



ENERGY AND WATER
OMBUDSMAN
Victoria **Listen Assist Resolve**

EWOV

Annual Report

2023



In this year's report

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EWOV acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country on which we operate throughout Victoria and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



EWOV embraces the diversity of our Victorian communities. Every person, regardless of their race, religion, age, physical attributes or sexual orientation is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. We oppose all forms of discrimination.



2023 Annual Report

Our reporting responsibilities

This *Annual Report* is prepared and distributed in accordance with the Ombudsman's responsibilities under the *EWOV Charter* and the *Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution (CDR Benchmarks)*.

Data note

The data in this report covers the year 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, run at 3 July 2023.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, so may not always add to 100%.

More on our website

See www.ewov.com.au for information on the cases we received in 2022-23 for individual energy and water providers, together with data visualisations and detailed graphical representations.

Who we are, what we do

We're an industry-based ombudsman scheme, providing fair, independent dispute resolution to Victorian energy and water consumers and providers.

We use alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to reach fair and reasonable outcomes to complaints. We can deal with a complaint if the energy or water provider is a member of EWOV Limited, the property is in Victoria, and the consumer has tried at least once to resolve the complaint themselves by contacting the provider directly.

Our service is free to consumers, and our scheme is independent in its structure and in its complaints handling and dispute resolution processes. We look at the facts and circumstances of each complaint, taking into account good industry practice, advice and the law to reach fair and reasonable outcomes.

We have an important role in contributing to industry and market improvements, participating in policy and regulatory consultations, and sharing our data and insights from case handling.

Set up in late 1995 as Australia's first electricity ombudsman scheme, we have since expanded to include natural gas (1999), water (2001), liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) (2005) and embedded networks (2018). To 30 June 2023, we had dealt with 766,176 cases.

EWOV is the designated consumer dispute resolution body under the *Electricity Industry Act* and the *Gas Industry Act*. EWOV's operations are underpinned by the *EWOV Charter*, the *EWOV Limited Constitution*, licence conditions for the electricity and gas industries, the *General Exemption Order 2017* for embedded networks, relevant water legislation, the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) industry code and the *Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution (CDR Benchmarks)*.



Our vision in 2022-23

A fair and accessible energy and water market for all Victorians.



Our purpose

To independently and efficiently resolve energy and water disputes in Victoria and reduce their occurrence.



Our principles

Accessible, fair, independent, efficient, effective, accountable.



Our values

We have the courage to do the right thing. We are creative. Together, we are different. We aim high.

2022-23 Snapshots

15,262
Cases received

↓ **5%**
from FY2022

Case Type

!! **Complaints**
14,248 ↓7%



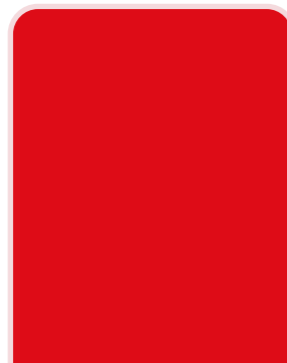
?? **Enquiries**
1,014 ↑31%

Case Industry

💡 **Electricity**
8,797 ↓10%



🔥 **Gas**
5,092 ↑7%

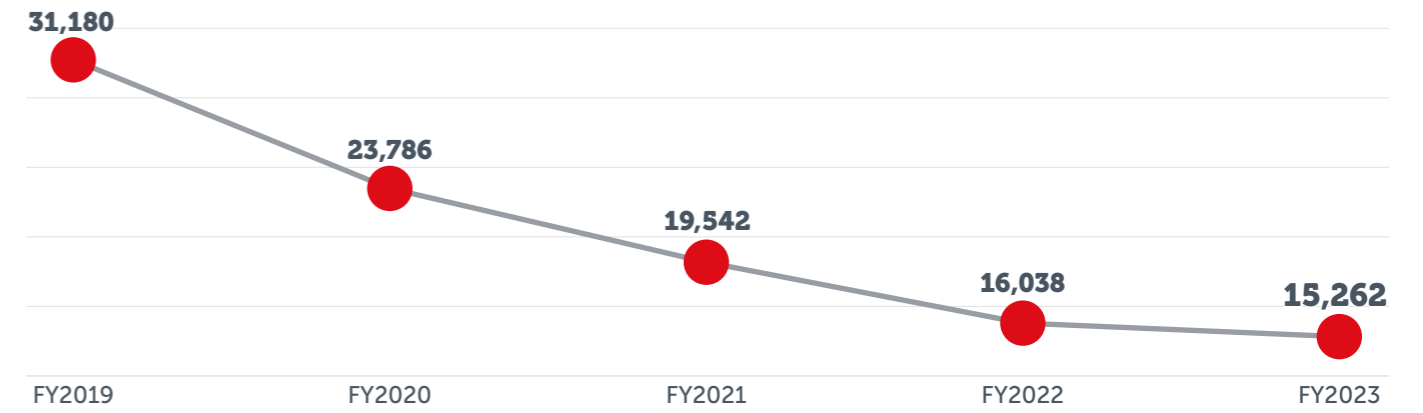


💧 **Water**
1,289 ↓5%



Other Industries
84 ↓29%

Case History



176

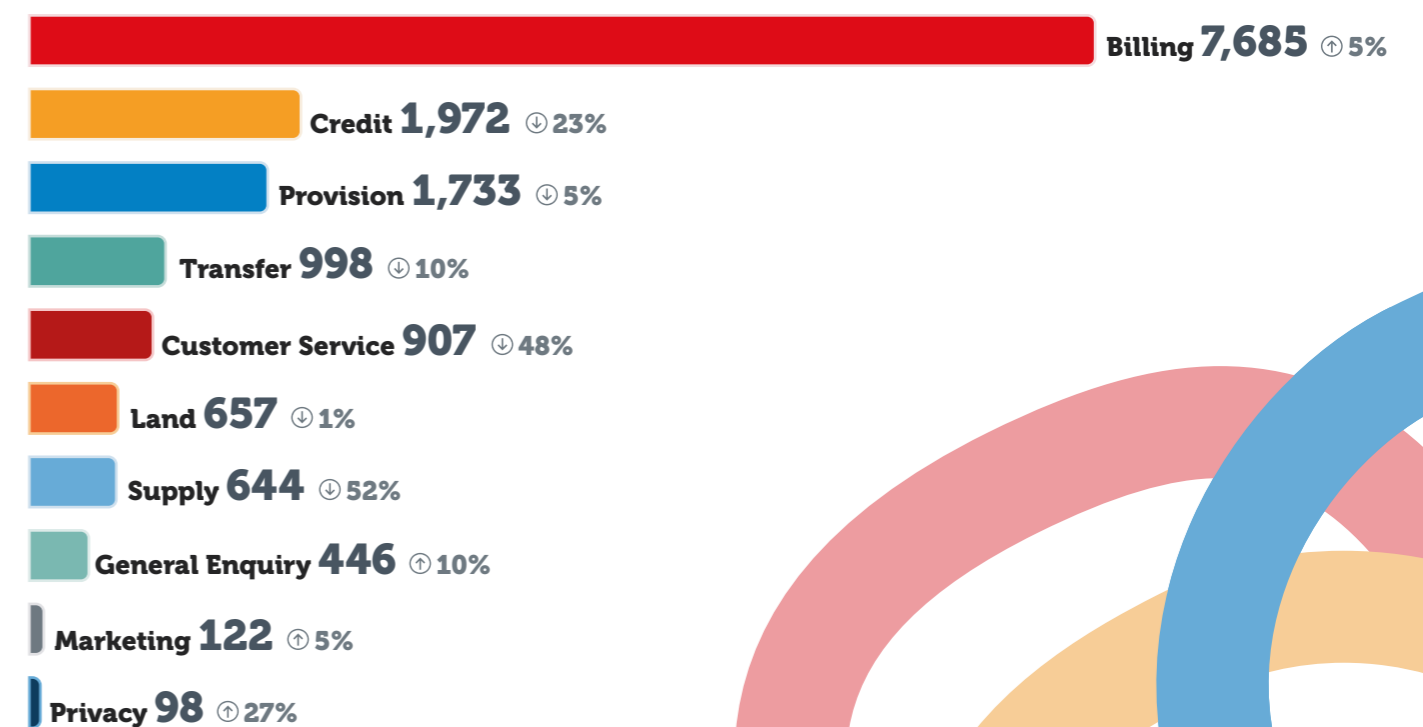
Wrongful disconnection payment assessments finalised, with **\$86,079** paid to customers



\$803,990

In **billing adjustments, service payments** and **debt waivers** for customers through EWOV investigations

Case Issue



About the Board

Chairman's message

It is with great pleasure that I present this report, demonstrating EWOV's work to address challenges, take steps to prepare for the future, and help support the trust and confidence of energy and water consumers.



Paul Sheahan AM
Chairman,
appointed November 2014

The past year has been a dynamic and transformative period for energy and water consumers, providers and communities in our state. Many important developments and challenges have demanded the attention and dedication of the Board and the EWOV team.

In late 2022, after a competitive recruitment process, we welcomed Catherine Wolthuizen as the new EWOV Ombudsman. Catherine has brought her considerable experience and enthusiasm to the role and has already made great strides in transforming and improving EWOV. Together with the Senior Leadership Team, Catherine has conducted an operations and strategic review of the organisation and begun to implement some crucial changes in EWOV that will see us continue to adopt the hallmarks of a modern ombudsman. More detail about this can be found in Catherine's Ombudsman message in this report.

I'm pleased to share more about the important steps EWOV is taking, under Catherine's leadership, to ensure the dispute resolution EWOV delivers is fit-for-purpose into the future, particularly to meet consumer and business needs in the energy transformation.

As we get closer to 2030 and the need for emissions reduction becomes ever more important, renewable energy transition is a focus for Victoria. Large scale renewable energy generation and transmission projects are creating challenges in areas such as land access. Distributed energy resources, such as rooftop solar and household batteries, highlight consumer needs in terms of transparency and remedy. EWOV is well placed to play our part in the transition to renewables, to help ensure trust and confidence in the sector.

In August 2022, Stephanie Tonkin and Kay Dilger joined the Board as consumer directors, and in October we welcomed Dona Tantirimudalige as an industry director. Peter Quinn and Gerard Brody left the Board during the financial year, after many years of service and I thank them both for their important and considered contributions over that period.

Finally, my sincere thanks go to all EWOV Limited Directors for their wisdom and commitment during the year, and my congratulations go to Catherine and the Senior Leadership Team for successfully negotiating another challenging year.

Paul Sheahan AM
Chairman, EWOV Limited

Directors



Jonathan Briskin
Industry Director,
appointed August 2014



Gerard Brody
Consumer Director,
appointed August 2014,
term completed June 2023



Eugenio (Gino) Fragapane
Industry Director,
appointed August 2015



Joanne Pafumi
Industry Director,
appointed April 2021



Lauren Solomon
Consumer Director,
appointed July 2021



Peter Quinn
Industry Director,
appointed August 2018,
term completed August 2022



Stephanie Tonkin
Consumer Director,
appointed August 2022



Kay Dilger
Consumer Director,
appointed August 2022



Dona Tantirimudalige
Industry Director,
appointed October 2022

Company Secretary
Christopher See,
EWOV, appointed October 2008

Governance statement

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) Limited is a company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. The objective of the company is to independently and efficiently resolve disputes between consumers and energy and water service providers in Victoria, with the further aim of reducing the occurrence of disputes. To fulfil this objective, EWOV Limited has set up a dispute resolution scheme called Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) and appointed an Ombudsman who has authority under the *EWOV Charter* to receive, investigate and facilitate the resolution of complaints. The 'members' of EWOV Limited, some of which trade under multiple business names, are the 'scheme participants' of the EWOV dispute resolution scheme.

The EWOV Limited Board is responsible for the business affairs and property of the company, including corporate governance, the setting of budgets, risk management, strategic planning and ensuring the Ombudsman's independence. The day-to-day operation of the EWOV dispute resolution scheme is the responsibility of the Ombudsman. The roles of the Board and the Ombudsman are complementary, with the Ombudsman attending Board meetings.

Ombudsman's message

2022-2023 was a year of evolving and new challenges, opportunities and priorities – many of which continue this current financial year. One of my key reflections from my first year with EWOV, is how many common and positive interests we share with consumers, providers, government, regulators and the wider community. We are all here to help improve outcomes for energy and water markets in Victoria.



Our case numbers stabilised to a degree after falling for four years, a time that coincided with COVID-19 measures such as reduced disconnections and debt collection, and increased government financial support. In the 2022-23 financial year, we received 15,262 cases, down slightly from 16,038 in the previous year.

While it is hard to predict overall case numbers, based on insights gained through data analysis, considerations of emerging trends such as price rises, and increased credit activity, we anticipate a modest increase in the 2023-24 period.

Our two all-staff gatherings during the year speak to our ongoing focus areas: exploring an understanding of our shared vision, purpose and outcomes for EWOV in everything we do, our unique Employee Value Proposition and launching our journey towards our first Reconciliation Action Plan.

“ ... we refreshed our structure and functions to improve focus, expand expertise and position EWOV for the future.

Transforming and evolving

In the 2022-23 financial year, we conducted strategic and operations reviews. These reviews explored the activities, approaches, structure and strategic alignment of EWOV and our ability to respond to the shifting needs and expectations of dispute resolution in Victoria. We landed on a new purpose, vision and strategy statement that will provide the direction for EWOV for the 2023-24 financial year and beyond. We also developed new objectives to guide our actions and help us transform into a modern ombudsman, one where the core function remains the resolution of individual complaints while also leveraging our expertise and unique insights to support and shape positive outcomes in current and emerging markets. We refined our focus to create EWOV's first Insights & Engagement

Team to maximise the positive value and impact of EWOV's unique insights. Please see page 8 to see a representation of our strategy on a page.

The operations review identified opportunities to enhance our efficiency, effectiveness, fairness and accessibility through structure and process change. In the second half of the financial year, we refreshed our structure and functions to improve focus, expand expertise and position EWOV for the future. For example, the review recommended the creation of a specialist *Senior Investigator – Credit and Vulnerability* to deal with an expected increase in the frequency and complexity of complaints from consumers experiencing financial hardship. The change also involved the creation of a new *Legal and Risk* team to deliver enhanced privacy compliance, quality assurance and improved knowledge flows within EWOV. Alongside the structural changes, we began the task of evolving our processes and systems, to improve speed, flexibility and guidance for efficient dispute resolution, while still applying a high level of expertise and sensitivity to complex or sensitive matters.

Supporting and empowering

The restructure completed in the 2022-23 financial year will ensure we are best positioned to meet challenges and take advantage of opportunities coming out of change. Our people are essential to this. We reviewed our benefits and programs to make sure we can continue to be an employer of choice, and support growth and development in our staff.

We enhanced our flexible working arrangements, expanded our parental leave to be gender-neutral and allowed staff to swap public holidays for other days of cultural significance. We formed an Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee to enable staff to co-design safe, respectful ways of working and improve our communications. We also expanded our career pathways for experienced, emerging leaders by partnering them with senior leaders, to feel empowered

to lead in areas such as change management, culture-building and authentic leadership. Our wellbeing program continued to expand in the year, delivered in a hybrid model, and we supported the physical health of our people with skin checks and vaccinations.

“Shifts in our operating environment and the Victorian community have introduced a considerable amount of uncertainty but also opportunities for change.

Building and measuring

Following the introduction of our new case management system SPARX in late 2021, this year saw us adding to our foundation of fit-for-purpose information technology systems. These systems are designed to help us be an efficient and responsive ombudsman scheme. During the 2022-23 financial year, we made several iterative enhancements to SPARX that have improved interactions and data capture. We've also laid the groundwork for additional portal capability by increasing security, modernising data storage and integrating the software we use. We will continue to leverage the technological capabilities we've built over the past several years to improve the dispute resolution and insights and engagement functions of EWOV.

We also began the process of implementing a new performance measurement framework, following the operations and strategic reviews. The new framework will provide clear targets that link back to our strategic objectives and outcomes, and will focus on qualitative impact alongside important operational quantitative measurements. We are working with our people to practically set this framework in place, which will guide our performance tracking going forward.

Watching and learning

Shifts in our operating environment and the Victorian community have introduced a considerable amount of uncertainty but also opportunities for change. Market volatility and policy change means that EWOV must anticipate, monitor and adapt to remain relevant and responsive to shifting needs. Affordability, in particular, remains a key concern for consumers. The rising cost of energy has put considerable strain on budgets, including for consumers who may not have previously experienced financial hardship. We recognise that EWOV plays an important role, now perhaps more than ever, in helping consumers get the energy and water they need and assisting with resolving a range of

disputes. While this has always been integral to EWOV's operations, we have now incorporated this in our revised purpose and vision.

Most notably, the majority of the disputes we received in the financial year were about billing and credit issues. Stories of the individuals, households and businesses behind those disputes can reflect the pressures being felt in the community and can help to uncover potential systemic issues that may affect a large number of consumers. We highlight some of these stories in the case studies in this report.

“It's clear that access to free, fair and independent external resolution must remain relevant and keep pace with evolving consumer needs, technologies and business models.

Transitioning and protecting

As consumers and markets make the shift to renewable sources of energy, EWOV is positioned to help support trust and confidence through free, independent, accessible, effective and fair alternative dispute resolution. New consumer energy resources and expanded transmission networks, in particular, present challenges around issues such as billing and payment difficulties, land access, privacy and customer service. Effective external dispute resolution is critical for maintaining consumer trust in evolving and complex markets. It's clear that access to free, fair and independent external resolution must remain relevant and keep pace with evolving consumer needs, technologies and business models. In fact, as a key safety net, dispute resolution must remain a step ahead of evolving consumer needs and business models. As industry and policymakers consider these issues going forward, we will continue to make our unique data and insights available to support the transition.

Catherine Wolthuizen

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) and Chief Executive Officer

A refreshed strategic direction for 2023-24

In early 2023, we embarked on an organisation-wide process to review and revise EWOV’s purpose, vision and strategy. The refreshed strategic direction shapes our work from the 2023-24 financial year and beyond, and is designed to reflect the multiple roles performed by a modern ombudsman.

Purpose We help Victorian energy and water markets work better for people

Vision Fair, accessible and sustainable markets that meet people’s energy and water needs

Promise We will find you, we will explain it for you, and we will work with you

Strategy Statement We reach and help as many people as we can. We build trust and confidence in current and future energy and water markets by providing independent, fair, efficient and free dispute resolution. We grow and share our energy and water knowledge and insights to benefit everyone, including those who do not use our service.

Objectives	Deliver a dispute resolution service that is accessible, efficient, fair, independent and leverages our expertise to provide clarity to complainants and the wider market	Grow and share our unique insights to influence broader positive changes in the energy and water markets	Develop our responsive and adaptive workforce and systems to meet current and future challenges
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Key Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop governance, policies, processes and practices to support the work we do (including position statements, charter, funding) Ensure the right structure to deliver the work (including roles, capabilities) Expand our reach and improve accessibility for all users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop strategies, plans and systems to develop these insights and influence positive change Ensure the right structure, roles and skills to support this Establish and embed an evolved market improvement, policy insights and strategic communications function Have strategic, data and insights-led engagement with key business, policy and regulatory stakeholders to improve outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define our culture, employee value proposition and ways of working that align to our workforce plan Develop a capability structure and plan that grows a responsive and adaptive workforce Foster a safe, supportive and resilient culture Maintain a diverse workforce that reflects the community that we serve Maintain and evolve our systems to support our staff Build fit-for-purpose knowledge and information-sharing people and systems
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Objectives and strategic priorities

The EWOV Board, Membership and Senior Leadership team agreed to the following strategic priorities for 2022-23.

