

2008 Annual Report
Our vision and values at work

EWOV is acknowledged as one of Australia's most effective industry-based Ombudsman schemes.

Our vision is to ensure we continue to effectively and efficiently resolve and prevent complaints, achieving fair and reasonable outcomes, having regard to good industry practice and the law.

We are a responsive, innovative and dynamic organisation, driven by strong cultural values and a dedicated professional team.

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 and energy and water service companies in Victoria.
- **We identify**, and where appropriate redress, systemic issues and refer these to energy and water companies and regulators.
- **We work** with customer groups, industry and regulators to drive ongoing customer service improvement and to prevent complaints.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Independence: complaint resolution not advocacy

Access: readily accessible to individual customers

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

Our year

Foreword	2
Chairperson	3
Board	4
Cultural Values	6
Ombudsman	7
Scheme participants	9
EWOV team	10
Case handling	12
2007-08 cases and issues	14
Policy and research	24
Community liaison	26
Electricity cases, issues and case studies	28
Gas cases, issues and case studies	34
Dual fuel cases, issues and case studies	40
Water cases, issues and case studies	44
Financial statements	50

An extraordinary year

the Ombudsman reflects pages 7-8

39% more cases received – 62% more complaints

cases reporting page 14

5,129 complaint investigations finalised

summary of case outcomes page 15

Mostly residential customers

customer profiles page 16

Systemic issues identification & reporting

listed pages 20-22

Input to public policy dialogue

reports & submissions pages 24-25

New consumer and community resources

initiatives page 26

Ombudsman, Fiona McLeod, and Chairperson of the EWOV Board, the Hon. Tony Staley AO, are pleased to present EWOV's 2008 Annual Report. Since 1996, the EWOV scheme has handled over 140,000 cases — 25,413 of those in 2007/08.



Statement of corporate governance

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) Limited (EWOV Limited) is a company limited by guarantee. The company is legally separate from, and independent of, the energy and water companies and government.

The composition of the EWOV Board reflects this independence — four industry directors (two electricity, one gas and one water) elected by scheme participants, four consumer directors nominated by the Essential Services Commission and an independent Chairperson.

In accordance with the EWOV Limited *Constitution* and *Charter*, the company has established the EWOV external dispute resolution scheme — and appointed an Ombudsman who has the power to receive, investigate and facilitate the resolution of complaints by consumers regarding electricity, gas and water services.

The EWOV Board is responsible for the business affairs and property of EWOV Limited — including corporate governance, the setting of budgets, risk management, strategic planning and ensuring the Ombudsman's independence.

The day-to-day operation of the EWOV external dispute resolution scheme is the responsibility of the Ombudsman.

The roles of the Board and the Ombudsman are complementary, with the Ombudsman attending Board meetings.

'... fast-moving and complex environment ...'

2007/08 was a difficult and volatile year, one which presented huge challenges for the EWOV Board and the EWOV staff team.

Indeed, as it transpired, it was probably the most challenging year in the scheme's 12 year history. In this context, time and time again during the year, the Board had cause to be thankful for good management.

The challenges hit us right from the beginning. As you'll read elsewhere in this report — and as the Ombudsman has reported in EWOV's two six-monthly *Resolution* newsletters — mid-June 2007 brought a large and rapid increase in complaints.

On top of this, in the first quarter of 2007/08, the scheme experienced a higher than expected staff attrition rate. In a tight labour market, filling vacant Conciliator roles was time consuming.

Together, these developments had the potential to significantly affect the scheme's capacity to effectively and efficiently perform its primary role of resolving customer complaints. To deal with the situation, a revised complaint receipt process was put in place.

We all anticipated this process as a short term solution — that complaints would shortly fall back to their usual levels. We were proven wrong on that front.

In December 2007 and into January 2008, complaints increased further as one energy retailer's problems with its new

billing system translated into complaints to EWOV. In March 2008, two national energy retailers experienced systems problems which similarly caused flow-on effects for EWOV.

The successive increases in complaints meant the scheme found itself operating in an extremely fast-moving and complex environment. The EWOV Board meets every two months and the Ombudsman and Management were excellent at keeping us fully informed and proposing solutions.

Careful review of EWOV's financial position was also necessary, in the face of increased operational costs. At its February 2008 meeting, the Board agreed to increase the annual operating budget by \$130,000.

The remarkable job the Ombudsman and Management did of managing, not just the operational challenges but also the financial situation, was evident when at 30 June 2008, the overall budget was exceeded by \$121,000 only.

It also became evident that our forecasts for EWOV's 2008/09 budget — which we formulated in February 2008 — may be greatly underestimated. We are watching EWOV case receipt numbers very closely as we move through the year, to ensure we have effective resourcing.

The Board relies on Management to give it the confidence that those on the ground day-to-day can handle anything thrown at them. In an extremely difficult and complex year operationally, the EWOV team did an outstanding job — continuing to resolve customer complaints in a timely manner and in accordance with the key performance indicators agreed with the Board.

There were no changes to the Board during the year. However, in early July 2008, Karen Lowe of TRUenergy resigned her position in that company and, as a result, her position as an EWOV Director, after almost two years service.

In closing, my sincere thanks are extended to all EWOV Directors for their insightful, supportive and positive contributions during a tough year.



Hon. Tony Staley AO

Chairperson
EWOV Board

Board

'...equal representation ...'

The EWOV Board comprises four industry directors elected by scheme participants, four consumer directors nominated by the Essential Services Commission and an independent chairperson.



6



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1. The Hon. Tony Staley AO

*Chairperson,
appointed 30 November 1998*

Tony Staley is a former Commonwealth Government Minister, educated in law and political science. Made an Officer of the Order of Australia in January 2007, he is also Chairman of the National Museum of Australia.

