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MEDIA RELEASE

New Ombudsman announcement from Chairperson, Paul Sheahan AM

I am pleased to announce that Catherine Wolthuizen will become the new Ombudsman in spring 2022. Catherine brings a wealth of experience to the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV), having held leadership positions across utilities, financial services and professional services in Australia and the UK. Catherine will take over from Acting Ombudsman James Lawson, who has been in the role since Cynthia Gebert moved to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman in May 2022, after leading the team for many years. I thank Cynthia for her fantastic leadership over the years and James for his leadership over this interim period.

Catherine Wolthuizen, is currently Customer Advocate at NAB, working in a senior role with the Board and Executive of one of Australia's largest organisations. She has a track record of leadership across utilities, financial services and professional services in Australia and the UK, with a particular focus on dispute resolution and fair outcomes in regulated markets. Catherine held the position of Ombudsman at the UK Financial Ombudsman Service for seven years and led that organisation's systemic issues and external engagement function. More recently, she has been a Panel member at the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, Board Director of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and of the Victorian Legal Services Board, Chair of the Consumer Policy Research Centre and Chair and Member of the Economic Abuse Reference Group.

Catherine has held CEO roles at international human rights NGO Fair Trials, the UK's whistleblowing NGO and the Consumer Law Centre Victoria, and has been an expert adviser to regulators in Australia and the UK.

"I'm excited to join EWOV at what is an important time for the energy and water sector in Victoria," Ms Wolthuizen said of the appointment. "The energy market, in particular, is undergoing a period of innovation and change, as new technology arrives in the shift to renewable energy and global factors lead to uncertainty and cost of living pressures. I'm looking forward to working with the EWOV team, regulators, government, business and other stakeholders to help improve outcomes and consumer protections in the sector."

EWOV is an independent and impartial dispute resolution service, committed to fair and reasonable resolutions to complaints about energy and water in Victoria. We're also a key contributor of insights in the industry, sharing our data and reports with the sector to help reduce the occurrence of complaints.

The EWOV Board and I are excited for the next phase under the leadership of Catherine, building on the work done for the Victorian community and the energy and water industry over more than two decades. We are happy to have appointed an innovative, purposeful and compassionate leader in Catherine to take over our Ombudsman position.

Paul Sheahan AM
Chairperson, EWOV

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.