Operating model	To provide efficient, effective, fair, and independent dispute resolution services to energy and water consumers and scheme participants
Industry relationships	To foster effective, collaborative relationships and drive continued consumer service improvement by the energy and water industry
Customer and community engagement	To advance the accessibility and awareness of EWOV
Policy and influence	To be a respected provider of high quality, independent information, analysis and advice about the consumer experience of the energy and water industries
Future scope and capability	To ensure EWOV remains relevant and effective in a changing environment
Systems and data analysis	To deliver robust and capable information technology and data solutions to support EWOV’s goals
Human capability	To foster an agile, high-performing workforce



Operating model

Goal

To provide efficient, effective, fair and independent dispute resolution services to energy and water consumers and members.

Success measures

- Meet or exceed key performance indicators by 30 June 2023
- Meet cost per case outlined in 2022-2023 budget

Our performance

We registered 15,262 cases, with 41 of these also requiring a wrongful disconnection assessment.

We finalised 13,435 cases — 976 as Enquiries, 1,929 as Unassisted Referrals, 9,038 as Assisted Referrals, and 1,492 as Investigations.

From our Investigations, consumers received \$803,990.46 in billing adjustments, service payments and debt waivers.

We exceeded two of seven key performance measures for case handling. Our results were as follows:

- Accessible and efficient service to consumers contacting us on the 1800 number – Calls answered in 30 seconds: KPI = 85%. Result = 66%.
- Timely and sustainable resolution of straightforward cases
 - Stage 1 Investigations closed within 28 days: KPI = >90%. Result = 87%.
 - Stage 1 Investigations average days to close: KPI = 28 days. Result = 15.
 - Stage 1 Investigations not reopened: KPI = 99%. Result = 98%.
- Effective and efficient Investigations (Stage 1 and Stage 2+)
 - Average days to close: KPI = 46 days. Result = 55 days.
 - Closed within 90 days: KPI = >95%. Result = 65%.
 - Not reopened: KPI = 98%. Result = 99%.

We achieved an overall customer satisfaction rating (excellent or good) of 73% (down 5%) and a Net Promoter Score of 53% (down 1%).

We received one complaint about the closure of a case. Our statement and policies about compliments and complaints about EWOV are available at www.ewov.com.au/about-us/feedback

Our total expenditure was \$9.8 million, \$1 million (9.8%) under budget.

In recognition of the challenges we faced in achieving key performance measures, we undertook an operations review in late 2022/early 2023. The review interrogated our operational practices through the lens of the Treasury CDR Benchmarks, our Independent Review from 2019, the *EWOV Charter*, *EWOV Promise*, and consumer and provider expectations, including those expressed in our regular surveys.

The review focused on the key areas of case handling practice, case classifications, resource capability, structure and KPIs, risk management and gap analysis. It gave us an opportunity to refine current practices to ensure we can deliver a dispute resolution function that is procedurally and substantively fair, aligned with best practice, structured to meet a balance of efficiency and impact, user-focused and sufficient to meet the changing needs of complaint management in Victoria.

As a result of the review, we:

- restructured the dispute resolution teams to refocus efforts on user and consumer experience
- created a Community and Support team within Dispute Resolution to focus on outreach, provider support and referral partnership
- created a Legal and Risk team to focus on compliance, service excellence training and knowledge ownership, and
- realigned case handling practices to ensure benchmarks for external dispute resolution are met and exceeded.

Industry relationships

Our performance

We continued to engage with key stakeholders in the energy and water sector in Victoria to help drive positive change and improve consumer outcomes.

We joined providers and industry members in outreach initiatives, including 'Bring Your Bills' days in key regions of Victoria. These events were aimed at increasing consumer understanding of energy and water bills, and awareness of supports available. Consumers could engage with us and industry members to ask questions and seek clarification on bills, particularly for consumers facing payment difficulties.

We prioritised regular meetings with stakeholders, including the Essential Services Commission's energy sector roundtable, which took place approximately once a quarter. These meetings served as a platform for learning about the sector's progress, proactive scoping and analysis of the sector, as well as an opportunity to engage with the sector and leverage our own data insights to drive positive changes.

Recognising the importance of dialogue with regulators, policymakers, providers and consumer groups, our Ombudsman Catherine Wolthuizen held introductory meetings following her appointment to build and strengthen relationships.

We conducted thematic reviews into our complaint data, including on the critical issue of family violence protections in energy and water. Our systemic issues monitoring and investigations have led to improvements in the sector with the potential to impact outcomes for many consumers. Examples of impact include: customer service process changes, where providers have made positive business and process changes to benefit consumers; uplift of training for frontline staff; and improvements to automatic system design leading to greater account security and privacy outcomes. The power of these changes is that they positively benefit thousands of consumers, including people who may never come into contact with EWOV.

Our member portal, a key resource for engaging with providers and providing timely access to case data and EWOV processes, has been improved during the year. We have added extra self-service capability for providers and we are adding multi factor authentication to secure data. We are looking at other processes we can manage via the portal, such as downgrade requests for complaint cases to streamline processes and ensure consistent responses and outcomes.

This year we welcomed new members including Nectr, Telstra Energy and GEE Energy and but also saw exits, with several businesses leaving the market altogether (Power Club, Elysian Energy and Mojo Power, trading as People Energy and Q Energy).

We sent regular communication to providers through *EWOV Member News*, covering topics and issues such as themes from our systemic issues investigations, insights from our case data and reminders of rule changes. These emails performed well, with an average open rate of 31.1% and a click-through rate of 8.7%.

We sought to understand the experiences and perspectives of providers with our yearly survey. We gathered valuable insights including opportunities for providers to learn from EWOV about systemic issues that impact vulnerable groups of consumers, the importance of communication at senior levels and the need for a portal for communication about cases. These insights will help inform our decision-making and future initiatives.

Goal

To foster effective, collaborative relationships and drive continued customer service improvement by the energy and water industry.

Success measures

- Sustained levels of members' satisfaction relative to 2021-2022
- 77% of systemic issues result in changes to process, procedures or conduct

Consumer and community engagement

Goal

To advance the accessibility and awareness of EWOV.

Success measures

- Sustained high levels of consumer satisfaction and rating of ease of use and fairness of EWOV's processes
- Improved familiarity with EWOV as measured by the Energy Consumers Australia annual Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey (31%)

Our performance

We continued with a hybrid approach to our community outreach, connecting online and in person to increase accessibility and awareness, connect community members with help, and build relationships with organisations working with vulnerable Victorians. We collaborated with community partners like the Australian Red Cross and Djirra to share knowledge and provide support. We heard about community concerns regarding affordability and rising living costs, provided information about consumer rights and highlighted the importance of maintaining contact with providers.

We convened our community consultation group, after a pause during the pandemic. The group is an opportunity for EWOV to connect, listen and talk about important issues that community members and groups are seeing. We also shared information about the work we do to support fair and reasonable outcomes for Victorian energy and water consumers.

We engaged with a range of stakeholders about community issues and the accessibility of support. For example, we participated in discussions with the Consumer Action Law Centre, Financial Counsellors Victoria and the Essential Services Commission about best practice when working with financial counsellors acting on behalf of vulnerable consumers. We attended the Financial Counselling Australia conference, taking part in the regular dispute resolution forums with other ombudsman schemes.

We continued to test and optimise broader communications to consumers and community stakeholders, in line with our awareness, accessibility and transparency benchmarks. We used a mix of email, website, social media and other channel communications, carefully selecting the channel mix according to audience needs.

Our sponsored posts on Facebook and Instagram primarily focused on messages about rights and entitlements and raising awareness among consumers about how to deal with affordability issues. Content featured messages about concessions available, best offer, the payment difficulty framework, debt collection and disconnection rights and responsibilities, entitlements available such as the Power Saving Bonus and the Utility Relief Grant Scheme and backbilling rules.

Following flooding events in Melbourne and regional Victoria, we activated targeted messaging to these communities on social media to raise awareness of consumer rights.

Our sponsored posts reached a wide audience across Victoria, with a range of posts designed to reach our priority outreach areas. We reached more than 1,517,222 Victorians with our content, at more than 3.8 million impressions, and received more than 8,649 click throughs.

Photos:

- 1 In March we travelled to Morwell to participate in an event hosted by Djirra. We provided valuable information about consumer rights and entitlements to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (Pictured: Maggie De Battista)
- 2 In May, EWOV attended the Financial Counselling Australia conference in Canberra. Presented by Financial Counselling Australia. It was attended by more than 600 representatives from the sector. (Pictured L-R: Catherine Wolthuizen, Melanie Shirley)

- 3 During the month of February, we attended an event hosted by Moonee Valley Legal Service to support the culturally diverse community of Flemington. We explained how to read your energy bill and what to do if you need assistance from your provider. (Pictured: Danielle Matthews)
- 4 Together with Salvation Army's Money Care Team and Barwon Water, we visited Corio Village Shopping Centre during AntiPoverty Week (October) to connect to the local community and provide information about hardship assistance and energy and water entitlements. (Pictured centred: Melanie Shirley)

- 5 At the final outreach event for 2022, EWOV visited the Hume Global Learning Centre in Sunbury. We met with local community members and provided information and support around rising utility bills and the increased cost of living pressures. (Pictured L-R: Nick Gardiner and Melanie Shirley)
- 6 In February we attended a community initiative "Bring Your Bills Day" in Glenroy, hosted by Moreland and Hume City Councils. (Pictured: Melanie Shirley)



Policy and influence

Goal

To be a respected provider of high quality, independent information, analysis and advice about the consumer experience of the energy and water industries.

Success measures

- 80% of consultation processes that EWOV engages in adopt EWOV's proposals/recommendations
- Ongoing and sustained engagement with EWOV's publications (average open rate of reports \geq 31%)

Our performance

We continued to analyse and share our unique consumer market insights, drawing on case data and consumer experiences from investigations, to inform policy decision-making and consultation processes with government and regulators.

We made seven formal submissions to the following consultations:

- Energy Services Board's *Data Strategy Initial Reforms Consultation Paper*
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's consultation on *Protecting Consumers of Distributed Energy Resources (DER)*
- A joint submission with EWOQ, EWON and EWOSA to the *Financial Counselling Industry Funding Model Discussion Paper*
- A joint submission with EWOQ, EWON and EWOSA to Australian Energy Market Commission's *Unlocking CER benefits through flexible trading rule change consultation paper*
- Essential Services Commission's *Making a Land Access Code of Practice: Consultation paper*
- A joint submission with EWOQ, EWON and EWOSA to the Attorney-General's Department's *Privacy Act Review Report consultation*
- Essential Services Commission's *Victorian Default Offer 2023-2024: Draft Decision Paper*.

We provided data insights to key government and regulatory stakeholders, sharing our consumer insights to contribute to a clearer picture of market trends, and consumer and provider behaviours. This proactive analysis offered relevant and timely updates about the sector and consumer protections for evidence-based decision-making.

We conducted in-depth data analysis and shared our unique insights with policymakers, specifically targeting the future energy market. We consider EWOV is best placed to provide a clear, fair and accessible dispute resolution pathway for consumer energy resources. Our data analysis also informed energy research conducted by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). By sharing our unique insights, we have contributed to the ongoing improvement of outcomes for energy consumers, particularly during periods of unexpected hardship.

We also participated in nationally significant reviews and consultations, such as the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) *Gamechanger Strategy*, which aims to enhance outcomes for consumers facing vulnerability. We contributed to the AER's review of consumer protections for future energy resources. This review focused on ensuring that consumer protections remain robust and adaptable in the face of evolving energy technologies. Beyond the AER review, we held discussion with stakeholders centred around ensuring that consumers have access to fit-for-purpose dispute resolution mechanisms in the transitioning market.

We published regular reports on ewov.com.au, including our quarterly report *Reflect*, and shared interactive data. Engagement with our data and reports improved in the 2022-23 financial year, with the time users spent on these pages increasing by 10.7%.

Additionally, we have engaged with, collaborated and shared our unique insights with key organisations, including the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission; Australian Energy Market Commission; Australian Energy Regulator; Consumer Affairs Victoria; Clean Energy Council; Clean Energy Regulator; Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Victoria); Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victoria); Essential Services Commission (Victoria); state energy and water ombudsman services; Solar Victoria; and the Victorian Small Business Commissioner.

Systems and data analysis

Our performance

We sustained the security and integrity of our systems through the complexity of our CRM replacement project, while making enhancements and improvements, and putting in the groundwork to modernise and advance our storage and data capabilities.

We maintained a minimum of 99.5% functioning of key business systems during our operating hours.

We made more than 200 enhancements to our complaints management system (SPARX), delivering on our commitment to ongoing improvements to the critical system. We implemented advanced email functionality in SPARX with Documill, improving staff experience with the system, as well as efficiency and greater control over output.

We commenced the delivery of a refreshed data warehouse environment in a cloud application called Snowflake. The data warehouse provides us with an advanced solution to better interrogate our data and automate data flows, while ensuring security. Additional functionality will be possible with the data warehouse, such as machine learning, efficient integration of external data, advanced data science options and in-built data masking to ensure that our data remains protected at all times.

We commenced our program of moving our server infrastructure off-premises and into the cloud, offering improved performance and staff experience with documents and applications. Cost-effective, secure and efficient, the new server will align with hybrid work, allowing the same user experience from office and home.

We underwent a cyber security audit of our environment to determine if we were following best practice and to identify any gaps in our Essential 8 Framework, a mitigation strategy to protect against cyber threats. The audit highlighted a solid foundation but identified opportunities to further harden our environment in a time of increasing risks. We now have a roadmap to improve our defences, to be robust and aligned with standards.

We moved our telephony and interaction platform to Genesys Cloud, providing functionality and capability that wasn't possible with our existing system. Genesys Cloud will allow us to better engage with conversational AI and social media, cueing chats directly into our system to improve our accessibility, especially for younger cohorts of consumers.

We improved security for our member portal, implementing multi-factor authentication. We also introduced a downgrade (lowering a case stage) form for providers, improving processing, allowing for more efficient channelling of requests and formalising the way we capture information.

In the next financial year, we'll work toward implementing a consumer portal and integrating our member portal with SPARX.

Goal

To deliver robust and capable information technology and data solutions to support EWOV's goals.

Success measures

- Key business systems are functioning 99.5% of the time during EWOV's operating hours
- CRM implementation project meets agreed time frames and budget

Future scope and capability

Goal

To ensure EWOV remains relevant and effective in a changing environment.

Success measures

- EWOV is actively engaged in dialogue about the balance of consumer protections and innovation in the energy market and driving harmonisation (where viable) with other schemes
- CRM implementation project meets agreed time frames and budget

Our performance

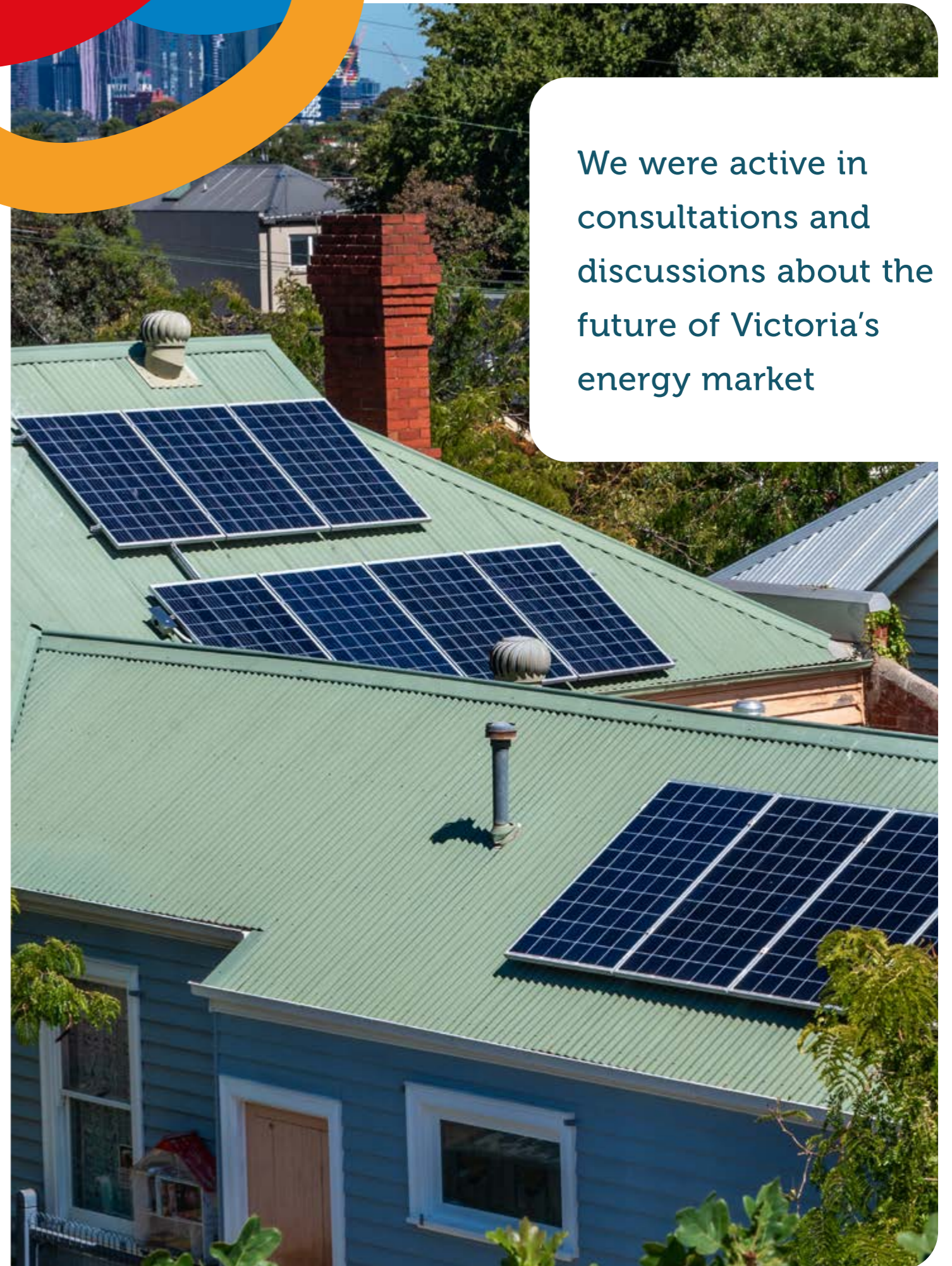
In the 2022-23 year, we have continued to build on the insights gathered in the VOICES report. Our focus has been on leveraging our unique data insights, which have revealed a significant unmet need among consumers who are rapidly adopting energy products and services such as rooftop solar.

We were active in consultations and discussions about the future of Victoria's energy market, as the state shifts to renewable sources of energy, which provides consumers and markets access to innovation and a multitude of new energy products and services. We've contributed to multiple consultation processes to ensure clear pathways to dispute resolution, including with regulators and Victorian government departments. Our submission to the then Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning in November 2022 about protecting consumers of distributed energy resources highlighted the unique part EWOV can play in sharing insights that will help to address emerging consumer harms in an agile and responsive way, as well as the importance of having clear, accessible, efficient and effective redress pathways in place, to promote trust and confidence in markets and the energy transition.

