

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) **2005 Annual Report**
Resolving your electricity, gas and water complaints. Independently.



Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV)

Resolving your electricity, gas and water complaints. Independently.

EWOV opened in May 1996. To 30 June 2005, we had helped some 79,000 Victorian electricity, gas and water customers.

Our mission

- We provide independent advice, information and referral regarding energy and water services.
- We receive, investigate and facilitate the resolution of complaints involving consumers of energy and water services in Victoria and members of the scheme.
- We identify, and where appropriate redress, systemic issues and refer these to members and regulators.
- We work with customer groups and industry to achieve customer service excellence.

Our vision

We will be a responsive, innovative and dynamic organisation, which is recognised for excellence.

Our guiding principles

- Independence ... *complaint resolution not advocacy*
- Access ... *readily accessible to individual consumers*
- Equity ... *fairness to all parties*
- Quality ... *highest professional standards*
- Effectiveness ... *high calibre people, supported by training and technology*
- Efficiency ... *optimal use of resources*
- Community awareness ... *foster community awareness*
- Linkages ... *effective links and working relationships*

National Benchmarks

EWOV complies with the *National Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes* published in 1997 by the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science and Tourism. These Benchmarks focus on the principles of accessibility, independence, fairness, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

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the 2004/05 snapshot

- ➔ We received 19,158 cases, up 39% from 13,767 last year.
 - 14,069 Enquiries, up 32% from 10,658
 - 5,089 Complaints, up 64% from 3,109
- ➔ We resolved and closed 4,782 Complaints, up 53% from 3,123 last year.
- ➔ We dealt with case increases across all industries:
 - electricity cases (13,491) were up 40% from 9,624
 - gas cases (3,882) were up 40% from 2,769
 - dual fuel cases (529) were up 122% from 238
 - water cases (1,256) were up 11% from 1,136
- ➔ To understand the rise in cases, we gathered specific information from all customers contacting us. We compiled this into monthly reports for each member.
- ➔ To deal with the large increase in Complaints, we implemented a number of strategies, including the streamlining of some processes.
- ➔ We achieved our highest Complaints closure rates ever.
- ➔ The EWOV Board ensured we were provided with the resources to maintain service standards in the face of case increases.
- ➔ We introduced procedural arrangements regarding the Victorian Government's new wrongful disconnection payment.
- ➔ We provided our staff with training on the requirements of four new industry codes.
- ➔ We prepared to accept LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) cases.
- ➔ We continued to report systemic and potential compliance issues to members and relevant regulators.
- ➔ We made nine public submissions on regulatory and government consultation papers.



It is increasingly common for Australian consumers to turn to an industry-based alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme, if they are unable to resolve a dispute directly with their service provider. In fact, Australia probably leads the world in establishing schemes of this type. And, while they are described as an alternative to the court system, in reality, for many people who would not be able to afford court action, they are the only practicable option.

In June 2005, I was able to spend some time at the National Consumer Representatives Forum held in Melbourne. Three of EWOV's consumer directors, Mark O'Brien, John Mumford and David Headberry, also participated, as did the Ombudsman and members of the EWOV executive team. This forum is an annual event supported by EWOV, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman, the Insurance Ombudsman Service, the Financial Industry Complaints Service and the Insurance Brokers Dispute Facility. It provides a valuable opportunity for consumer representatives involved with industry-based ADR schemes to learn more about how our schemes operate and to raise and discuss common issues.

the Chairperson's message



An impressive line-up of speakers — from the schemes, and from the consumer, regulatory and industry sectors — covered a wide range of topics. They included various challenges facing the industry-based ADR sector; issues being dealt with by individual schemes; governance issues and director responsibilities; the role of our schemes in identifying systemic issues; potential barriers to consumer access; and the respective roles of schemes, regulators and government. While I do not need convincing about how important schemes such as EWOV are to the overall consumer protection framework, the forum certainly reinforced that for me.

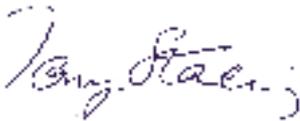
2004/05 was a particularly challenging year for EWOV. With case receipt estimates greatly exceeded, it was necessary to approve additional operational funding to resource case work and allow the scheme to meet its obligations. The Board was impressed with the marvellous effort put in by all members of the EWOV team, as they ensured cases were closed within target timeframes and targets in relation to older cases were met. Given the pressures on the scheme, and the fact that key performance indicators were set at the beginning of the year on case estimates which were significantly exceeded, this was an extraordinary result. Achieving it also required streamlining of some of the scheme's case handling processes and the introduction of some new procedures. These changes, made to deal with the situation EWOV found itself in this year, will be reviewed for applicability moving forward.

This year also saw arrangements finalised for the LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) industry to join EWOV from 1 July 2005. Revisions to EWOV's *Constitution* and *Charter* reflecting LPG entry were adopted by the Board and approved by the members. The Board is very pleased with how the Ombudsman has progressed this development to provide customers of Victorian LPG retailers with the same access to an independent dispute resolution body as natural gas customers.

There were also some important developments in EWOV's external environment during the year, in particular the move towards national energy regulation. In October 2004, the Board made a submission to the Ministerial Council on Energy's Issues Paper, *National Framework for Electricity and Gas Distribution and Retail Regulation*. Over the coming year, we will be monitoring further developments on the national front with interest and for how they may impact EWOV's operations.

Another recent external development which the Board noted with great interest was the State Government's May 2005 announcement of a Committee of Inquiry into Financial Hardship of Energy Consumers. The issue of billing-related disconnection has been on the EWOV agenda for some time now, and we hope to assist the Inquiry with relevant information from EWOV cases.

Thank you to all of the EWOV Directors for your contributions throughout the year and to the EWOV team for your hard work. I am delighted to have been re-appointed as EWOV Chairperson, for a further 3 years to November 2007, giving me the opportunity to help ensure our scheme continues to serve the community to the same high levels it always has.



The Hon. Tony Staley
EWOV Chairperson



- ➔ 32,794 telephone calls (↑ 22%).
- ➔ 14,069 customers assisted with Enquiries (↑ 32%)
- ➔ 5,089 Complaints investigated (↑ 64%)
- ➔ 4,782 Complaints closed (↑ 53%)
- ➔ 96% of Complaints conciliated, as for last year
- ➔ 80% of cases closed within two weeks, as for last year

The Annual Report presents an overview of the EWOV year. Our six-monthly reports, *Resolution 19* (July – December 2004) and *Resolution 20* (January – June 2005), present further details of the electricity, gas and water cases we received (overall, by industry, by industry sector and by individual member). They are available from our website (www.ewov.com.au). Printed copies are also available on request.

the Ombudsman's overview

A very big year

2004/05 was a very big year for EWOV, presenting us with some major challenges.

How we managed those is discussed on pages 6 and 7. While at times it was very difficult, we finished the year having maintained the scheme's standards of service — a major achievement for which I thank all members of the EWOV team.

The challenges stemmed from unprecedented case increases. In preparing this year's business plan, we planned for case increases of 8.9%, based on projected 2003/04 increases over 2002/03. In July 2004, we revised our case estimates based on the actual 2003/04 increase of 12.9%. We ended 2004/05 with 19,158 cases — an increase of 39%.

More information on this year's cases (Enquiries and Complaints) appears on pages 26 to 59.



The increase in Enquiries

- ➔ We received 14,069 Enquiries, 32% more than last year.
- ➔ 33% of them were referred back to a member's contact centre, mainly because the customer hadn't yet contacted it about their complaint — 16% more than last year.
- ➔ 52% of them were referred back to a member's designated higher level contact mainly because the customer had already made one contact about their complaint without success, usually via the member's contact centre — 39% more than last year.

Concerned that we were dealing with Enquiries which could have been handled by members rather than us, we took action to understand the increased number of Enquiries we were receiving. We introduced a series of questions which we now ask of all customers who contact us:

- Who did you speak to at your electricity/gas/water provider (highest level)?
- How many times did you contact them?
- When did you last speak to them?
- Why did you call EWOV?

This improved data collection certainly helped us better understand why customers were contacting us rather than their provider. Since February 2005, we have provided each member with a monthly Customer Contact Information Report, which draws together the feedback from their customers.

Member response to receiving these reports has been overwhelmingly positive. This additional source of feedback from their own customers has proven valuable in reviewing the operation of their contact centres, customer follow-up processes, complaint escalation procedures and internal dispute resolution processes. The monthly reports have also given members another tool for month-to-month comparison of how well their service initiatives are working.

The increase in Complaints

- ➔ We received 5,089 Complaints, 64% more than last year.
- ➔ 27% of cases were Complaints, up from 23% last year.
- ➔ This was the highest proportion of Complaints since 1997/98.

We implemented a number of strategies to deal with the large increase in Complaints. In doing so, we worked closely with members, particularly those with high case numbers.

In March 2004, we began to use a streamlined process for less complex Complaints, where the customer was agreeable to this. Our aim was to resolve these Level 1 Complaints more quickly, freeing up member resources to work on more complex Complaints. We encouraged members to actively identify cases where they felt an immediate negotiated outcome was achievable and our Conciliators did the same.

At times of peak case receipt during the year, we sought agreement from the three major energy retailers to accept Level 1 Complaints as RHL (Refer to Higher Level) Complaints on a temporary basis, again only where the customer agreed with this strategy. The aim was to facilitate a further opportunity for direct resolution between the customer and a retailer representative empowered to achieve that.

We convened conciliation and clarification conferences to expedite complex Complaints soon after receipt; we scheduled case review meetings with members with the highest Complaint loads; and we regularly scheduled specific Complaint closure, receipt and response days to help our Conciliators deal with high workloads.

Our Complaint closure rates of 500 in November 2004, 516 in March 2005 and 474 in May 2005 were our highest ever, despite increased case receipt rates.



Resourcing to ensure service standards

- ➔ This year's case increases had the potential to significantly reduce our capacity to maintain EWOV's service standards.
- ➔ An appropriate resourcing ratio of Conciliators and Enquiry Officers needed to be maintained.

Even though we acted to streamline our case handling processes and to help members understand why their EWOV cases were high, it was still necessary to expand the Conciliation team to meet key performance indicators and our case handling obligations.

For greater effectiveness, our Conciliation area is now made up of four teams of Conciliators and Enquiry Officers, each led by a Conciliation Team Co-ordinator who also continues to case-manage a number of Complaints. The four Conciliation Team Co-ordinators and two Complex Case Managers report to a Conciliation Manager who in turn reports to the General Manager Operations. Our organisational chart is on page 21.

The challenge of new codes and legislation

- ➔ The *Energy Legislation (Amendment) Act 2004 (Vic)* introduced a new wrongful disconnection payment (WDP) applicable to energy retailers from 8 December 2004.
- ➔ A new *Energy Retail Code* (for both electricity and gas) came into force on 1 January 2005.
- ➔ A new *Code of Practice for Marketing Energy in Victoria* (for the marketing of electricity and gas contracts) took effect from 1 January 2005.
- ➔ A new *Customer Service Code for Metropolitan Retail and Regional Water Businesses* took effect from 1 July 2005.
- ➔ The *Victorian LPG Retail Code of Practice* became operational on 1 July 2005 (coinciding with EWOV's expansion to take LPG cases).

To do their jobs, EWOV's Enquiry Officers and Conciliators must be aware of and understand the content of applicable codes and legislation. The introduction of three new energy codes, new energy legislation and a new water customer service code in a relatively short space of time, and at the same time as we were dealing with high caseloads, presented us with some learning and development challenges.

In addition, significant new wrongful disconnection payment (WDP) procedural arrangements needed to be put in place to meet the requirements of the Essential Services Commission (ESC)'s *Interim Operating Procedure – Compensation for Wrongful Disconnection*. One by-product of these new arrangements was that while disconnection cases fell after 8 December 2004, it took us longer on average to handle disconnection Enquiries and close disconnection Complaints (including a 19% increase in days to close *actual* disconnection Complaints). This was particularly the case where the matter of whether a payment should be made or not needed to be referred to the ESC initially for opinion, and if necessary, for decision. In this way, the WDP added greater complexity to what were often already complex cases.

We addressed this situation as much as we could by ensuring that, while the matter of the WDP was being resolved, other aspects of a case (e.g. assessment by EWOV's independent financial counsellor or review of payment plan arrangements) were progressed by our Conciliators. We developed new template letters, including one for members to complete where the Complaint involved *actual* electricity or gas disconnection issues. We also set up processes within EWOV for co-ordinating WDP referrals to the ESC, and we ensured staff were provided with regular updates about the nature of the WDP cases being received and their progress. These initiatives remain in place.

For more information on disconnection/restriction cases, see pages 32 and 33.



EWOV and LPG (liquefied petroleum gas)

This year saw us preparing for the extension of EWOV's jurisdiction to include LPG from 1 July 2005. Our jurisdiction relates to the five main LPG retailers (Elgas, Kleenheat, Origin Energy, Powergas and Supagas) and their contractors and agents — it does not extend to resellers of LPG or the setting of LPG prices. EWOV's *Constitution* and *Charter* were updated to provide for the entry of LPG and are available from our website, under *Jurisdiction*.

The key document for customers is the *Victorian LPG Retail Code* (the Code) which applies to the delivery of LPG (also known as bottled gas) to domestic customer sites. Customers can obtain a copy from their LPG retailer. It is also available on the website of the Energy and Security Division of the Department of Infrastructure.

The Code is voluntary, but enforceable. In volunteering to comply with it, the five main LPG retailers agreed (among other things) to participate in EWOV's dispute resolution scheme and to be bound by any decision made by the Ombudsman about a customer's Complaint. They also agreed to include terms in their customer contracts consistent with the minimum standards for the sale of LPG reflected in the Code (and to ensure their agents did the same). They must observe those minimum standards in their dealings with customers generally, and again, must ensure their agents do so also.

New and merged EWOV electricity, gas and water members

Apart from the entry of the LPG retailers, there were other changes to EWOV's membership during the year.

On 1 July 2004, International Power and Victoria Electricity joined as electricity retail members. On 26 August 2004, Momentum Energy joined as an electricity retail member. And, on 21 February 2005, Victoria Electricity also took out gas retail membership.

In addition, changes in Victoria's water sector resulted in the following water authority mergers and name changes from 1 July 2004:

- Grampians Water (a regional urban water authority) and Wimmera Mallee Water (a rural water authority) merged to become Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (a rural urban water authority).
- Lower Murray Water (a regional urban water authority) and Sunraysia Rural Water (a rural water authority) merged to become Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water (a rural urban water authority).

National energy regulation

The Ministerial Council on Energy (MCE) was established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2001 to deliver economic and environmental benefits for Australia from the implementation of the COAG national energy policy framework. The MCE is the national policy and governance body for the Australian energy market. In October 2004, the EWOV Board submitted a response to the MCE's August 2004 Issues paper, *National Framework for Electricity and Gas Distribution and Retail Regulation*. I also made a submission as the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria).

Under new National Electricity Law and Rules, the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) and the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) became operational from 1 July 2005. The AEMC is the statutory national body responsible for rule-making and market development for the energy sector, while the AER is the statutory national body responsible for economic regulation and rule enforcement in the energy sector.

The impact of the establishment of these bodies on Victorian regulatory arrangements remains unclear — in particular, how the existing licensing requirements for energy companies to participate in an Ombudsman scheme may be affected. We'll watch as national regulation develops further to ensure the maintenance of this requirement. We'll also follow the potential development of a national customer protection framework, in particular to ensure the elements of any such framework are set at best practice levels.



ANZEWON

EWOV is part of ANZEWON, the Australia & New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network. The other ANZEWON members are the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW, Energy Industry Ombudsman South Australia, Energy Ombudsman Tasmania, Energy Ombudsman Western Australia, and the Office of the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner, New Zealand.

ANZEWON's aim is to ensure that members and customers alike receive consistent, best practice service from all of our schemes. This year, we continued to work towards consistency in how our schemes classify cases, to help members generally, and in particular to assist those members who belong to several schemes. We also continued to streamline policies to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our schemes.

In April 2005, EWOV contributed to a joint ANZEWON submission on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)'s February 2005 *Draft Debt Collection Guideline*.

ANZOA

The Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA) was formed in May 2003. Among other things, ANZOA acts as a network for consultation and discussion about areas of interest, concern or common experience by Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman offices. Membership is open to organisations which meet high standards of independence, impartiality and effectiveness. Initially, it was an association for industry-based Ombudsmen; however, membership has expanded to include various State and Commonwealth Parliamentary Ombudsmen.

EWOV staff have been participating in two ANZOA interest groups — Learning and Development, and Public Relations and Communications. I have also continued in my role as ANZOA Chair.

In closing

It was a tough year, so it's good to be able to look back with pride at how we handled it. Operationally, there were significant challenges, but by being adaptable with our resources and processes, we met those challenges head on. Thank you to all of the members of the EWOV team for your ongoing dedication and professionalism. Thank you also to the EWOV Board and the EWOV members whose support and co-operation through the year helped us meet our key performance indicators. No doubt next year will bring its own challenges and changes, and based on our performance to date, I believe we're well placed to meet them.



