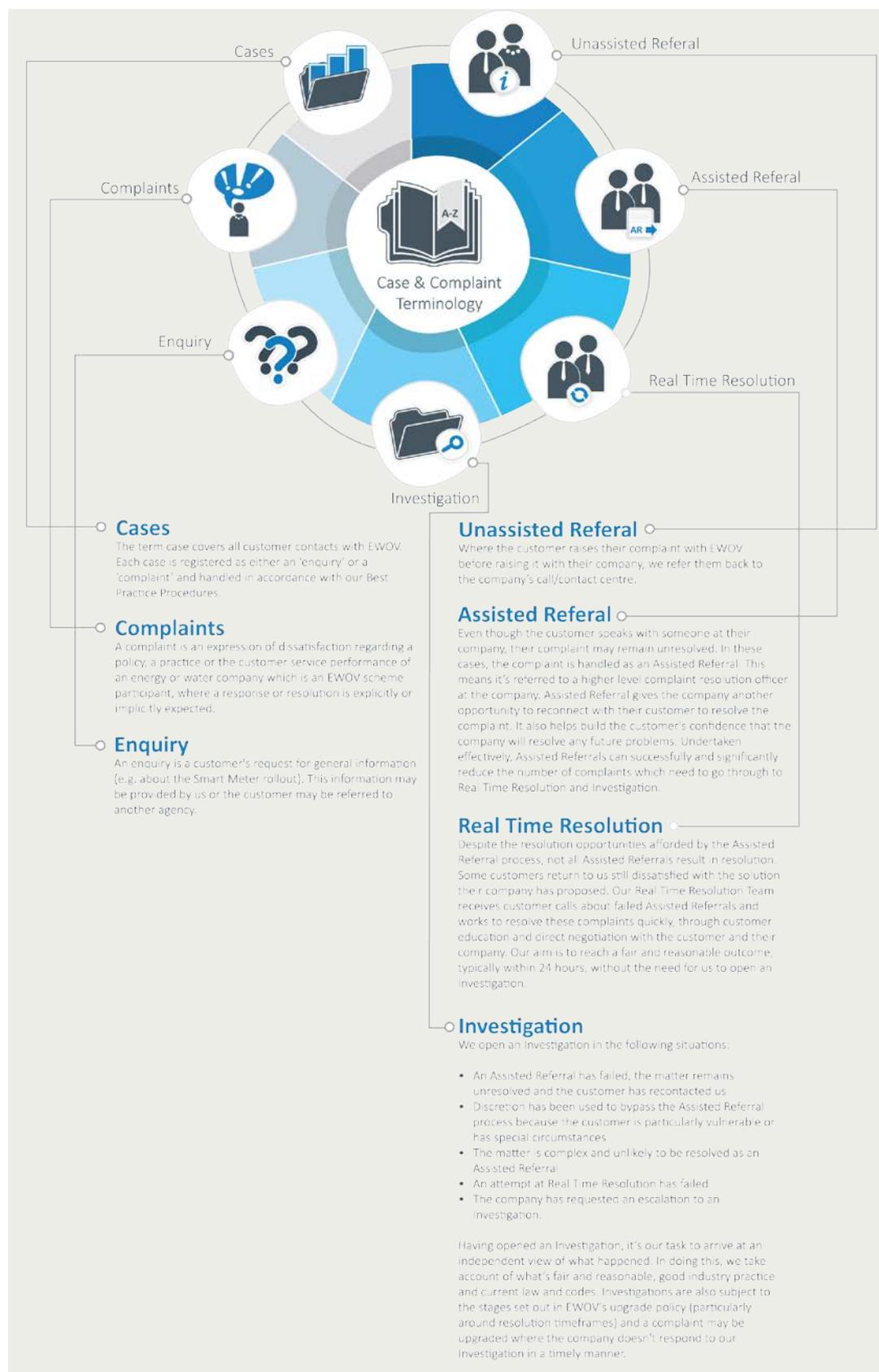
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#### ***Economic regulation, governance and efficiency in the Victorian water sector – Preliminary advice from the Independent reviewer (June 2014)***