2. Carolyn Bond

*Consumer Director,
appointed 27 June 2007*

Currently the co-CEO of the Consumer Action Law Centre, Carolyn Bond has worked in the consumer advocacy field for over 20 years. She represents the consumer interest on a range of bodies and is a past Chair of the Consumers' Federation of Australia.

3. Neil Brennan

*Industry Director,
appointed 22 August 2002*

Neil Brennan is the Managing Director of Central Highlands Water. He has over 25 years experience in the water industry, including appointments to a number of state government committees. Neil is Chairman, Goldfields Superpipe Joint Venture Company, and a past president of the Institute of Water Administration.

4. Richard Gross

*Industry Director,
appointed 14 December 2001*

Richard Gross is General Manager Regulation for CitiPower Pty and Powercor Australia Ltd. With extensive experience in network revenue/pricing, financial planning and analysis, Richard was a member of the original Electricity Industry Ombudsman (Victoria) Council.

5. David Headberry

*Consumer Director,
appointed 20 June 2002*

David Headberry is Managing Director of Headberry Partners P/L, which specialises in assisting energy consumers around Australia secure low-cost, reliable energy supplies. A qualified engineer, he is a long-time active advocate for consumers on energy matters.

6. Karen Lowe

*Industry Director,
appointed 26 October 2006*

Employed in the energy industry for over a decade, Karen Lowe has held senior management positions in Retail, Customer Services, Finance and Human Resources. Until July 2008, Karen was Director Retail with TRUenergy.

7. Karen Moses

*Industry Director,
appointed 20 October 2005*

Karen Moses has over 25 years experience in the energy industry. Currently Chief Operating Officer, Australia for Origin Energy Limited, she is also a Director of the Victorian Energy Networks Corporation (VENCorp) and Contact Energy Limited in New Zealand. Karen is the Chair of Origin's National Customer Consultative Council.

8. John Mumford

*Consumer Director,
appointed 30 June 2004*

John Mumford has a strong background in grassroots consumer advocacy specialising in rural issues. A financial counsellor at Bass Coast Regional Health in Wonthaggi, he is also a Director of the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre, Victoria.

9. Mark O'Brien

*Consumer Director,
appointed 30 June 2004*

CEO of the Tenants Union of Victoria, Mark O'Brien has worked in tenancy advice and advocacy in both a paid and unpaid capacity since 1987. He has previously worked in government and the construction industry as a civil and structural draftsman.

10. Fiona McLeod

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)

Steve Morris

*Company Secretary,
9 October 2000 to 10 April 2008*

Kerrin Duczmal

*Acting Company Secretary,
11 April 2008 to 30 June 2008*

We strive for high quality in all areas of EWOV

- We provide excellent customer service, efficiently and effectively, and our case handling policies and procedures focus on this
- We work to very high standards and expect high quality
- We work to continuously improve our customer service
- We focus on quality outcomes/solutions after exploration and discussion
- We are open to giving and receiving constructive criticism and suggestions
- We recognise that mistakes happen, are honest about making a mistake, and we learn from these

Good communication is fundamental to our work

- We manage expectations
- We discuss the setting and achievement of priorities, goals and objectives
- We communicate well with each other
- We listen
- We communicate openly
- We encourage discussion and ideas

We work to high professional standards

- We value creativity, ingenuity and critical thinking
- We work hard
- We act honestly
- We are accountable and take responsibility for our actions
- We don't pretend we know the answer if we don't
- We try to do the right thing in all the circumstances
- We respect privacy and confidentiality
- We respect, never disrespect, each other, customers and scheme participants
- We manage performance in line with our values
- We are fair
- We proactively develop our professional competence, thereby enhancing personal growth
- We have a responsibility to learn how to do our jobs and to keep on doing a good job

Our philosophy and actions embody working together

- We show our support and care for each other by behaving in a kind and friendly way
- We help each other
- We recognise and acknowledge people's work
- We work as a team
- We have fun and a sense of humour
- We do not undermine each other publicly. If we disagree with each other in a public forum, we go away and work it out later
- We collaborate across areas of the office/work together to achieve outcomes
- We take responsibility for our own well being at work utilising assistance provided by EWOV
- We seek staff input into the way we work
- We respect boundaries
- Our first allegiance is to EWOV, but we are not defensive and we are open to negative criticism in order for us to grow and learn
- We recognise it's important to provide space and to take time to reflect

'...fundamentally about communication and innovation ...'

From the Chairperson's message you'll have a sense of the challenges which beset us in 2007/08. It was an extraordinary year — probably our most challenging so far.

Our vision and values at work

We had anticipated, and budgeted for, an annual increase in cases of around 11% — we ended the year with an increase of 39%, having received a record 25,413 cases.

My thanks go to the remarkable EWOV staff team — all of whom worked so hard in difficult circumstances to ensure that, as far as effective and efficient handling of customer enquiries and complaints went, it was business as usual. Behind the scenes, we knew it was something different.

My appreciation is also extended to the EWOV Board and Chairperson, Tony Staley, for the support they gave us — and their confidence in our capacity to manage whatever our operating environment was going to throw our way.

Our vision and values at work is very aptly the theme for this annual report, because these are things we drew on again and again during the year — as we faced the challenges of managing the very high volume of cases, the settling in of a quite new and inexperienced Conciliation team, the development of a new middle management team and the achievement of strategic goals.

The vision?

EWOV is acknowledged as one of Australia's most effective industry-based Ombudsman schemes. Our vision is to ensure we continue to effectively and efficiently resolve and prevent complaints, achieving fair and reasonable outcomes, having regard to good industry practice and the law. We are a responsive, innovative and dynamic organisation, driven by strong cultural values and a dedicated, professional team.

The values are in full at left, but in summary ...