Fiona McLeod

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)



Wherever possible in our policy and research work we adopt a preventative focus, looking for ways to identify and address problems before they become a source of widespread customer complaint. When systemic or potentially systemic issues arise in our casework, we seek feedback from the member or members concerned and where appropriate, report the issues to relevant regulators. Most of this reporting is to the Essential Services Commission (ESC) with whose staff we meet monthly.

One case signals a systemic issue

In June 2005, a metropolitan service charge error came to public attention when the metropolitan water retailers sent refunds, ranging from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars, to customers around Melbourne. Since 1998, metropolitan water customers on a single property title have been required to pay one water and sewerage charge only, even where there is more than one dwelling on the property. One customer complaint led to the discovery by the water retailers that some 7,000 metropolitan water customers had been overcharged by being billed one service charge per dwelling (that is, multiple service charges), instead of one service charge per property title.

This was an excellent example of a systemic issue being identified from just one case. It could, however, have been discovered 18 months earlier when EWOV identified this issue in a case we'd received. At that time, we asked the water retailer concerned whether other customers may be similarly affected — the retailer responded that it was an isolated error.



contributions to policy and research



EWOV undertakes a range of policy and research work. We provide regulators and government agencies with comments on consultation papers and draft codes and guidelines, we contribute to committees and working groups, we raise systemic and potential compliance issues with regulators and relevant members of the EWOV scheme, and we work with the other members of ANZEWON (the Australia & New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network) towards consistency in case handling procedures across our schemes.

Matters we raised with regulators

The link between disconnection/restriction and capacity to pay

We presented data to the ESC on the systemic issue of energy customers being disconnected or threatened with disconnection, despite evidence of their incapacity to pay their energy bill/s. This included a full analysis of disconnection/restriction cases we received from July to December 2004. We also worked closely with the ESC on the development and implementation of its *Interim Operating Procedure – Compensation for Wrongful Disconnection*.

Market conduct in retail competition

Since 2002, in accordance with a Market Conduct Reporting Protocol, we've provided reports to retailers and regulators — the ESC, Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) — on retail competition cases raising potential compliance issues in relation to the ESC's Marketing Codes, the *Fair Trading Act 1999* (Vic) and the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cwlth).

In January 2005, following investigation prompted by a series of market conduct cases we'd received, CAV entered into an enforceable undertaking with one energy retailer, under section 146 of the *Fair Trading Act*. The undertaking related to door-to-door marketing activity by the retailer and/or its agents between

July 2004 and November 2004. It was alleged that claims had been made about terms and conditions which didn't exist in contracts; advice had been given that termination fees were lower than they actually were; incorrect assertions had been made that rebates applied to individual bills; sales pitches had been made on the basis of bill payment systems that weren't available; and sales representatives had refused to leave consumers' premises when asked and/or behaved in an overbearing manner. The retailer agreed to take a number of actions to address these allegations including offering redress to identified consumers, introducing additional payment methods, improving its internal dispute resolution processes, conducting compliance programmes and product training for staff and agents, and adhering to and enforcing the terms of contracts with its independent contractors.

Marketing to non-account holders was another retail competition systemic issue we highlighted for regulators during the year, specifically the situation where existing account holders can find their accounts transferred to a different retailer without their explicit informed consent to that transfer.

Utility connection services

We discussed with the ESC issues we were observing in relation to utility connection services, including transfer without explicit informed consent, connection delays, double billing, failure to bill and customer service generally. Customers, often tenants, can use a utility connection service to arrange for connection or disconnection of their electricity and gas (and perhaps water and telephone). In April 2005, the ESC and CAV hosted an information forum for energy retailers and utility connection services, which we attended.

Internal dispute resolution processes

We presented to the ESC our concerns about the effectiveness of some members' internal dispute resolution processes, illustrating these with information we had gathered from the customers contacting EWOV.

Bill smoothing issues

We highlighted cases involving bill smoothing arrangements. These are arrangements whereby a customer pays equal monthly amounts over the year, with the retailer recalculating those against the customer's total usage after six months in line with the provisions of the *Energy Retail Code*, and making adjustments if necessary — prior to 1 January 2005, this period was 12 months. We advised the ESC of instances where the amount requested of the customer fell well short of the cost of their actual usage, resulting in substantial adjustments to instalment amounts or substantial backbills.

Our participation on committees and working groups

- ESC's Customer Consultative Committee (observer status)
- LPG Retail Code Drafting Committee
- Market Conduct Group (with the ESC, CAV and ACCC)
- Rural Legislative Committee of the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector (now Energy Safe Victoria)

Public submissions we made

EWOV made submissions and comments on the following:

- Ministerial Council on Energy's August 2004 Issues Paper, *National Framework for Electricity and Gas Distribution and Retail Regulation* (comments by the EWOV Board and the Ombudsman)
- ESC's October 2004 *Summary of Metropolitan and Regional Water Businesses' Water Plans*
- ESC's *Customer Service Code for Metropolitan Retail and Regional Water Businesses*
- ESC's new *Code of Conduct for Marketing Retail Energy in Victoria*
- ESC's *Electricity Distribution Price Review 2006–10 Issues Paper and Position Paper*
- Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector's *Proposed Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2005*
- State Government's May 2005 *Committee of Inquiry into Financial Hardship of Energy Consumers - Issues Paper for Consultation with Stakeholders*

All EWOV's public submissions and comments are available from our website, under *Responses to regulatory and government authorities*.



In seeking to foster community awareness, we undertake a broad range of activities:

- ➔ co-operative projects which enable us to reach groups we may otherwise have difficulty contacting
- ➔ policy projects which allow us to share our knowledge and experience
- ➔ metropolitan, regional and rural visits
- ➔ community and industry speaking engagements
- ➔ conference, exhibition and event attendance
- ➔ distribution of annual, bi-annual and quarterly stakeholder publications
- ➔ preparation and distribution of fact sheets and brochures
- ➔ the EWOV website (www.ewov.com.au).



community liaison



Through EWOV's community activities, we work to improve awareness of our services and customer rights and responsibilities (in relation to electricity, gas and water), develop projects aimed at reducing customer complaints, and improve community access to our scheme and other complaint resolution options.



Community education

During the year, the Ombudsman made contact with several of Victoria's major community agencies — Anglicare, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Jesuit Social Services, Jewish Care (Victoria), Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese, Melbourne City Mission, Salvation Army, The Smith Family, Uniting Care, Villa Maria and Wesley Mission. This outreach builds on existing links with other agencies, such as Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services, St Vincent de Paul Society and Kildonan Child and Family Services, to name a few. Following on from this contact, representatives from EWOV and community organisations formed a working group to consider possible community education initiatives. Particular focus is being placed on the usefulness of these options to community agencies, individually and collectively.

Co-operative projects

The **Utilities project for women in prison** was initiated by Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services, which sought EWOV's assistance in helping women entering and exiting the prison system to manage the issues associated with their utilities. We formed a taskforce made up of a number of EWOV members, the Concessions Unit of the Department of Human Services, Corrections Victoria and Carmel Stafford of Good Shepherd. Our aim has been to provide a process which can prevent the accumulation of account arrears while women are in prison, and assist with the reconnection of their supply once they leave prison. If successful, the project will be considered for male prisoners.

Keys for Community is an ongoing state-wide visits programme organised by the Indigenous Consumers Unit (ICU) of Consumer Affairs Victoria. Other participants are the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria, the Ombudsman Victoria, the Office of the Public Advocate and the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria. This year, as part of this programme, we visited and made presentations to the Njernda Aboriginal Co-operative in Echuca, an Elders Forum in Portland, Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation in Wodonga and Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative in Mooropna.

Policy projects

EWOV and a large number of other industry, consumer and government stakeholders have been involved in a Committee for Melbourne (CFM) project to map out a strategy to minimise adverse impacts on utility customers in debt. The CFM's **Utility Debt Spiral Prevention Study** included regulatory framework mapping, research into utility companies' hardship policies and development of an effective hardship benchmark methodology. We were instrumental in the preparation of part of the study, which was launched in April 2005. Further information is available on the CFM website (www.melbourne.org.au).

Outer-metropolitan visits

During one-day visits in March 2005, the Ombudsman met with staff of community agencies and financial counsellors in the Melton/St Albans and Altona Meadows/Werribee areas. As well as providing an opportunity to present information about EWOV's role, the visits enabled us to learn more about energy and water issues being raised by the clients of these services. After a general community briefing in each location, the Ombudsman was also available to meet with individual customers who wished to discuss particular complaints.



Presentations

Over the year, we made presentations to a number of diverse community groups, industry groups and staff teams within member companies and authorities. Together with the Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the Insurance Ombudsman Service, the Financial Industry Complaints Service and the Insurance Brokers Dispute Facility, we also supported and participated in the National Consumer Representatives Forum held in Melbourne in June 2005.

Publications

We produced and distributed two issues of our *Resolution* newsletter. *Resolution* presents six months of detailed case information — overall, by industry, industry sector and individual member. *Resolution* Bulletin, a two-page summary of each publication was also prepared and distributed to community agencies.

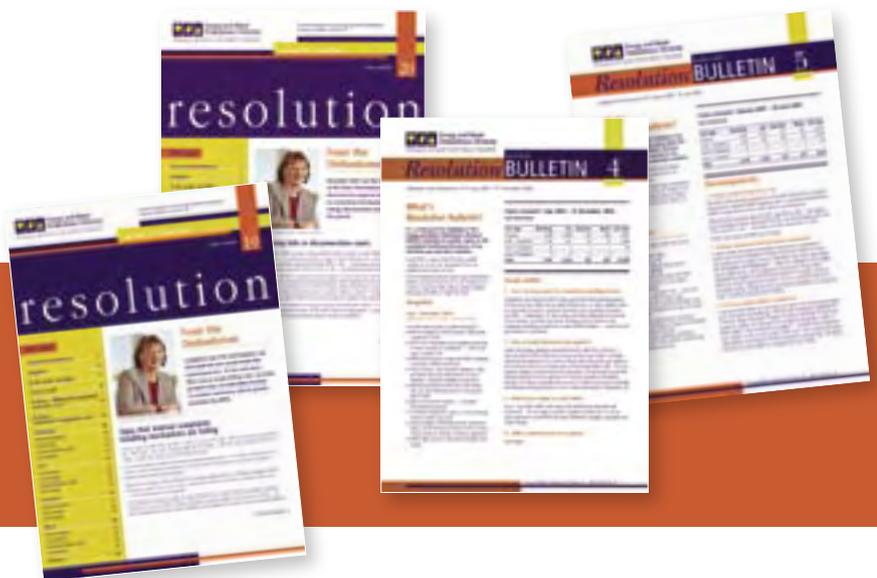
The first issue of *EWOV Connect*, our new electronic newsletter for community sector workers who deal directly with clients' energy and water issues, is scheduled for distribution by email in late 2005.

We distributed four issues of our electronic member newsletter *EWOV Link* to members, providing them with information on cases, case trends and suggestions for process improvements.

We updated our existing retail competition fact sheet and prepared new fact sheets on disconnection, our role in relation to LPG and to help customers who have issues with high bills.

Website

The EWOV website continues to be a source of updated information for stakeholders, providing the latest information on EWOV membership, as well as access to our public submissions, fact sheets and publications. During the year, we included links for customers to a range of information on the efficient use of energy and water.



the foundations of EWOV

History

EWOV was formerly the Electricity Industry Ombudsman (Victoria) (EIOV), established in 1995 when the Victorian electricity industry was undergoing major restructuring. EIOV, with six original electricity members, emerged in response to strong lobbying from consumer groups for appropriate and effective consumer protection mechanisms to accompany the industry changes.

Early on, EIOV was considered to have the potential to provide a foundation for a broader utilities ombudsman scheme across the electricity, gas and water industries. From 1999, gas customers were given access to its services; from 2001, access was extended to Victoria's water customers; and from 1 July 2005 to customers of LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) retailers. EIOV's establishment was a significant and widely acclaimed milestone for electricity customers and companies. It was also a world first for the energy industry.

Jurisdiction

While EWOV's services are available to all customers, the scheme was essentially established to assist residential and small business customers.

We are able to deal with most of the issues that may arise between customers and their electricity, gas and water providers, including:

- the provision and supply of, or failure to provide or supply, electricity, gas or water services
- billing
- credit and payment services
- disconnections and restrictions
- bills, and billing and payment arrangements
- refundable advances (security deposits)
- land and land access, including vegetation management issues.

We can also investigate:

- matters raised with the scheme by the Essential Services Commission (ESC)
- matters referred to the scheme by a member, with the consent of the customer
- the concerns of third parties directly affected by the activities of an EWOV member (where the member's activity affects someone who is not their customer — for example, marketing of electricity or gas to the general public, vegetation management and network augmentation).

Funding

EWOV's services are free to customers. Funding comes from the scheme's members, on a 'user pays' basis. This method of funding provides a financial incentive for members to reduce the number of cases coming to EWOV, by resolving customer issues within their own internal dispute resolution processes.

A fixed fee applies to members when they join EWOV. This *start up levy* covers joining costs and contributes to the scheme's establishment costs, which were originally provided by the founding members.

An *annual levy* is applied to members each year to fund the scheme's operations. The *annual levy* is made up of a fixed fee to cover membership costs, and a variable fee based on each member's share of cases handled.





the board of directors at 30 June 2005

The structure of the EWOV Ltd Board of Directors assures the Ombudsman's independence. Industry and consumers are equally represented, with an independent Chairperson.

Responsibilities

The EWOV Board meets every two months. It is primarily responsible for the business affairs and property of EWOV, including corporate governance, the setting of budgets, risk management, strategic planning, and financial and major policy matters. There are four Board sub-committees — Finance and Budget, Remuneration, Constitution and Rules, and Annual Report.

Chairperson

The Hon. Tony Staley, appointed 30 November 1998

Educated in law and political science, and a former Minister in the Commonwealth Government, Tony Staley is also Chairman of the Council of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the National Museum of Australia and a number of other organisations.

Industry Directors

1 Mr Neil Brennan, appointed 22 August 2002

Neil Brennan is the Chief Executive Officer of Central Highlands Region Water Authority. Employed in the Victorian water industry since 1986, he was previously Western Water's CEO. He has also served as President of the Institute of Water Administration.

2 Mr Sandro Canale, appointed 26 August 2004

General Manager Retail Performance with Australian Gas Light Company (AGL), Sandro Canale has held senior management positions in Customer Services, Regulation, Corporate Affairs and Property. He is also a Director on the Boards of the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW and the Energy Industry Ombudsman South Australia.

3 Ms Caryle Demarte, appointed 23 June 1999

General Manager Corporate Relations for TXU Australia Pty Ltd, Caryle Demarte has extensive senior management experience in the energy industry and is Deputy Chair of the Energy Retailers Association of Australia.

4 Mr Richard Gross, appointed 14 December 2001

A member of the original EIOV Council, Richard Gross is General Manager Regulation, CitiPower Pty and Powercor Australia Ltd. He has extensive experience in network revenue/pricing, financial planning and analysis.



Community/Consumer Directors

5 Mr Chris Field, appointed 23 April 2001

Chris Field is Chair of the Australian Consumers' Association, Chair of the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre, an Adjunct Professor at La Trobe University and the former Executive Director of the Consumer Law Centre Victoria, a position he held for seven years. He is also a member of the Economic Regulation Authority, the independent regulator of the Western Australian gas, electricity, rail and water industries.

6 Mr David Headberry, appointed 20 June 2002

An active advocate for consumers on energy matters for nearly ten years, David Headberry is a qualified engineer. He is Managing Director of Headberry Partners P/L, which specialises in assisting energy consumers secure low-cost, reliable energy supplies in all Australian states.

7 Mr John Mumford, appointed 30 June 2004

John Mumford is a Financial Counsellor at Bass Coast Regional Health in Wonthaggi, Victoria. With a strong background in grassroots consumer advocacy specialising in rural issues, he is also a Director of the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre and the Consumer Law Centre Victoria.

8 Mr Mark O'Brien, appointed 30 June 2004

The Co-ordinator then CEO of the Tenants Union of Victoria since 1996, Mark O'Brien has worked in tenancy advice and advocacy in both a paid and unpaid capacity since 1987. Prior to this, he worked in government and the construction industry as a civil and structural draftsman.

Company Secretary

Mr Steve Morris, Business Manager EWOV, appointed 9 October 2000

Alternate directors

Mr Mark Harvey, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Water Industry Association, appointed 26 July 2001 as alternate director for Mr Neil Brennan

Ms Cassandra Hogan, Manager Service Excellence, AGL Energy Sales and Marketing, appointed 21 October 2004 as alternate director for Mr Simon Lucas

Ms Karen Moses, Chief Operating Officer, Origin Energy, appointed 31 March 2005 as alternate director for Ms Caryle Demarte



the members of EWOV^{at 30 June 2005}¹

At the close of 2004/05, EWOV had 25 electricity members, 11 natural gas members and 22 water members. Just over half were private companies; the others were government businesses. Four new members joined during the year: International Power and Momentum Energy as electricity retail members, and Victoria Electricity initially as an electricity retail member and later as a gas retail member also. EWOV began receiving LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) cases from 1 July 2005.