We highlighted some incorrect information about EWOV's dispute resolution processes in the Preliminary Advice Paper, to the effect that EWOV uses codes to "decide breaches and penalties as they serve as a measure of what is reasonable and acceptable for service standards". We clarified that EWOV resolves complaints in an informal and expeditious manner while having regard for the law and licences, industry codes, regulations, good industry practice and individual complaint circumstances. While we consider the relevant laws, codes and regulations which establish the minimum standards, this is only one element in a suite of considerations that we use to resolve complaints. We made the point that EWOV is not the Victorian energy or water regulator, so it is not our role to decide breaches and penalties applicable to companies. However, we do have a role in relation to systemic issues in both sectors, with our systemic issues role in water being to identify, investigate and seek redress for all affected customers and report the outcomes to the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

- [Full submission on the EWOV website](#)

# Case & Complaint Terminology



# EWOV Issue Categories



# Billing

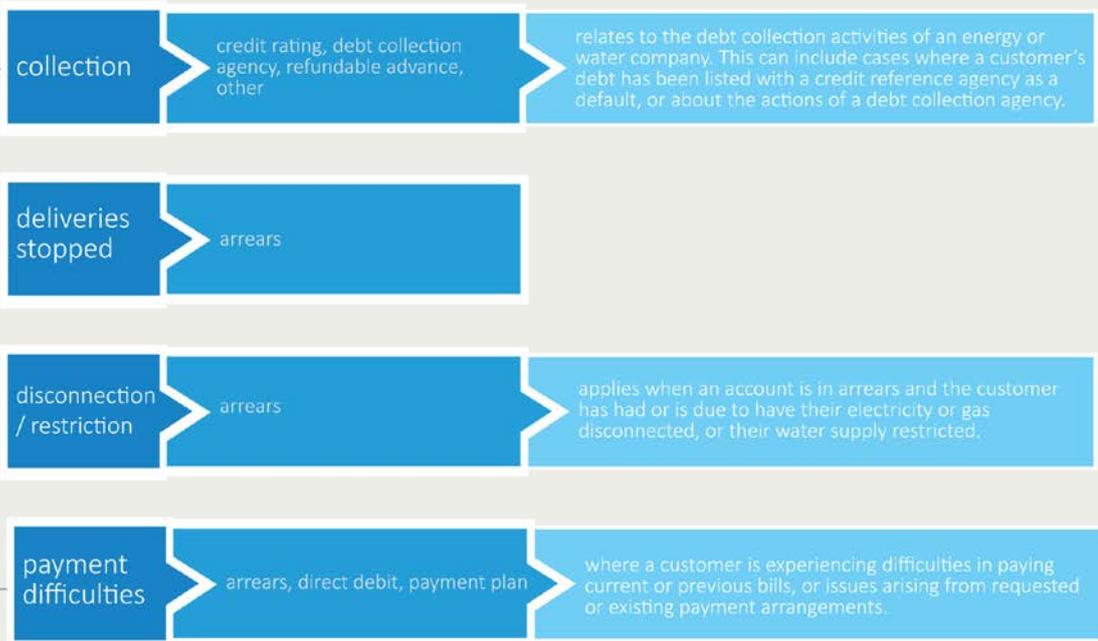


Relates to generating and sending customer bills and processing payments

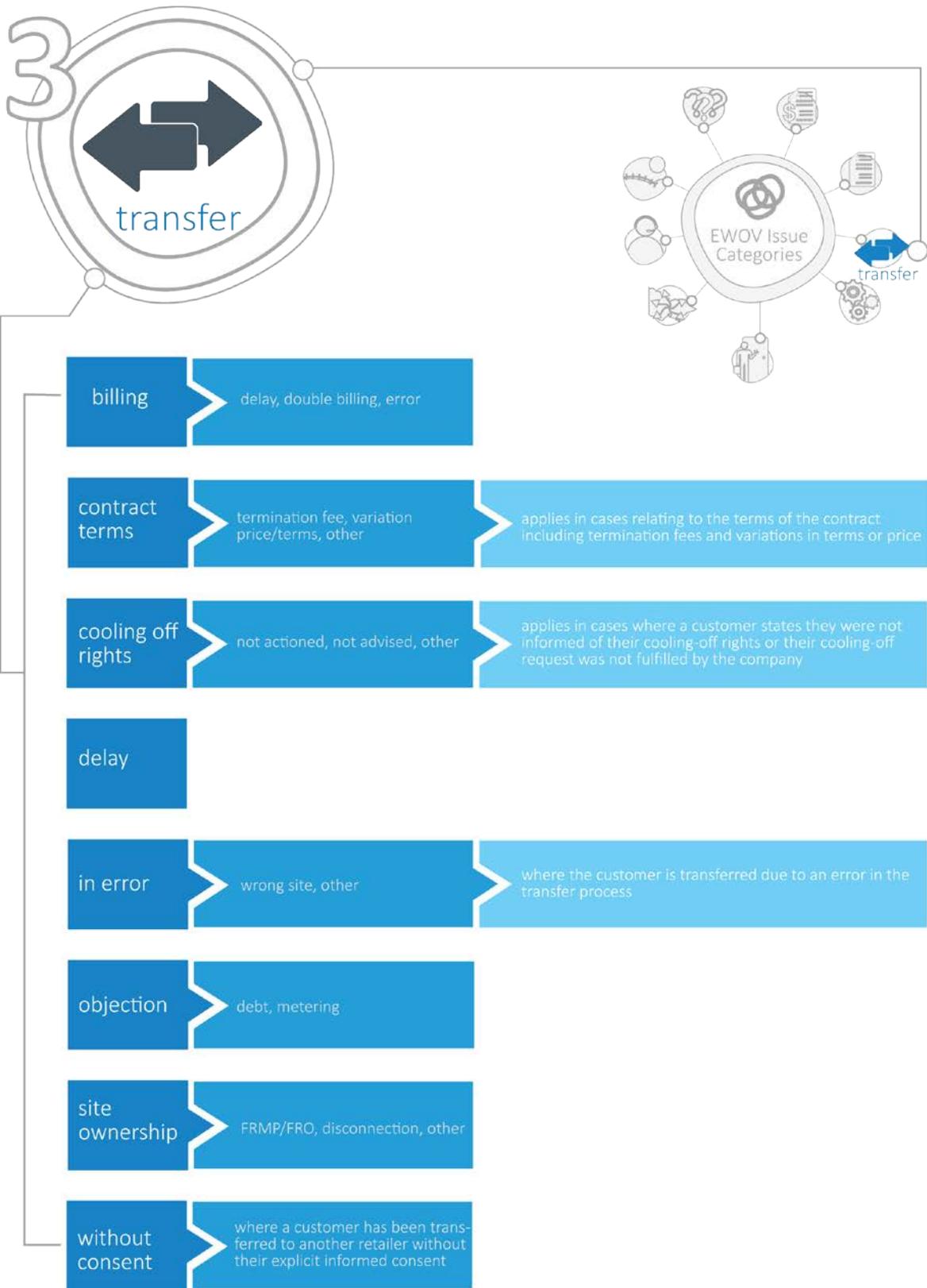


backbill	error, payment, other	
concession/rebate	concession error, concession information, network tariff rebate	
delay		
error	lost payments, other. This applies where an error has affected a customer's account. Examples can include:	charges relating to an incorrect meter have been applied to the account in error, the amount of the usage incorrectly calculate payments applied to an incorrect account.