- *We strive for high quality in all areas of EWOV*
- *Good communication is fundamental to our work*
- *We work to high professional standards*
- *Our philosophy and actions embody working together*

We care about customers who have complaints. We want to do a good job in achieving resolutions for the scheme's industry participants. Our scheme has a reputation for excellence which we strive to maintain.

Faced with successive increases in complaints, we worked really hard to come up with solutions — we looked for ways to streamline what we were doing, while maintaining our standards.

We revised and adapted our complaint receipt process. This saw customers, whose complaint would have been investigated by us, given the option of being referred back to their energy or water company a further time — with a telephone call from the company made to them within 24 hours.

5,485 customers took up this option. We calculate that it saved us having to recruit an additional 22 Conciliators. In addition, customer feedback clearly shows it had no negative impact on our overall complaint resolution performance.

Internally, our strategy was fundamentally one of communication and innovation. We encouraged ongoing discussion and ideas — and we listened to what was said. Creative solutions and clever ideas were put into practice — this included the establishment of a triage team to handle the large number of complaints coming from one retailer's customers.

Overall, we responded to the challenge of increasing case loads enthusiastically and positively. We continued to deliver a very high level of customer service, while avoiding both a complaint backlog and extended resolution timeframes — the complaint closure data in the industry sections of this annual report attests to that.

We also achieved the majority of our planned strategic tasks within the projected timeframes — where delays occurred, these were outside of EWOV's control and, importantly, workarounds were implemented to ensure the outcomes of planned tasks were achieved.

Of particular note was the introduction of EWOK (Energy and Water Ombudsman Knowledge), a knowledge management system and intranet — implemented on time and within budget. Our effectiveness and efficiency are now benefitting from having a system which manages the currency and accessibility of our information content.

Along the way, we ensured we stayed up-to-date, with high quality skills and technical training.

It was, at times, challenging to keep working together as a team when we were under such pressure — but we supported each other, we kept each other informed and we collaborated to get the job done.

Coming back to our cultural values — our most recent staff survey, conducted in December 2007, showed that 92% of survey respondents believe we live the EWOV cultural values day-to-day — very gratifying feedback indeed.

Ombudsman community

During the year, I was privileged to continue as Chair of the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA). Established in May 2003, ANZOA is a professional association. It provides a vehicle for industry-based and parliamentary Ombudsmen to share, learn and help each other professionally and operationally.

In April 2008, ANZOA held its inaugural conference — topics ranged from the foundations of 'Ombudsman', through the core values, to the standards which apply to Ombudsman offices and schemes. Those Ombudsmen and staff who attended left with a strong sense of the Ombudsman community, refreshed and inspired by their colleagues.

The Australia & New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (ANZEON) also continues to be an incredibly vibrant and helpful network of peers — one which will become increasingly important as we move into national energy frameworks.

Looking forward

We entered 2007/08 with what was basically a new EWOV team. However, we recruited well and have invested extensively in staff development. As a result, the team continues to be highly skilled, energetic and full of enthusiasm.

We also farewelled Steve Morris, our long time Business Manager and Company Secretary after 7.5 years in these roles.

At the end of the financial year, our caseloads were still higher than ideal and they continue to be so. With the case increases continuing, we're facing a challenging 2008/2009.

I look forward with confidence though — knowing we'll continue to strive for very high standards, ongoing improvement, innovation and quality outcomes — as we work to meet the needs of all of our stakeholders.



Fiona McLeod

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)

'... an industry-based scheme ...'

At 1 July 2008¹, EWOV had 67 scheme participants — joining EWOV enables energy and water companies operating in Victoria to satisfy licence, legislative and industry code requirements.

Electricity Retailers

AGL Sales Pty Ltd
Aurora Energy
Australian Power & Gas Pty Ltd
CitiPower Pty #
Click Energy
Country Energy
Dodo Power & Gas
EnergyAustralia
Energy One *
Integral Energy Australia
Jackgreen International Pty Ltd
Momentum Energy Pty Ltd
Origin Energy Electricity Ltd
Our Neighbourhood Energy
Powerdirect Pty Ltd
Powerdirect Australia Pty Ltd °
Red Energy Ltd
Simply Energy ∞
SPI AusNet (SPI Electricity Pty Ltd)
Sun Retail Pty Ltd +
TRUenergy Pty Ltd (SPI Retail Pty Ltd)
Victoria Electricity Pty Ltd

Electricity Distributors

Alinta AE Limited ³
CitiPower Pty
Powercor Australia Ltd
SP AusNet (SPI Electricity Pty Ltd)
United Energy Ltd
(Alinta Asset Management)

Electricity Transmission Companies

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

Natural Gas Retailers

AGL Sales Pty Ltd
AGL Sales (Queensland) Pty Ltd ++
Australian Power & Gas Pty Ltd
Red Energy **
Simply Energy ∞
Origin Energy Retail Ltd
Origin Energy (Vic) Pty Ltd
TRUenergy Pty Ltd (SPI Retail Pty Ltd)
Victoria Electricity Pty Ltd

Natural Gas Distributors

Investra Limited
Multinet Gas (Alinta)
SP AusNet (SPI Networks (Gas) Pty Ltd)
Vic Gas Distribution Pty Ltd

LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) Retailers

Elgas Limited
Origin Energy Retail Ltd
Powergas Pty Ltd
Supagas Pty Ltd
Wesfarmers Kleenheat Gas Pty Ltd

Metropolitan Water Retailers

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

Metropolitan Water Wholesaler

Melbourne Water Corporation

Regional Urban Water Corporations

Barwon Region Water Corporation
Central Gippsland Region Water Corporation ^
Central Highlands Region Water Corporation
Coliban Region Water Corporation
East Gippsland Region Water Corporation
Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation
North East Region Water Corporation
South Gippsland Region Water Corporation
Wannon Region Water Corporation
Western Region Water Corporation
Westernport Region Water Corporation

Rural Water Corporations

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

Rural Urban Water Corporations

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Corporation
Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Corporation ##

NOTES

Origin purchased the retail arm of CitiPower in 2002. CitiPower retail does not market to new customers, but retains some customers who did not transfer to Origin.

