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MEDIA RELEASE

Don't let your energy and water bills keep you up at night

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV) today reported its latest consumer insights about Victorian energy and water services for January-March 2023, urging consumers to reach out now if they need help with their energy and water bills.

EWOV's complaints data shows that consumers remain concerned about credit collection, billing issues and high bills. As more consumers take up renewable energy sources to manage their use and household expenses, we also saw an increase in complaints about solar products and services.

"We are seeing credit and billing cases remaining at a steady high, making up 63% of all the complaints we received during the quarter. Consumers remain price sensitive and concerned about affordability issues", Ombudsman Catherine Wolthuizen said.

There are important responsibilities and protections in place to help consumers who are having trouble paying their bills and to protect against disconnection. Ombudsman Catherine Wolthuizen said, "If you are worried about how you are going to pay your energy or water bills, reach out to your provider for help now. If you can't resolve the issue, contact us at EWOV. Don't let your bills keep you up at night – help is available now".

"If you're having trouble paying your bills, worried you might be disconnected or need help, please contact your energy or water provider for support. If you still need help, call EWOV on 1800 500 509 or visit us at www.ewov.com.au. We are here to help", she said.

During January-March 2023, EWOV observed:

- **Billing** complaints accounted for 49% of all EWOV cases in the quarter (1,667 cases), remaining at a steady high.
- **Credit** complaints made up 14% of all EWOV cases in the quarter (488 cases).
- Complaints about **solar** products and services increased by 12% compared to the last quarter, up 8% when compared with the same time last year.
- Concerns about **delayed billing and backbilling** practices related to business systems changes, which impacted thousands of customers and can make it hard for consumers to budget, and manage their energy bills and usage.
- With important protections in place in Victoria for victim-survivors of **family violence**, we have identified areas for ongoing improved business practices in payment assistance, customer service, privacy and account security and complaints handling.
- We received **3,403 cases** during the quarter, an overall decrease of 10% compared to last quarter.

Help is available

While it is pleasing to see reports that wholesale energy prices are falling as renewable energy output increases, many consumers are needing payment assistance and help is available. Follow these tips to help find savings and manage your bills.



EWOV's energy saving tips

- If you're having trouble paying your energy or water bills, worried you might be disconnected or need help, reach out to your provider.
- If you can't resolve the issue, please call EWOV on 1800 500 509 or visit us at www.ewov.com.au. We are here to help.
- To save money on energy bills, check if you are getting your provider's 'best offer' – check out your most recent bill or call your provider and ask for their best offer.
- Contact your provider to check if you are entitled to: payment plans, concessions, grants like the Utility Relief Grant and other supports.
- You can save money by accessing the \$250 Victorian Power Saving Bonus now at www.compare.vic.gov.au
- In Victoria, energy and water providers have important responsibilities to you, particularly if you are having trouble paying your bills.
- If you are at all concerned about being able to pay your bills, reach out for help now – contact your energy or water provider first to talk about the payment plans and other supports. If you're still having trouble, call us on 1800 500 509 or visit our website at www.ewov.com.au. We are here to help.
- There are important protections and penalties in place in Victoria if an energy provider disconnects you unlawfully. If this occurs, you may be entitled to compensation of up to \$500 a day. Contact EWOV if you are concerned.

About the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV)

- We provide free, fair and independent dispute resolution for Victorian energy and water consumers. We help consumers and providers to reach fair and reasonable outcomes.
- Consumers with complaints about energy and water issues can call us on 1800 500 509 or visit our website at www.ewov.com.au
- EWOV also analyses and shares our unique sector-wide complaints data and insights to highlight good practices and where improvements are needed to benefit consumers and the market.
- As an established, benchmarked dispute resolution services, EWOV plays an important role in ensuring trust and confidence in the current and future energy and water markets.

More information

- EWOV's quarterly [Reflect report](#) (4 May 2023)
- [EWOV Data Hub](#)
- [Sign up for EWOV updates](#)

Media contact:

For more information or to arrange an interview with the Ombudsman, contact media@ewov.com.au