Recognising the ongoing challenges and opportunities arising from the energy transition, we have worked closely with other energy and water ombudsman services. Together, we have influenced a strategic approach that acknowledges the diverse frameworks, scheme models and policy approaches in each jurisdiction. This collaborative effort ensures that we can continue learning from one another as we navigate the evolving landscape to ensure fit-for-purpose dispute resolution in the transition.

Land access has become an important issue in Victoria, as upgrades to energy supply and transmission to meet renewable energy targets raise the need to access private land. In our submission to the Essential Services Commission's *Making a Land Access Code of Practice: Consultation paper*, we shared insights about current land access issues, including how the proposed Code can build trust and confidence among impacted communities and landholders through supporting improved community consultation and engagement and clearer and respectful contact between transmission companies and landholders. We highlighted the importance of transparency and clear redress pathways. We also explored EWOV's unique role in the transforming energy market as an experienced consumer dispute resolution scheme and our experience in handling land access cases under the Essential Services Commission's Statement of Expectations.

We were active in consultations and discussions about the future of Victoria's energy market



Human capability

Goal

To foster an agile, high-performing workforce.

Success measures

- Improved staff engagement survey results relative to 2022
- 97% of gaps identified through quality and capability processes are resolved within three months

Our performance

We continued a hybrid way of working, building on the systems and processes we implemented in previous financial years. Average staff engagement scores increased to 86% (up from 82% in the previous financial year) with an average participation rate of 84%.

We worked closely across departments to help create an organisation designed for high performance and agility. While our complaint volumes have declined in recent years, there is increasing volatility and we play an important role in providing a fair and independent service. With newly created Assistant Ombudsman roles, we worked together on an organisational redesign. We consulted an organisational psychologist and our staff to understand their needs, and designed an organisational structure that supports the work our key staff do. We reviewed our benefits and commitments to our people so we can continue to be an employer of choice, including expanding our parental leave to be gender-neutral and removing primary/secondary carer labels.

We formed an Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee, allowed staff to swap public holidays for other days of cultural significance, and lived and breathed our flexible working offerings. We launched several parallel recruitment campaigns and despite ongoing competition for talent, had fast and successful internal and external appointments, completing a positive and exciting redesign.

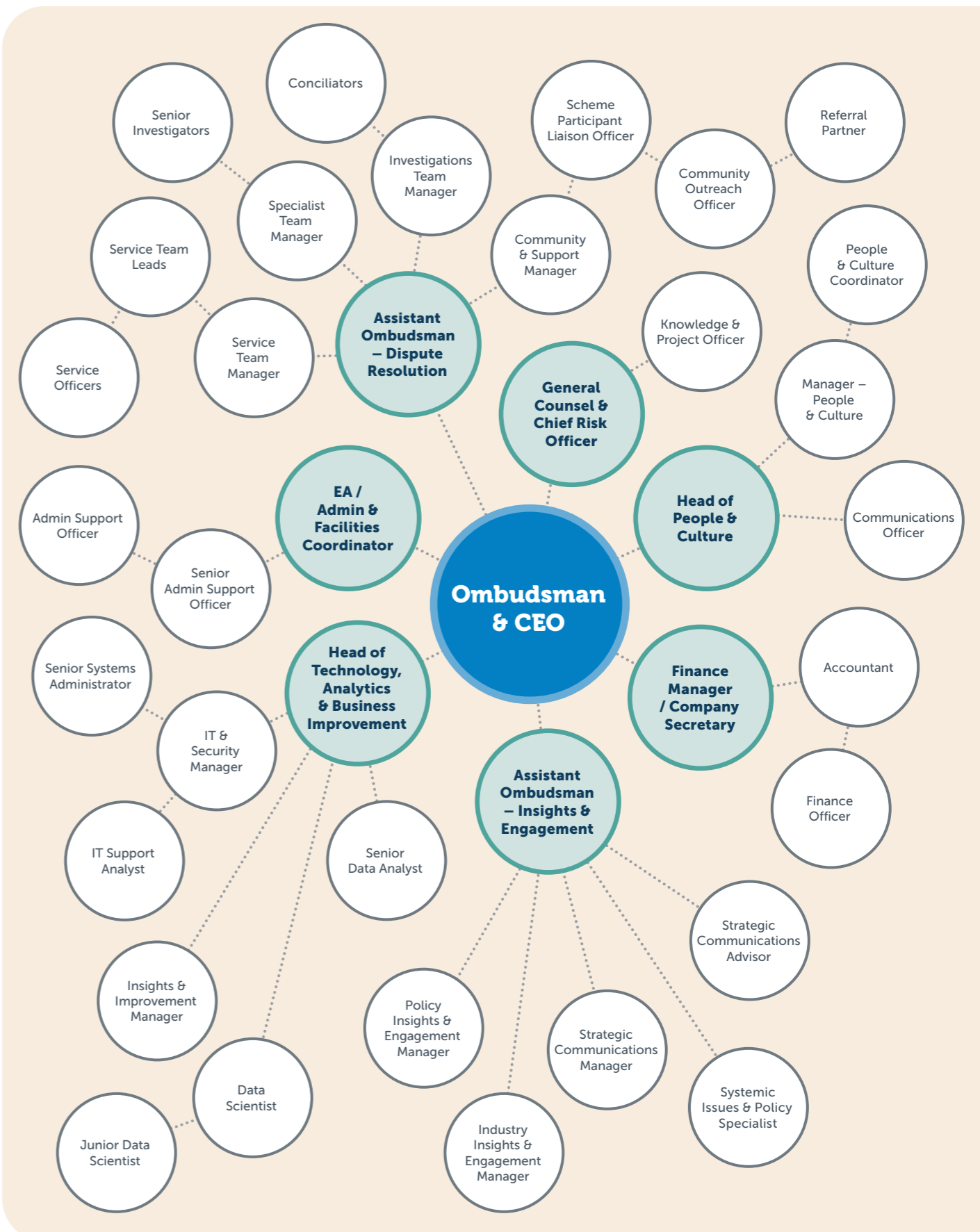
After our redesign and all-staff collaboration, 83% of our people said they see themselves as being a part of EWOV's future purpose and vision, and 83% feel positive about the work they do at EWOV.

We launched career pathways for experienced and emerging leaders. During a transition period of senior leadership change, we continued to offer our emerging leaders capability opportunities in coaching through change, creating positive team culture and creating psychological safety through vulnerable and authentic leadership. We also created a genuine partnership between these emerging leaders and our senior leaders through our Experienced Leader pathway. This program connected our emerging leaders to our experienced leaders through a formal mentorship program, as a way of encouraging our senior leaders to continue to share their insights and experiences across leadership levels. The program has supported the shift from leadership theory to culturally aligned leadership in practice at EWOV.

The wellbeing program we delivered successfully addressed the needs of our organisation during a period of change. Our responsive and hybrid approach targeted the specific challenges faced by our employees, focusing on maintaining psychological safety. In person, we delivered interesting sessions such as sound healing and rest workshops. Available on our "anytime, anywhere" online hub, we hosted positive psychology, stress management and workload/resilience sessions. We also included our usual skin checks and flu vaccinations in support of our peoples' physical health and a program that encompasses total wellbeing.

On wellbeing, 91% of our people say they receive support from the people around them at EWOV when they need it and 76% of people feel safe to take calculated risks, which is a measure of psychological safety and critical for innovation and creativity.

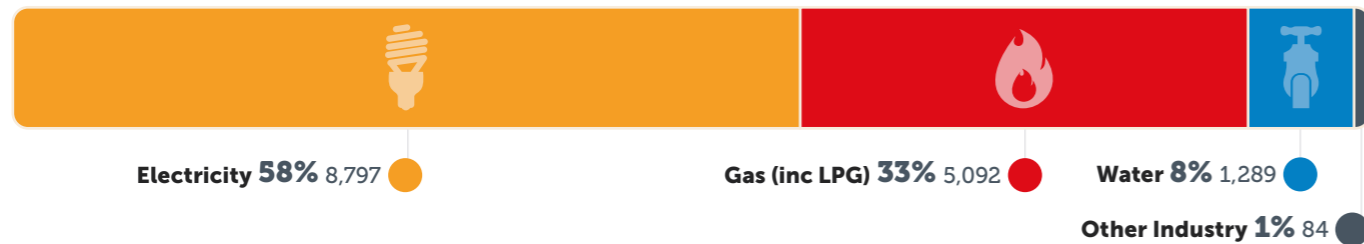
Organisational structure at 30 June 2023



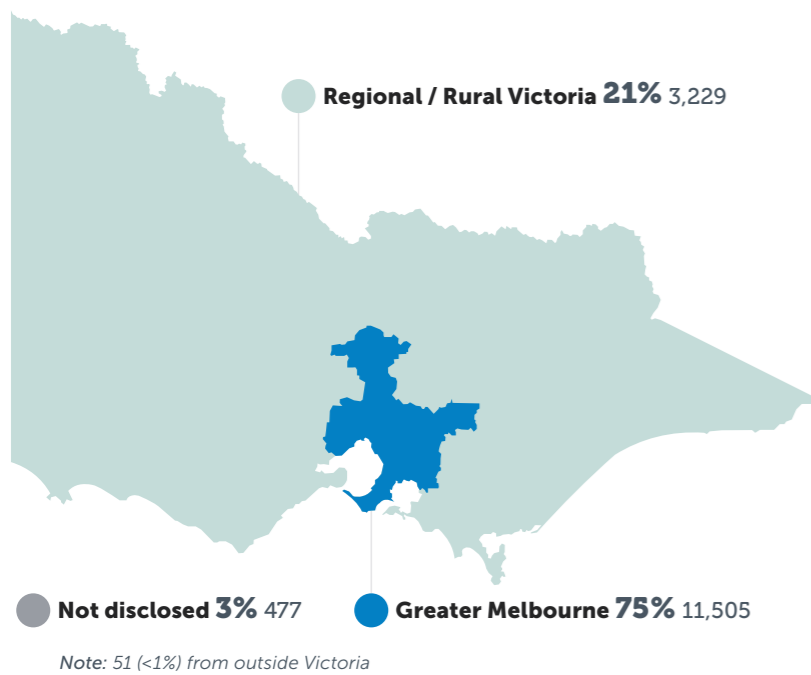
Cases received and who lodged them

15,262 total cases ⬇️ 5% from FY2022

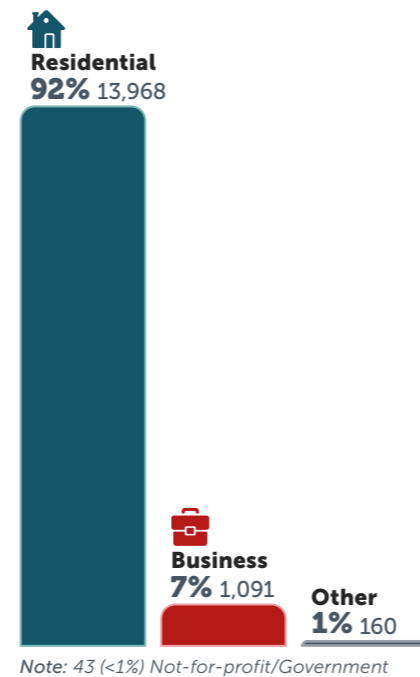
Case Industry



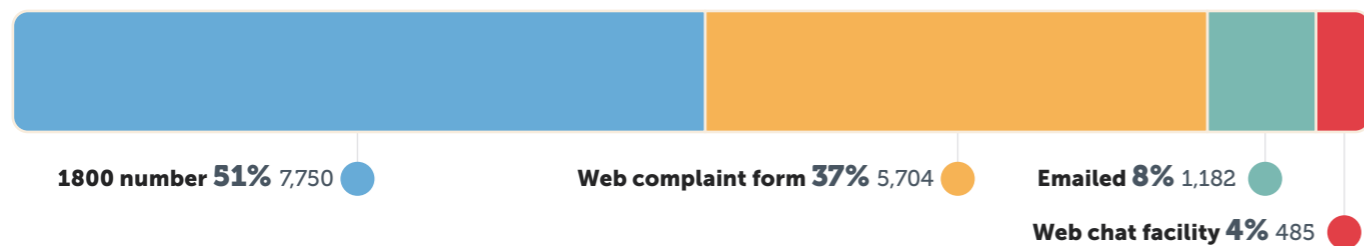
Case Location



Customer Type



Customer Contact method



Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, so may not always add to 100%.

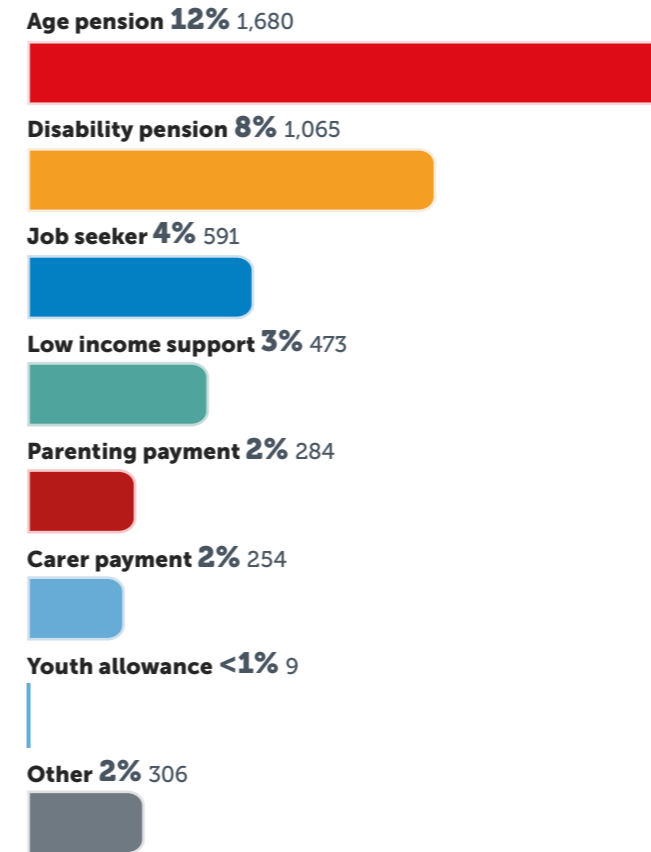
4,662

Residential customers identified as concession card holders

321

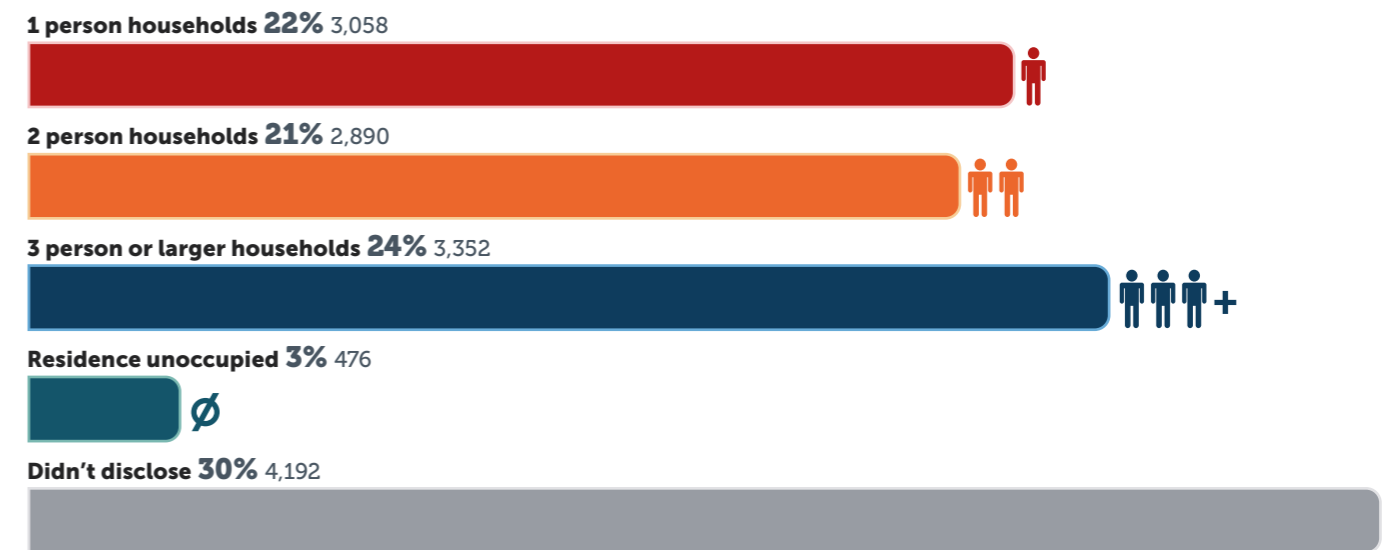
Residential customers self-identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Residence Concessions



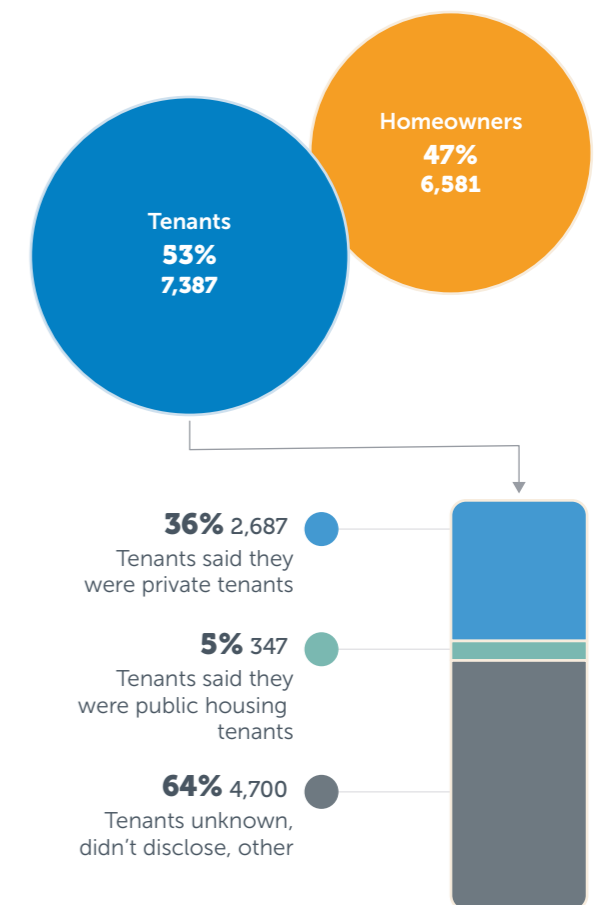
Note: 8,275 (59%) didn't hold a concession card and 1,031 (7%) unknown or didn't disclose

Residence Household size



Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, so may not always add to 100%.

Residence Owning vs Renting



Case study

High estimated bill

High bill • Estimated reads • Meter access issues • Utility Relief Grant

Sarah* called EWOV to lodge a complaint as she was unhappy with her provider in relation to a high estimated bill. She had received an estimated bill of \$844.02 and didn't think it was correct.

The provider then sent a letter to Sarah as she doesn't have a phone or an email address, advising that the estimated bill is due to meter access issues. The gas account previously had a credit of \$212.73 before the estimated bill was issued. Sarah then paid the bill by cheque for \$746.80 which was the amount with the "pay on time" discount.