* Energy One ceased its electricity retail operations on 22 June 2007.

° Powerdirect Australia is now owned by AGL It was formerly Ergon Energy.

» On 4 July 2008, Alinta AE became known as Jemena Electricity Networks (Vic) Ltd. It was formerly AGL Distribution.

∞ Prior to August 2007, Simply Energy was EA-IPR Retail Partnership.

+ Sun Retail is now owned by Origin Energy. It was formerly ENERGEX Retail Pty Ltd.

++ AGL Sales (Queensland) was formerly Sun Gas Retail, which in turn was formerly ENERGEX Retail.

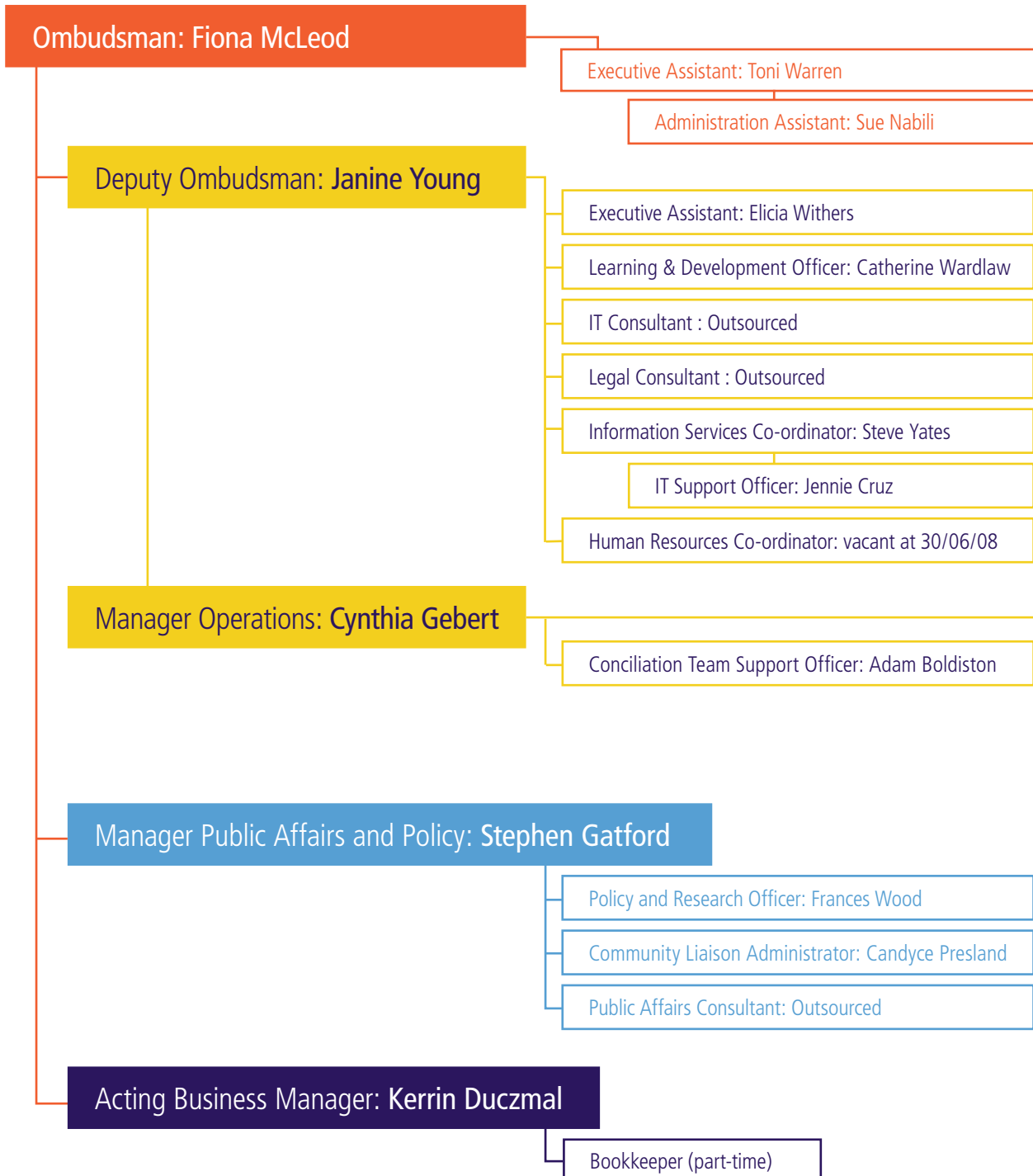
** Red Energy joined EWOV as a gas scheme participant on 25 October 2007.

^ Central Gippsland Region Water Corporation is commonly known as Gippsland Water.

On 19 August 2008, the Minister for Water gazetted Determinations abolishing First Mildura Irrigation Trust and appointing Lower Murray Water to take over its powers, functions and duties.