Electricity

Retailers

ActewAGL Retail Ltd
AGL Electricity Ltd
AGL Victoria Pty Ltd
Aurora Energy Pty Ltd
CitiPower Pty #
Country Energy
ENERGEX Retail Pty Ltd
EnergyAustralia
Ergon Energy Pty Ltd
Integral Energy Australia
International Power (Retail) Pty Ltd
Momentum Energy Pty Ltd
Origin Energy Electricity Ltd #
Powerdirect Pty Ltd
Red Energy Pty Ltd
SPI Electricity Pty Ltd (TXU)
SPI Retail Pty Ltd
(TXU, now TRUenergy Pty Ltd)
Victoria Electricity Pty Ltd

Distributors

AGL Electricity Ltd
CitiPower Pty
Powercor Australia Ltd
SPI Electricity Pty Ltd
(TXU, now SP AusNet)
United Energy Ltd (Alinta Ltd)

Transmission companies

Basslink Pty Ltd
(now National Grid Australia Pty Ltd)
SPI PowerNet Pty Ltd
(now SP AusNet)

CitiPower remains an EWOV retail member, although Origin Energy acquired its retail electricity business in 2002.

^ Commonly known as Gippsland Water

* Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water was formed on 1 July 2004 from the merger of Grampians Region Water Authority and Wimmera Mallee Rural Water Authority.

+ Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Authority was formed on 1 July 2004 from the merger of Sunraysia Rural Water Authority and Lower Murray Region Water Authority.

~ On 1 July 2005, Glenelg Region Water Authority, Portland Coast Region Water Authority and South West Water Authority merged to become Wannon Region Water Authority.

Gas

Retailers

AGL Victoria Pty Ltd
ENERGEX Retail Pty Ltd
EnergyAustralia
Origin Energy Retail Ltd
Origin Energy (Vic) Pty Ltd
SPI Retail Pty Ltd
(TXU, now TRUenergy Pty Ltd)
Victoria Electricity Pty Ltd

Distributors

Envestra Limited
Multinet Partnership
SPI Networks (Gas) Pty Ltd
(TXU, now SP AusNet)
Vic Gas Distribution Pty Ltd

Water

Metropolitan Retailers

City West Water Limited
South East Water Limited
Yarra Valley Water Limited

Metropolitan Wholesaler

Melbourne Water Corporation

Regional Urban Water Authorities

Barwon Region Water Authority
Central Gippsland Region Water Authority ^
Central Highlands Region Water Authority
Coliban Region Water Authority
East Gippsland Region Water Authority
Glenelg Region Water Authority ~
Goulburn Valley Region Water Authority
North East Region Water Authority
Portland Coast Region Water Authority ~
South Gippsland Region Water Authority
South West Water Authority ~
Western Region Water Authority
Westernport Region Water Authority

Rural Water Authorities

First Mildura Irrigation Trust
Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority
Gippsland and Southern Rural Water Authority

Rural Urban Water Authorities

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water *
Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Authority +

¹ For the most current list of members, see EWOV's website.



the EWOV team

Ombudsman

The **Ombudsman**, appointed by the Board, is responsible for EWOV's day-to-day operation. The roles of the Ombudsman and the Board are complementary, with the Ombudsman attending Board meetings.

Operations

The **General Manager Operations** manages EWOV's case handling functions, including quality assurance, data integrity, learning and development, and consultants in IT and legal. The General Manager Operations also supports the work of the Ombudsman in developing and implementing EWOV's strategic direction.

The **Conciliation Manager** is responsible for the day-to-day management of the case handling function of the Conciliation area, including management of the Conciliation Team Co-ordinators and the Complex Case Managers.

Each **Conciliation Team Co-ordinator** is responsible for the supervision and day-to-day management of a team of Conciliators and Enquiry Officers, as well as for the direct management of a small case load.

Complex Case Managers focus on any particularly protracted or difficult matters that require high level case management. They also co-ordinate the Internal Review Process.

Conciliators investigate and resolve individual cases, with an emphasis on facilitating outcomes with which both parties agree. Most Complaints are handled by the same Conciliator from start to finish.

Enquiry Officers handle the receipt and processing of Enquiries, mostly by phone. They provide information and referrals for customers, including referral to Conciliators where they have assessed that to be appropriate.

The **Case Analyst** analyses cases for systemic and trend issues, undertakes case audits to ensure quality assurance processes are maintained, and provides case data for member and public reporting.

The **Learning and Development Officer** develops and supports EWOV's learning and development activities, ensuring an overall holistic and strategic approach to this area.

Public Affairs and Policy

The **Manager Public Affairs and Policy** manages EWOV's public affairs, policy and research, and community liaison functions.

The **Policy and Research Officer** is responsible for research and policy development for EWOV, both internally and externally.

The **Community Liaison Officer** assists the Ombudsman and other staff to develop EWOV's relationship with the Victorian community.

Administration

The **Business Manager** is responsible for the scheme's administration, finance and human resource systems.

The **Executive Assistant to the Ombudsman** and **Executive Assistant to the General Manager Operations** provide executive and project support to these roles.

The **Conciliation Team Assistant** provides administrative support to the Conciliation/Enquiry Officer Teams.

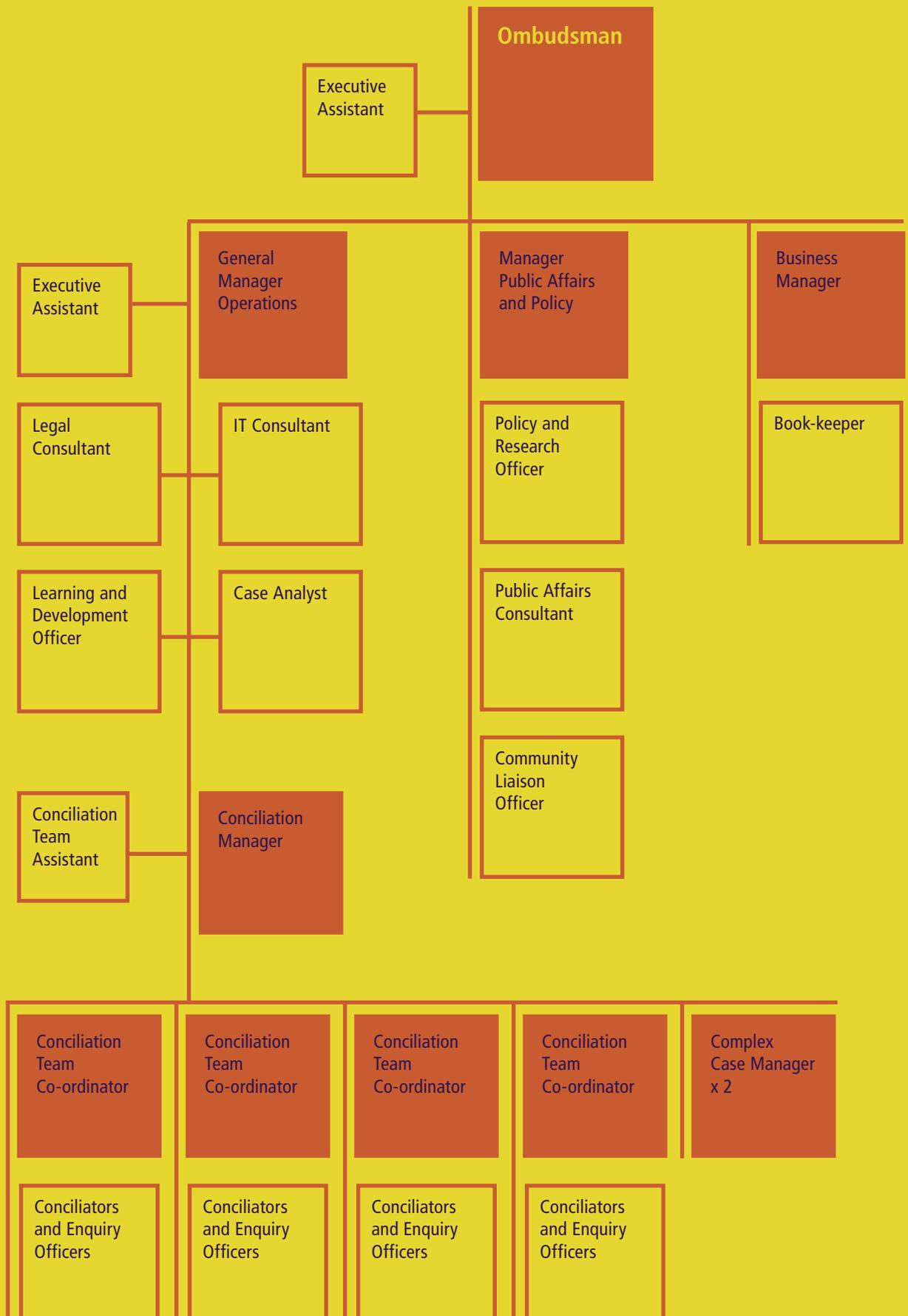


EWOV staff team (at 30 June 2005)²

Ombudsman	Fiona McLeod
Executive Assistant	Toni Warren
General Manager Operations	Janine Young
Executive Assistant	Heather McCauley
Conciliation Manager	Bridie Fennessy (to 27 May 2005)
Case Analyst	Steve Yates
Learning and Development Officer	Catherine Wardlaw
Manager Public Affairs and Policy	Stephen Gatford
Policy and Research Officer	Frances Wood
Community Liaison Officer	Virginia McLeod
Complex Case Managers	Jane Harper Marika Peirce
Conciliation Team Co-ordinators	Justine Bunn Rebecca Phillips Elize Simpson Samantha Spry
Conciliators	Helen Betros Irene Brown Amy Castos Alex Clunies-Ross Susan Conley Hannah Cumming Jane Edwards Nia Elovaris Sarah Ernst Richard Fernandez Joanne Finlay Michela Friolo Louise Goh Ralph Haller-Trost Petra Jankulovski Irene Kazantzidis Olivia Lennon Nesrine Mojaled Melissa Officer Clare O'Shaughnessy Jayde Richmond Jeff Smith Lynette Squillace
Enquiry Officers	Callum Cheyne Jane Davey Lucy Idle Vicki Krokos
Conciliation Team Assistant	Elicia Withers

²This list does not include EWOV's temporary staff or consultants.

1 Organisational chart (at 30 June 2005)



independence

EWOV is a company limited by guarantee, legally separate from its electricity, gas and water members, and from government. The Board has equal numbers of industry and consumer Directors and an independent Chair.

While maintaining good working relationships with all stakeholders, we act independently, with this independence reflected in the scheme's policies and practices. Conciliators explain to customers that their role is to resolve an issue in a fair and independent manner, not to act on behalf of a member company/authority or a customer, or as a customer's advocate in the same way a lawyer would.

access

EWOV is readily accessible to individual customers of electricity, gas and water services regardless of their ethnicity, language skills, physical or mental abilities or geographical locations. While any customer can seek our assistance, the scheme was essentially set up to assist residential and small business customers.



the principles guiding our work

EWOV's work is undertaken in the context of eight guiding principles — independence, access, equity, quality, effectiveness, efficiency, community awareness and linkages. The scheme also complies with the *National Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes*.

Complaints don't have to be put in writing, there is no charge for our services and customers can contact us in a variety of ways:

- by phone:
 - on Freecall 1800 500 509, from anywhere in Victoria
 - where a call from a mobile phone may attract charges, we can call the customer back
 - customers calling from a restricted phone service can ring Telstra reverse charges on 12550 and quote (03) 9649 7599; we'll accept the reverse charges and the call cost
 - customers whose first language is not English can call 131 450 to use our interpreter service
 - customers with a hearing or speech impairment can call the National Relay Service on 133 677 to have a Relay Officer assist them make contact with us
- in writing:
 - on Freefax 1800 500 549
 - by email: ewovinfo@ewov.com.au
 - through our website: www.ewov.com.au
 - by post to GPO Box 469 Melbourne Vic 3001

equity

EWOV deals first and foremost in what is fair and reasonable, considering good industry practice and current law. Each party can put their case to us. They are also advised of the arguments and the case the other party is making, and given the opportunity to rebut these. We ensure that information provided to us for the purposes of resolving complaints is kept confidential, unless disclosure is required by law.

quality

EWOV's case handling policies and procedures are focussed on providing excellent customer service, efficiently and effectively. We work to very high standards, continuously looking for ways to improve our customer service. We focus on quality outcomes and solutions after exploration and discussion.

effectiveness

EWOV's office is staffed by high calibre people, supported by training and state-of-the-art technology. We proactively develop our professional competence.

The Ombudsman has the power to make a decision where a conciliated outcome cannot be reached. This includes the making of awards up to \$20,000, and \$50,000 with the agreement of all parties. The decision is binding on the member provided the complainant accepts it.

efficiency

EWOV deals only with matters within its jurisdiction and has procedures in place for referring matters outside jurisdiction to other bodies or mechanisms. We are able to draw systemic issues to the attention of relevant members, and where necessary report them to relevant regulators.

We keep records of all Enquiries and Complaints, their progress and their outcomes. Key performance indicators are set and performance against these is regularly reviewed, internally and with the Board. Our case resolution procedures facilitate speedy resolution, without compromising quality.

community awareness

EWOV promotes its existence to ensure maximum customer awareness. We foster community awareness through a range of community liaison activities.

The scheme's members are required to make information about EWOV available to customers through their internal dispute resolution processes, and to include EWOV contact information on all disconnection/restriction warnings and on at least one bill each year.

linkages

EWOV maintains effective links and working relationships with relevant organisations, agencies and members. Some working relationships are formally documented in a memorandum of understanding. EWOV personnel are actively involved in external committees and working groups, and in regular meetings with, and presentations to, key stakeholders.



the way we handle cases

Case categories

In handling cases, we use two case categories — Enquiry and Complaint.

Two important things we take into account when deciding whether to take a case as an Enquiry or as a Complaint are:

- whether the member concerned has had a reasonable opportunity to address the complaint
- whether the matter falls within our jurisdiction as set out in EWOV's *Charter*.

Where a customer's issue isn't resolved after referral back to a member, or if the customer has already made several attempts at resolution, we accept the case as a Complaint which we investigate. Complaints require significantly more EWOV time and resources than Enquiries. They may also require us to obtain independent regulatory, technical or legal advice. Enquiries don't involve us in investigation, but they do require us to provide information and/or advice, or undertake research, and they may generate outward calls.

This year, 27% of EWOV cases were received as Complaints — up from 23% and 24% in previous years, and the highest proportion of Complaints since 1997/98.

Enquiries

Even though we may classify a customer's initial contact with us as an Enquiry, the vast majority of customers are calling because they have a complaint about their electricity, gas or water provider. Typically, they detail the issues to one of our Enquiry Officers who helps them progress the matter.

Complaints

Although discretion may be applied in specific circumstances, as a rule we don't accept a case as a Complaint unless the customer has made at least two attempts to resolve the issue with the member concerned.

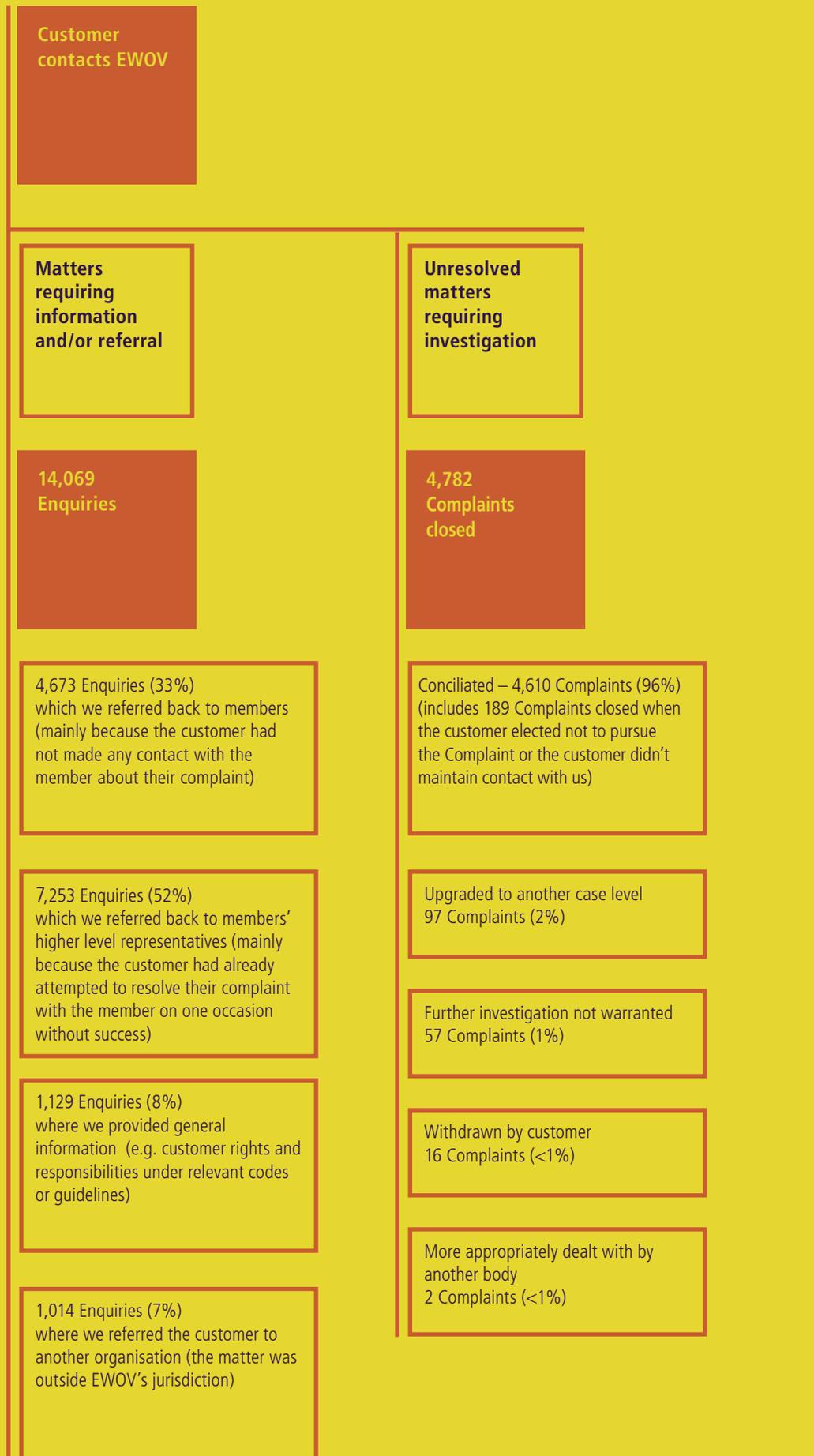
We use three levels of Complaint, each with an increased cost implication for the member. Generally, if a Complaint isn't resolved within the required timeframe, it's upgraded to the next level.