Sarah did not receive a response from her provider within the designated time frame, and she also believed the financial cost for a special read was not previously stated. Two months later, Sarah contacted EWOV expressing dissatisfaction with the outcome and handling of her case. She mentioned that her concerns were not being understood and that the provider had failed to explain how they arrived at what she considered to be an unreasonable estimate and questioned why it was so high, and was also concerned that the provider might make similar estimates in the future. She mentioned that due to security reasons, her gate needed to be kept locked, and she lacked telephone or internet access to provide self-reads.

Despite her previous efforts in contacting her provider from a public telephone her issue remained unresolved. Because of the extended duration it takes for letters to reach and be processed, Sarah experienced difficulty meeting response deadlines. As a solution, Sarah wanted her case escalated to a team leader to review the letter and complaint. EWOV sought to have the issue rectified as soon as possible, which resulted in an actual reading obtained, and the account was re-billed.

EWOV also observed from the provider's notes that Sarah had previously requested a Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS) form, however, as the account was in credit at the time of the form being issued, she was not eligible to apply.

During our investigation, we reviewed all available information and communicated with both the provider and Sarah about the investigation. We considered:

- laws and regulations related to the case
- the consumer's circumstances
- how the provider calculated an estimated meter read.

The above factors were used to assess whether the provider's position, response and offer to Sarah's concerns about estimated bills and meter access were fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

After EWOV's investigation which carefully considered Sarah's unease regarding gate access and her concerns about future estimated reads, the provider took necessary action to ensure her issues were rectified. The provider agreed to use its 'best endeavours' to ensure that an actual meter read will be taken at least once per calendar year, and would consider waiving a special meter read fee once per calendar year where there has been no actual meter read obtained for 12 months, if requested by Sarah.

It confirmed that if an actual meter read cannot be taken due to hindered access to a meter, an estimated bill may be issued which is calculated using Approved Estimated Methodology.

To resolve the meter access difficulty, the provider also agreed that it will accept self-meter reads from Sarah via post and will re-bill the account accordingly.

The provider agreed to apply URGS onto Sarah's account. Sarah was satisfied with the changes made to her billing and future meter reads, and EWOV accepted that the provider presented reasonable options for Sarah to be billed correctly in the future, and we closed the case as a Fair Offer Assessment.

* Name has been changed

Case study

Family violence victim-survivor's address revealed

Privacy • Family violence • Customer service

Regina* called us on our 1800 number with a complaint about her electricity provider. She was dissatisfied about a breach of privacy.

A victim-survivor of family violence, Regina had moved out of her previous address, where her ex-partner was listed as a joint account holder with the electricity provider. Regina told us that when she moved into a new property, she created an account under her name only. Regina said she then received a text message from her ex-partner, showing that the electricity provider had included the ex-partner's name as a joint account holder at the new address and sent a copy of the bill. Concerned for her safety, Regina told us she needed to buy security cameras for protection.

Regina wanted a privacy breach reported and for the provider to consider compensation of several thousands of dollars in recognition of the breach, including reimbursement for a new security system to be installed.

Due to the sensitive concerns attached to this case, we worked quickly and progressed Regina's case straight to an investigation because of family violence. We asked the provider not to contact Regina about the matter while we conducted our investigation.

As part of our thorough investigation, we asked the provider how Regina's address was exposed to her ex-partner. The provider explained that, when Regina contacted it to close the original account, it added Regina's new address as a forwarding address – a standard practice when a consumer is vacating a property. It said Regina did not disclose family violence but acknowledged that it did not advise Regina that her forwarding address would display on future invoices.

Having exposed this crucial gap in the provider's training (both initial and ongoing) it agreed to update its scripting and guidance procedures to ensure it won't disclose this information in the future.

To assist Regina further, the provider advised that it could offer half of the monetary compensation Regina was seeking as a goodwill gesture, rather than paying for any security cameras to be installed. It also confirmed that it removed Regina's ex-partner from her account and that the ex-partner would no longer be able to receive future emails linked to Regina.

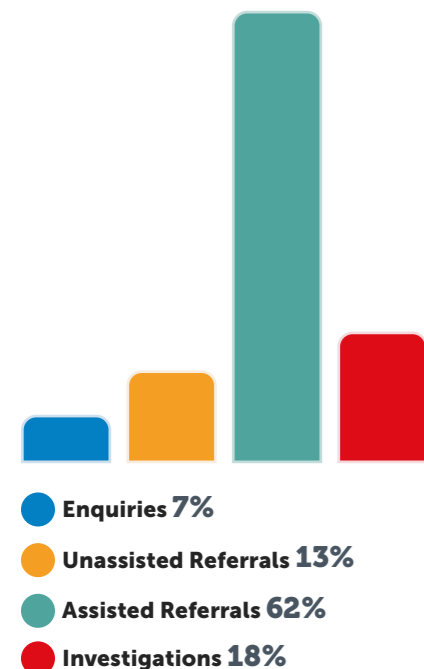
Regina accepted the goodwill gesture and was confident there would be no future breaches of privacy. As a result, the complaint was closed.

* Name has been changed



Dispute resolution processes and outcomes

Cases by Stages



Our approach to dispute resolution

We make sure each party to the complaint has a fair opportunity to explain their perspective and understand the issues and each other's point of view. The provider is given an opportunity to offer a resolution that takes account of the consumer's situation. Then, without taking sides, we work towards a fair and reasonable outcome and what needs to be done to achieve it. This outcome may be achieved directly between the consumer and the provider, or it may be conciliated by us.

At first contact

'Case' is when a consumer contacts EWOV. The case is then registered as either an 'enquiry' or a 'complaint'.

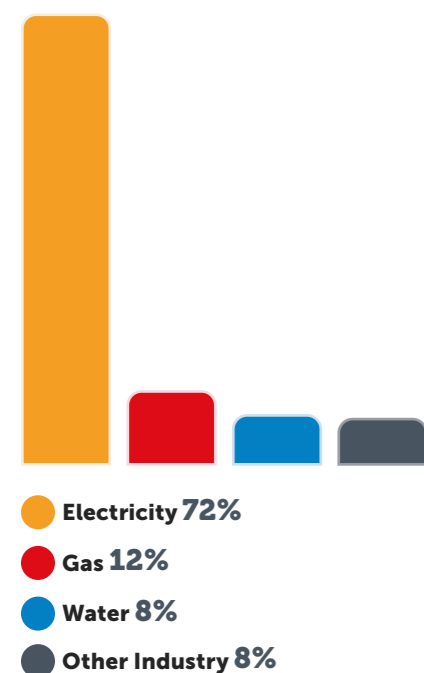
- An **enquiry** is a request for information.
- A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction about an energy or water provider or an embedded network entity that's an EWOV scheme participant – where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

When a consumer first contacts EWOV, we assess:

1. whether we have jurisdiction under the *EWOV Charter* to deal with their issue
2. whether the contact is an enquiry or a complaint
3. how many contacts the consumer has had with the provider, how they did that, if there are any special circumstances that need to be considered and with whom they spoke to.

From this assessment, we decide whether to register the case as an Enquiry, an Unassisted Referral, an Assisted Referral, or an Investigation. The bar chart on the left shows how we registered the 15,262 cases we received.

Enquiries by Industry



How we responded to enquiries

An enquiry is a request for general information. Where we can, we provide the information ourselves. Where we can't, we provide the consumer with contact information for the most appropriate other body.

Information requests

We gave 81 consumers (8%) information and referred them back to their energy or water provider.

We helped 347 people (34%) with general information.

'No wrong door'

Where a consumer contacts us and we can't help them directly, we advise them who can help and why, and we offer to send the complaint directly on to the other body, with the consumer's permission.

We referred 347 (33%) to a regulator – many of these were solar enquiries referred to Consumer Affairs Victoria.

We referred 112 consumers (11%) to another ombudsman.

We referred 26 people (3%) to government or a member of parliament.

We referred 40 people (4%) to another body.

The bar chart on the left shows the Enquiries we registered for each industry.

How we handled Unassisted Referrals

Before we can register a case as a complaint, the consumer must give the provider the opportunity to address the problem. In most cases where the consumer hasn't done that, we register the case as an Unassisted Referral and refer the consumer back to the provider's call centre. We also give the consumer the provider's contact details, to assist them to make contact.

1,929 complaints were closed as Unassisted Referrals. 844 consumers (43%) were referred to their provider's call centre and 70 consumers (4%) were referred to a regulator. 501 consumers (26%) were provided with general information.

The bar chart on the right shows the Unassisted Referrals we registered for each industry.

How we handled Assisted Referrals

If a consumer has contacted the provider at least once and their issue remains unresolved, we register the complaint as an Assisted Referral and arrange for the provider to contact the consumer. We provide the consumer with information about their rights and responsibilities and provide them the provider's contact details to assist them in making contact.

The consumer can return to us if the Assisted Referral doesn't resolve the complaint for them. Four weeks after the Assisted Referral we also send them a reminder SMS asking them to contact us again if the complaint isn't resolved.

After receiving an Assisted Referral from EWOV, the provider has three business days to contact the consumer. The provider has a total of 15 business days to investigate the complaint and undertake any necessary actions. Common reasons for consumers returning to EWOV are no contact by the provider, contact outside the required timeframes, or an offer that doesn't resolve the complaint to their satisfaction.

We closed 9,038 complaints at this level, when the consumer's complaint was resolved by the provider, or the consumer didn't return to us.

Where the consumer returned to EWOV still dissatisfied with how the provider responded to their complaint, we opened an Investigation. 11% of Assisted Referrals progressed to Investigation, with 34 days the average time between the Assisted Referral and the Investigation (up from 26 days in 2021-22).

The bar chart on the right shows the Assisted Referrals we registered for each industry.

Unassisted Referrals by industry

In 2022-23, 1,929 complaints were registered at Unassisted Referral:



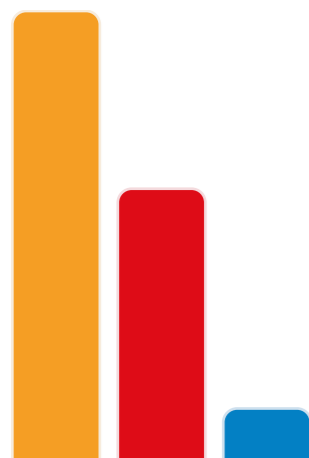
Assisted Referrals by industry

In 2022-23, 9,038 complaints were registered at Assisted Referral:



Dispute resolution processes and outcomes

Investigations opened by industry



- Electricity 895
- Gas 544
- Water 110

How we handled Investigations

If a consumer returns to EWOV because an Assisted Referral to a higher-level contact hasn't resolved their complaint for them, we review the complaint again for jurisdiction before we open an Investigation. Sometimes we bypass Assisted Referral and move directly to Investigation. We do this where we assess there are special consumer circumstances, or an energy or water provider requests an investigation rather than an Assisted Referral.

The bar chart on the left shows the Investigations we opened in each industry.

Monetary outcomes from EWOV Investigations

The bar chart below shows that, from EWOV Investigations, providers gave \$803,990.46 in billing adjustments, service payments and debt waivers. We also finalised 176 'wrongful disconnection' assessments, from which 45 payments were made by energy providers, including 4 payments made with no admission of breach. These totalled \$86,079, with consumers receiving an average of \$1,913.

Billing Adjustments \$219,275



Debt reductions / waivers \$264,863



Recognition of customer \$302,757



Waived fees \$9,141



Guaranteed service level \$7,954



\$803,990

was provided by companies to customers as a result of EWOV investigations

Investigation stages and upgrades

An Investigation may resolve at Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 or Final Stage depending on its complexity and whether the complaint has been upgraded under EWOV's *Complaint Upgrade Policy*.

The complaint upgrade process – with its additional costs for the provider – helps ensure that providers give EWOV timely, accurate and appropriate responses that assist resolution.

We may also upgrade a complaint if we assess that a provider's suggestion for resolution is inappropriate or inadequate, or if the provider disconnects or restricts supply, pursues debt collection activity, or contacts the consumer about the issue during our Investigation.

Stage 1 Investigation

A **Stage 1 Investigation** is one that we think can be resolved within 28 business days and two responses, because it doesn't require detailed information, action or analysis by us, the provider or the consumer. To provide faster information flows, we may gather a provider's Stage 1 complaint response verbally during a scheduled meeting. If the complaint isn't resolved promptly, or if the complaint needs to be tested against our fair and reasonable framework, we upgrade it.

We closed 1,216 Investigations at Stage 1, 1,101 of them (91%) conciliated. A further 113 (9%) were closed because the consumer disengaged from our process.

We upgraded 104 Investigations to Stage 2 – 57 electricity, 36 gas and 11 water.

Stage 2 Investigation

A **Stage 2 Investigation** requires more detailed information, action or analysis by us, the provider, or the consumer. The provider has 10 business days to provide us with an initial response, which we review and discuss with the consumer. We then work with the consumer and the provider to reach a fair and reasonable outcome.

We closed 1,321 Investigations at Stage 2. We conciliated 939 of these Investigations (71%).

We upgraded 140 Investigations to Stage 3 – 88 electricity, 37 gas and 15 water.

Stage 3 Investigation

We closed 201 Investigations at Stage 3. We conciliated 154 of these Investigations (77%).

36 Investigations were assessed as more appropriately dealt with by another body or closed because the consumer disengaged from the resolution process.

We upgraded 18 Investigations to Final Stage – 13 electricity, 3 gas and 2 water.

Final Stage Investigations

Once a complaint is upgraded to **Final Stage**, we begin the **Binding Decision** process. We aim to finalise a complaint at Final Stage within 90 days – by negotiating an outcome, closing the complaint on the basis that a fair and reasonable offer has been made by the provider, or referring the matter to the Ombudsman for a decision. A Binding Decision is binding on the provider if the consumer accepts it. It's not binding on the consumer, who can choose to pursue the complaint in another forum, such as a court.

We closed 34 Investigations at Final Stage. We conciliated 29 of these Investigations (85%).

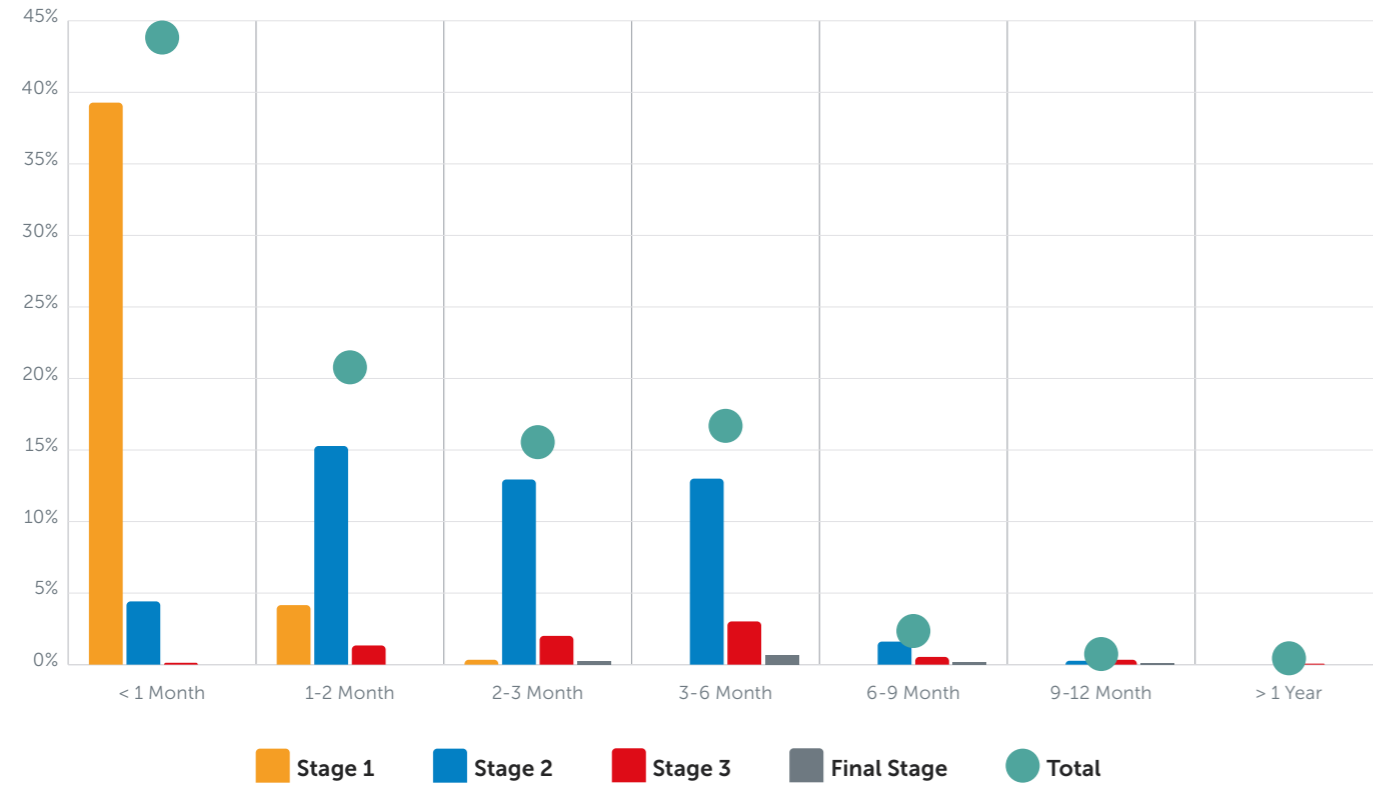
3 Investigations (9%) were closed because the consumer disengaged from the resolution process. No Binding Decisions were made.

2 Investigations resulted in a Fair and Reasonable Assessment – Fair Offer.

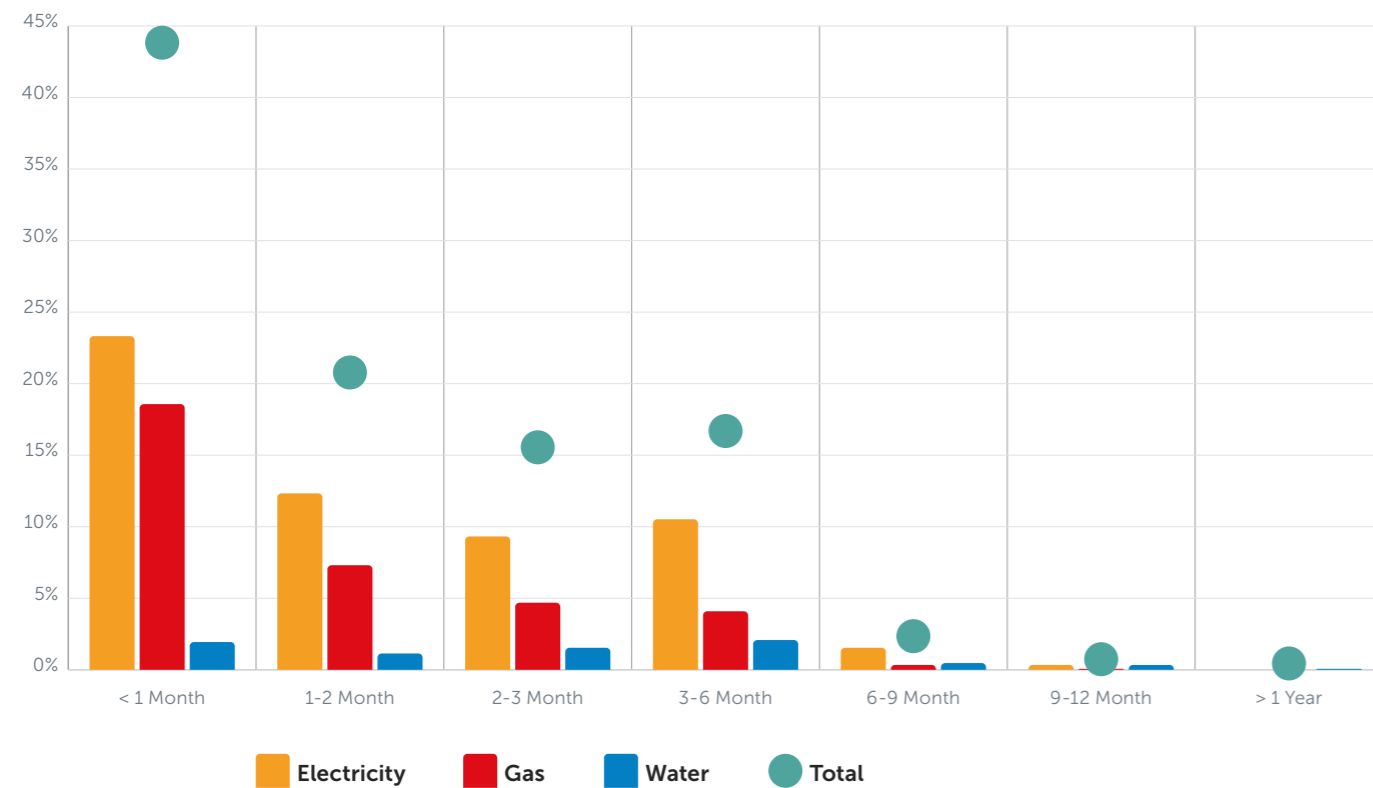
The bar charts on page 28 show time frames for EWOV Investigations, by stages and by industry.