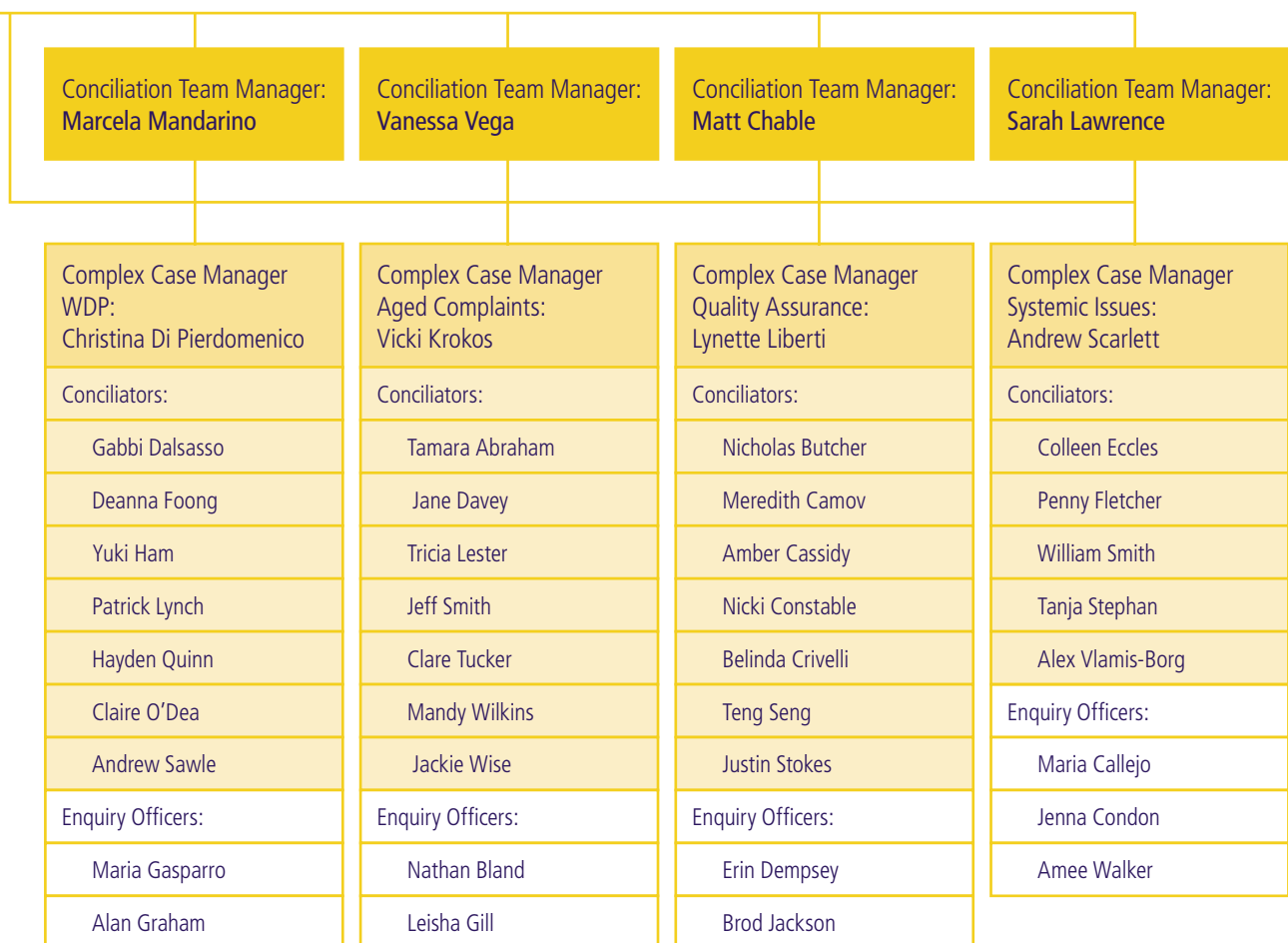
¹ For the most current list of EWOV scheme participants, see our website (www.ewov.com.au).

Figure 1



*at 30 June 2008

Ombudsman	Responsible for the overall performance of the scheme, its day-to-day operation and the effective and efficient investigation and resolution of customer complaints
Deputy Ombudsman	Responsible for strategic direction of Conciliation, learning and development and IT
Manager Public Affairs and Policy	Leads the public affairs, policy and research, and community liaison functions
Business Manager	Responsible for administration, finance and human resource systems
Manager Operations	Manages the day-to-day case handling functions of Conciliation
Conciliation Team Managers	Day-to-day management of a team of Conciliators, Enquiry Officers and Complex Case Managers
Information Services Co-ordinator	Responsible for effective operation and ongoing development of information systems
Learning and Development Officer	Develops and supports learning and development activities
IT Support Officer	Day-to-day running of IT systems and implementation of IT solutions
Human Resources Co-ordinator	Provides human resources advice and operational support
Policy and Research Officer	Responsible for research and policy development, internally and externally
Community Liaison Administrator	Plans and implements an annual programme of community activities
Complex Case Managers	Focus on protracted or difficult matters requiring high level case management
Conciliators	Investigate and resolve individual cases from start to finish
Enquiry Officers	Provide information and internal and external referrals for customers
Executive and Administration Assistants	Provide executive and project support
Conciliation Team Support Officer	Provides administrative support to the Conciliation/Enquiry Officer Teams



'... informal rather than legalistic ...'

Our aim is to ensure EWOV's case handling procedures result in fair and timely resolutions for most issues that arise between a customer and an energy or water company.

Case types

Case is an overall term for all matters customers contact EWOV about. Each case is registered and classified as either an enquiry or a complaint, based on how the customer presents it.

An **enquiry** is a request from a customer for general information.

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction regarding a policy, practice or customer service performance of an energy or water company — where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.



"Wherever possible, direct resolution is the way to go."

Janine Young, Deputy Ombudsman

Complaint types

All complaints are classified further — based on whether the customer has already contacted their company and whether the matter falls within EWOV's jurisdiction.

Complaint referred to company

Where the customer hasn't yet spoken with their company about their complaint, we usually refer them to the company's call centre.

Complaint referred to higher-level contact

Where the customer has spoken once with someone at the company, but remains dissatisfied with the company's response, we usually refer them to a higher-level contact at the company.

Interim complaint receipt process

During 2007/08, complaints to EWOV increased dramatically — this affected our workloads and threatened our capacity to undertake investigations effectively and efficiently. To deal with this situation, we introduced an interim complaint receipt process — ahead of accepting a complaint for investigation.