estimation	high, low	for estimated bills, or where a customer has been advised by the energy or water company that a high bill is in fact a catch-up bill caused by previous bills being based on estimated readings.
fees & charges	collection/legal fees, connection fee, delivery fee, drainage, interest, late payment fee, meter test fee, parks, reconnection fee, rental/service fee, service charge, sewerage disposal charge, truck visit, other	
high	bulk hot water, leak, general	involves concerns about high billing. A customer may consider a bill to be high if they have previously received lower bills for comparable periods or they have had changes in their appliances or usage patterns.
meter	final reading, reading, tampering	
other	format, general	
price of LPG		
refund		
tariff	consumption share, contract, information, network tariff, price increases, retail tariff, unmetered, other	concerns about tariffs and how they are applied to an account or information about tariffs and the setting of prices

# Credit



# Transfer



# Provision



**deliveries stopped** → safety, site access

**disconnection / restriction** → error, meter access, safety/defect → cases that involve a faulty, defective or dangerous installation. These issues do not have anything to do with the disconnection / restriction of supply due to credit or transfer issues

**existing connection** → de-energisation, energisation/ connection, interference, meter removal, repair, safety, supply up-grade, other → relates to problems arising from connections that are already in place. For example, cases about altering, up-grading, connecting or disconnecting an existing connection

**new connection** → capital contribution, delay, information, other → issues arising from new connections, such as the costs associated with the connection and the period of time taken to carry out the work

