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MEDIA RELEASE

Access and fairness for energy and water customers

As two major initiatives focused attention on access and fairness for Victorian energy customers, cases to the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) fell 10% in 2018-19.

- › **EWOV received 31,180 cases in 2018-19, down 10% from 34,524 in 2017-18.**
- › **Credit cases fell 25%, driven by the introduction of clear entitlements for energy customers in need of payment assistance.**
- › **Over 96,000 electricity customers in embedded networks gained access to EWOV.**

In EWOV's *2019 Annual Report*, Ombudsman Cynthia Gebert discusses EWOV's experience of two major regulatory initiatives that have strengthened the customer protection framework in Victoria over the past year.

Since July 2018, EWOV has been able to accept complaints from customers whose electricity arrangements are part of an embedded network. In 2018-19, the scheme registered 423 embedded network cases, just over 1% of all EWOV cases.

"Over 96,000 more electricity customers now have EWOV access, with around 21,000 more customers to be afforded access over the next year," said Ms Gebert.

On 1 January 2019, a new regulatory *Payment Difficulty Framework* introduced important protections for customers needing help to pay their electricity and gas bills.

"This is one of the most significant regulatory changes we've seen," Ms Gebert said. "With credit cases down 25% from 2017-18, we're optimistic the new framework is starting to deliver positive outcomes for customers."

Also in EWOV's *Annual Report*:

- › **Electricity, gas and water cases studies around common issues**
- › **Cases and complaint trends for individual energy and water companies**
- › **Maps showing where EWOV cases have come from across Victoria**

The online version of EWOV's *2019 Annual Report* is available at ewov.com.au

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 cases 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 2019, EWOV had handled 685,928 Victorian electricity, gas and water cases, mostly residential.