We offered customers who'd already had two or more direct contacts with their company a choice — we could contact a designated higher-level person within the company who would be required to ring the customer about their complaint within 24 hours (excluding weekends and public holidays), or the complaint could be investigated by us in a timeframe our resources permitted. This process is still in place — it will be reviewed in March 2009.

Complaint received for investigation

Where a complaint remains unresolved after two or more contacts between the customer and their company, we investigate it — there are three levels of complaints for investigation, each with a required timeframe and an increased cost implication for the company.

Complaint referred elsewhere

Some complaints fall outside of EWOV's jurisdiction, so we refer the customer to another agency which can help them, e.g. a regulator, government, another Ombudsman.

Other complaints

Sometimes the customer just wishes to register their complaint with EWOV, but not have it investigated or referred.

Figure 2 on page 15 sets out the number of overall cases, enquiries and complaints EWOV received and resolved in 2007/08.

Issues categories

EWOV was essentially set up to assist residential and small business customers who aren't able to resolve their energy or water complaint directly with the company. Larger customers may also lodge complaints, though they're more often in a position to resolve matters themselves.

We deal with most of the issues that arise between a customer and an energy or water company — the provision and supply of a service (or the failure to provide or supply it), billing, credit and payment services, disconnections and restrictions, refundable advances (security deposits) and land and property issues.

We can also investigate matters raised with the scheme by the Essential Services Commission, those referred to us by a scheme participant with the consent of the customer, and the concerns of third parties directly affected by the activities of a scheme participant (where the company's activity affects someone who's not their customer, e.g. marketing).

Since July 2007, the issues categories of EWOV and the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW have been aligned. We use nine first level issues — Billing, Credit, Customer Service, Land, Marketing, Provision, Supply, Transfer and General Enquiry. Each has sub-issues to describe the matter in more detail — e.g. a billing case may be about a backbill (second level) related to an error (third level).

Investigation and resolution

EWOV's approach is informal, rather than legalistic.

Complaints are accepted and negotiated over the phone, providing easy access for all customers — especially those who might have difficulty preparing a written complaint.

We focus on conciliation — where the customer and the company agree on an outcome, as well as any future action each may be required to carry out.

We investigate the complaint thoroughly to arrive at an objective view of what's happened. In doing so, we consider the wider context of each complaint — what is fair and reasonable, good industry practice and current law.

Our aim is to uncover the facts and help the parties better understand the issues and each other's point of view. This increases the likelihood of an agreement which will satisfy each party.

Sometimes, despite detailed investigation and negotiation, a complaint can't be conciliated. In these cases, the Ombudsman may review the investigation and make a Binding Decision. While this decision will be binding on the scheme participant, the customer has the option of rejecting it and taking action in another forum, e.g. a court. If the customer does reject a decision by the Ombudsman, the scheme participant is no longer bound by it. No Binding Decisions have been necessary since 2003.

The Ombudsman may also decide to discontinue an investigation where it is assessed that a case has insufficient merit (e.g. if a fair and reasonable offer has been made by the company to the customer).

Fast facts:

- Cases are classified as either enquiries or complaints
- Over 90% of cases are registered as complaints
- This year an interim process was used to deal with a dramatic increase in complaints
- Our investigations focus on what is fair and reasonable, good industry practice and current law
- Where conciliation is not possible, the Ombudsman can make a Binding Decision

'...a surge in complaints...'

In 2007/08, EWOV received 25,413 cases — up 39% on the 18,280 cases received in 2006/07.

2,506 were enquiries. 22,907 complaints were received and 22,668 complaints finalised.

Cases profile

The source of the increase was a surge in complaints, which were up 62% overall. Electricity complaints increased 59%. Natural gas complaints increased 88%. LPG complaints increased 12%. Dual fuel complaints increased 6%. Water complaints increased 27%.

In electricity and natural gas, most of the increase can be attributed to the billing systems problems experienced towards the end of 2007, and into 2008, by two large energy retailers.

Figure 5 on page 17, shows overall and industry trends over the past four years.

5,368 complaints were received for investigation in 2007/08. This doesn't tell the full story though. If we hadn't put in place the interim complaint receipt process described on page 12, we would have received 10,853 complaints for investigation — with the result that they would have been up by 109% (5,669 more than in 2006/07).

5,129 investigated complaints were finalised. See Figure 6 on page 17, for the end-of-year status of complaint investigations by industry.

At 48% of all issues, billing was again the most common issue raised by customers overall — most commonly about high bills, billing errors and meter issues.

Credit was next at 13% — most commonly about the disconnection of electricity or gas or the restriction of water for debt, payment difficulties and credit collection activities.

For the most common issues and sub-issues by industry, see Figure 13 (electricity), Figure 19 (gas), Figure 25 (dual fuel) and Figure 31 (water).

Customer profile

93% of all cases came from residential customers and 7% from business customers. See Figure 3 on page 16, for a breakdown by industry.

50% of customers said they contacted EWOV based on their existing knowledge of the scheme. 17% said they found out about us from information provided by their energy or water company. See Figure 4 on page 16 for other ways customers found out about EWOV.

93% of customers rang us, 5% used email or the complaint lodgement form on our website and 2% wrote to us or faxed us.

Taking residential populations into account, the parts of Victoria with the highest rates of residential energy and water cases were the Loddon Shire, City of Banyule, City of Frankston, City of Port Phillip and City of Manningham.

By comparison, the parts of Victoria with the highest raw numbers of residential cases were the Mornington Peninsula Shire, City of Monash, City of Greater Geelong, City of Banyule and City of Glen Eira.