**restriction** → error, meter access, safety/defect

# Marketing



information	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	when a customer believes they have been provided with incorrect information about a company or is seeking to know if a company is legitimate
misleading	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	when a customer is dissatisfied about the misleading information of a door-to-door marketer, telemarketer or in the material provided
non account holder	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	when a non account holder is subject to marketing
other	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	
pressure sales	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	a transfer has occurred due to pressure or coercion by a marketer

# Supply



conservation /restrictions

licensing      entitlement, information, none provided, transfer

off supply – planned      damage/loss, duration, frequency, health & safety, inconvenience, information/notice, other

off supply – unplanned      damage/loss, delivery delay, duration, frequency, health & safety, inconvenience, information /notice, loadshed      issue relating to planned or unplanned interruptions or outages. It can include cases about damage to property or appliances. It can also include cases about the duration or frequency of interruptions, the impact on health and safety of an interruption to supply and outage notifications

quality      colour, health/safety, pressure, taste/odour, other      relates to the smell/taste/appearance of the water or gas being supplied, and any associated health and safety issues

sewer/stormwater overflow/blockage      involves a leaking, blocked or overflowing sewer system

variation      damage/loss, frequency, health & safety, inconvenience, information      involving electricity voltage variations and gas or water pressure variations. It can include cases about damage to property or appliances. It can also include cases about the frequency of variations and the impact on health and safety

water licensing      entitlement, information, irrigation, none provided, transfer

water restrictions

# Customer Service



failure to  
consult /  
inform

failure to  
respond

where the company fails to follow up on actions or reply to customer correspondence

incorrect  
advice  
/information

where the customer receives information or advice from the company that they believe is incorrect

poor  
service

where the customer believes there has been a general lack of service provided

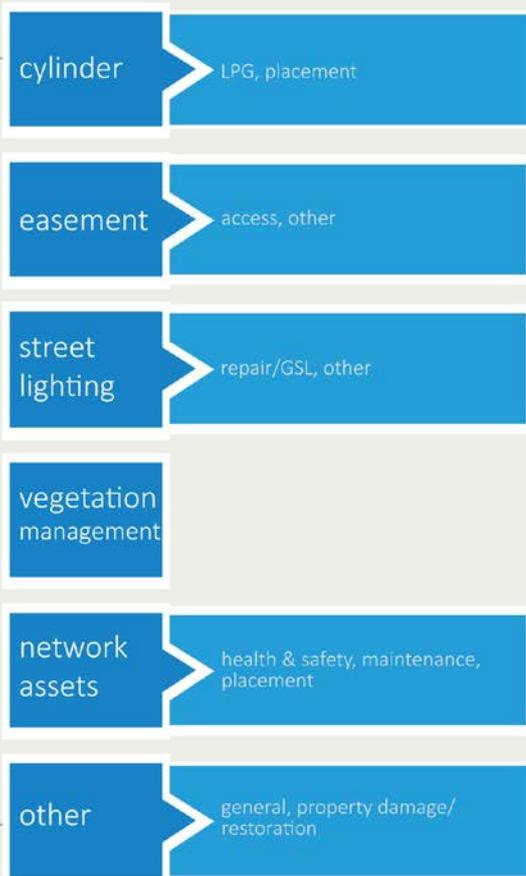
poor/  
unprofessional  
attitude

privacy

details released by company, details requested by company, disclosure refused by company, other

a perceived breach of the National Privacy Principles, including providing information such as an address or details about outstanding bills to someone who is not the account holder

# Land



# General Enquiry



## Systemic Issues Update

### Systemic Issue investigations closed by EWOV

*April 2014 to June 2014*

#### *Service to property charges wrong on consecutive bills*

One complaint to EWOV highlighted incorrect service to property charges applied to consecutive bills. The energy retailer confirmed an issue during system migration meant a group of customers incurred an additional 10% premium service to property charge on their bills, despite not being signed up for the premium service to property product. It confirmed that it had identified all affected customers, refunded the charges, notified them of the issue and implemented a permanent system fix. The regulator, the Essential Services Commission (ESC) was notified. We believe the energy retailer took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. (SI/2014/22)

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#### *Off-schedule Smart Meter billing*