Our investigation processes are informal rather than legalistic, with consideration being given to the wider context of each Complaint — what is fair and reasonable, good industry practice and current law. We focus on conciliation — where the customer and the member mutually agree on the outcome, as well as on any future action each may be required to carry out. At all times, our aim is to establish an objective view of what has happened, to help the parties better understand the issues, as well as each other's point of view, and thus reach an agreement with which they are both satisfied.

Where a case remains unresolved after detailed investigation and negotiation, the Ombudsman reviews it and may make a Binding Decision. Such a decision is binding on the member, while the customer may accept or reject it. If the decision is rejected by the customer, the member is released from its terms. The Ombudsman also has the discretion to discontinue an investigation where a case has insufficient merit.



2 Case handling procedure and 2004/05 case outcomes



- ➔ 19,158 **cases overall**, ↑ 39% from 13,767
- ➔ follows previous annual increases of 13%, 37% and 33%
- ➔ 70% **electricity** — 13,491 cases (↑ 40% from 9,624)
- ➔ 20% **gas** — 3,882 cases (↑ 40% from 2,769)
- ➔ 3% **dual fuel** — 529 cases (↑ 122% from 238)
- ➔ 7% **water** — 1,256 cases (↑ 11% from 1,136)



the 2004/05 big picture



Most common issues

- ➔ 65% **Billing** — covers all aspects of the billing process, from meter reading, application of tariffs and bill formats through to errors, delays, high bills, payment options and billing-related disconnection or restriction of supply.
- ➔ 11% **Transfer** — the process of transferring from one retailer to another, including transfer errors and delays (category relates to electricity and gas only).
- ➔ 8% **Provision** — anything to do with a service provider's assets, such as pipes, meters, wires, and pole cabling (may also include customers' assets, such as private electric lines).
- ➔ 5% **Market conduct** — concerns a retailer's sales or advertising activities (category relates to electricity and gas only).
- ➔ 5% **Supply** — covers planned or unplanned outages, and the quality or reliability of electricity, gas or water supply.

Enquiries

Overall

- Enquiries increased 32%, from 10,658 to 14,069

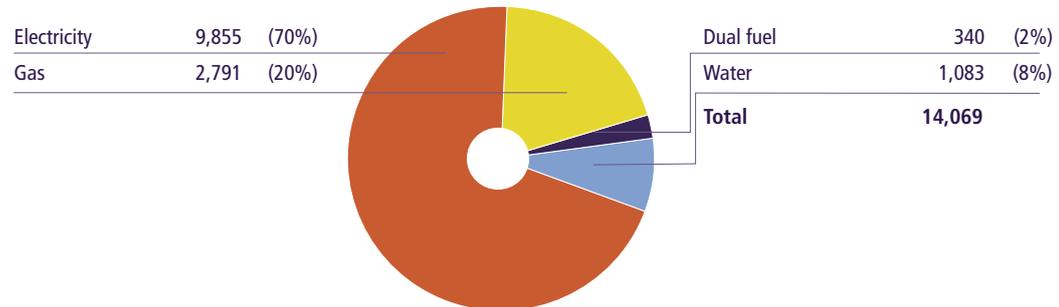
By industry

- 70% (9,855 cases) electricity, as for last year
- 20% (2,791 cases) gas, up from 19%
- 2% (340 cases) dual fuel, as for last year
- 8% (1,083 cases) water, down from 9%

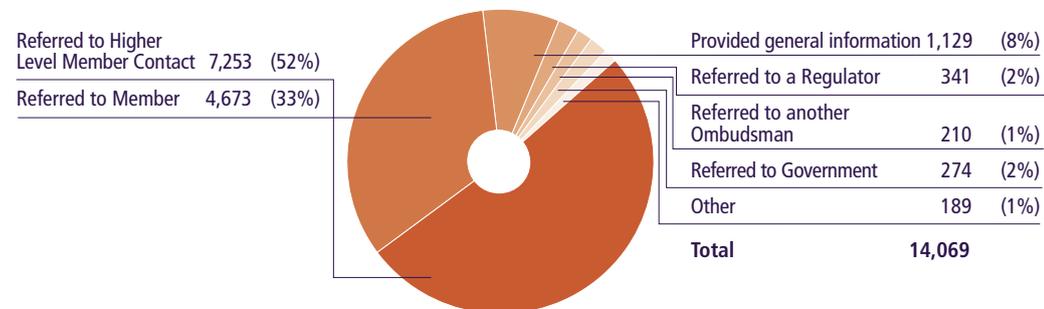
How we handled Enquiries

- 4,673 Enquiries (33%) were referred back to a member’s contact centre, mainly because the customer hadn’t yet contacted it about their complaint — this was 16% more Enquiries than last year.
- 7,253 Enquiries (52%) were referred back to a member’s designated higher level contact because the customer had already made one contact about their complaint, usually via the member’s contact centre, without success — 39% more than last year.
- 1,129 Enquiries (8%) where we provided the customer with general information, including helping them understand their rights and responsibilities — 50% more than last year.
- 1,014 Enquiries (7%) fell outside EWOV’s jurisdiction and where possible, we referred them on to another appropriate body — 55% more than last year.

3 Enquiries received



4 How we handled Enquiries



NOTE: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.



Complaints

Overall

- Complaints increased 64%, from 3,109 to 5,089
 - Level 1 Complaints up 64% from 3,043 to 4,994
 - Level 2 Complaints up 67%, from 55 to 92
 - Level 3 Complaints down 73%, from 11 to 3
- 27% of all cases were Complaints, up from 23% and 24% in previous years

By industry

- 71% (3,636) electricity, as for last year
- 21% (1,091) gas, down from 22%
- 4% (189) dual fuel, up from 2%
- 3% (173) water, down from 5%

How we resolved and closed Complaints

- We closed 4,782 Complaints, up 53% from 3,123.
- 4,610 (96%) were conciliated or partially conciliated. This included 189 Complaints closed when the customer elected not to pursue the Complaint or the customer didn't maintain contact with us (generally following receipt of our communication to them of the member's initial response to their Complaint, which may have addressed the issue to their satisfaction).
- 97 (2%) were upgraded to the next Complaint level, as they were not resolved within the required timeframe.
- 57 (1%) were closed when it was assessed by the Ombudsman that further investigation into the matter was not warranted.
- 16 (<1%) were withdrawn by the customer.
- 2 (<1%) were closed when it was decided that the matter was more appropriately dealt with by another body.
- It was not necessary for the Ombudsman to make a Binding Decision this year.



5 Complaints received, closed and open

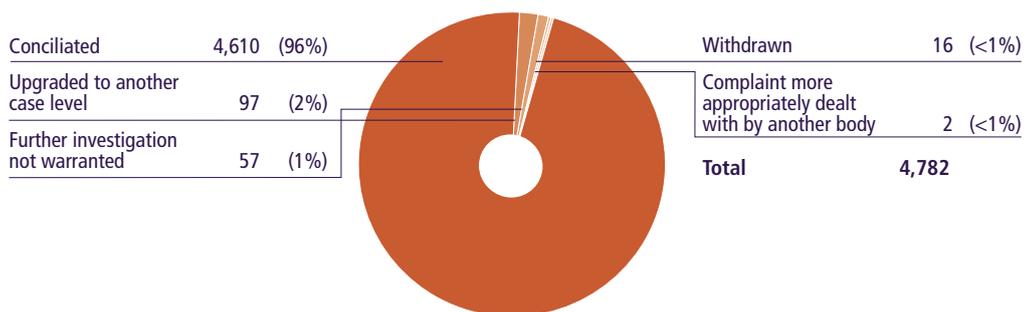
Overall		Total	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Received		5,089	4,994	92	3
Closed*		4,782	4,686	94	2
Open**		844	817	25	2
Electricity					
Received		3,636	3,564	69	3
Closed*		3,406	3,331	74	1
Open**		622	603	17	2
Gas					
Received		1,091	1,077	14	0
Closed*		1,042	1,032	10	0
Open**		145	140	5	0
Dual fuel					
Received		189	185	4	0
Closed*		172	169	3	0
Open**		26	25	1	0
Water					
Received		173	168	5	0
Closed*		162	154	7	1
Open**		51	49	2	0

NOTE:

* Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

** Complaints open at 30 June 2005.

6 Complaints resolved (closed Complaints; all industries combined)



Customer profiles

Residential customers

- 93% of all cases were lodged by residential customers, up from 92% last year.
- Residential customers lodged 91% of electricity cases, 98% of gas cases, 99% of dual fuel cases and 91% of water cases.

Business customers

- 7% of all cases were lodged by business customers, down from 8% last year.
- Business customers lodged 8% of electricity cases, 2% of gas cases, less than 1% of dual fuel cases and 9% of water cases.

Metropolitan vs regional/rural

- 75% of cases were lodged by customers in metropolitan Melbourne.
- 25% were lodged by customers in regional and rural areas.

7 Which customers contacted us for help?

Electricity

Business	1,104	(8%)
Not for profit	21	(<1%)
Government	50	(<1%)
Residential	12,316	(91%)
Total	13,491	

Dual fuel

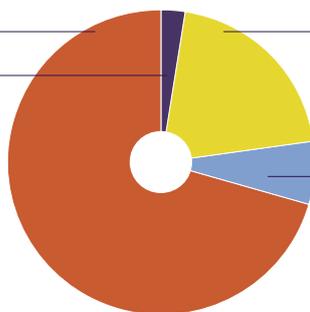
Business	2	(<1%)
Not for profit	0	(0%)
Government	2	(<1%)
Residential	525	(99%)
Total	529	

Gas

Business	73	(2%)
Not for profit	2	(<1%)
Government	16	(<1%)
Residential	3,791	(98%)
Total	3,882	

Water

Business	110	(9%)
Not for profit	4	(<1%)
Government	4	(<1%)
Residential	1,138	(91%)
Total	1,256	



NOTE: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.

How did customers contact us?

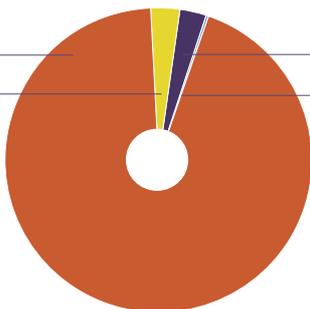
- 94% of contacts with EWOV were made by phone, in line with previous years.
- 3% were made by email or via our website, up from 2%.
- 3% were made in writing or by facsimile, down from 4%.

8 Customer contact points

Telephone	18,007	(94%)
Email/Website	574	(3%)

Written/Fax	540	(3%)
In person	37	(<1%)

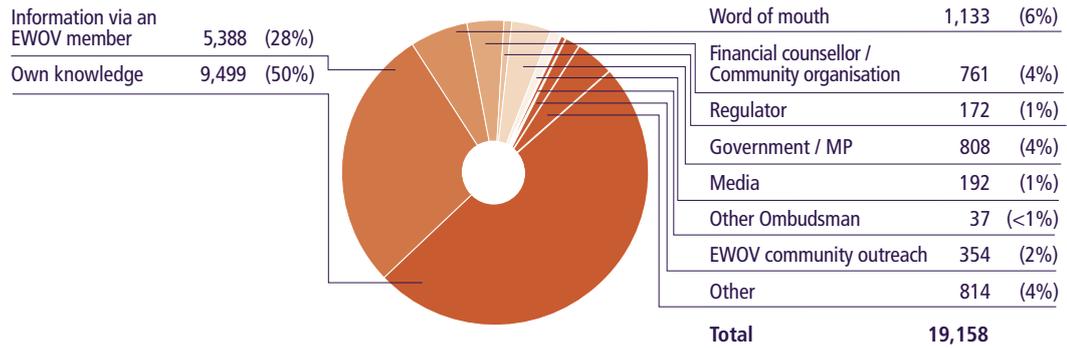
Total 19,158



How did customers know to contact us?

- 50% of customers said they were already aware of EWOV, down from 52% last year.
- 28% contacted us based on information from an EWOV member, up from 27%.
- 6% heard about EWOV from family, friends or colleagues (word of mouth), as for last year.
- 4% contacted us on the advice of a financial counsellor or community organisation, up from 3%.
- 4% contacted us based on the advice of their member of parliament or a government agency, up from 2%.

9 How did customers find out about us?



Disconnection/restriction — trends and developments

10% of EWOV cases were about billing-related disconnection or restriction of supply, down from 15% last year. Case receipt in the first half of the year (when disconnection/restriction cases made up 13% of all cases) was significantly different from that for the second half of the year (when disconnection/restriction cases fell to 7% of all cases).

The turning point appears to have been the State Government's introduction of the wrongful disconnection payment (WDP) legislation from 8 December 2004. The WDP has applied to energy disconnections on or after this date, where the electricity or gas retailer failed to comply with the terms and conditions of its contract with the customer. The payment is \$250 for each day, and pro rata of \$250 for any part of a day, the customer's supply was wrongfully disconnected.

EWOV understands that following the introduction of the WDP, there was a reduction in disconnection activity by some, if not all, energy retailers while they reviewed their disconnection procedures. We've been advised by some members that as these reviews are completed, disconnection activity is likely to resume. Whether EWOV cases will go back up as a result remains to be seen. *Resolution 20*, released by EWOV in October 2005, contains a detailed report on how we are now handling energy disconnection cases to take account of the WDP.

Overall

- 1,889 disconnection/restriction cases, down 11% from 2,132
 - 894 *actual* disconnection/restriction cases, down 12% from 1,021 (*actual* means the customer was already off supply when they contacted EWOV)
 - 995 *imminent* disconnection/restriction cases, down 10% from 1,111 (*imminent* means the customer was facing disconnection or restriction, and had most likely received a notice to that effect)

By industry and issue

- 1,232 electricity disconnection cases, down 17% from 1,486
 - 463 *actual* disconnection cases, down 22% from 590
 - 769 *imminent* disconnection cases, down 14% from 896
- 624 gas disconnection cases, up 2% from 612
 - 407 *actual* disconnection cases, down 1% from 411
 - 217 *imminent* disconnection cases, up 8% from 201
- 33 water restriction cases, down 1 case from 34
 - 24 *actual* restriction cases, up 4 cases from 20
 - 9 *imminent* restriction cases, down 5 cases from 14

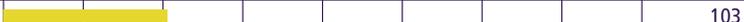
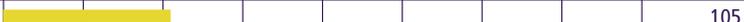


10 Trends in disconnection/restriction cases – *actual* (all case types)

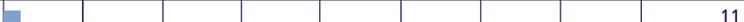
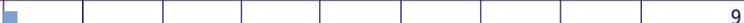
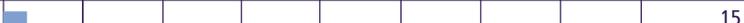
Electricity

Jan - June 2002		125
July - Dec 2002		188
Jan - June 2003		182
July - Dec 2003		200
Jan - June 2004		390
July - Dec 2004		351
Jan - June 2005		112

Gas

Jan - June 2002		160
July - Dec 2002		103
Jan - June 2003		69
July - Dec 2003		105
Jan - June 2004		306
July - Dec 2004		285
Jan - June 2005		122

Water

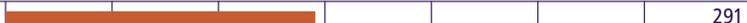
Jan - June 2002		19
July - Dec 2002		10
Jan - June 2003		10
July - Dec 2003		11
Jan - June 2004		9
July - Dec 2004		9
Jan - June 2005		15

0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400

NOTE: Dual fuel cases are registered against the fuel disconnected.