Investigation time frames

by Stages



by Industry



Issues and trends

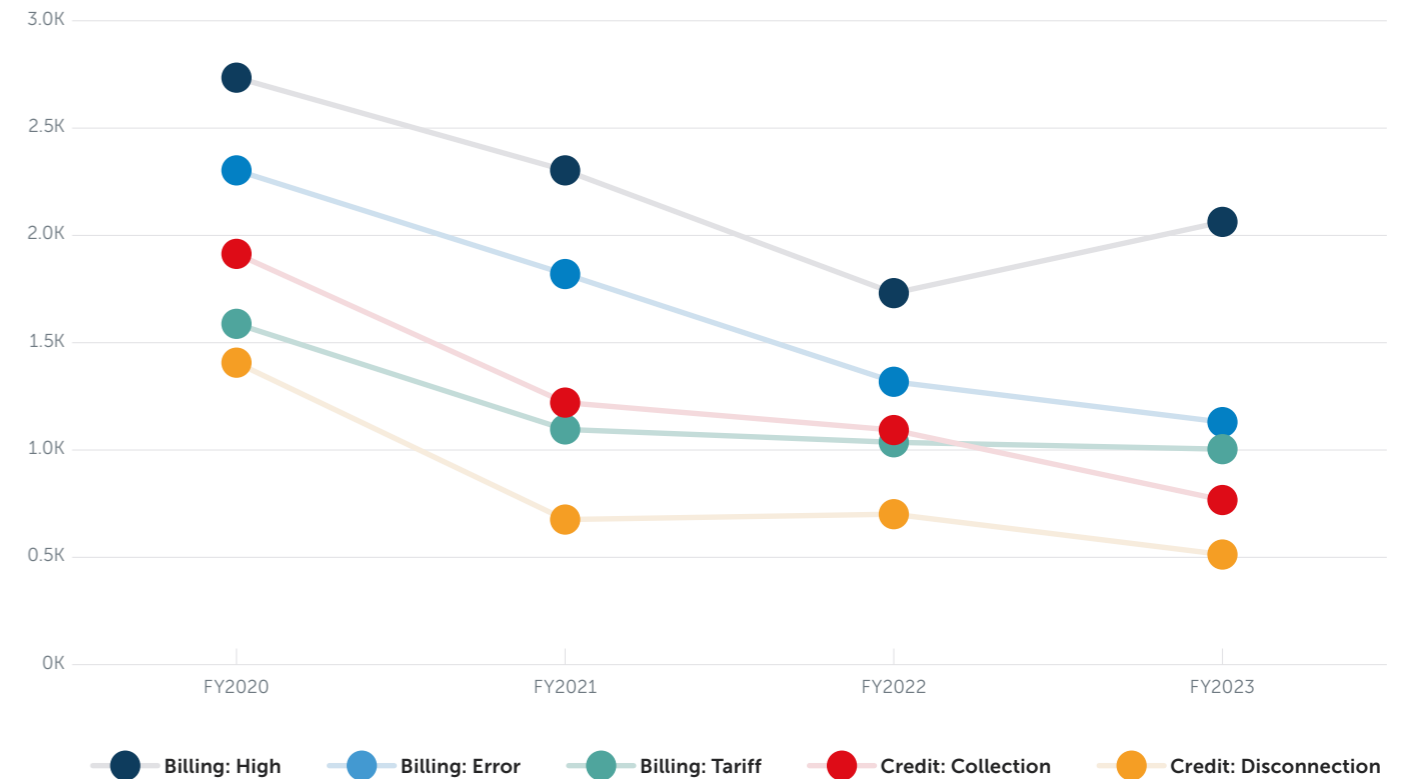
EWOV uses ten high-level issues categories

- **Billing** = Generating bills, sending bills, payment processes
- **Credit** = Unpaid bills and the action taken by energy and water providers to collect arrears
- **Customer service** = The level of service received or not received
- **Land** = How provider activities or network assets affect a consumer's property
- **Marketing** = How electricity and gas providers go about gaining new consumers
- **Privacy** = How a consumer's personal information is handled
- **Provision** = Connection of a property to an energy or water network
- **Supply** = Physical delivery of the electricity, gas or water service
- **Transfer** = Switching an electricity or gas account to another energy provider
- **General enquiry** = Cases that don't fit under another category

Our public reporting is based on 'one case – one issue', that being the main issue the consumer raises when they contact us.



Tracking common sub-issues



Top 5 sub-issues for 2022-23

Overall

1. Billing: high
2. Billing: error
3. Provision: existing connection
4. Billing: tariff
5. Credit: collection

Electricity

1. Billing: tariff
2. Billing: high
3. Provision: existing connection
4. Billing: error
5. Credit: collection

Gas

1. Billing: high
2. Billing: estimation
3. Billing: error
4. Provision: existing connection
5. Credit: payment difficulties

Water

1. Billing: high
2. Land: network assets
3. Billing: fees & charges
4. Land: property damage
5. Billing: error

Billing

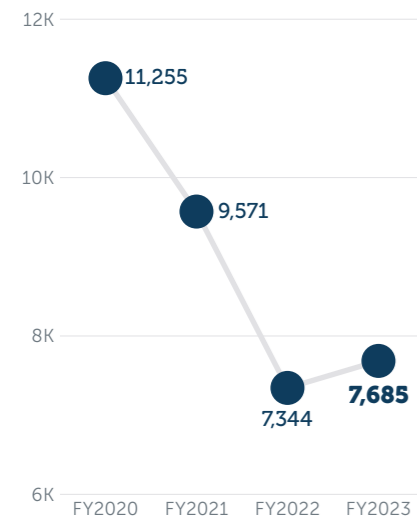
Billing:

- Generating bills
- Sending bills
- Payment processes

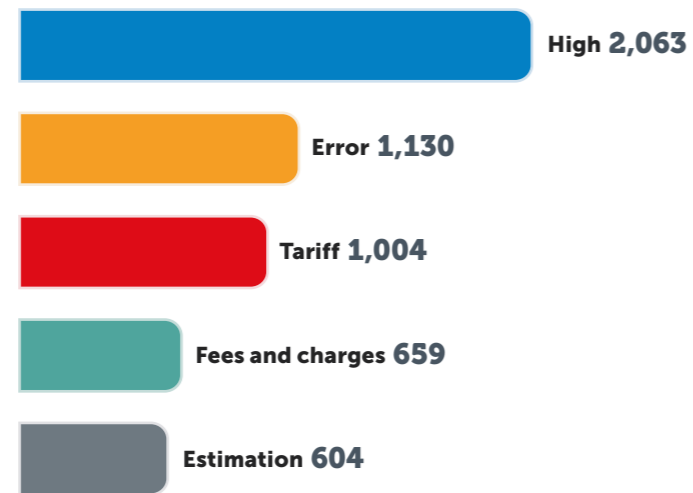
Common sub-issues:

- High
- Error
- Tariff
- Fees and charges

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↑ 5%
7,685
 Billing cases

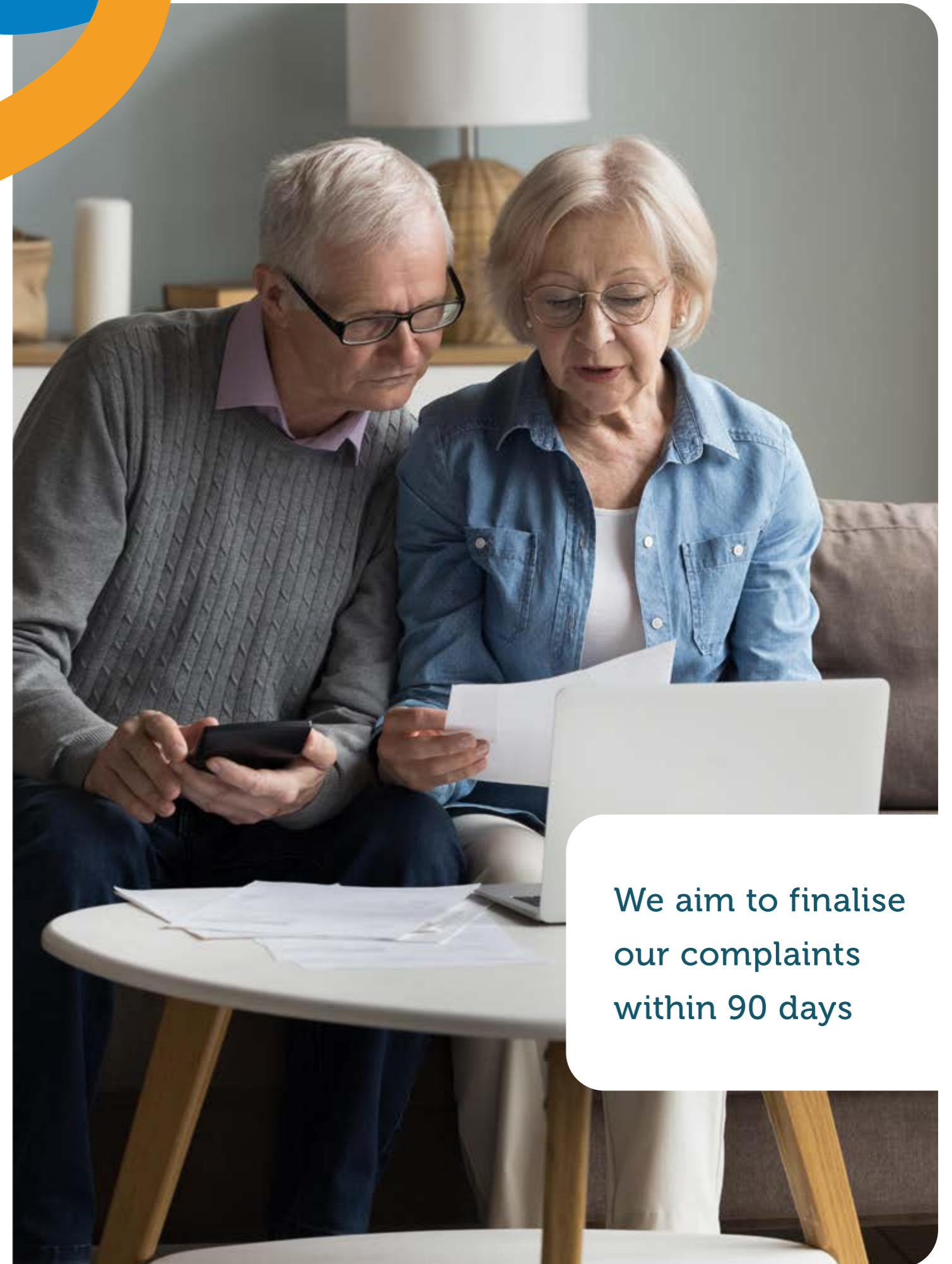
Trends in billing cases

EWOV received 7,685 billing cases in 2022-23:

- 52% electricity – most commonly about tariffs, high bills, billing errors
- 39% gas – most commonly about high bills, estimation, billing errors
- 8% water – most commonly about high bills, fees and charges, billing errors

Against 2021-22, billing cases were up 5% (and down 32% from four years ago):

- Electricity billing cases were down 2%
- Gas billing cases were up 18%
- Water billing cases were down 4%



We aim to finalise our complaints within 90 days

Credit

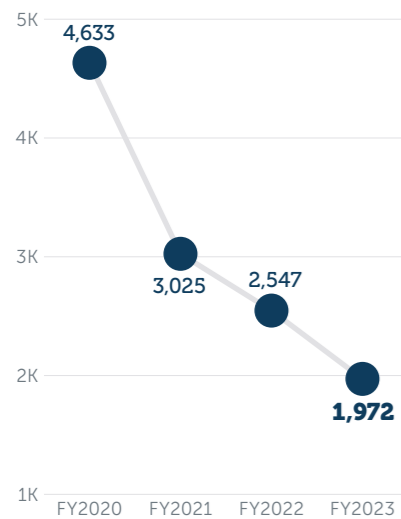
Credit:

- Unpaid bills and the action taken by energy and water providers to collect arrears

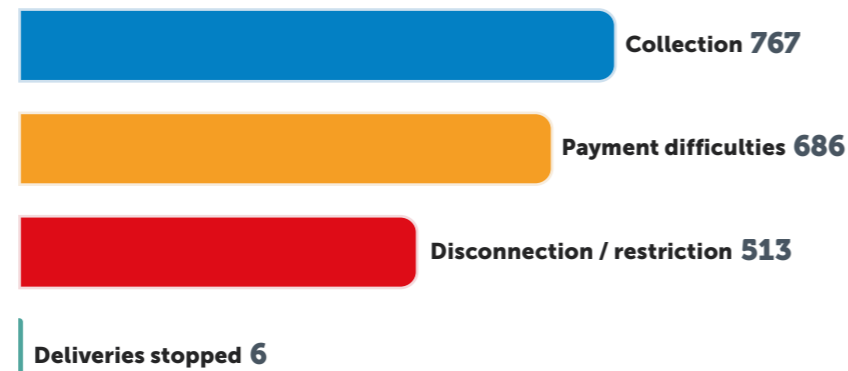
Common sub-issues:

- Collection
- Payment difficulties
- Disconnection/restriction

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↓ 23%
1,972
Credit cases

Trends in credit cases

EWOV received 1,972 credit cases in 2022-23:

- 61% electricity, most commonly about debt collection
- 36% gas, most commonly about payment difficulties
- 4% water, most commonly about collection and payment difficulties.

Against 2021-22, credit cases were down 23% (and down 57% from four years ago):

- Electricity credit cases were down 22%
- Gas credit cases were down 22%
- Water credit cases were down 31%.

Assessing whether an electricity or gas disconnection was 'wrongful'

Before disconnecting electricity or gas supply, an energy provider must comply with the terms and conditions of its contract with the consumer, and with the requirements of the *Energy Retail Code of Practice* and the *Electricity Industry Act* (or the *Gas Industry Act*). If the provider doesn't, a Wrongful Disconnection Payment (WDP) is payable to a consumer.

The payment is \$500 a day (or part thereof), capped at \$3,500 if the consumer doesn't contact the provider within 14 days. When we investigate an energy disconnection complaint, we make a separate assessment of whether a WDP is payable.

The WDP assessment includes a comprehensive review of the provider's actions leading up to the disconnection, including but not limited to:

- any verbal or face-to-face interactions with the consumer which occurred in the period leading up to the disconnection
- whether or not the warning notices issued to the consumer were compliant
- whether or not the consumer was provided with the required information regarding their payment assistance entitlements.

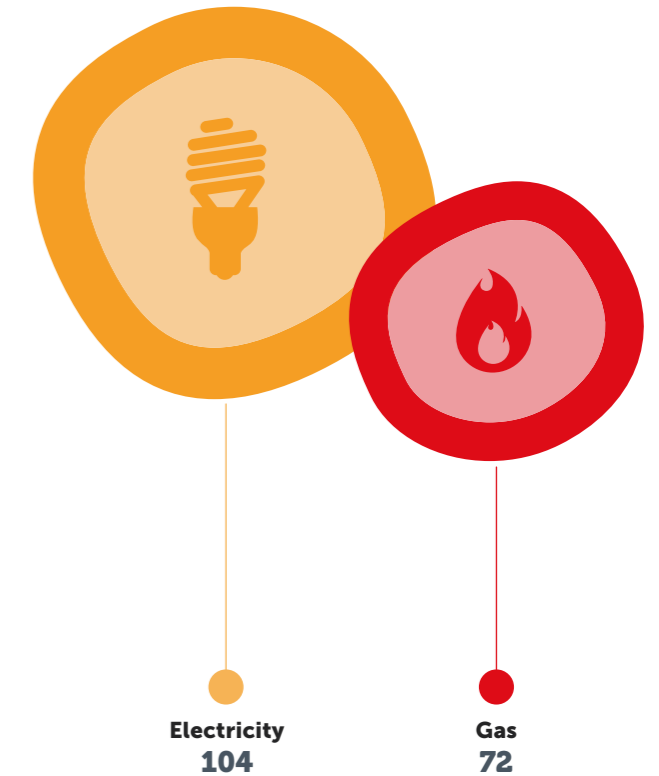
In addition to disconnections for non-payment, EWOV also completes detailed assessments for other scenarios resulting in disconnection, such as:

- unauthorised usage (energy being used without an account in a customer's name)
- transfer errors
- cross-metering errors (meters assigned to incorrect properties).

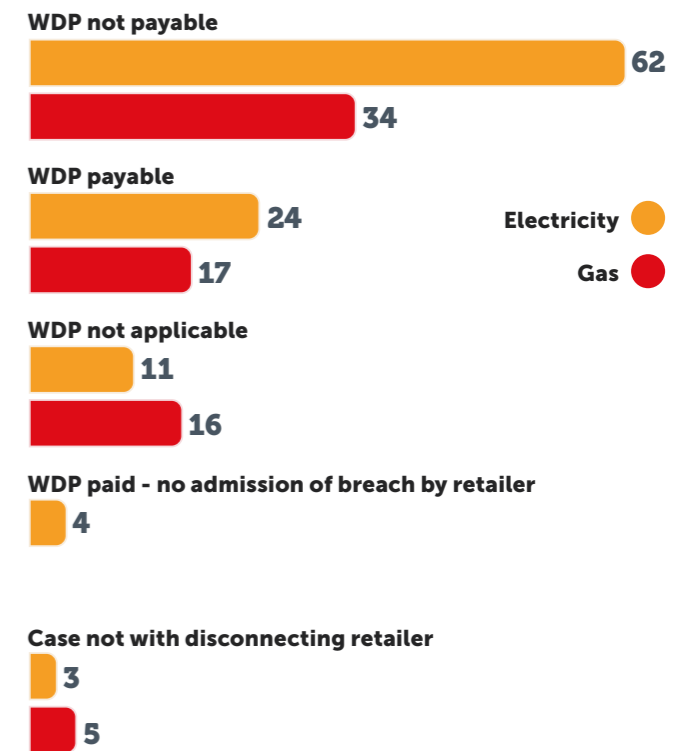
In order for a WDP assessment to be finalised, EWOV and the provider must agree on the outcome. While EWOV has a robust escalation process in place, there are rare occasions where an agreed outcome between EWOV and a provider is not possible.