From one complaint lodged with EWOV, we identified that a Smart Meter customer was being billed weekly. It appeared to us that a system fault was causing this customer, and others, to be billed at incorrect frequencies. The energy retailer confirmed that one of the electricity distributors was taking catch-up meter readings outside the usual three-month billing period. As a result, bills for some 200 customers were being issued for irregular periods (i.e. weekly). The energy retailer said this was an isolated occurrence. Affected customers were correctly billed, just not at the usual frequency. The ESC was notified. We believe the energy retailer took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. (SI/2013/61)

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#### *Potentially misleading marketing promotion*

12 complaints to EWOV highlighted several issues arising from an energy retailer's marketing promotion in which customers received a prepaid \$50 Visa card when signing up to a contract. The energy retailer said the promotion applied to both door-to-door and telemarketing contracts. It also said the activation process was confusing for some customers, because the \$50 wasn't loaded onto the Visa card until the transfer was finalised. We briefed the energy retailer on the issues raised in the 12 complaints we received—including potential misleading door-to-door marketing around the amount registered on the card, the activation process and delays in issuing the card to customers. The energy retailer said it would take our feedback into consideration and review the marketing offer. The ESC was notified. We believe the energy retailer took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. Ideally, early modification or substitution of marketing offers should occur once numerous complaints are received. (SI/2014/9)

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#### *Payment arrangements limited to direct debit*

One complaint to EWOV indicated that an energy retailer may be agreeing to payment arrangements for arrears only where the customer agreed to direct debit. Otherwise, arrears had to be paid in full. The energy retailer advised that, where a customer fails on two consecutive payment plans, its staff are encouraged to offer a third payment plan via direct debit, although this isn't a mandatory requirement. In relation to the complaint EWOV received, it said a particular staff member was at fault. It had addressed this with the staff member and reminded its staff that it isn't mandatory for the third payment plan to be set up via direct debit. The ESC was notified. We believe the energy retailer took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. (SI/2014/26)

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*Confusing solar tariff offer*

One complaint lodged with EWOV highlighted how a customer had been offered an additional 10 cents per kWh on the solar feed-in tariff, but didn't receive this entitlement on his bill. It appeared that the energy retailer's advertising may have caused some confusion. While the energy retailer's solar terms and conditions clarified the offer, its website advertisement stated that the government subsidises solar anywhere from zero to eight cents per kWh. This is incorrect as the government subsidises the Premium Feed-in Tariff and Transitional Feed-in Tariff, which range from 25 cents to 60 cents per kWh. The retailer changed the wording on its website to provide a much clearer description of the offer available. The ESC was notified. We consider the energy retailer took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. (SI/2014/25)

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*Application of backbilling provisions to bulk hot water accounts*

Three complaints to EWOV have highlighted that an energy retailer believes the backbilling provisions under the Energy Retail Code don't apply to its bulk hot water accounts. As a result, at least one customer has been billed for an extended period. We maintain that the backbilling provisions under the Energy Retail Code should apply to bulk hot water, because the energy retailer doesn't have a water licence and the billing is for the heating of hot water, not the supply of it. We have referred this matter to the ESC, which is investigating it with the energy retailer. (SI/2013/63)

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*Billing delayed because concession discounts couldn't be applied accurately*

From two complaints to EWOV, we identified instances where billing was delayed because the energy retailer couldn't accurately apply the concession discount. The retailer confirmed an issue with the calculation method of the Controlled Load Concession and the Off-Peak Concession for a significant number of its customers. For the groups of affected customers, a meter exchange took place during the billing period and, in the majority of cases, the concessions applied were less than what the customer should have received. We understand some 1,332 customers were affected. The energy retailer confirmed that it put a hold on all affected accounts once the issue was identified and it had since addressed the cause and issued amended billing including the correct concession discount. The ESC was notified. We believe the energy retailer took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. (SI/2014/27)

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*Customers moved off dedicated load tariff without warning*

Five complaints lodged with EWOV highlighted that, after being on a dedicated load tariff for many years, some customers were moved to a peak-only tariff without explanation. The energy distributor maintained that the issues with tariffs primarily resulted from energy retailers' lack of understanding and customer communication. However, it also said that staff changes in its new connections area can sometimes result in isolated errors. Despite the energy distributor's advice, the complaints EWOV received showed that it had contributed to the tariff-related issues the customers complained about. We provided this feedback to the distributor and we are continuing to monitor for further complaints of this type. The ESC was notified. (SI/2014/35)

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*Delay in issuing solar meter data*