11 Trends in disconnection/restriction cases – *imminent* (all case types)

Electricity

Jan - June 2002		291
July - Dec 2002		317
Jan - June 2003		365
July - Dec 2003		355
Jan - June 2004		541
July - Dec 2004		499
Jan - June 2005		270

Gas

Jan - June 2002		48
July - Dec 2002		90
Jan - June 2003		91
July - Dec 2003		79
Jan - June 2004		122
July - Dec 2004		152
Jan - June 2005		65

Water

Jan - June 2002		8
July - Dec 2002		8
Jan - June 2003		9
July - Dec 2003		4
Jan - June 2004		10
July - Dec 2004		5
Jan - June 2005		4

0 100 200 300 400 500 600



Retail competition — trends and developments

Since January 2002 (in electricity) and October 2002 (in gas) all customers in Victoria have been able to choose their electricity and gas retailers. The past year has seen a high level of marketing activity by energy retailers. There have also been some initiatives to help customers compare new energy offers with their current energy arrangements.

The Essential Services Commission (ESC)'s Energy Comparator is an online tool (www.esc.vic.gov.au) which prompts the customer to provide a picture of their energy consumption from their bills, and enter details from the contract or offer they've received from a retailer. It then returns a report which compares the price and service package of the new offer with the customer's current arrangements.

The ESC has also developed format and content guidelines for information on market offers, which retailers must make available through their websites. The uniformity of this information will further help customers compare various market offerings and make informed decisions.

Overall

- 3,014 retail competition cases, up 73% from 1,743
- 2,262 Enquiries, up 73% from 1,310
- 752 Complaints, up 74% from 433

By industry

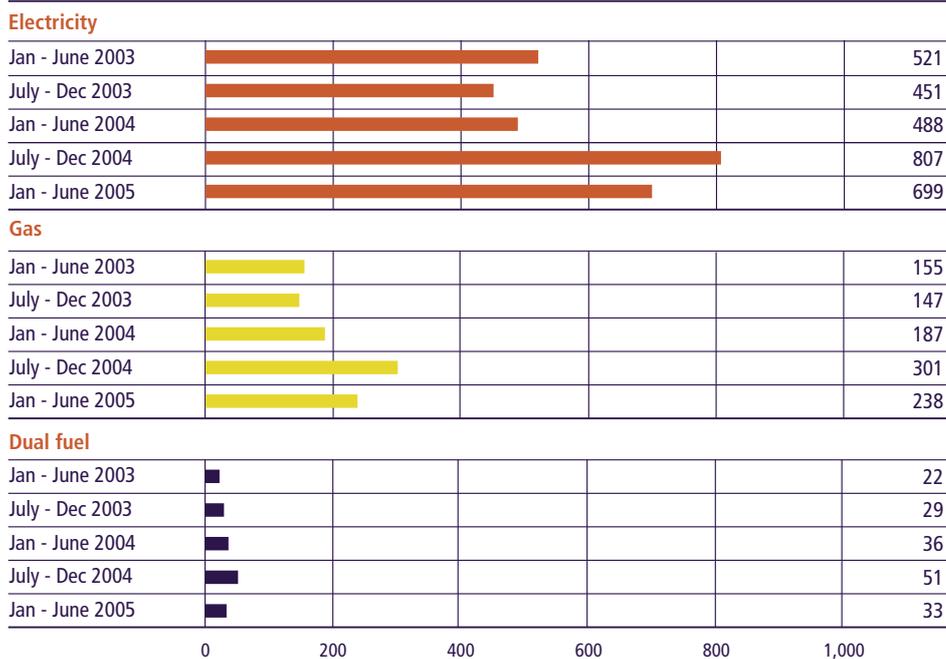
- 2,127 electricity retail competition cases, up 73% from 1,228
- 711 gas retail competition cases, up 77% from 402
- 176 dual fuel retail competition cases, up 56% from 113

Most common issues

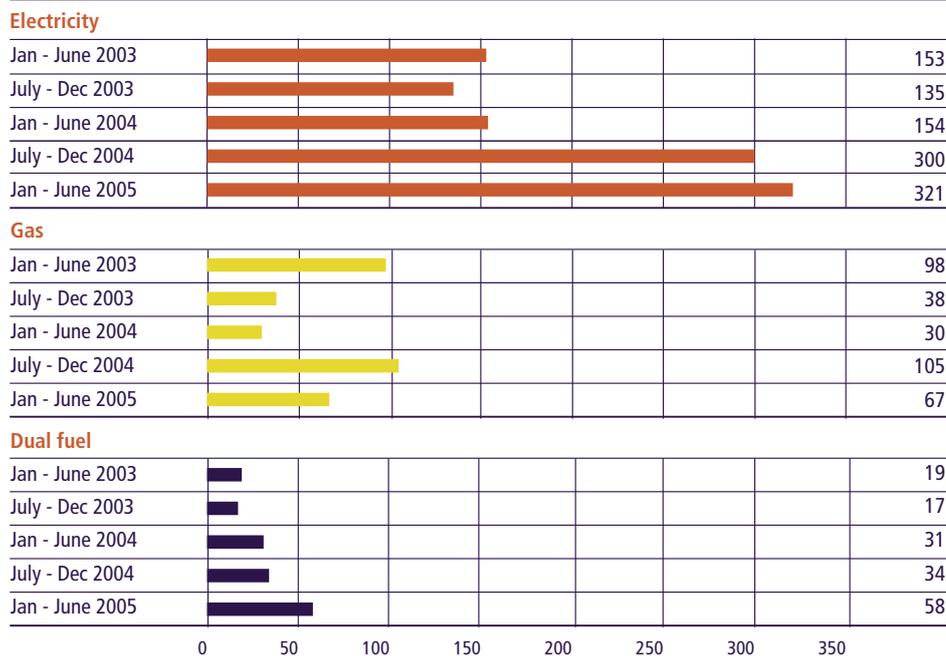
- 71% Transfer — 2,129 cases, up 59% from 1,338
 - 43% error
 - 14% delay
 - 12% information
 - 10% contract terms and conditions
- 29% Market conduct — 885 cases, up 119% from 405
 - 55% door-to-door sales
 - 28% phone sales



12 Trends in transfer cases (all case types)



13 Trends in market conduct cases (all case types)



- ➔ 13,491 **overall electricity cases**, ↑ 40% from 9,624
9,855 Enquiries (73%) and 3,636 Complaints (27%)
- ➔ 11,252 **electricity retail cases**, ↑ 40% from 8,012
7,865 Enquiries (70%) and 3,387 Complaints (30%)
- ➔ 1,346 **electricity distribution cases**, ↑ 31% from 1,025
1,100 Enquiries (82%) and 246 Complaints (18%)
- ➔ 5 **electricity transmission cases**, ↓ 1 case from 6
2 Enquiries (40%) and 3 Complaints (60%)

Electricity

EWOV has been dealing with electricity cases since the scheme opened in May 1996.

At 30 June 2005, there were 25 EWOV electricity members: 18 retailers, 5 distributors and 2 transmission companies.

All Victorian customers have had choice of retailer since January 2002. There are 3 local retailers with an obligation to offer to sell electricity to customers in their local areas. They can also sell electricity to customers in other areas in competition with the local retailer and independent retailers. Customers don't have choice of distributor since each electricity distributor supplies a specific geographical area.

Most common electricity issues

- ➔ 65% **Billing** — 8,712 cases
 - 18% high bills
 - 14% billing-related disconnection
- ➔ 11% **Transfer** — 1,506 cases
 - 43% transfer error
 - 14% information provision
- ➔ 8% **Provision** — 1,101 cases
 - 47% existing company assets/customer assets, such as poles and wires
 - 37% new connections

14 Electricity cases received (Enquiries and Complaints) and closed (Complaints)

	Overall cases		Enquiries		Complaints (Levels 1 – 3 combined)				Market share*
	Received		Received		Received		Closed		(local retailers)
Retail	%		%		%		%		%
AGL Electricity	1,761	16	1,299	17	462	14	438	14	12
AGL Victoria	1,390	12	939	12	451	13	480	15	26
Country Energy	302	3	261	3	41	1	41	1	
ENERGEX Retail	12	< 1	11	< 1	1	< 1	1	< 1	
EnergyAustralia	753	7	542	7	211	6	181	6	
Ergon Energy	1	< 1	1	< 1	0	0	0	0	
Momentum Energy #	4	< 1	4	< 1	0	0	0	0	
Origin Energy	4,094	36	2,805	36	1,289	38	1,201	38	39
Powerdirect	568	5	380	5	188	6	139	4	
Red Energy	85	1	77	1	8	< 1	7	< 1	
TXU Electricity (TRUenergy)	2,143	19	1,423	18	720	21	657	21	23
Victoria Electricity #	139	1	123	2	16	< 1	10	< 1	
Retail total	11,252	100	7,865	100	3,387	100	3,155	100	100
Distribution	%		%		%		%		Customer share*
AGL Electricity	224	17	191	17	33	13	29	12	12
CitiPower	87	6	71	6	16	7	17	7	12
Powercor Australia	355	26	294	27	61	25	61	24	27
TXU Electricity (SP AusNet)	479	36	375	34	104	42	105	42	24
United Energy (Alinta)	201	15	169	15	32	13	37	15	26
Distribution total	1,346	100	1,100	100	246	100	249	100	100
Transmission	%		%		%		%		
SPI PowerNet (SP AusNet)	5	100	2	100	3	100	2	100	
Transmission total	5	100	2	100	3	100	2	100	
Non industry related/non member specific									
Non industry related	227		227						
Non member specific	661		661						
Electricity totals	13,491		9,855		3,636		3,406		

NOTES:

* Market share for local electricity retailers is based on customer numbers for the electricity companies at deregulation in December 1994. Market shares are not shown for independent retailers as this information is not available. This approach is under review.
Customer share for electricity distributors is based on 2004 customer numbers in the ESC's *Electricity Distribution Businesses Comparative Performance Report covering 2004* (published July 2005).

Based on data run at 29 July 2005.

List excludes electricity members for whom EWOV received no cases in 2004/05.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.

Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

Retailers engaged in marketing activities take the view that their marketing may have an impact on their case numbers from time to time.

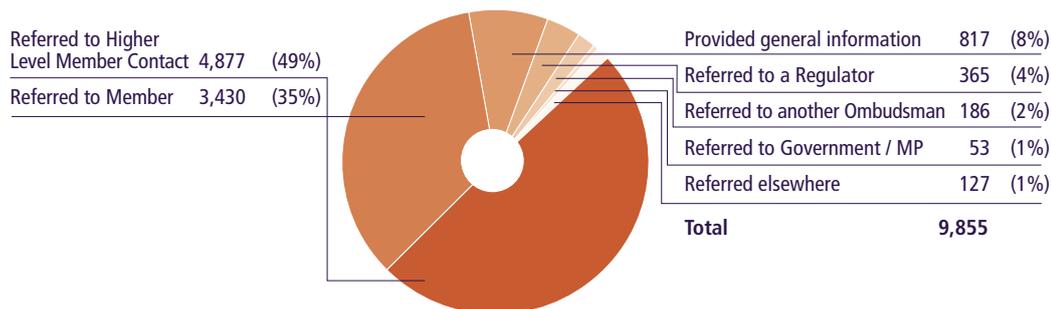
Victoria Electricity and International Power joined EWOV on 1 July 2004. Momentum Energy joined EWOV on 26 August 2004.

No cases were received this year for the following electricity members:

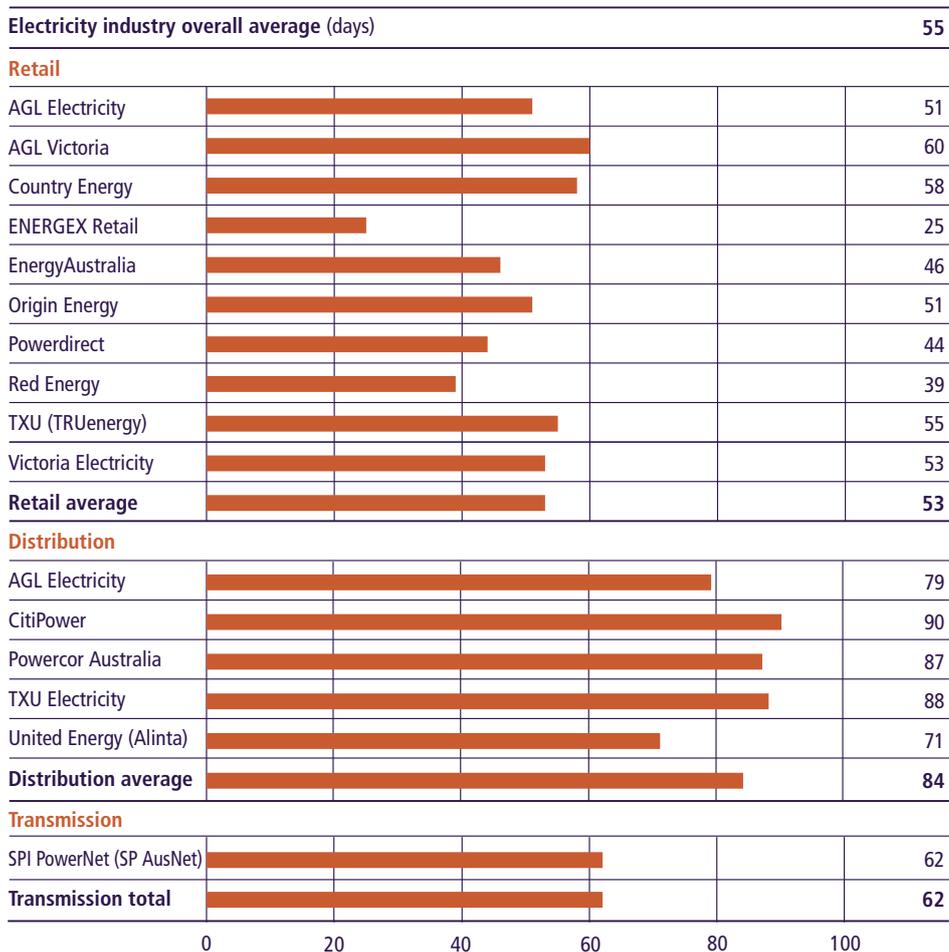
- ActewAGL Retail
- Aurora Energy
- Basslink (National Grid)
- Integral Energy
- International Power



15 How we handled electricity Enquiries



16 Average days to close electricity Complaints (Levels 1 – 3 combined)



NOTES:

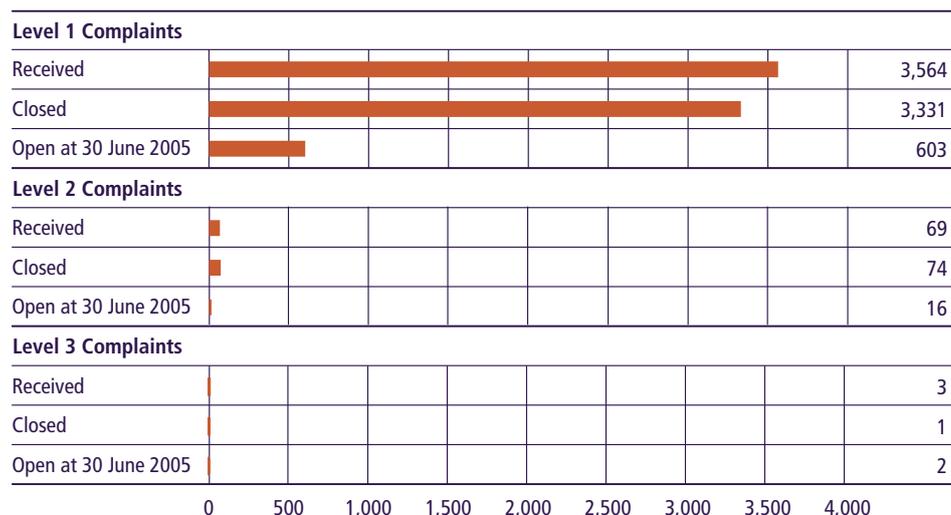
List excludes electricity members with no closed complaints.

Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

Case complexity contributes to the time taken to close a case. EWOV's seeking of technical or legal advice and delays in customer action/replies may also have an effect.

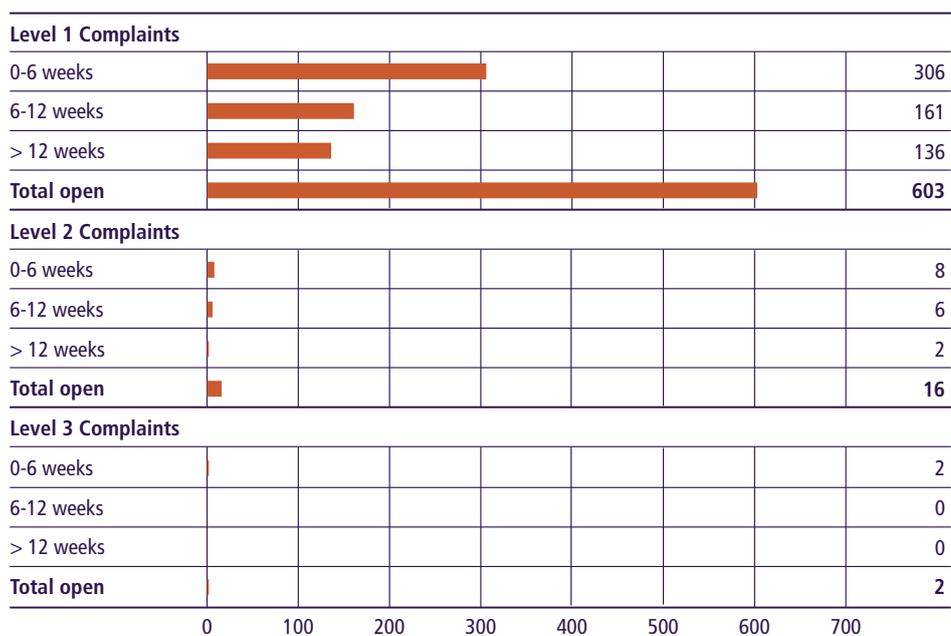
Case closure times may also be affected by factors internal to the electricity member, such as the time required for field testing and site inspections, and its resourcing for complaint handling.

