

MEDIA RELEASE

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COST OF LIVING PRESSURES DRIVE 23% INCREASE IN CASES TO THE VICTORIAN ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN 2023/2024

Increases in wholesale gas and electricity prices, and cost of living pressures in Victoria during the 2023/2024 financial year, drove a significant increase in complaints to the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV).

- EWOV received 18,702 cases in 2023/2024, an increase of 23% compared to the previous financial year.
- Gas and LPG cases rose by 34%, electricity cases increased by 16%, and water cases increased by 15%.
- Billing cases were the highest driver of complaints, making up more than 50% of all cases.
- \$1,545,452 in billing adjustments, service payments and debt waivers went to Victorian consumers through EWOV investigations.

EWOV's 2024 Annual Report, released today, highlights the strongest drivers of energy and water complaints in Victoria through case data trends and consumer stories. During a time of considerable change in energy and water markets, EWOV helps the community navigate that change through fair and reasonable dispute resolution, and sharing our case insights to support wider industry improvement.

The 2024 Annual Report is available at ewov.com.au, along with interactive data visualisations and case data on individual energy and water companies.

Quotes attributable to Catherine Wolthuizen, Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)

"We expect case volumes to remain high and even increase due to affordability pressures in the community driven in part by sustained higher energy prices, especially for gas. We continue to urge energy retailers to ensure consumers receive all available support and relief to ease financial stress."

"At a time of considerable volatility and change, our insights have contributed to increased consumer protections, such as the Land Access Code of Practice. This sets new standards for companies looking to access private land to build new transmission lines and provides a role for EWOV to help resolve disputes that may arise. As the transition to renewable energy gathers pace, EWOV is well-positioned to provide independent, free and fair dispute resolution."

“While many consumers are reaping the benefits of new energy technology, our cases also show that new energy technology is driving complaints, including from providers who are not currently required to be members of EWOV. This may threaten trust and confidence in the transition to renewables and raise the risk of consumer harm unless effective protections are in place, such as a path to independent, fair and free dispute resolution when things go wrong.”

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 companies, fairly and independently.