

EMBARGOED UNTIL midnight 15 October 2018

16 October 2018

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Billing, credit and provision top the list of energy and water issues

The *2018 Annual Report* of the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) shows issues about billing, credit and provision made up EWOV's 'top 5' issues of complaint in 2017-18.

EWOV received 34,524 cases in 2017-18, up 8% from 2016-17.

- For the first year since 2012-13, **high bill** was the top issue overall. 87% of high bill cases were about energy. Electricity high bill cases were up 17% and gas high bill cases were up 28%. Water high bill cases fell 14%.
- **Disconnection or restriction of supply for debt** was the second most common issue. Cases were up 1% from 2016-17. 97% of cases about disconnection or restriction for debt were about energy.
- **Debt collection/credit default listing** was number three, with cases down 5% from 2016-17. 97% of cases about debt collection/credit default listing were about energy.

Releasing EWOV's *2018 Annual Report* today, Ombudsman Cynthia Gebert highlighted the prevalence of these three issues, saying affordability is a continuing concern.

"A significant number of the customers presented to EWOV with limited capacity to reduce their consumption or increase their capacity to pay," said Ms Gebert.

EWOV's *Annual Report* also highlights the growth in complaints about provision.

- **New connection** cases more than doubled (from 1,225 to 2,502) taking it to number four.
- **Existing connection** was number five, with cases up 9%.

The increases in provision cases are attributed to a combination of new suburbs and developments creating more work for electricity and gas distributors, service order changes and problems between retailers and distributors, poor information provision to customers, claims from customers who suffered loss due to connection delays, industrial action at one major distributor and resourcing challenges at another.

Also in EWOV's *Annual Report*:

- Electricity, gas and water case studies around common issues
- 'Hot spot' maps for common issues

- The expansion of EWOV's jurisdiction to include 'embedded networks' from 1 July 2018. This gives electricity customers who live in a residential park, an apartment building or a retirement village, or who operate a business in a shopping centre, access to EWOV's dispute resolution services.

The online version of EWOV's *2018 Annual Report* is available at [ewov.com.au/2018](http://ewov.com.au/2018)

**For more information or to arrange an interview with the Ombudsman, contact:**

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EWOV is an industry-based, customer dispute resolution scheme. It has dealt with electricity cases since 1996, extending to natural gas in 1999, water in 2001, LPG in 2005 and embedded networks in 2018. The Ombudsman has the power to investigate and resolve disputes between customers and their energy and water providers, fairly and independently.

To 30 June 2018, EWOV had handled 654,748 Victorian electricity, gas and water cases, mostly residential.