17 Progress of electricity Complaints during the year

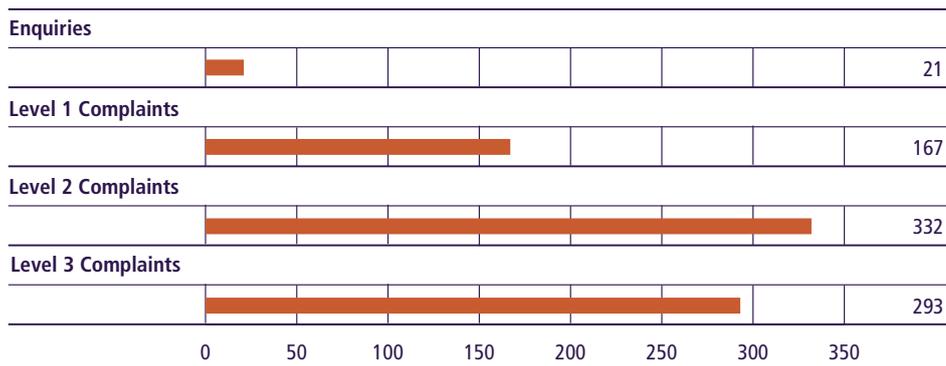


NOTE: Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

18 Age of open electricity Complaints at 30 June 2005



19 Average time spent on closed electricity cases (in minutes)



20 Most common electricity issues (all case types combined)

Electricity industry overall			
(Total cases: 13,491)	Billing	8,712	High
			1,552
			Disconnection
			1,232
	Transfer	1,506	Error
			641
			Information
			204
	Provision	1,101	In-Place
			518
			New
			410
Electricity retail			
(Total cases: 11,252)	Billing	8,435	High
			1,539
			Disconnection
			1,221
	Transfer	1,417	Error
			637
			Delay
			200
	Market Conduct	603	Sales/Contact
			555
			Advertising
			22
Electricity distribution			
(Total cases: 1,346)	Supply	586	Unplanned Outage
			387
			Quality
			76
	Provision	521	New
			225
			In-Place
			221
	Land	104	Pole Cabling
			74
			Street Lighting
			9
Electricity transmission			
(Total cases: 5)	Land	4	Towers
			2
			Vegetation
			2
	Provision	1	In-Place
			1

Electricity case studies

Capacity to pay not assessed — wrongful disconnection payment made (C/2005/1958)

Ms B's electricity supply was disconnected for non-payment of arrears of around \$1,000. She'd been on several payment plans which had been cancelled by the retailer due to missed payments.

EWOV arranged for Ms B's supply to be reconnected, and a new payment arrangement was negotiated in line with her capacity to pay. EWOV's investigation also needed to consider whether, in disconnecting her supply, Ms B's retailer had complied with the terms and conditions of her contract. We found that the retailer may not have complied with clause 11.2 of the *Energy Retail Code*, as it hadn't adequately assessed Ms B's capacity to pay prior to disconnecting her electricity. Ms B had three payment plans cancelled over an eight month period in 2004, due to missed or partial payments. In addition, her supply had been disconnected at her previous address for non-payment of arrears.

Despite this history of failed and partial payments, Ms B's retailer hadn't provided her with telephone information about energy efficiency or advice on the availability of an independent financial counsellor. It was also noted that Ms B had contacted the retailer four times in the months preceding the disconnection, either to negotiate a new payment arrangement or advise of a payment she'd made. The retailer, therefore, had ample opportunity to undertake a systematic assessment of Ms B's capacity to pay and to offer her appropriate advice and assistance.

The retailer agreed that it hadn't adequately assessed Ms B's capacity to pay in line with *Energy Retail Code* requirements and a wrongful disconnection payment was credited to Ms B's account. The retailer also offered Ms B an incentive plan, whereby it would match every third electricity payment she made.

This case highlights the requirement for energy retailers to adequately assess a customer's capacity to pay prior to disconnecting supply, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the customer's contract and the provisions of the Energy Retail Code. Failure to do so may trigger the wrongful disconnection payment obligation.

Supply quality interfering with speakers (C/2004/4353)

Mr M lives in a beach resort. When his expensive home entertainment/theatre system was set up, there was a loud hum through the speakers. He contacted the manufacturer and was advised to check his power supply. He engaged local electricians, but they were unable to fix the problem which was identified as low voltage, occurring particularly on weekends.

After much discussion and some monitoring of the voltage variation, the electricity distributor arranged for a consultant audio/electronics engineer to look into Mr M's concerns. The consultant made a number of recommendations which Mr M implemented at considerable personal cost, but the problem remained. Frustrated at this, he contacted EWOV.

During our investigation of the matter, the distributor arranged for monitoring of the voltage variation. This was undertaken on several occasions, with mixed results. Finally, it was agreed that a multi-disciplinary group from the distributor would visit Mr M's home to undertake a site inspection. As a result of this inspection, the distributor reviewed its approach to the case and moved to resolve it.

The distributor apologised to Mr M and acknowledged the problem with voltage variation. In addition to compensation for over \$3,000 in costs he'd incurred, Mr M was provided with a power conditioner which would enable him to manage future voltage variations.

In the initial stages of this investigation, the distributor spent considerable time refuting Mr M's claims. Considerable cost and customer frustration could have been avoided if it had taken more time to understand his concerns. A fresh approach to the problem, and to the customer's needs, following the site inspection resulted in an expeditious resolution to the satisfaction of both parties.

NOTE: Case studies are provided to demonstrate the range of complaints received, and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. Initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer who lodged the Complaint.



Bill check reveals marketing error (C/2004/8070)

Mr T's electricity bill was \$310 more than for the same period in the previous year. In reviewing it, he noticed that his off-peak tariff had increased. Mr T had entered into a new contract with his electricity retailer and according to the information he'd been given, his off-peak tariff should not have altered. After several failed attempts to resolve the matter with the retailer, he contacted EWOV.

The retailer advised us that the information Mr T had been given about the off-peak tariff was wrong. To resolve the matter, it returned him to his original off-peak tariff and recalculated his bills based on that tariff. Mr T's account was credited with \$371.90, including a \$100 customer service payment.

It's important that customers check their bills to ensure they reflect the terms of the contract they've agreed to. This case also illustrates how information provided by sales consultants can be incorrect.

Claims of loss unable to be substantiated (C/2004/10266)

Mr A, a registered electrician, contacted EWOV dissatisfied with the delay in connecting the electricity at his client's commercial property. He asserted that a breakdown in the electricity retailer's procedures contributed to the connection delay, leading to loss of income and productivity, and significant inconvenience. In light of this, he was seeking reimbursement from the retailer of \$4,137.75.

Our investigation found that Mr A hadn't specified a date by which electricity should be connected. It was also found that the retailer had acted in accordance with relevant laws and codes in arranging the connection, including required timeframes. In addition, Mr A was unable to adequately substantiate the losses he believed he'd suffered.

The retailer agreed to compensate him for out-of-pocket expenses, where he could provide receipts. In resolution of the case, Mr A accepted a payment of \$527.75 for the cost of hiring generators.

For a claim such as this to be successful there must, amongst other things, be adequate records of the events and costs incurred.



- ➔ 3,882 **gas cases overall**, ↑ 40% from 2,769
2,791 Enquiries (72%) and 1,091 Complaints (28%)
- ➔ 3,568 **gas retail cases**, ↑ 42% from 2,508
2,512 Enquiries (70%) and 1,056 Complaints (30%)
- ➔ 169 **gas distribution cases**, ↑ 13% from 150
134 Enquiries (79%) and 35 Complaints (21%)

Gas



At 30 June 2005, there were 11 EWOV natural gas members: 7 retailers and 4 distributors.

Victorian customers have had choice of retailer since October 2002. There are 3 local retailers with an obligation to offer to sell gas to customers in their local areas. They can also sell gas to customers in other areas in competition with the local retailer and independent retailers. Customers don't have choice of distributor since each gas distributor supplies a specific geographical area.

Since 1 July 2005, EWOV has had jurisdiction to deal with LPG (liquefied petroleum gas, also known as bottled gas) cases.

Most common gas issues

- ➔ 68% **Billing** — 2,631 cases
 - 24% billing-related disconnection
 - 14% high bills
- ➔ 14% **Transfer** — 539 cases
 - 50% transfer error
 - 17% transfer delay
- ➔ 7% **Provision** — 289 cases
 - 54% existing company/customer assets, such as pipes and meters
 - 28% new connections

21 Gas cases received (Enquiries and Complaints) and closed (Complaints)

	Overall cases		Enquiries		Complaints (Levels 1 – 3 combined)				Market share*
	Received		Received		Received		Closed		(local retailers)
Retail	%		%		%		%		%
AGL Victoria	1,150	32	799	32	351	33	343	34	36
ENERGEX Retail	2	< 1	2	< 1	0	0	0	0	
EnergyAustralia	456	13	299	12	157	15	148	15	
Origin Energy	925	26	684	27	241	23	233	23	36
TXU (TRUenergy)	1,032	29	725	29	307	29	283	28	28
Victoria Electricity Gas #	3	< 1	3	< 1	0	0	0	0	
Retail total	3,568	100	2,512	100	1,056	100	1,007	100	100
Distribution	%		%		%		%		Customer share*
Envestra	29	17	21	16	8	23	7	20	30
Multinet Gas	66	39	52	39	14	40	15	43	39
TXU Networks (SP AusNet)	74	44	61	46	13	37	13	37	31
Distribution total	169	100	134	100	35	100	35	100	100
Non industry related/non member specific									
Non industry related	30		30						
Non member specific	115		115						
Gas totals	3,882		2,791		1,091		1,042		

NOTES:

* Market share for local gas retailers is based on customer numbers for the gas companies at deregulation in November 1998. Market shares are not shown for independent gas retailers as this information is not available. This approach is under review. Customer share for gas distributors is based on 2004 customer numbers in the ESC's *Gas Distribution Businesses Comparative Performance Report covering 2004* (published July 2005).

Based on data run at 29 July 2005.

List excludes gas members for whom EWOV received no cases in 2004/05.

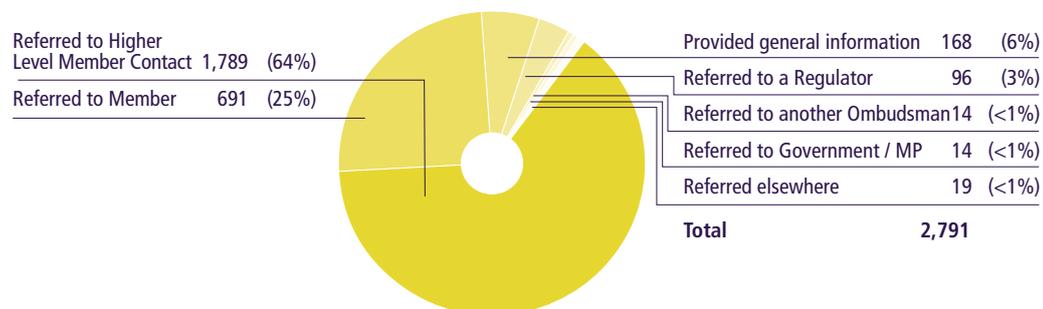
Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.

Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

Retailers engaged in marketing activities take the view that their marketing may have an impact on their case numbers from time to time.

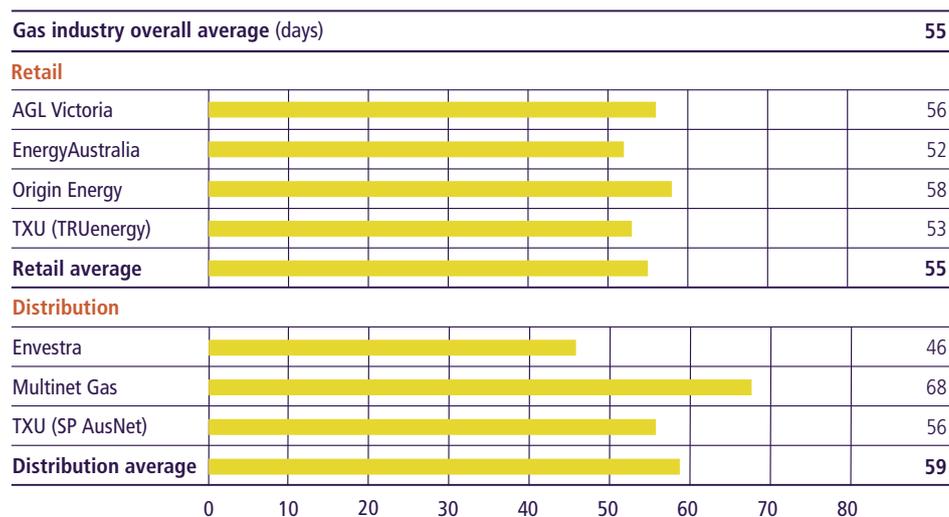
Victoria Electricity Gas joined EWOV as a gas retail member on 21 February 2005.

22 How we handled gas Enquiries



NOTE: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.

23 Average days to close gas Complaints (Levels 1 – 3 combined)



NOTES:

List excludes gas members with no closed Complaints.

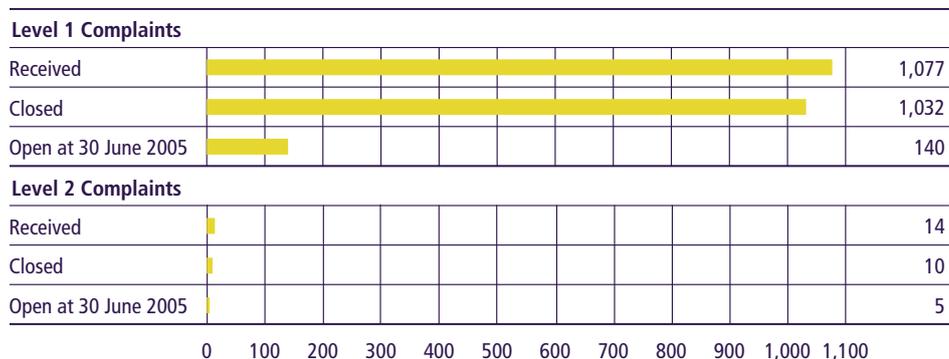
Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

Case complexity contributes to the time taken to close a case. EWOV's seeking of technical or legal advice and delays in customer action/replies may also have an effect.

Case closure times may also be affected by factors internal to the gas member, such as the time required for field testing and site inspections, and its resourcing for complaint handling.

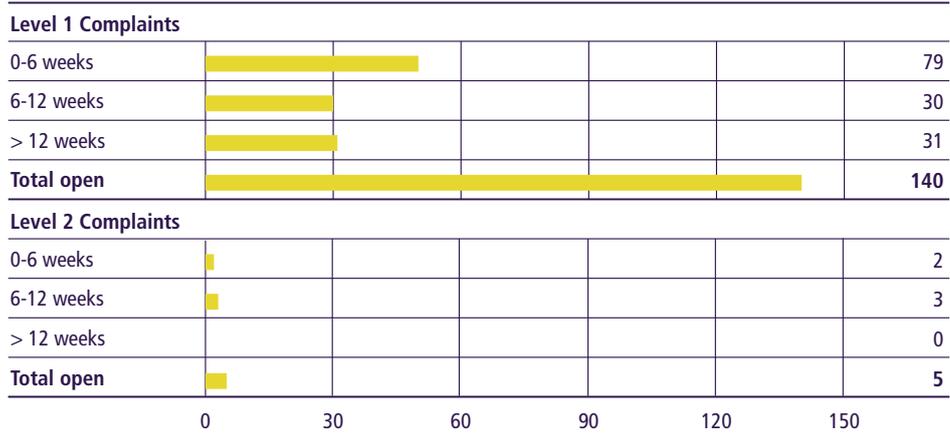


24 Progress of gas Complaints during the year

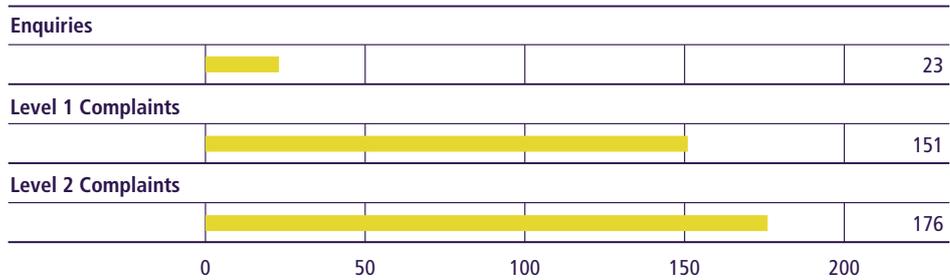


NOTE: Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

25 Age of open gas Complaints at 30 June 2005



26 Average time spent on closed gas cases (in minutes)



27 Most common gas issues (all case types combined)

Gas industry overall				
(Total cases: 3,882)	Billing	2,631	Disconnection	624
			High	375
	Transfer	539	Error	267
			Delay	91
	Provision	289	In-Place	156
			New	81
Gas retail				
(Total cases: 3,568)	Billing	2,583	Disconnection	621
			High	370
	Transfer	523	Error	265
			Delay	91
	Provision	196	In-Place	108
			New	49
Gas distribution				
(Total cases: 169)	Provision	79	In-Place	40
			New	29
	Supply	54	Reliability	23
			Quality	16
	Land	13	Pipes	12
			Easement	1



Gas case studies

Enforcing a sales representative's undertaking (G/2004/3890)

Three days after agreeing to transfer his gas supply to one retailer, Mr Y was approached by a sales representative for a second retailer. Mr Y told EWOV he advised the sales representative that he'd recently entered into a contract with another retailer. He said that the sales representative told him that he could cancel that contract within the cooling-off period and that the retailer he was representing would attend to this cancellation.