If the retailer and EWOV can't agree on an outcome, we request a formal decision from the Essential Services Commission.

In 2022-23, we finalised 176 WDP assessments, 104 (59%) electricity and 72 (41%) gas. From these, 45 WDPs were paid, including 4 paid with no admission of breach by the provider. The total paid was \$86,079, with an average of \$1,913 per consumer.



Outcomes of WDP assessments closed



176
WDP assessments finalised

Case study

Customer service complaint about permit leads to VCAT application on flood risk

Customer service • Flooding • Jurisdiction

Katya* called us with a complaint about her water provider. She told us she had a planning permit rejected on her block of land due to a flood risk. Katya employed a coastal engineer and believed her property was not in a flood zone. Katya was dissatisfied with the customer service, informing us the water provider had not responded to her complaint and had just said it was acting on the advice of the Victorian Government department.

We set a fair and reasonable expectation with Katya, telling her that EWOV does not have jurisdiction over the planning permit process. Katya still wanted our assistance with the matter, so we raised an Assisted Referral, putting Katya in contact with a high-level representative at the water provider. After speaking to the representative, Katya contacted us and said that the water provider had put drainage pipes in a street behind her house which services a creek.

Because of these pipes, Katya believed that her property should not be classified as being in a flood zone, as this drain would mitigate any risk of flood and would capture any overflow of water. The water provider continued to refuse her permit, and advised that the decision to classify flood zones are made by Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

We began an investigation to try to get more information for Katya on her issue. We learned from the water provider that it had rejected the proposed development due to current and projected flood depths. We requested further information from the water provider about Katya's options to overcome the depth of flooding issue. We also organised a conference between Katya and the water provider, facilitated by EWOV, to help address the issues and extract more information. The water provider answered Katya's questions during the conference, and Katya advised that she would be appealing against the water provider's decision to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

As the questions raised by Katya had been addressed by the water provider and the appeal of its decision was out of our jurisdiction, we asked Katya to send through any new information or we would close the case. As no new information was provided and we did everything we could in our jurisdiction to assist Katya, we closed Katya's case noting the information discovered during the investigation and Katya's right of appeal with VCAT.

* Name has been changed



Case study

Family violence victim-survivor struggling with debts

Family violence • Financial abuse • Privacy breach • Payment difficulties

A financial counsellor reached out to EWOV on behalf of their client, Sharna* who was a victim-survivor of family violence. The client had been struggling to receive adequate assistance from her energy provider, which eventually led to sensitive account information being sent to the alleged perpetrator. Our investigation revealed that the account was in Sharna's name, but the other party had been receiving the invoices through their email address as they used to handle the payment of utility bills. Sharna also became aware of unpaid bills totalling over \$20,000 in 2022.

Sharna sought to work with the energy provider while she was in the process of selling the family home as part of the separation and to settle other outstanding debts (accumulated due to ongoing financial abuse). She contacted her energy provider three times (in the course of four months) to disclose that she was affected by family violence. Sharna also wanted to request an affordable payment plan and gain access to other potential financial supports, such as backdated concessions and an URGS allocated to persons affected by family violence.

In Sharna's first contact with the energy provider, it attempted to transfer Sharna to its dedicated support team. After a 15-minute wait time, the line was disconnected and we later discovered the support team had declined to accept Sharna into its payment assistance process. Furthermore, no flag was placed on Sharna's account to indicate her situation or establish a safe method of communication. Sharna was not called back.

After receiving another collection contact, Sharna contacted her energy provider again to let it know about her situation. During this call, Sharna was asked about her financial situation and at key moments, asked the energy provider to not mention what was owing (as she found this information distressing) and that she didn't have access to any money, as the alleged perpetrator had 'locked her out'.

After noting that she would be able to afford a fortnightly payment plan of \$20, the energy provider advised Sharna that they wouldn't disconnect the energy supply as long as she stuck to the payment plan. She was placed on hold for 20 minutes and the call was disconnected. Sharna was not called back. Her account was not flagged in the context of family violence and, the payment plan was not activated on the account.

In a third attempt to seek assistance, Sharna contacted her energy provider and again disclosed that she was experiencing family violence. She was successfully transferred to the relevant support team, where her account was flagged and additional payment assistance was discussed. Sharna was also informed about her eligibility for URGS and an interim payment plan was set up. Unfortunately, the energy provider did not ensure a safe method of communication was created, and accidentally emailed the URGS application, which disclosed Sharna's situation to the other party. This error resulted in Sharna being contacted and further subjected to abuse by the alleged perpetrator.

After EWOV's investigation, the energy provider agreed to waive the overall debt, to ensure that the account would be appropriately flagged and for Sharna to be accepted in its payment assistance support program.

As part of EWOV's engagement with the energy provider, it advised EWOV that all frontline customer service staff would receive quarterly family violence refresher training. The energy provider also undertook a review of all consumer accounts to ensure that where consumer accounts were flagged as being affected by family violence, it would apply proper controls and processes so the required protections were in place and customer information was secured.

* Name has been changed

Provision

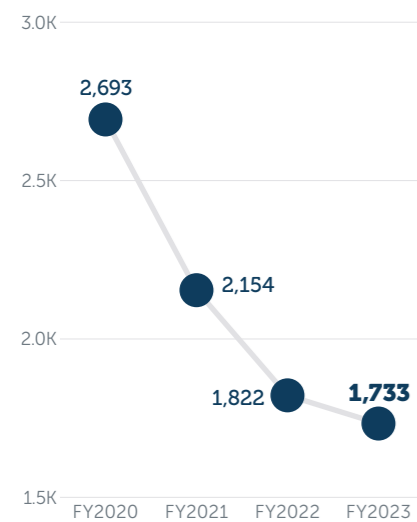
Provision:

- Connection of a property to an energy or water network

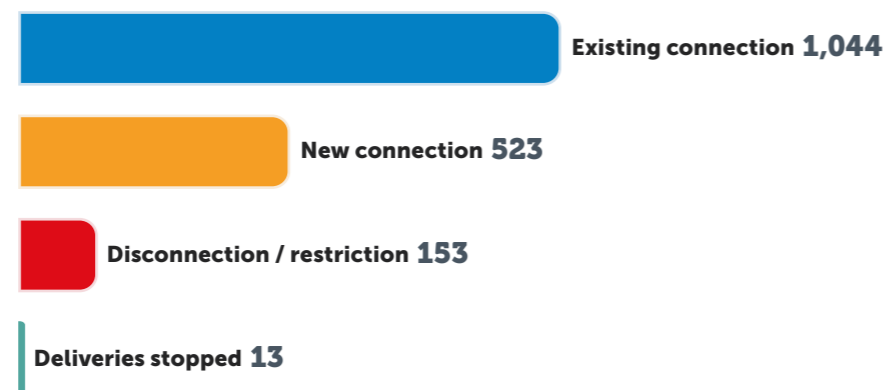
Common sub-issues:

- Existing connection
- New connection

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↓ 5%
1,733
Provision cases

Trends in provision cases

EWOV received 1,733 provision cases in 2022-23:

- 68% electricity
- 27% gas
- 5% water.

In all three industries, provision at an existing connection was the most common sub-issue.

Against 2021-22, provision cases were down 5% (and down 36% from four years ago):

- Electricity provision cases were down 7%
- Gas provision cases were up 1%
- Water provision cases were down 8%.

Supply

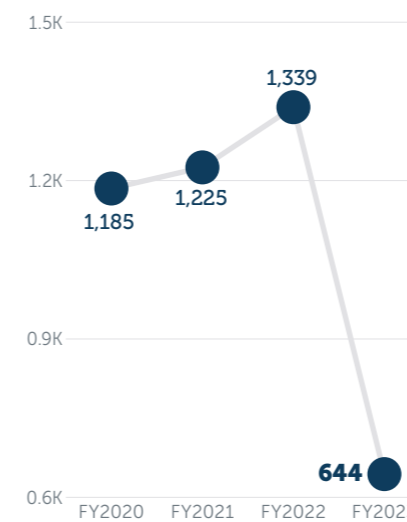
Supply:

- Physical delivery of the electricity, gas or water service

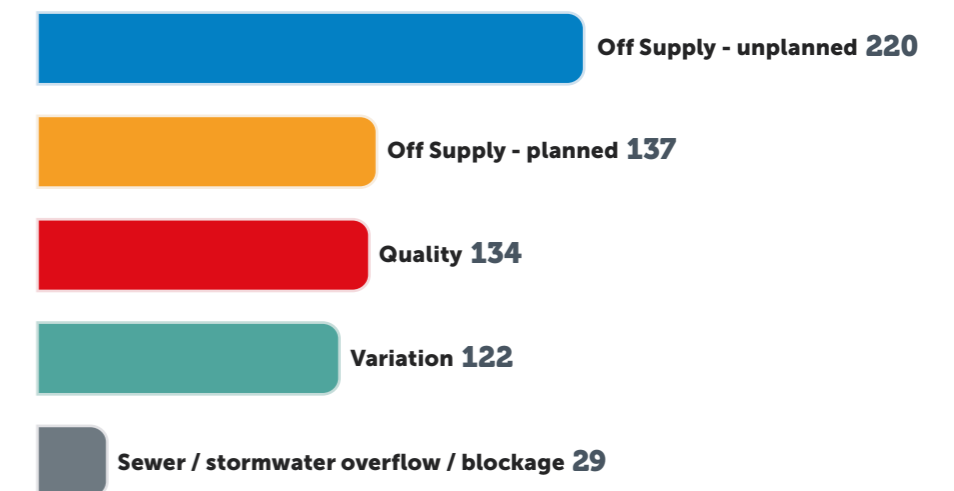
Common sub-issues:

- Unplanned outage
- Planned outage
- Quality

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↓ 52%
644
Supply cases

Trends in supply cases

EWOV received 644 supply cases in 2022-23:

- 67% electricity – most commonly about unplanned outage, planned outage, variation
- 19% gas – most commonly about quality
- 14% water – most commonly about quality.

Against 2021-22, supply cases were down 52% (and down 46% from four years ago):

- Electricity supply cases were down 62%
- Gas supply cases were up 34%
- Water supply cases were down 19%.

Land

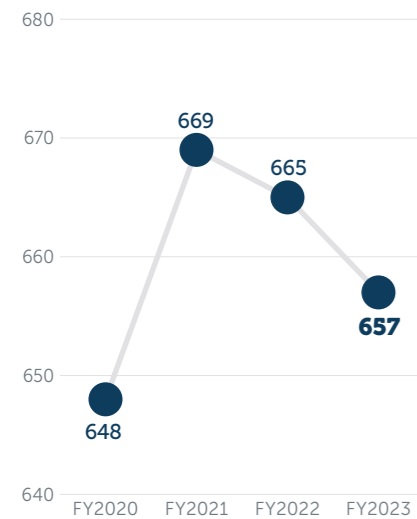
Land:

- How provider activities or network assets affect a consumer property

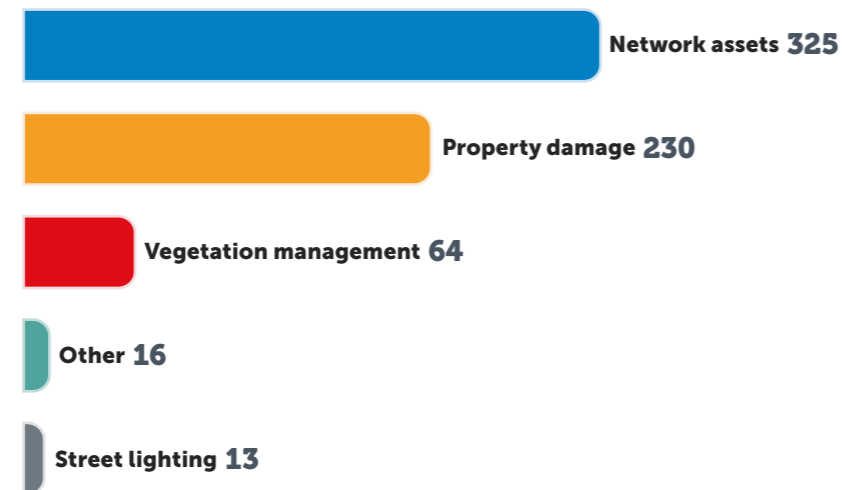
Common sub-issues:

- Network assets
- Property damage
- Vegetation management

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↓ 1%
657
Land cases

Trends in land cases

EWOV received 657 land cases in 2022-23:

- 45% electricity, most commonly about network assets, property damage including land access for transmission upgrades
- 14% gas, most commonly about network assets, property damage
- 40% water, most commonly about network assets, property damage.

Against 2021-22, land cases were down 1% (and up 1% from four years ago):

- Electricity land cases were up 2%
- Gas land cases were up 4%
- Water land cases were down 7%.

Marketing

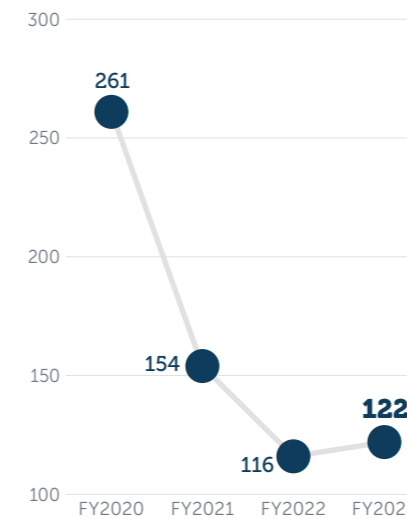
Marketing:

- How electricity and gas retailers go about gaining new consumers

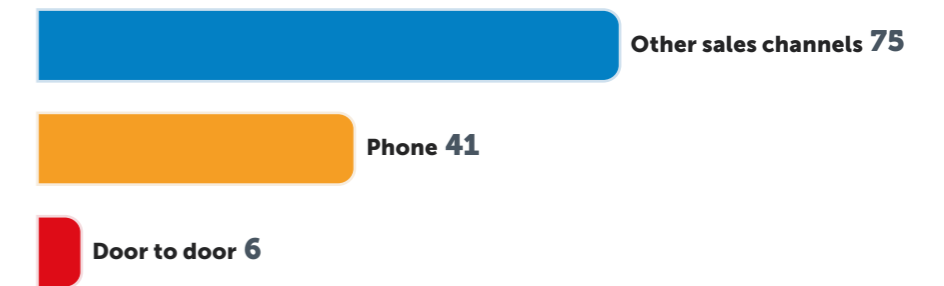
Common sub-issues:

- Other sales channels
- Phone

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↑ 5%
122
Marketing cases

Trends in marketing cases

EWOV received 122 marketing cases in 2022-23:

- 75% electricity
- 23% gas
- 2% other industry.

Overall, the most common energy marketing sub-issue was other sales channels.

Against 2021-22, marketing cases were up 5% (and down 53% from four years ago):

- Electricity marketing cases were down 4%
- Gas marketing cases were up 87%.

Transfer

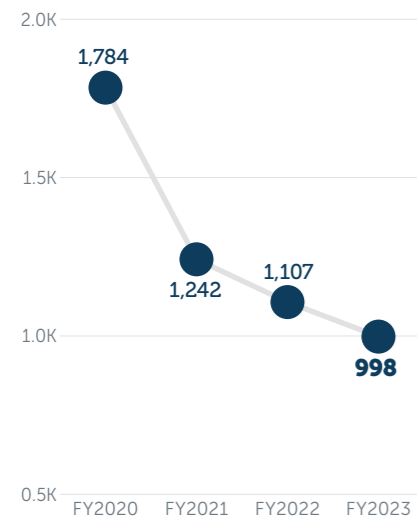
Transfer:

- Switching an electricity or gas account to another energy provider

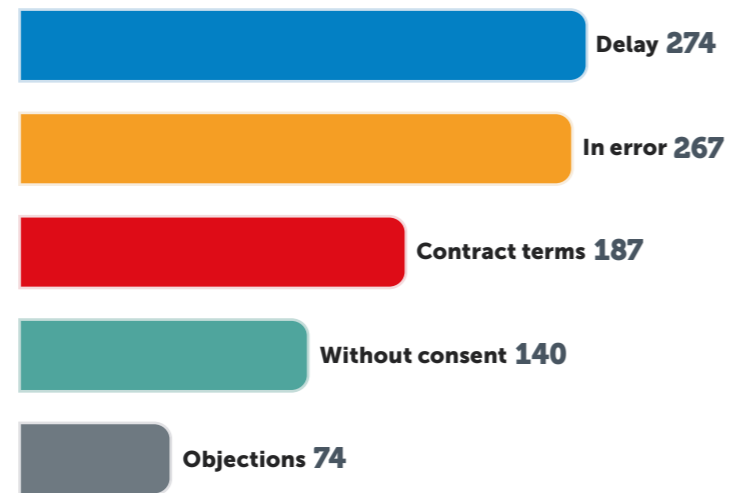
Common sub-issues:

- Delay
- Error
- Contract terms
- Without consent

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↓ 10%
998
Transfer cases

Trends in transfer cases

EWOV received 998 transfer cases in 2022-23:

- 61% electricity, most commonly about error, contract terms
- 39% gas, most commonly about delay, error.

Against 2021-22, transfer cases were down 10% (and down 44% from four years ago):

- Electricity transfer cases were down 8%
- Gas transfer cases were also down 12%.



Customer service

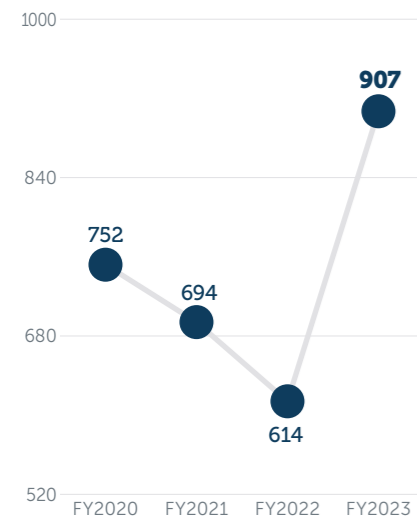
Customer service:

- The level of service received or not received

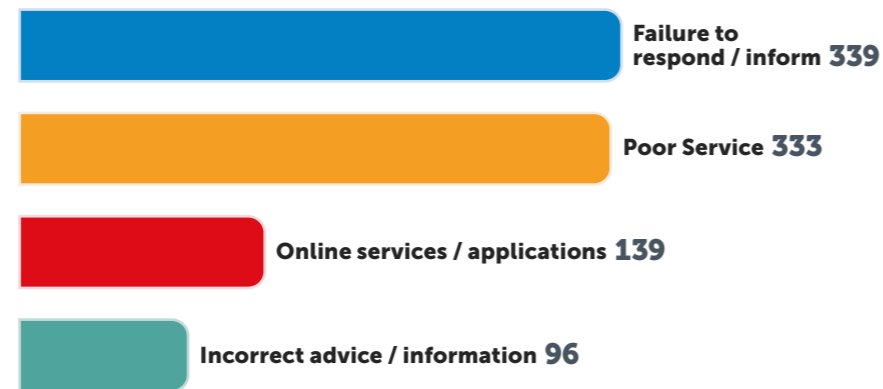
Common sub-issues:

- Failure to respond/inform
- Poor service
- Online services/applications

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↑ **48%**
907
Customer service cases

Trends in customer service cases

EWOV received 907 customer service cases in 2022-23:

- 66% electricity
- 24% gas
- 10% water.