Fast facts:

- Cases were up 39% to 25,413
- The biggest increases were in electricity and natural gas complaints
- Billing accounted for almost half the issues
- 93% of cases were lodged by phone
- 9 out of 10 cases were from residential customers

Figure 2: Case outcomes 2007/08

2,506 enquiries where EWOV provided information and/or a referral	22,668 complaints finalised	
1,229 enquiries (49%) Provided general information and referred to company	16,982 complaints referred to the company or elsewhere	5,129 complaint investigations were finalised
782 enquiries (31%) Provided general information	4,609 complaints (27%) Referred to company's contact centre	4,673 complaints (91%) Conciliated Redress to customers: 146 written apologies \$782,101 in billing adjustments \$346,310 in recognition of customer service issues \$93,525 in debt reductions/waivers \$35,147 in waived fees \$9,377 in guaranteed service level payments 1,027 payment plans negotiated
234 enquiries (9%) Referred to a Regulator	11,885 complaints (70%) Referred to higher-level contact at company*	
108 enquiries (4%) Referred to another Ombudsman	174 complaints (1%) Referred to a Regulator	
45 enquiries (2%) Referred to Government	111 complaints (1%) Referred to another Ombudsman	
108 enquiries (4%) Referred to other bodies	77 complaints (<1%) Referred to Government	
	126 complaints (1%) Referred to other bodies	390 complaints (8%) Finalised on the basis of no further contact from the customer
	557 other complaints did not require referral or investigation**	29 complaints (<1%) Further investigation not warranted
		30 complaints (<1%) Withdrawn by customer
		7 complaints (<1%) Found to be out of jurisdiction
		No Binding Decisions

NOTES:

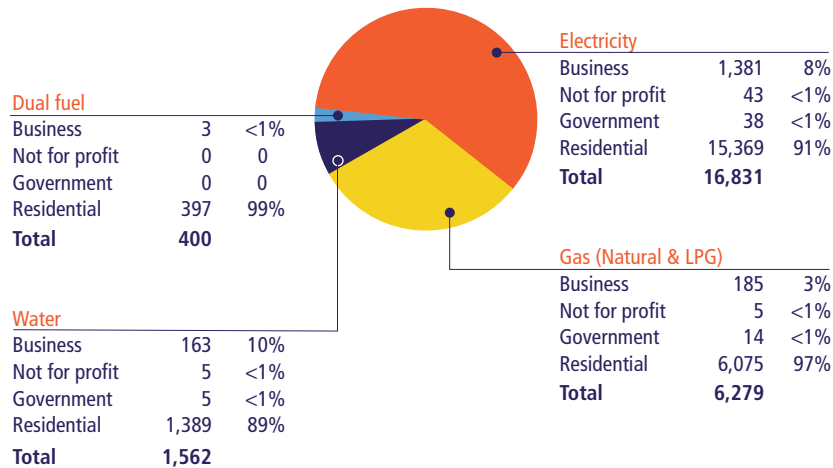
* 5,485 of the complaints referred back to a higher-level contact would normally have been investigated, but for an interim complaint receipt process of offering customers a final opportunity for direct resolution, if they agree.

** Some customers wish to register marketing/switching complaints with EWOV but do not seek referral or investigation.

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

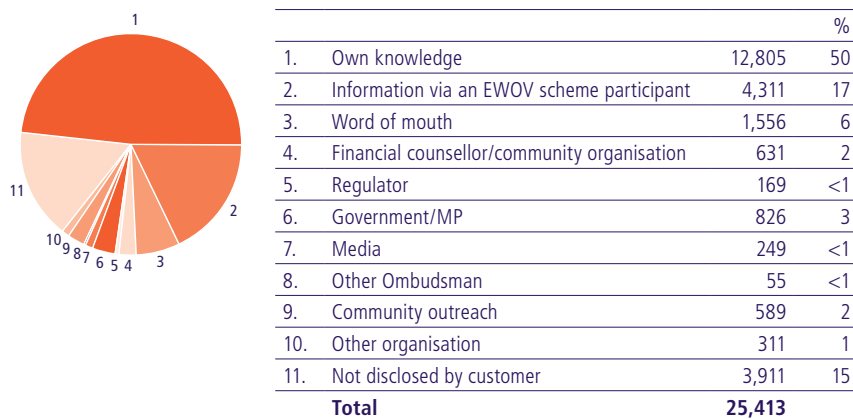
The data for 2007/08 in this publication was run on 15 July 2008. Data from previous financial years is as published in previous Annual Reports.

Figure 3: By industry, which customers contacted EWOV?



NOTE:
There were also 341 other industry or non-industry related cases.

Figure 4: How did customers find out about EWOV?



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

Figure 5: How have EWOV cases trended over the last few years?













	Total	Electricity	Natural gas	LPG*	Dual fuel	Water	Other Industry^
2007-08	25,413	16,831	6,146	133	400	1,562	341
2006-07	18,280	11,909	3,725	163	429	1,484	570
2005-06	17,763	12,636	3,426	102	296	1,303	
2004-05	19,158	13,491	3,882		529	1,256	

NOTES:

* EWOV began receiving LPG cases in July 2005.

^ EWOV separated out other industry cases in July 2006.

Figure 6: In 2007/08, how many complaints for investigation were received and finalised?

Total						
Received						5,368
Finalised						5,129
Open at 30 June 2008						959
Electricity						
Received						3,684
Finalised						3,511
Open at 30 June 2008						687
Gas						
Received						1,353
Finalised						1,304
Open at 30 June 2008						191
Dual fuel						
Received						71
Finalised						63
Open at 30 June 2008						15
Water						
Received						260
Finalised						251
Open at 30 June 2008						66

NOTE:

Complaints finalised includes a number of complaints received prior to 1 July 2007.