Three months later, Mr Y received a gas bill from the first retailer. The retailer subsequently advised Mr Y that there had been no contact made, in relation to cancelling the contract, by the retailer the salesperson represented. When Mr Y rang this retailer to check what it had (or hadn't) done, he was told that it was his responsibility to contact the first retailer if he wanted to cancel his contract. Mr Y wanted the retailer to honour the undertaking given by its salesperson.

After contact by EWOV, the retailer arranged for a retrospective transfer of Mr Y's gas supply and also agreed to reimburse any termination fees associated with that.

Energy retailers' sales representatives must understand the implications of making undertakings to customers. In addition, retailers need to have some means of checking that their representatives are providing customers with accurate sales and contract information.

Errors in account set-up lead to disconnection of supply (G/2004/3555)

Moving into her house on 1 September 2003, Ms G contacted one energy retailer to set up her gas and electricity accounts. Although she started to receive electricity bills, no gas bills arrived. Rather, she received disconnection warning notices from a second retailer, with whom she'd had no prior contact. A year later, her gas supply was disconnected for non-payment. Following the disconnection, Ms G rang the retailer she thought she had her gas contract with. She was told it had no record of her request for a gas account.

When Ms G originally contacted EWOV, in line with EWOV policy, her concerns were referred to a higher level representative of the retailer she thought she was with. When no contact was made with her by that retailer, she came back to EWOV.

In responding to our investigation, the retailer confirmed it had no record of a gas account for Ms G. To resolve the matter, it offered to transfer her gas account across to it, but that would have placed her on a market contract. Ms G didn't wish to take up this offer. We then contacted the 'host' retailer for Ms G's area — the retailer which had disconnected her supply for non-payment. It confirmed it hadn't received notification of any request to transfer the account when Ms G moved into the house.

In the end, Ms G decided to stay with this 'host' retailer. She was also given a contact with whom she could discuss payment of the outstanding bills. The retailer who had failed to arrange for her gas account to be transferred to it when she moved into her home made her a \$150 customer service payment.

The case highlights the possible consequences when a retailer fails to transfer, or delays transferring, a customer's account in accordance with their wishes. In addition, in the context of the recently introduced wrongful disconnection payment, the 'host' retailer would potentially have had to take further steps, or be more proactive in addressing the issues around the disconnection, prior to actually disconnecting Ms G's supply for non-payment.

NOTE:

Case studies are provided to demonstrate the range of complaints received, and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. Initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer who lodged the Complaint.

Concessions not applied despite requests (G/2005/226)

Some four months before contacting EWOV, Mr V had taken up electricity and gas accounts with an energy retailer. Although he'd provided his concession card details over the phone, when he received his first bill the relevant concessions hadn't been applied. Mr V paid the amount on the bill less the concessions entitlement. He then faxed a copy of his health care card to the retailer and sent a letter explaining the situation. Despite this, the amount he'd withheld appeared on his next bill — his concessions entitlement hadn't been applied.

Our investigation showed that Mr V's concession card hadn't been registered permanently on his account. This meant that to receive concessions, he had to pay his bill at the post office and present his concession card. To rectify this, the retailer registered Mr V's concession details, thus ensuring his concessions entitlement would be automatically deducted from future bills. It also agreed to waive an amount of \$26.71 which had been underpaid by Mr V in error as a result of the dispute.

Not surprisingly, customers get frustrated when service providers seemingly ignore issues they raise. This case is a good example of something which should have been resolved by the gas retailer through its internal dispute resolution procedures, without the need for referral to EWOV at all.

All parties benefit from a permanent solution to supply problems (G/2005/332)

For 18 months, Mrs K had been experiencing problems with her gas supply, more commonly during and after heavy rain. She believed the problem was the result of water seeping into the gas pipes at or near her property. When the problem occurred during business hours, Mrs K's retailer would liaise with the distributor for her area and it would be attended to. However, when it happened outside of business hours, she had to wait until the next business day for assistance, because the distributor wasn't able to undertake the works without a request from the retailer. Mrs K was concerned about the underlying cause of the problem and her inability to obtain out-of-hours assistance.

A site inspection by the distributor found no corrosion at the connection point of Mrs K's service to the property line and the gas mains. Nevertheless, to make sure the problem was addressed effectively, it replaced the service to property line with a non-corrosive gas line at no cost to her.

In response to Mrs K's concerns about out-of-hours assistance, the distributor also undertook training of its customer service staff, reminding them of their obligation to take and respond to calls (such as that from Mrs K) which they received outside of retailers' business hours.

While the distributor responded positively to resolve Mrs K's concerns in its initial response to EWOV's investigation, this case highlights the importance of providing customers with permanent solutions to problems, rather than short term fixes.



- ➔ 529 **dual fuel cases**, ↑ 122% from 238
- ➔ 340 **Enquiries** (64%)
- ➔ 189 **Complaints** (36%)

Dual fuel

EWOV introduced the dual fuel case type in January 2003, to provide for equitable case handling charges for members, clear and fair reporting of issues arising from the marketing of dual fuels and efficient case handling by EWOV.

Dual fuel refers to cases where the customer's complaint isn't specifically related to either electricity or gas. A customer may, for example, be complaining about the general conduct of a salesperson selling a dual fuel (electricity and gas) contract. Where a customer has a dual fuel contract, but their issue is specifically about electricity or gas, we receive the matter as an electricity or gas case, not a dual fuel case.

Most common dual fuel issues

- ➔ 64% **Billing** — 339 cases
 - 39% account arrears
 - 18% backbills
- ➔ 17% **Market Conduct** — 92 cases
 - 96% sales/contact, usually door-to-door or phone
 - 3% advertising
- ➔ 16% **Transfer** — 84 cases
 - 33% contract terms and conditions
 - 17% information provision

28 Dual fuel cases received (Enquiries and Complaints) and closed (Complaints)

	Overall cases		Enquiries		Complaints (Levels 1 – 3)			
	Received		Received		Received		Closed	
		%		%		%		%
AGL Victoria	48	9	38	11	10	5	10	6
EnergyAustralia	74	14	53	16	21	11	21	12
Origin Energy	11	2	8	2	3	2	3	2
TXU Retail (TRUenergy)	392	74	237	70	155	82	138	80
Non member specific	4	< 1	4	< 1				
Dual fuel totals	529		340		189		172	

NOTES:

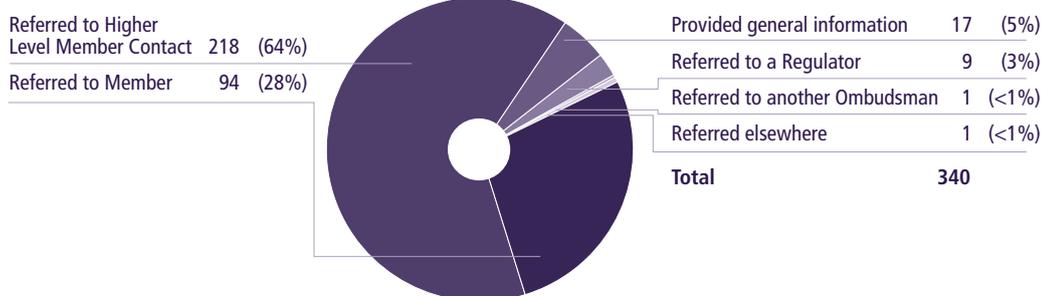
Based on data run at 29 July 2005.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.

Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

Retailers engaged in marketing activities take the view that their marketing may have an impact on their case numbers from time to time.

29 How we handled dual fuel Enquiries



30 Average days to close dual fuel Complaints (Levels 1 – 3 combined)

Dual fuel overall average (days)	39
AGL Victoria	15
EnergyAustralia	36
Origin Energy	19
TXU Retail (TRUenergy)	41

NOTES:

Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

Case complexity contributes to the time taken to close a case. EWOV's seeking of technical or legal advice and delays in customer action/replies may also have an effect.

Case closure times may also be affected by factors internal to the member, such as the time required for field testing and site inspections, and its resourcing for complaint handling.

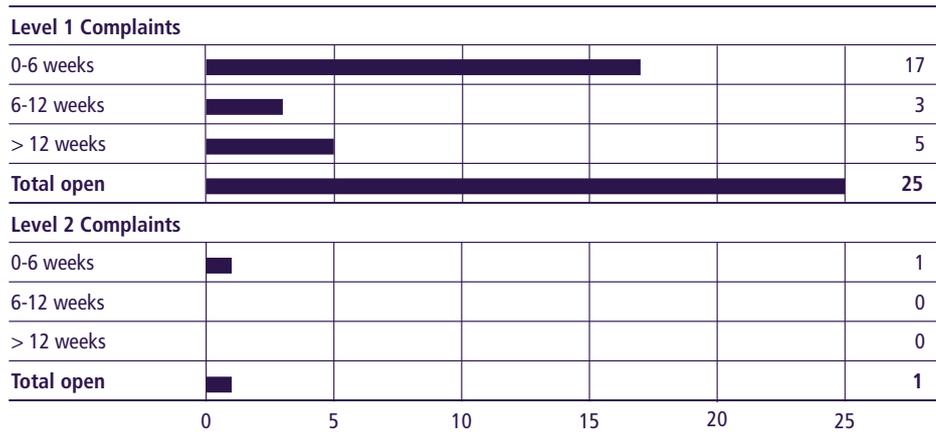
31 Progress of dual fuel Complaints during the year

Level 1 Complaints		
Received	185	
Closed	169	
Open at 30 June 2005	25	
Level 2 Complaints		
Received	4	
Closed	3	
Open at 30 June 2005	1	

NOTE: Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.



32 Age of open dual fuel Complaints at 30 June 2005



33 Average time spent on closed dual fuel cases (in minutes)



34 Most common dual fuel issues (all case types combined)

Dual fuel overall				
(Total cases: 529)				
	Billing	339	Arrears	133
			Backbill	60
	Market Conduct	92	Sales/Contact	88
			Advertising	3
	Transfer	84	Contract (terms & conditions)	28
			Information	14

Dual fuel case studies

Arrears from underestimation of monthly payments (F/2005/295)

Ms K received a backbill and a letter from her energy retailer advising that her dual fuel account had been cancelled for arrears of \$261.55. When the account was set up, Ms K was told that payments of \$70 a month would cover both her electricity and gas usage, so the arrears came as a surprise to her.

In investigating Ms K's concerns, we found that the retailer had underquoted her monthly payments and hadn't notified her that the amounts she was paying weren't covering the cost of the electricity and gas she was using. The retailer acknowledged that Ms K's arrears had accrued due to its underquoting and its lack of notification to her, and credited her electricity account with \$131.65. Ms K was satisfied with this outcome.

Because arrears can accumulate quickly, accounts (particularly those based on usage estimates and instalment amounts) should be monitored regularly to make sure the agreed payments are covering usage. If this is found not to be the case, the customer needs to be informed and given the opportunity to adjust either their payments or their usage accordingly.

Inaccurate calculation of instalment amounts (F/2004/279)

When Mr and Mrs X entered into their dual fuel contract, their retailer quoted a monthly payment of \$182.60 to cover both electricity and gas usage. They'd been paying this amount for over two years when the retailer advised them to reduce it. Shortly afterwards, they received a substantial backbill. They were dissatisfied that, by reducing their monthly payment at the suggestion of their retailer, they'd ended up with arrears on their account.

EWOV's investigation found that, when the retailer set up the customers' dual fuel account, it underestimated their electricity usage. Contributing to this was a delay in receiving meter readings from the distributor, which meant an electricity bill for them hadn't been generated in over 12 months. The retailer recognised that the failure to issue electricity bills and to adequately quote the monthly instalment had led to Mr and Mrs X's arrears. In light of this, it applied a \$567.15 credit to their account.

When retailers set up dual fuel accounts, they need to ensure that the instalment amounts they provide to customers are calculated accurately, taking account of both fuels. These payment arrangements then need to be reviewed regularly, with customers notified about shortfalls and given the opportunity to prevent arrears accruing on their accounts.

Representations about a specific travel offer (F/2004/288)

Mr R said that he had signed up to a dual fuel contract on the basis of receiving a specific travel offer, and had been told he would receive the benefits immediately after he signed the contract. When this didn't happen Mr R contacted the retailer, to be told that he needed to contact his airline. He did so, and was advised that the retailer hadn't submitted a request for application of the offer. Going back to the retailer, Mr R was told the offer application could not be processed until billing commenced.

The retailer told EWOV it couldn't process the offer until Mr R's electricity and gas accounts were both transferred to it. The offer related separately to each account and full application of it could take up to four months from the time Mr R signed his contract.

As it turned out, Mr R received the full benefit of the offer some seven months after the contract was signed. The retailer provided Mr R with an apology and, in recognition of the inconvenience caused to him, credited his account with \$20.

Energy retailers' sales representatives must understand the implications of making representations to customers which may not be able to be delivered.



NOTE: Case studies are provided to demonstrate the range of complaints received, and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. Initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer who lodged the Complaint.

- ➔ 1,256 **overall water cases**, ↑ 11% from 1,136
1,083 Enquiries (86%) and 173 Complaints (14%)
- ➔ 678 **metropolitan retail water cases**, ↑ 13% from 599
584 Enquiries (86%) and 94 Complaints (14%)
- ➔ 20 **metropolitan wholesale water cases**, ↓ 53 cases from 73
17 Enquiries (85%) and 3 Complaints (15%)
- ➔ 357 **regional urban water cases**, ↑ 9% from 327
299 Enquiries (84%) and 58 Complaints (16%)
- ➔ 101 **rural water cases**, ↑ 40% from 72
83 Enquiries (82%) and 18 Complaints (18%)
- ➔ 54 **rural urban water cases**³
43 Enquiries (80%) and 11 Complaints (20%)



Water

At 30 June 2005, there were 22 EWOV water members, operating in five sectors — metropolitan retail, metropolitan wholesale, regional urban, rural and rural urban.

With the exception of the metropolitan wholesaler, each water member has both retail/billing and distribution/supply functions.

Most common water issues

- ➔ 57% **Billing** — 710 cases
 - 21% service charges
 - 17% billing enquiries
- ➔ 16% **Supply** — 202 cases
 - 30% sewerage/drains/catchments
 - 21% water quality
- ➔ 12% **Provision** — 146 cases
 - 50% existing company/authority/customer assets, such as pipes and meters
 - 42% new connections

³Annual case data for the Rural Urban Water sector is reported for the first time this year. The sector is made up of two hybrid regional urban/rural water authorities, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water and Lower Murray Water.