In all three industries, the most common issues were poor service and failure to respond/inform.

Against 2021-22, customer service cases were up 48% (and up 21% from four years ago):

- Electricity customer service cases were up 45%
- Gas customer service cases were up 60%
- Water customer service cases were up 60%.

Privacy

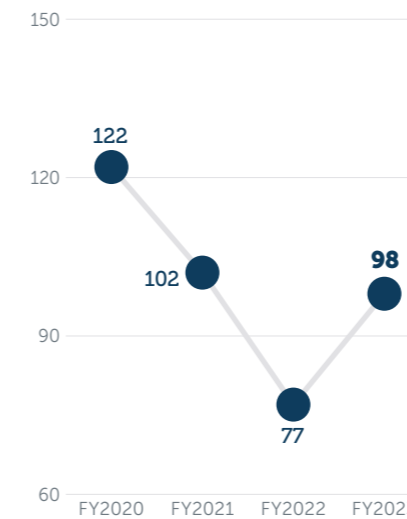
Privacy:

- How a consumer's personal information is handled

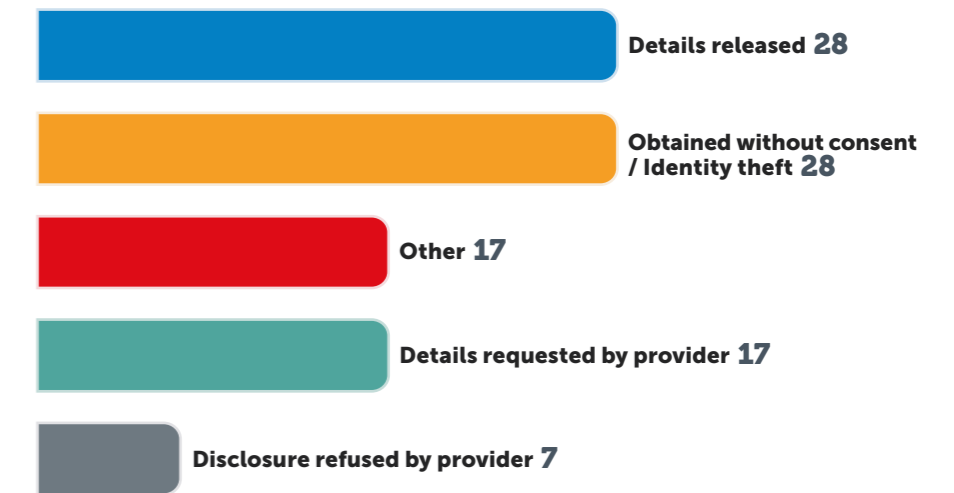
Common sub-issues:

- Details released
- Obtained without consent/identity theft

Recent history



Top sub-issues



↑ **27%**
98
Privacy cases

Trends in privacy cases

EWOV received 98 privacy cases in 2022-23:

- 70% electricity – most commonly about obtained without consent/identity theft
- 22% gas – most commonly about details released
- 7% water – most commonly about details released.

Against 2021-22, privacy cases were up 27% (and down 20% from four years ago):

- Electricity privacy cases were up 41%
- Gas privacy cases were up 83%
- Water privacy cases were down 50%.

Solar

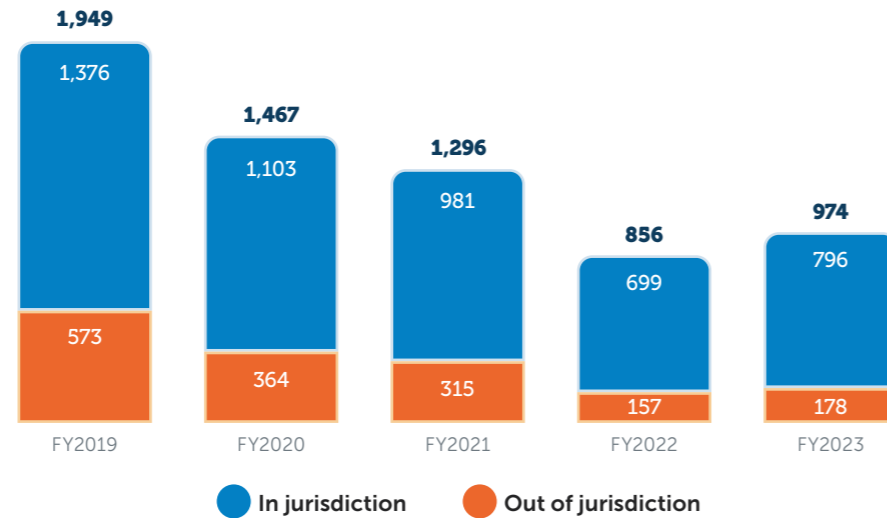
Solar:

- Relating to solar by a company that is an EWOV scheme participant

Common sub-issues:

- Tariff
- Provision at an existing connection
- High bill

Recent history



↑ 14%
974
Solar cases

Trends in solar cases

In 2022-23 we registered 974 solar cases, up 14% from 856 cases in 2021-22.

We were able to assist with 796 of these cases, which fell within EWOV's jurisdiction because the complaint was about a provider which is an EWOV scheme participant. Our current jurisdiction for solar incorporates issues relating to electricity accounts, missing solar credits, connection issues and metering. The most common issues were billing and provision.

178 cases fell outside EWOV's jurisdiction. The majority of these cases stem from recent solar installations, which often relate to key moments of coordination between the installer, retailer and distribution business. Consumers often encounter difficulty determining what the problem is, who is responsible and where to get help seeking redress. We referred these consumers to Consumer Affairs Victoria or the Clean Energy Council.

We registered 464 in-jurisdiction solar **billing** cases. 282 (61%) were about tariffs. 61 (13%) were about high bills.

We registered 191 in-jurisdiction solar **provision** cases. 169 (88%) were about provision at an existing connection.

Embedded network

Embedded network:

- A private electricity network that is, or is part of, an EWOV scheme participant

Common sub-issues:

- High bill
- Tariff
- Billing error
- Fees and charges
- Collection

EWOV's embedded network jurisdiction

Caravan parks, retirement villages, apartment blocks and shopping centres may have private electricity networks supplying homes or businesses within specific self-contained sites. These are called embedded networks. There are 526 embedded network entities registered with EWOV, providing access to independent dispute resolution for 142,764 consumers.

We've been dealing with embedded network complaints since July 2018, under the Victorian Government's *General Exemption Order* (GEO). The GEO requires that the legal entity responsible for each embedded network site must be a member of EWOV Limited.

Until recently, those entities were required to list all of their embedded network sites in their initial EWOV Limited membership application and maintain that list throughout their time as a member. To reduce the administrative burden, the requirement to keep an up-to-date list of sites with EWOV has been removed. Entities are still required to keep EWOV updated on the total number of consumers across all their sites.

Trends in embedded network cases

In 2022-23, EWOV received 159 embedded network cases, down 53% from 2021-22.

24 cases were registered as Enquiries.

74 cases were registered as Complaints:

- 28 Unassisted Referrals
- 43 Assisted Referrals
- 3 Investigations.

↓ 53%
159
Embedded network cases

Billing

High 22

Tariff 11

Fees and charges 6

Error 6

Credit

Collection 6

Disconnection / restriction 5

Payment difficulties 3

Case study

Vulnerable consumer facing imminent disconnection

Imminent disconnection • Arrears • Grants

Steve* called us about his gas account and some notices he'd received about imminent disconnection. He had a disability that made communication difficult and was concerned about disconnection.

Dissatisfied, Steve came to us for help. When Steve called us, he said the bills were previously in his ex-partner's name which was historically correct, but they had since moved out, and then suddenly the bills were in his name without his consent. The provider confirmed that the account was indeed changed into Steve's name, however, it could not locate any customer service notes to explain how or why. The provider confirmed it could not prove that Explicit Informed Consent was provided by the customer and the name change was rectified.

As the arrears were mounting up to more than \$3,000, Steve was feeling very overwhelmed and suspected that he was getting estimated bills.

Concerned, we immediately raised an Assisted Referral with Steve's provider. Steve returned to us saying he had not received any contact. Steve also believed he had missed out on five or six grants, such as a utility relief grant, due to his disability.

We proceeded with an investigation and requested information from the provider. It confirmed that the gas meter reads were actual reads. It told us that Steve had previous debt that had been sold to an external party.

Steve's provider bought back the debt from the external party and requested that Steve make a payment plan towards the recovered debt, but he advised that this would be very difficult in his situation.

Due to the consumer's vulnerabilities and inability to establish a long-term payment plan, the provider waived the total debt, which Steve was very relieved to hear and told us he was satisfied with the case outcome.

We closed the case and recommended that the provider improve its privacy protection processes for consumers and to re-train its employees regarding Explicit Informed Consent, which it agreed to.

We also provided Steve with information about the Victorian Government Power Saving Bonus, technical energy saving tips, further information on other government services, and how to contact the provider's resolution team if he had any questions.

* Name has been changed



Case study

Usage of gas ducted heating leads to high arrears

High bill • Arrears • Payment plan

Bella* contacted us on our live chat on ewov.com.au and told us she had arrears of over \$5,000. She was living in a government transitional home, was in financial hardship, had mental health issues and was a victim-survivor of family violence.

Bella had lived in the house for three years and used the two-bedroom unit's ducted heating, stovetop, and water. When she first moved into the property, it was winter and she used the ducted heating a lot. After Bella's first bill came in at almost \$1,000, she arranged for the meter and heater to be checked but was advised each meter was operating normally. Bella wanted the high bills investigated, for the provider to consider reducing the arrears and to provide hardship assistance.

We bypassed the usual Assisted Referral stage because of Bella's experience of family violence, mental illness and homelessness. We went straight to a Stage 2 investigation and requested information from the provider. We also had our Technical Consultant review Bella's consumption data to provide her advice and recommendations on how she can save energy in the future.

We found that Bella's gas meter data matched her bills, meaning she was billed correctly for usage. We saw that gas consumption was high in the winter of 2019 and peaked over the winter of 2020. Since then, as Bella started to become aware of the cost of running gas ducted heating, usage decreased along with Bella's bills. We made recommendations to Bella to keep future gas usage to a minimum by setting the thermostat no higher than 20 degrees and by being conscious of how long the heater is operating.

From the information given by the provider, we saw that payment assistance was applied, including a payment plan and it applied the utility relief grant to her account. As part of the Investigation, the provider offered a goodwill gesture of credits totalling almost \$1,500 and provided tailored assistance because of her vulnerable circumstances.

Bella confirmed that she was satisfied with the outcome, and we closed the case, providing Bella with information about the Power Saving Bonus and detailed technical advice from our consultant.

* Name has been changed

Systemic issues

Our systemic issues investigations in 2022-23 resulted in provider process, policy and conduct changes. By highlighting systemic issues and sharing insights about concerning practices, we are able to improve outcomes for many consumers, including people who may not come into contact with EWOV.

Key impacts of our investigations are highlighted in this section.

Key impacts

Family violence

We identified issues with provider practices in the context of family violence. In two of the issues identified, providers were not informing consumers that updates to contact details, such as a postal address, would affect other associated accounts. Affected consumers had new addresses exposed to alleged perpetrators. In another issue, despite a consumer advising their provider on two occasions that they were affected by family violence, the provider did not flag the account, which ultimately compromised the consumer's safety and resulted in harm.

We encouraged providers to implement training uplift programs and customer service process changes. In one case, a provider agreed to review its family violence policy and processes after it was found that it was requiring victim-survivors to provide documentary evidence of their circumstances to access their support program.

We also undertook a systemic issues review of cases where consumers had identified as being affected by family violence. The exercise highlighted concerning practices by both energy and water providers, such as potentially unsafe consumer automation processes, data governance processes and use of third-party agents.

Billing disruptions and backbilling

We investigated billing practices that have the capacity to affect many consumers, during a time of affordability issues and cost-of-living pressures.

Two energy providers updated their customer relation management (CRM) systems and, as a result of system issues, we received a spike in complaints related to consumer billing disruptions and billing delay issues.

One provider had billing delays ranging from 3 to 18 months, affecting 7,000 energy consumers. Of these consumers, 440 were overcharged a total of \$114,000 (an average of \$260 per consumer). The provider commenced a remediation program and has undertaken refresher training, improved reporting capabilities, and new system and process controls.

The other energy provider had an overcharging and billing delay issue caused by a new CRM. More than 2,000 consumers were overcharged a total of \$500,000. We worked with the energy provider to ensure consumers were reimbursed. The provider also provided an additional credit to consumers in recognition of the issue.

Ease of access to the Utility Relief Grant Scheme and concessions

We uncovered issues consumers faced when accessing information about the utility relief grant scheme and concessions. These consumers often reported issues about being provided assistance in applying for a utility relief grant or having concessions applied to their bills.

In October 2020, it became a regulatory requirement to assist consumers with utility relief grant scheme applications over the phone. During a systemic issue investigation, we found that one provider did not have an embedded process until May 2022. The provider was emailing or mailing application forms, which often led to processing delays or applications expiring. We highlighted the issue with the provider, which has since implemented and embedded a process to assist consumers over the phone.



Electricity

8,797
Cases received
↓ 10%

717
Enquiries received
↑ 46%

8,080
Complaints received
↓ 13%

The consumers

At 30 June 2023 there were 2,939,279 electricity consumers in Victoria (2,705,667 residential and 233,612 small business).¹ Most of these consumers have been able to choose their electricity provider since early 2002. They can't choose their electricity distributor, because each of the five distributors owns and operates the 'poles and wires' network in a specific part of the state. Some consumers in caravan parks, retirement villages and retail complexes buy their electricity through an embedded network entity.

The companies

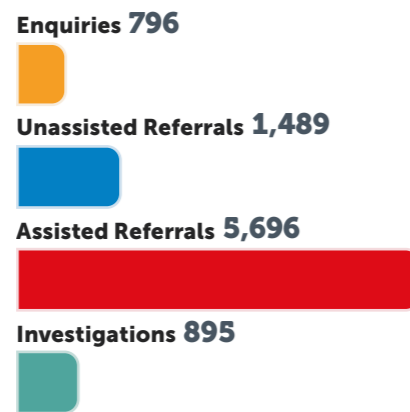
EWOV Limited has 64 electricity members under licence:

- 56 Retailers²
- 5 Distributors
- 3 Transmission companies

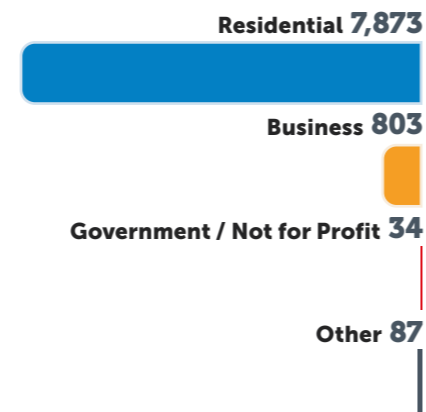
A further 526 electricity embedded network entities are members under the *General Exemption Order*.

¹ Essential Services Commission 2023, *Victorian Energy Market Dashboard*
² Includes People Energy and Q Energy

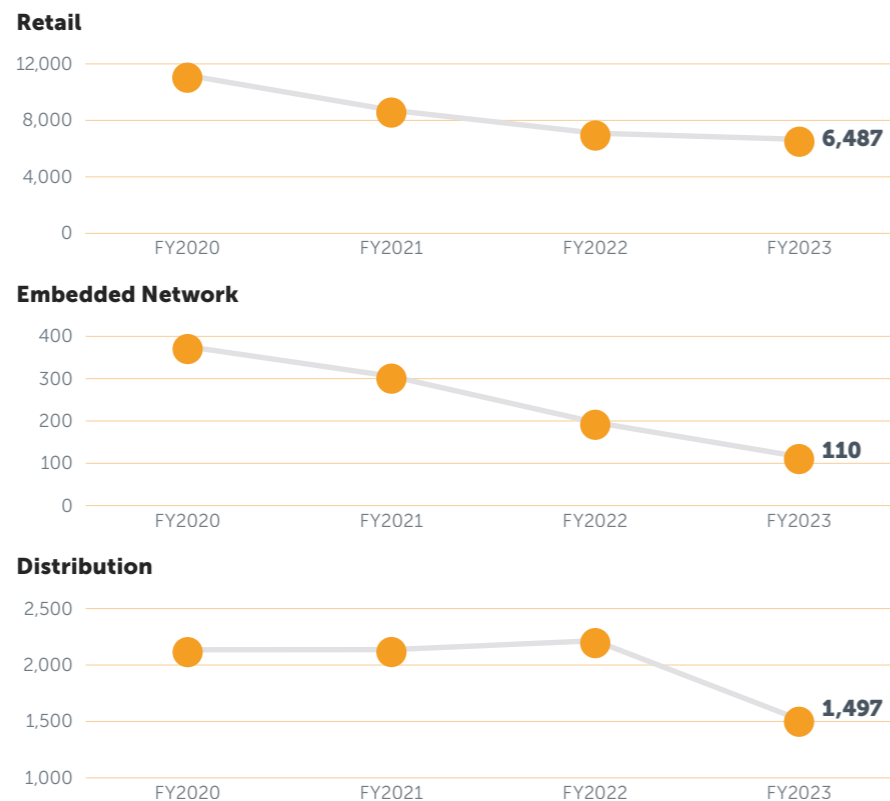
Cases by Stages



Cases by Customer type



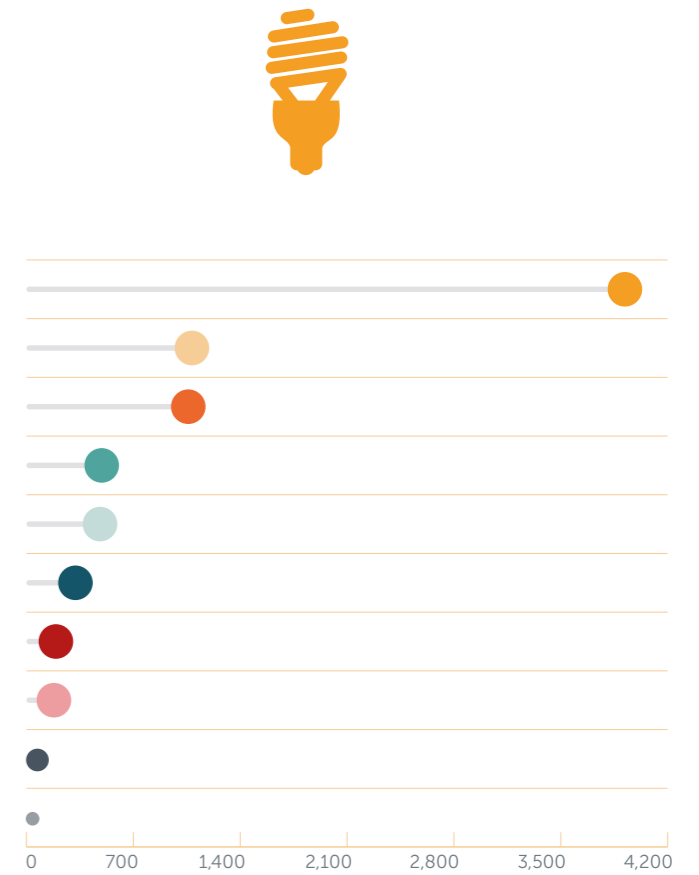
Recent history of Case numbers



Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, so may not always add to 100%.