One complaint lodged with EWOV highlighted how a customer was affected by an energy distributor's delay in providing solar meter data to an energy retailer. The energy distributor confirmed that an issue with a program supplied by the meter manufacturer affected how data

was being processed and retrieved. The issue affected solar customers with manually-read interval meters only — we understand there were 1,500 affected customers. The energy distributor confirmed the problem had since been rectified and the metering data had been provided to energy retailers. The ESC was notified. We believe the energy distributor took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. (SI/2014/14)

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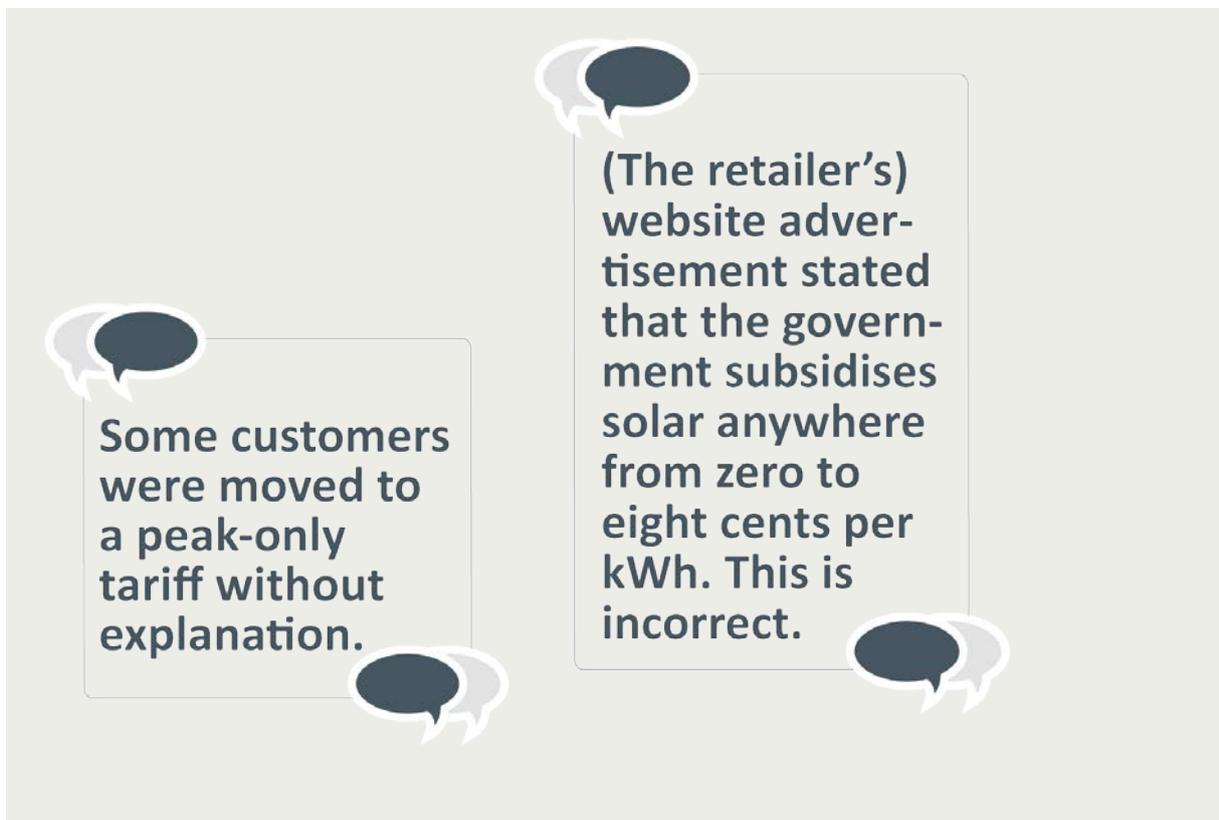
*Wrong date on disconnection notices*

Two complaints to EWOV highlighted that an energy retailer had issued disconnection notices with a disconnection date earlier than allowed under clause 13.1(c) of the Energy Retail Code. Wrongful Disconnection Payments were applicable in these cases. The energy retailer has confirmed that it is working through this issue with the ESC to determine the best course of action for redress. Our advice was that this should include amended notices and any affected customers being assessed for the applicability of a Wrongful Disconnection Payment. The matter is being investigated by the ESC with the energy retailer. (SI/2014/5)

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*Mismatch between meter readings on bills and consumption data*

