ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN
Victoria Listen Assist Resolve

Media release

Victorian energy and water complaints surge 23% as affordability issues and system problems drive disputes

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV) has reported a significant increase in complaints from Victorian consumers in the 2025/2026 financial year, as affordability pressures and billing system problems impact households.

EWOV received 23,957 cases in 2025/2026, an increase of 23% compared with the previous financial year. This marks the third consecutive year of growth in complaints.

- Water cases increased by 51%.
- Billing cases increased by 22% and accounted for more than half of all complaints.
- Land cases (for example, complaints about network assets and vegetation management) increased by 35%.
- Companies provided more than $2 million to customers as a result of EWOV investigations – 26% more than the previous financial year.

EWOV's 2026 Annual Report, released today, features case data and trends that highlight the strongest drivers of energy and water complaints in Victoria. Consumer stories highlight the pressures on Victorian households, caused by broad cost of living increases, as well as the ongoing impact of IT and operational changes at energy and water providers.

The report also showcases the important work the Ombudsman does in preventing future complaints and improving outcomes. The Ombudsman issued the first binding decision by EWOV in 23 years, providing clarity on how providers should assess claims of electrical property damage caused by an unauthorised voltage variation. And EWOV continued to share unique data and insights, and conduct systemic issues investigations, that informed policy reform and industry improvement.

The 2026 Annual Report is available at ewov.com.au, along with interactive data visualisations and consumer stories.

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

"Demand for EWOV's services surged in the 2025/2026 financial year. We received 23,957 cases, an increase of 23% compared with the previous year. Billing made up more than half of our total cases, driven by the ongoing impact of IT and operational changes, as well as broader affordability pressures in Victoria."

"If companies don’t effectively manage major technology and operational changes, it’s often consumers who are most impacted. It can lead to billing delays, confusion, customer service issues and difficulties in accessing important supports. With the rise of artificial intelligence, companies need to put the consumer at the heart of new system design and technology implementation to avoid these and other potential harms."

"Globally, conflict and market volatility are having an impact on prices and household budgets, adding to cost-of-living pressures for Victorians. While many of these factors are beyond the control of companies, we expect providers to communicate clearly, offer affordable payment options and ensure customers can access hardship support when they need it."

"Every complaint tells us about a problem experienced by Victorian energy and water consumers. Our role extends beyond individual complaints to identifying the root causes of systemic issues, and informing industry and other stakeholders, to help prevent the same problems affecting other consumers in the future."

Background information

EWOV is a free and independent service that resolves disputes between Victorian consumers and energy and water companies. We work to ensure fair and reasonable outcomes when energy and water problems arise between customers and their providers.

We also use our unique data and insights about consumers' experiences of the Victorian energy and water markets to improve consumer and market outcomes, through our engagement with businesses, government, regulators and the wider community.

Contact

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