Top issues

Issue	Case count	%
Billing	4,033	46%
Credit	1,197	14%
Provision	1,173	13%
Transfer	606	7%
Customer Service	595	7%
Land	434	5%
Supply	306	3%
General Enquiry	293	3%
Marketing	91	1%
Privacy	69	1%



Sub issues

Billing 4,033	Transfer 606	Supply 306
Tariff 843	In Error 167	Off Supply – Unplanned 189
High 735	Contract Terms 153	Off Supply – Planned 115
Error 655	Delay 114	Variation 106
Concession 342	Without Consent 86	Quality 24
Refund / Credit 332	Objection 45	
Fees and Charges 308	Cooling Off Rights 41	
Delay 247		General Enquiry 293
Backbill 167		Energy / Water 271
Estimation 153	Customer Service 595	Non Energy / Water 35
Format 118	Failure to Respond / Inform 220	
Meter 108	Poor Service 206	Marketing 91
Other 23	Online Services / Applications 97	Other Sales Channels 57
Bulk Hot Water 2	Incorrect Advice / Information 72	Phone 29
		Door to Door 5
	Land 434	Privacy 69
	Network Assets 138	Obtained Without Consent/ Identity Theft 24
	Property Damage 82	Details Released 18
	Vegetation Management 56	Details Requested by Provider 13
	Street Lighting 13	Other 10
	Other 3	Disclosure Refused by Provider 3
	Easement 1	Data Security 1
Provision 1,173		
Existing Connection 694		
New Connection 390		
Disconnection / Restriction 86		
Deliveries Stopped 3		

Gas

5,092
Cases received
↑7%

129
Enquiries received
↑12%

4,963
Complaints received
↑7%

The consumers

At 30 June 2023 there were 2,155,279 gas consumers in Victoria (2,102,798 residential and 52,481 small business)¹. These consumers have been able to choose their natural gas provider since 2002. They can't choose their distributor, because each of the natural gas distributors owns and operates a network of pipes in a specific part of the state. Consumers using LPG at home, or in their business, can choose from LPG retailers operating in their area.

The providers

EWOV Limited has 36 gas members:

- 27 Natural gas retailers under licence
- 5 Natural gas distributors under licence
- 4 Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) retailers under the *LPG Industry Code*.

Cases by Stages

Enquiries **129**

Unassisted Referrals **741**

Assisted Referrals **3,678**

Investigations **544**

Cases by Customer type

Residential **4,890**

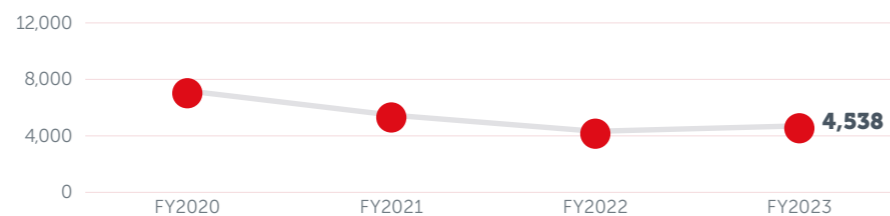
Business **174**

Government / Not for Profit **5**

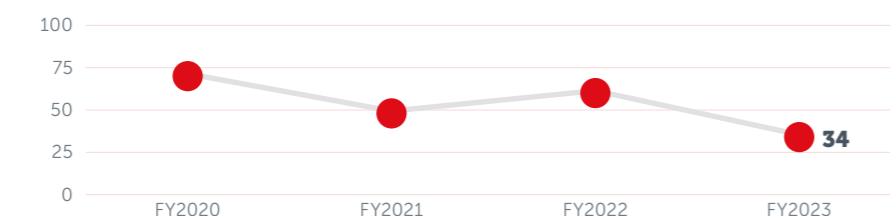
Other **23**

Recent history of Case numbers

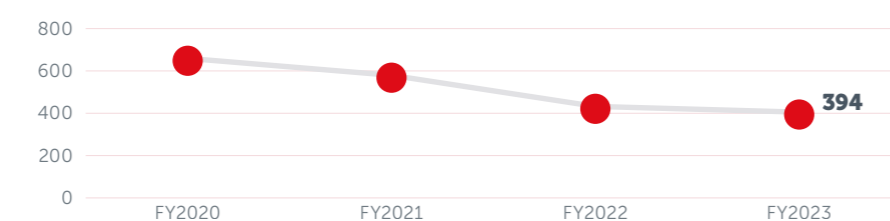
Retail Gas



Retail LPG

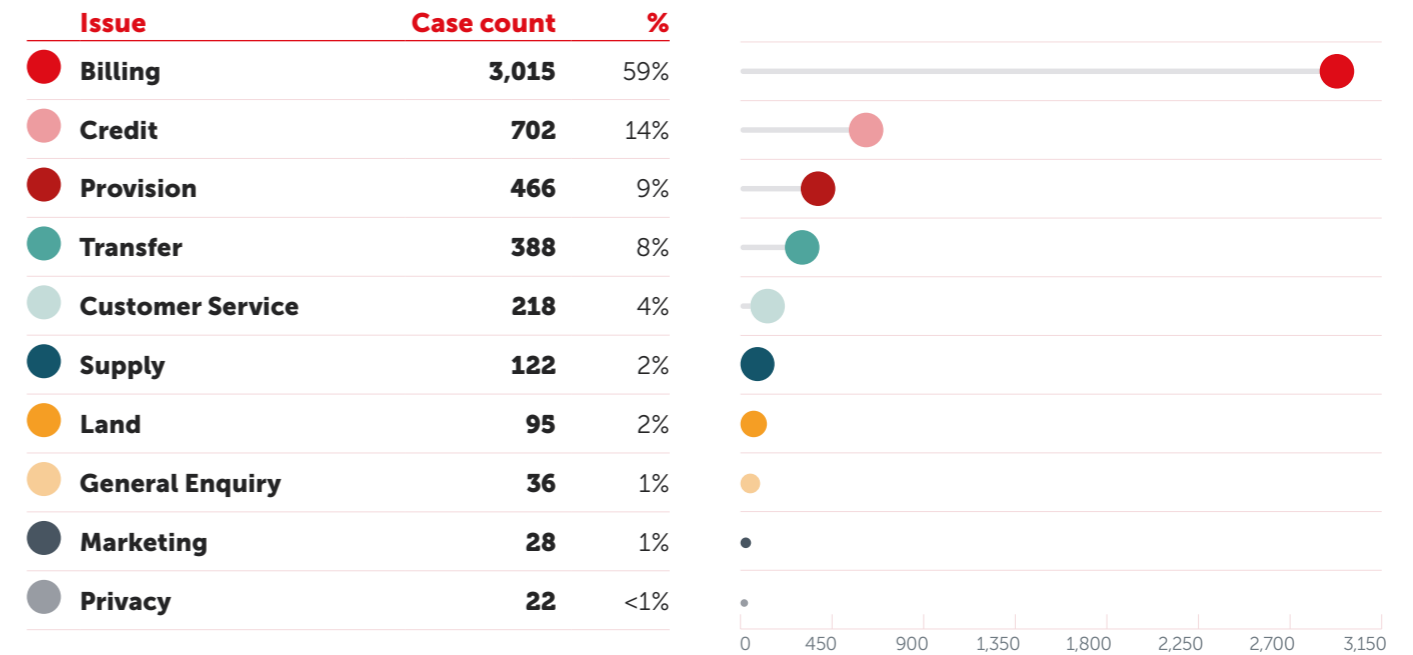


Distribution



Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, so may not always add to 100%.

Top issues



Sub issues

Billing	3,015	Transfer	388	Land	95
High	1023	Delay	158	Network Assets	49
Estimation	433	In Error	99	Property Damage	44
Error	394	Without Consent	54	Other	2
Fees and Charges	240	Contract Terms	33	General Enquiry	36
Concession	175	Objection	29	Energy / Water	35
Refund / Credit	173	Cooling Off Rights	15	Non Energy / Water	1
Tariff	157	Customer Service	218	Marketing	28
Backbill	147	Poor Service	98	Other Sales Channels	17
Meter	82	Failure to Respond / Inform	64	Phone	10
Delay	73	Online Services / Applications	37	Door to Door	1
Bulk Hot Water	65	Incorrect Advice / Information	19	Privacy	22
Format	45	Supply	122	Other	7
Other	8	Quality	76	Details Released	7
Credit	702	Off Supply – Unplanned	18	Obtained Without Consent / Identity Theft	3
Payment Difficulties	255	Variation	14	Disclosure Refused by Provider	3
Collection	225	Off Supply – Planned	14	Details Requested by Provider	2
Disconnection / Restriction	217	Provision	466	Existing Connection	302
Deliveries Stopped	5	New Connection	92	Disconnection / Restriction	64
Provision	466	Deliveries Stopped	8		8

¹ Essential Services Commission 2023, Victorian Energy Market Dashboard

Water

1,289
Cases received
↓ 5%

84
Enquiries received
↑ 65%

1,205
Complaints received
↓ 7%

The consumers

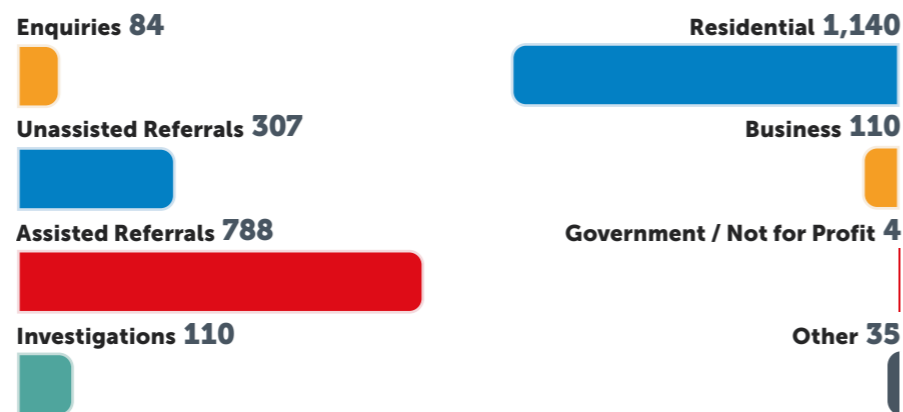
At 30 June 2023 Victoria's water consumers numbered 2,978,878 (2,745,139 residential and 233,739 non-residential).¹ These consumers are provided with water supply, sewage and trade waste disposal and treatment, water delivery for irrigation and domestic and stock purposes, drainage, and salinity mitigation services.

The providers

EWOV Limited has 18 water members, all State-owned water corporations constituted under the *Water Industry Act 1989*:

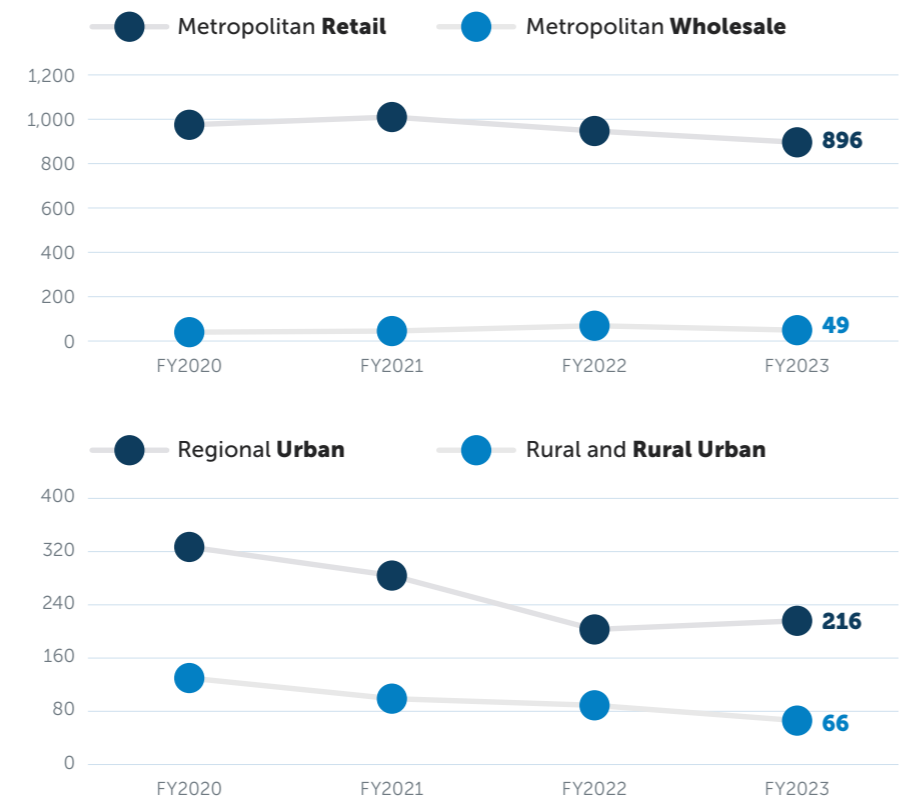
- 3 metropolitan retailers
- 1 metropolitan wholesaler
- 10 regional urban water corporations
- 2 rural water corporations
- 2 rural urban corporations.

Cases by Stages



Cases by Customer type

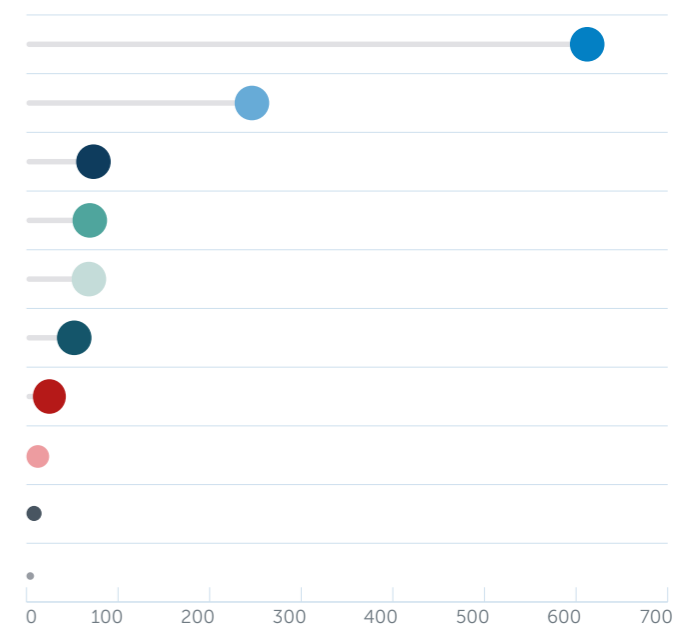
Recent history of Case numbers



Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, so may not always add to 100%.

Top issues

Issue	Case count	%
Billing	631	49%
Land	265	21%
Provision	92	7%
Customer Service	88	7%
Supply	87	7%
Credit	71	6%
General Enquiry	43	3%
Privacy	7	1%
Transfer	4	<1%
Marketing	1	<1%



Sub issues

Billing	631	Provision	92	Credit	71
High	304	Existing Connection	46	Collection	36
Fees and Charges	110	New Connection	41	Payment Difficulties	32
Error	81	Disconnection / Restriction	3	Disconnection / Restriction	3
Backbill	30	Deliveries Stopped	2	General Enquiry	43
Refund / Credit	20	Customer Service	88	Energy / Water	43
Estimation	18	Failure to Respond / Inform	52	Privacy	7
Format	17	Poor Service	26	Details Released	3
Delay	16	Online Services / Applications	5	Details Requested by Provider	2
Meter	14	Incorrect Advice / Information	5	Obtained Without Consent / Identity Theft	1
Concession	13	Objection	70	Disclosure Refused by Provider	1
Tariff	4	Cooling Off Rights	51	Transfer	4
Other	2	Land	265	Delay	2
Bulk Hot Water	2	Network Assets	137	In Error	1
		Property Damage	101	Contract Terms	1
		Other	11	Marketing	1
		Vegetation Management	8	Phone	1
		Easement	8		
		Supply	87		
		Quality	33		
		Sewer / Stormwater Overflow / Blockage	29		
		Off Supply – Unplanned	13		
		Off Supply – Planned	8		
		Water Licensing	2		
		Variation	2		

¹ Essential Services Commission 2022, Water Performance Report 2020-21: Performance of Victorian urban water and sewerage businesses, 28 February 2023

Financial statements

Statement of Profit or Loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Revenue	9,422,645	9,183,164
Administrative expenses	(1,206,811)	(921,799)
Bad debts reversal/(expenses)	(90,842)	5,345
Consultancy expenses	(152,707)	(627,179)
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	(1,052,836)	(1,100,126)
Employee benefits expenses	(6,493,262)	(6,527,712)
Finance expenses	(158,045)	(179,498)
Occupancy expenses	(304,215)	(266,086)
Policy and Communication expenses	(103,958)	(110,812)
Training and development expenses	(147,325)	(100,841)
Deficit for the year	(287,356)	(645,544)
Income tax expense	–	–
Deficit from continuing operations	(287,356)	(645,544)
Total comprehensive income for the year	(287,356)	(645,544)

Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	3,400,274	4,099,672
Trade and other receivables	111,865	90,283
Other financial assets	3,314,916	3,282,664
Total Current Assets	6,827,055	7,472,619
Non-Current Assets		
Intangible assets	77,053	128,142
Property, plant and equipment	1,271,577	1,596,744
Right-of-Use Assets	2,721,316	3,369,740
Total Non-Current Assets	4,069,946	5,094,626
Total Assets	10,897,001	12,567,245
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Lease liabilities	886,758	823,692
Trade and other payables	346,263	229,740
Other financial liabilities	–	894,231
Employee benefits	862,901	732,874
Total Current Liabilities	2,095,922	2,680,537
Non-Current Liabilities		
Lease liabilities	3,184,655	4,055,364
Employee benefits	178,264	116,191
Long-term provisions	701,220	690,857
Total Non-Current Liabilities	4,064,139	4,862,412
Total Liabilities	6,160,061	7,542,949
Net Assets	4,736,940	5,024,296
EQUITY		
Accumulated surplus	4,736,940	5,024,296
Total Equity	4,736,940	5,024,296

Financial statements

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended
30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Receipts from Members	9,100,100	10,589,479
Interest received	103,607	12,740
Payments to suppliers and employees	(8,889,512)	(9,510,822)
Finance costs	(158,045)	(179,498)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) operating activities	156,150	911,899
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(26,363)	(36,001)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) investing activities	(26,363)	(36,001)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities		
Repayment of lease liabilities	(829,185)	(781,955)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) financing activities	(829,185)	(781,955)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held	(699,398)	93,943
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	4,099,672	4,005,729
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	3,400,274	4,099,672



How to contact EWOV

We can help with complaints about electricity, gas or water providers, which a consumer hasn't been able to resolve directly with the provider.

We're free for Victorian consumers, and we're independent and fair.

Phone us:

Free call
1800 500 509

Calls from mobile phones may attract charges. We can call back.

Interpreter Service: 131 450

National Relay Service: 133 677

Use live chat on our website www.ewov.com.au/contact-us

Use the complaint form on our website www.ewov.com.au/start-a-complaint

Write to us Reply Paid 469 Melbourne VIC 8060
We accept letters in Braille.

Email us ewovinfo@ewov.com.au

Fax us 1800 500 549 (free fax)



ABN: 57 070 516 175