35 Water cases received (Enquiries and Complaints) and closed (Complaints)

	Overall cases		Enquiries		Complaints (Levels 1 – 3)				Sector share*
	Received		Received		Received		Closed		
Metropolitan retail	%		%		%		%		%
City West Water	167	25	140	24	27	29	25	27	19
South East Water	185	27	158	27	27	29	29	31	39
Yarra Valley Water	326	48	286	49	40	43	40	43	42
Metropolitan retail total	678	100	584	100	94	100	94	100	100
Metropolitan wholesale	%		%		%		%		%
Melbourne Water	20	100	17	100	3	100	3	100	100
Metropolitan wholesale total	20	100	17	100	3	100	3	100	100
Regional urban	%		%		%		%		%
Barwon Water	28	8	26	9	2	3	1	2	21
Central Highlands Water	25	7	18	6	7	12	5	10	9
Coliban Water	57	16	48	16	9	16	9	18	11
East Gippsland Water	12	3	12	4	0	0	0	0	3
Gippsland Water	41	11	35	12	6	10	5	10	10
Glenelg Water ^	8	2	6	2	2	3	2	4	2
Goulburn Valley Water	26	7	24	8	2	3	4	8	9
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (urban issue) #	19	5	16	5	3	5	2	4	5
Lower Murray Water (urban issue) #	10	3	8	3	2	3	2	4	5
North East Water	28	8	22	7	6	10	7	14	7
Portland Coast Water ^	8	2	6	2	2	3	2	4	1
South Gippsland Water	23	6	21	7	2	3	1	2	3
South West Water ^	20	6	14	5	6	10	3	6	4
Western Water	24	7	21	7	3	5	4	8	8
Westernport Water	28	8	22	7	6	10	4	8	2
Regional urban total	357	100	299	100	58	100	51	100	100
Rural	%		%		%		%		%
First Mildura Irrigation Trust	8	8	7	8	1	6	1	7	4
Goulburn-Murray Water	44	44	35	42	9	50	7	50	56
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (rural issue) #	11	11	8	10	3	17	4	29	15
Lower Murray Water (rural issue) #	14	14	11	13	3	17	2	14	7
Southern Rural Water	24	24	22	27	2	11	0	0	18
Rural total	101	100	83	100	18	100	14	100	100
Non industry related/non member specific									
Non industry related	20		20						
Non member specific	80		80						
Water totals	1,256		1,083		173		162		

NOTES:

*Water sector shares are based on 2003 customer numbers provided by the Victorian Water Industry Association.

Reflects data run at 29 July 2005.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.

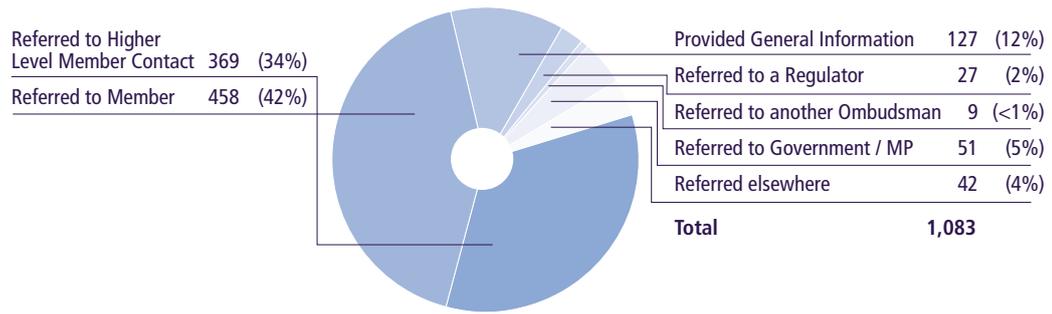
Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

On 1 July 2004, Grampians Water and Wimmera Mallee Water merged to become Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, and Lower Murray Water and Sunraysia Rural Water merged to become Lower Murray Water.

^ From 1 July 2005, Glenelg Water, Portland Coast Water and South West Water merged to become Wannon Region Water Authority.



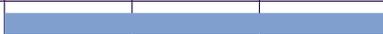
36 How we handled water Enquiries



NOTE: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100.



37 Average days to close water Complaints (Levels 1 – 3 combined)

Water industry overall average (days)		98
Metropolitan retail		
City West Water		97
South East Water		86
Yarra Valley Water		67
Metropolitan retail average		81
Metropolitan wholesale		
Melbourne Water		209
Regional urban		
Barwon Water		94
Central Highlands Water		54
Coliban Water		113
Gippsland Water		54
Glenelg Water		93
Goulburn Valley Region Water Authority		67
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (urban issue)		25
Lower Murray Water (urban issue)		241
North East Water		158
Portland Coast Water		78
South Gippsland Water		69
South West Water		181
Western Water		203
Westernport Water		76
Regional urban average		112
Rural		
First Mildura Irrigation Trust		19
Goulburn-Murray Water		187
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (rural issue)		144
Lower Murray Water (rural issue)		67
Rural average		145

NOTES:

List excludes water members with no closed Complaints.

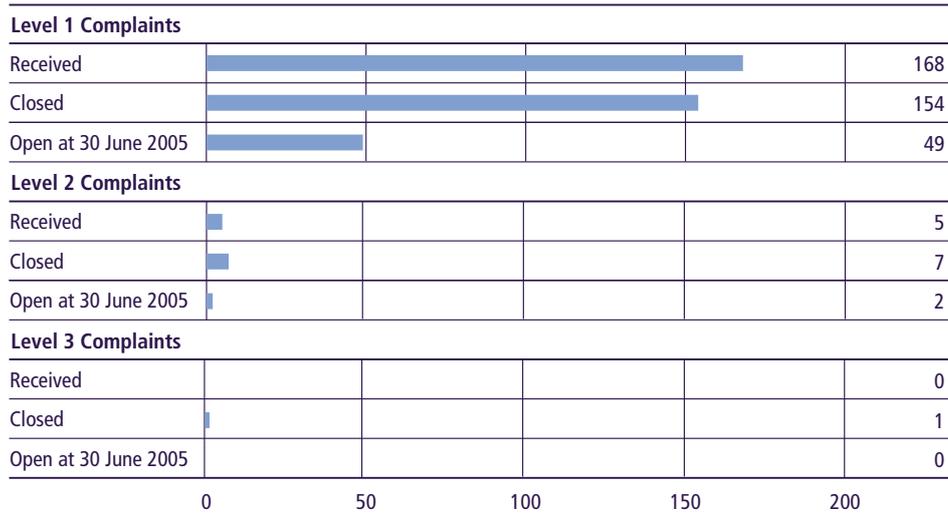
Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

Case complexity contributes to the time taken to close a case. EWOV's seeking of technical or legal advice and delays in customer action/replies may also have an effect.

Case closure times may also be affected by factors internal to the water member, such as the time required for field testing and site inspections, and its resourcing for complaint handling.

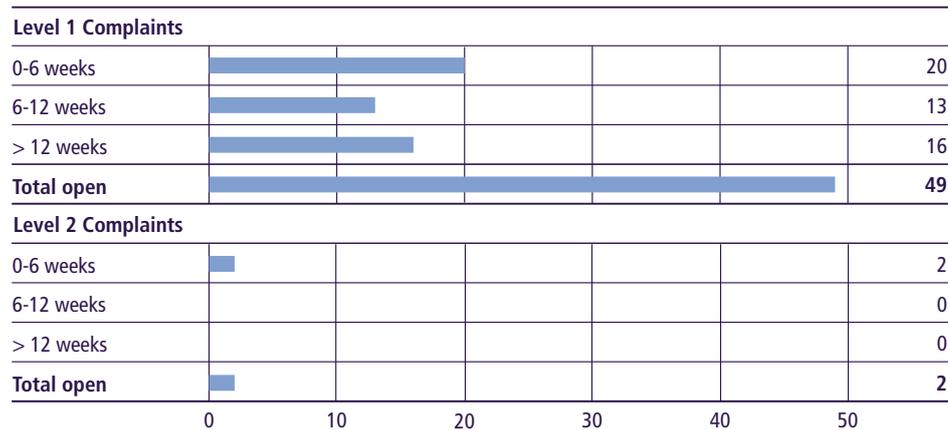


38 Progress of water Complaints during the year

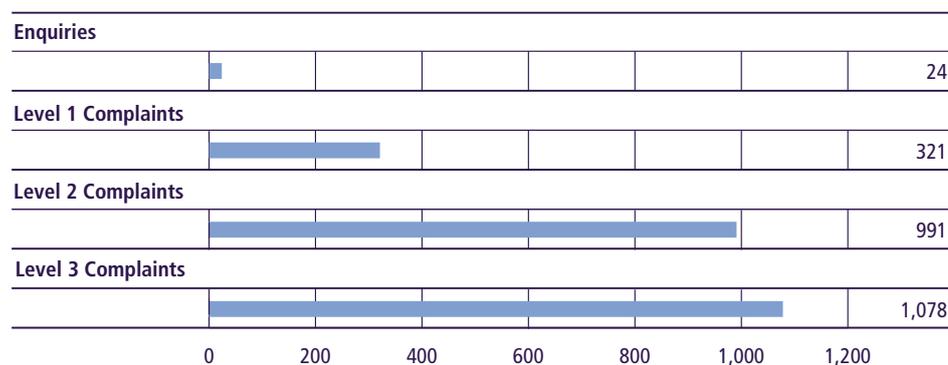


NOTE: Complaints closed includes a number of Complaints received in 2003/04.

39 Age of open water Complaints at 30 June 2005



40 Average time spent on closed water cases (in minutes)



41 Most common water issues (all case types combined)

Water industry overall				
(Total cases: 1,256)	Billing	710	Service Charge	150
			Enquiry	121
	Supply	202	Sewerage/Drains/Catchment	61
			Quality	42
	Provision	146	In-Place	73
			New	62
Metropolitan retail				
(Total cases: 678)	Billing	409	Enquiry	86
			Arrears	70
	Supply	106	Sewerage/Drains/Catchment	45
			Conservation/Restriction	17
	Provision	90	In-Place	47
			New	37
Metropolitan wholesale				
(Total cases: 20)	Land	11	Pipes/Channels/Drains	3
			Easement	2
	Billing	6	Enquiry	3
			Service Charge	2
	Supply	2	Access	1
			Conservation/Restriction	1
Regional urban				
(Total cases: 357)	Billing	240	Service Charge	77
			Arrears	29
			High	29
	Supply	42	Quality	14
			Sewerage/Drains/Catchment	10
	Provision	41	New	21
			In-Place	17
Rural				
(Total cases: 101)	Supply	35	Licensing	13
			Irrigation	6
			Quality	6
	Billing	32	Service Charge	12
			Arrears	4
			Tariff	4
	Land	14		
Rural urban				
(Total cases: 54)	Billing	29	Service Charge	11
			High	4
	Provision	9	In-Place	7
			New	2
	Supply	9	Quality	3
			Irrigation	2
			Licensing	2



Water case studies

Legal action vs a customer-focussed solution (W/2004/283)

Mr R was concerned about legal costs of \$1,017.80 being added to his quarterly water bill and the placing of a caveat on his property by his water company. He said he'd paid \$700 the previous year, which was more than his yearly water usage costs. He'd also informed the company that he was temporarily unemployed and unable to make payments. He'd recently made a payment of \$165 and believed his balance was nil. Mr R said he'd tried to arrange a payment plan, but had been unsuccessful. He wanted the legal costs waived and the caveat removed, as he believed the company had acted prematurely and without cause.

EWOV's investigation showed arrears of \$1,021.22 on Mr R's account. He was paying \$50 a fortnight and his bills were around \$70 to \$90 a quarter. The amount he owed for water usage and associated charges (excluding legal costs) was \$825.22.

A payment and incentive plan was agreed on the following basis:

- After Mr R maintained his payment plan of \$100 a month for six months, the water company would waive part of the legal costs (the issue fee of \$429).
- Once he'd maintained his payment plan for 12 months, the company would remove the caveat and waive the remainder of the legal costs (the caveat fee of \$588.80 and the summons fee of \$196).

The company also apologised to Mr R and provided a direct contact should he experience any difficulties with his payment plan.

This case highlights how consideration of customers' individual circumstances can facilitate solutions that work for both parties. Legal action should be seen as a last resort.

Application of waste water allowance (W/2004/980)

Under its policy relating to the waste water volumetric charge, Mrs N's water authority had applied an allowance to reduce one bill which had increased significantly as a result of a water leak on her side of the meter. Because two bills had been affected by the water leak which had since been repaired, Mrs N was seeking to have the waste water volumetric allowance applied to both of them. The water authority maintained it had fulfilled its applicable policy by applying it to the higher of the two accounts.

EWOV's investigation confirmed that the water which escaped from the leak didn't go down the water authority's drainage system. Therefore, the authority hadn't incurred any costs for its disposal. In resolution of the matter, the authority agreed to credit Mrs N's account with \$103, representing 50% of the waste water portion of the disputed bill.

In the application of policies and processes, there should be some room for discretion, taking into consideration what is fair and reasonable in each case.



Damage and cost from boundary trap search (W/2004/942)

Mr B's property had a sewerage blockage which required urgent attention. His water company told him the problem was probably in the vicinity of the boundary trap near the rear of his property, and that tree roots were the likely cause. It said he would need to uncover the concealed boundary trap to give it access to clear the blockage. When digging in this area didn't uncover the trap, the water company suggested other locations and Mr B eventually called in a digging machine to assist. After considerable expense and damage to his garden, the boundary trap was uncovered near the base of a tree.

Mr B believed the water company had provided him with incorrect and conflicting information about where the boundary trap was located. The water company believed it wasn't responsible for the location of the trap, as information in sub-divisional records was old and unreliable. It did, however, acknowledge that its delivery of this information to Mr B could have been better. In light of this, the water company agreed to undertake the repair works, with Mr B making a part contribution only, which he was given time to pay.

This case illustrates some of the problems which can arise when information is being conveyed to customers, especially where the parties are relying on historical records.

Arrears in another tenant's name (W/2005/123)

Mr M was unable to resolve a dispute about responsibility for outstanding arrears. Until recently, he'd shared an Office of Housing (OOH) property with another tenant chosen by OOH. The water account for the property had been opened by OOH and was in both their names. The other tenant had since left the property and Mr M didn't know where he was. When Mr M asked that the joint account be closed and an account established in his name only, the water company sought payment of the full arrears of \$576.10. He'd offered to pay half the amount owing, but this offer wasn't accepted.

EWOV's investigation revealed that the water company had been notified that Mr M's flatmate had moved out, but it failed to act on this notification. It agreed to withdraw \$288.05 (half the amount billed jointly) from the account. This left a balance of \$238.65 which Mr M paid.

Account records need to be amended at the time customers call with relevant information. Had this been done, Mr M would have been spared the inconvenience and upset of having to pursue the matter, and the water company would have avoided an EWOV Complaint.



NOTE: Case studies are provided to demonstrate the range of complaints received, and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. Initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer who lodged the Complaint.

Financial statements

Statement of financial performance For the year ended 30 June 2005

	2005 \$	2004 \$
Revenue from ordinary activities	4,386,069	4,280,547
Employee benefits expense	(2,841,079)	(2,315,220)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(141,471)	(124,656)
Rental expense	(350,836)	(382,898)
Other expenses from ordinary activities:		
Administration expenses	(623,825)	(557,351)
Consultancy expenses	(371,276)	(330,107)
Marketing expenses	(107,698)	(144,221)
Training & development	(75,050)	(98,649)
Other expenses	(3,567)	(2,523)
(Deficit)/Surplus from ordinary activities	(128,733)	324,922
Total changes in Members' Equity other than those resulting from transactions with members as members	(128,733)	(324,922)



Statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2005

	2005 \$	2004 \$
Current Assets		
Cash asset	420,634	429,358
Receivables	27,722	0
Investments	201,367	550,000
Other	31,631	26,009
Total Current Assets	681,354	1,005,367
Non-Current Assets		
Plant and equipment	306,183	308,111
Total Non-Current Assets	306,183	308,111
Total Assets	987,537	1,313,478
Current Liabilities		
Payables	355,491	601,735
Provisions	94,768	59,383
Total Current Liabilities	450,259	661,118
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provisions	72,698	59,047
Total Non-Current Liabilities	72,698	59,047
Total Liabilities	522,957	720,165
Net Assets	464,580	593,313
Members' Equity		
Retained surplus	464,580	593,313
Total Members' Equity	464,580	593,313



Statement of Cashflows

For the year ended 30 June 2005

	2005 \$	2004 \$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Levy receipts from Members (inclusive of goods and services tax)	4,317,975	4,957,831
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods and services tax)	(4,588,647)	(4,183,842)
Interest received	52,858	45,851
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities	(217,814)	819,840
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Proceeds from sale of plant and equipment	0	500
Payments for plant and equipment	(139,543)	(166,335)
Net cash outflow from investing activities	(139,543)	(165,835)
Net Decrease in Cash Held	(357,357)	654,005
Cash at the Beginning of the Financial Year	979,358	325,353
Cash at the End of the Financial Year	622,001	979,358



Acronyms used in this report

ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AEMC	Australian Energy Market Commission
AER	Australian Energy Regulator
ANZEWON	Australia & New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network
ANZOA	Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association
ASIC	Australian Securities and Investments Commission
CAV	Consumer Affairs Victoria
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
EIOV	Electricity Industry Ombudsman (Victoria)
ESC	Essential Services Commission
EWOV	Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas, also known as bottled gas
MCE	Ministerial Council on Energy
OOH	Office of Housing
WDP	Wrongful disconnection payment

Contacting EWOV

We can help if you have a problem with an electricity, gas or water provider which you can't resolve directly with that provider. EWOV's services are free and available to everyone.

Freecall: **1800 500 509**

Calls from restricted phone services: ring 12550 (Telstra reverse charges) and quote (03) 9649 7599 — EWOV will accept the reverse charges and the call cost.

Calls from mobile phones may attract charges: we can ring you back.

Freefax: 1800 500 549

Interpreter service: 131 450

National Relay Service: 133 677

Email: ewovinfo@ewov.com.au

Website: www.ewov.com.au

Postal address: GPO Box 469 Melbourne Vic. 3001

ABN: 57 070 516 175