Three complaints to EWOV highlighted instances where the index meter reads on bills didn't reconcile with the consumption data provided to EWOV or actual meter reads. The energy retailer confirmed this as an issue with its existing billing system, but said a contributing factor was missing distributor data. The energy retailer said the issue with the energy distributor was resolved in late 2013 and the issue with its billing system was corrected in June 2014. The ESC was notified. We believe that the energy retailer took appropriate steps to resolve this matter. (SI/2013/105)



**Under the EWOV Charter, we have a responsibility to identify potential Systemic Issues and, as appropriate, report these to relevant companies and regulators.**

We identify Systemic Issues through the cases we receive and the complaints we investigate. A Systemic Issue may also be identified by the company itself and notified to us. Some affected customers contact us and some don't.

By being proactive about reporting potentially Systemic Issues, we can work with companies and regulators to bring about redress for everyone affected (not just those who complain), reduce possible wider impact and minimise complaints.

Our Systemic Issues responsibilities differ slightly between energy and water.

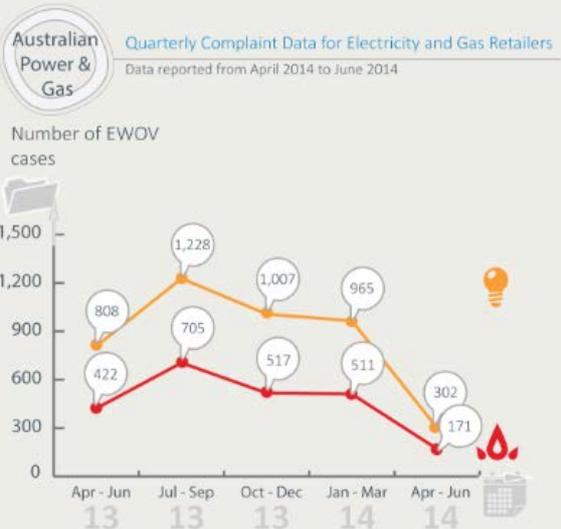
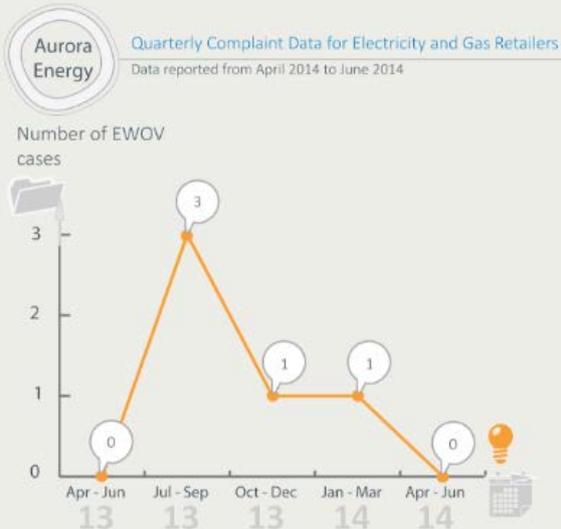
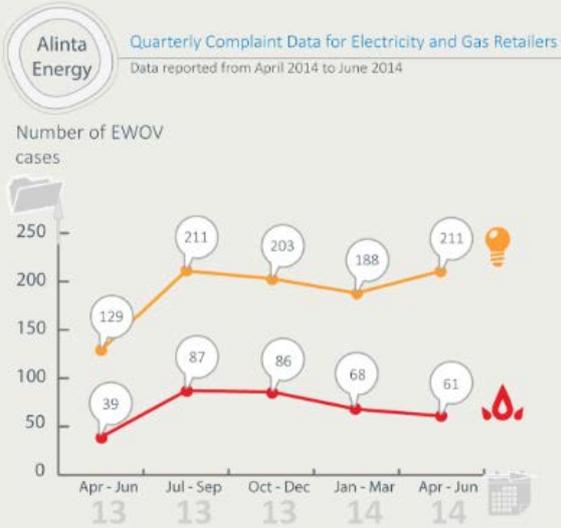
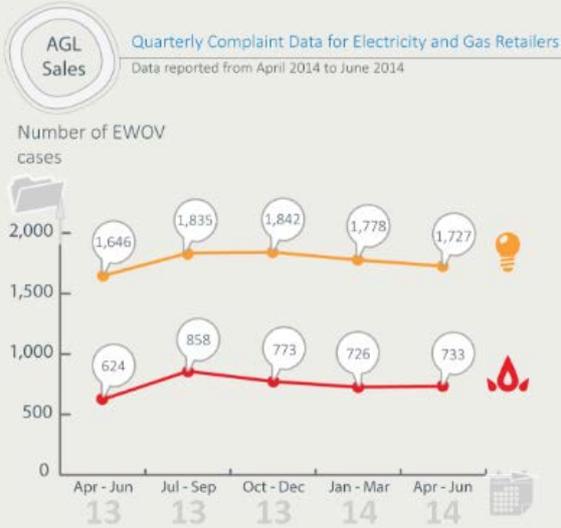


## **Scheme Participant Data**

### **Quarterly Scheme Participant Case Data**

The following Scheme Participant data is reported over the previous five quarters. Please click on the following links to view case numbers for each Scheme Participant by sector.

### **Electricity and gas retail**





Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



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**Powershop Australia** Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**QEnergy** Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**Red Energy** Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**Simply Energy** Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



# Electricity and gas distribution



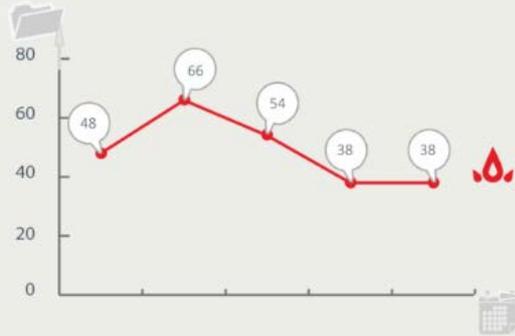
Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



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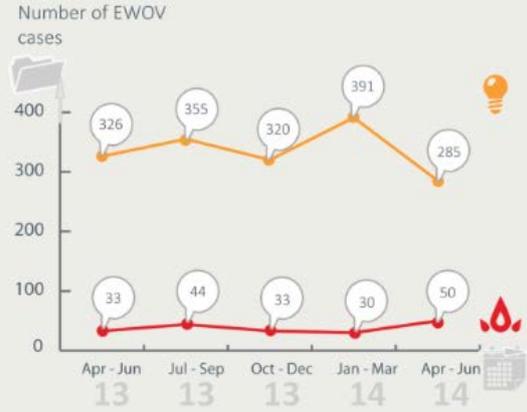
Number of EWOV cases



**Powercor Australia** Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014



**SP AusNet** Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014



**United Energy Distribution** Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014



# Electricity transmission



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity Transmission Companies  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity Transmission Companies  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



# LPG Retail



Quarterly Complaint Data for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



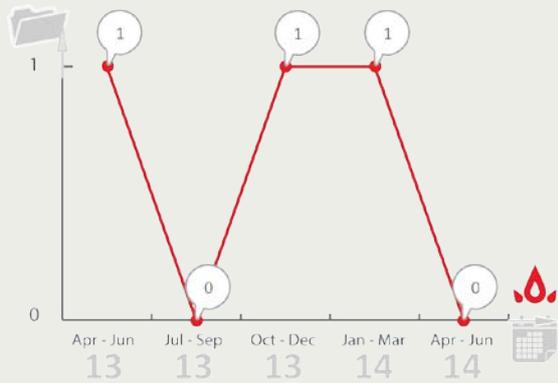
Quarterly Complaint Data for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



# Water corporations



Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Retailers  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Urban Water Corporations  
 Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Urban Water Corporations  
 Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**Westernport Region Water**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
 Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**Goulburn-Murray Rural Water**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Water Corporations  
 Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



**Gippsland Southern Rural Water**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Water Corporations  
 Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

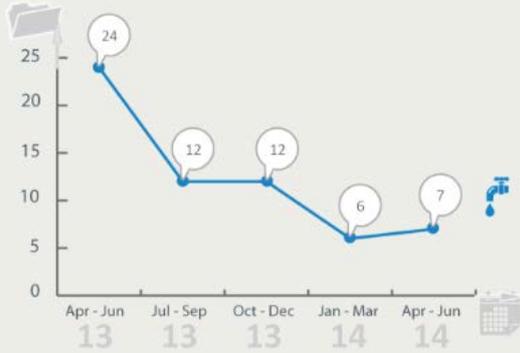
Number of EWOV cases





Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

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Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases





Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Wholesaler  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from April 2014 to June 2014

Number of EWOV cases