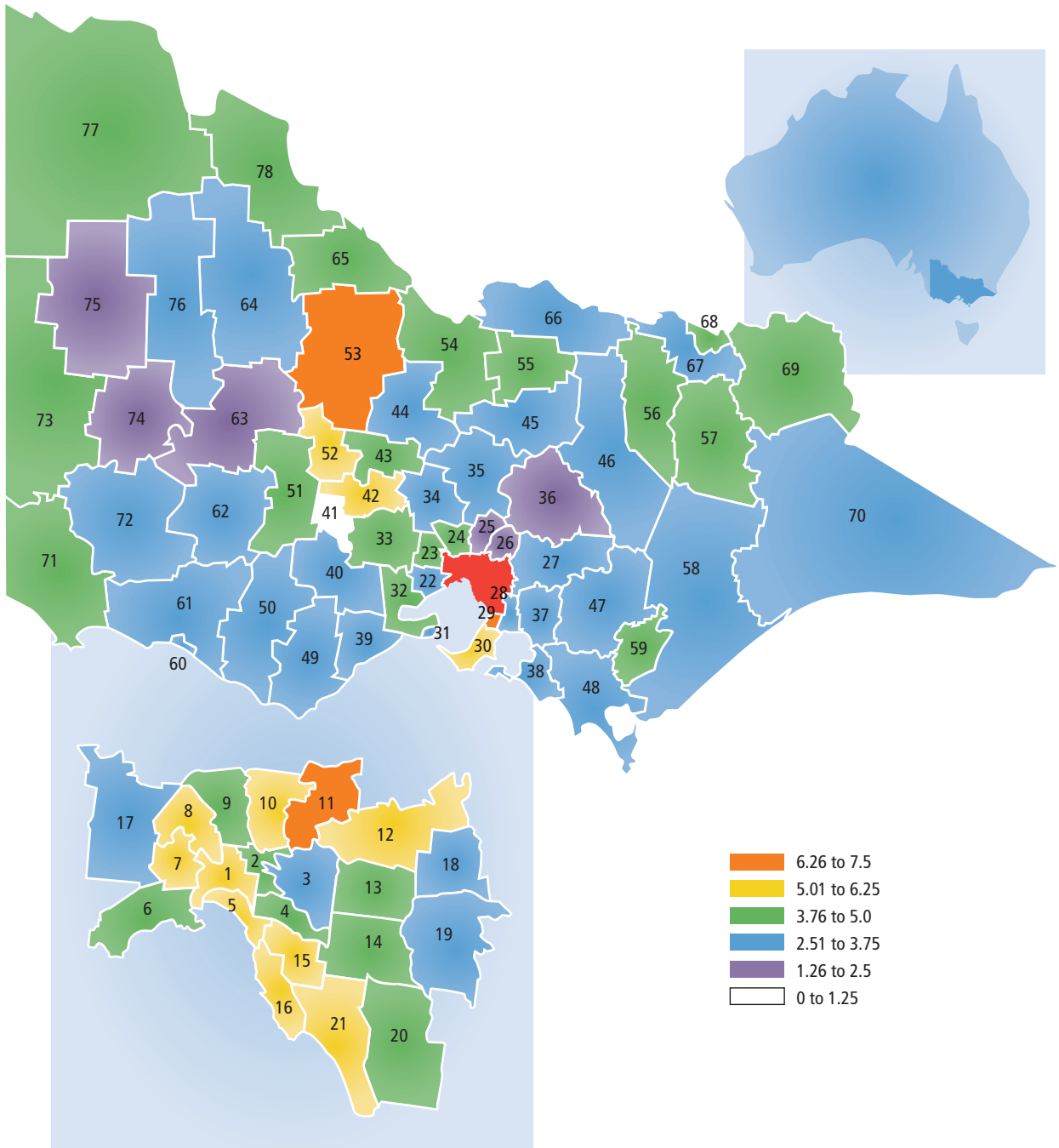
Figure 7: How many EWOV cases were received from residential customers in each Council/Shire area across Victoria?

Council / Shire area	map no.	Population 2007/08*	Residential cases 2007/08^	Residential cases per 1,000 population		
				2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
Loddon Shire	53	8,077	55	6.81	5.47	5.00
City of Banyule	11	120,349	789	6.56	2.71	2.52
City of Frankston	29	123,315	777	6.30	3.53	4.10
City of Port Phillip	5	91,931	567	6.17	4.23	4.91
City of Manningham	12	116,449	715	6.14	2.48	2.24
City of Melbourne	1	81,144	496	6.11	7.39	8.50
Mornington Peninsula Shire	30	142,659	859	6.02	3.78	3.43
City of Glen Eira	15	131,144	781	5.96	3.33	3.61
City of Maribyrnong	7	67,825	394	5.81	4.52	4.14
Hepburn Shire	42	14,289	81	5.67	3.81	6.27
City of Moonee Valley	8	112,481	597	5.31	3.38	3.11
City of Bayside	16	92,801	491	5.29	2.47	3.02
City of Kingston	21	141,550	738	5.21	2.71	2.34
City of Darebin	10	135,262	700	5.18	3.96	4.17
Central Goldfields Shire	52	12,736	64	5.03	3.89	3.81
City of Whitehorse	13	152,368	739	4.85	2.15	2.18
Glenelg Shire	71	20,664	99	4.79	3.77	3.76
City of Monash	14	171,478	804	4.69	2.30	2.32
Mount Alexander Shire	43	17,851	83	4.65	3.94	3.36
Pyrenees Shire	51	6,763	31	4.58	5.17	3.48
Moorabool Shire	33	26,843	121	4.51	4.71	3.86
City of Hobsons Bay	6	85,525	375	4.38	2.83	2.73
Rural City of Swan Hill	78	21,459	93	4.33	4.69	3.36
City of Greater Dandenong	20	132,237	572	4.33	2.30	2.59
City of Moreland	9	144,015	619	4.30	3.21	3.06
City of Greater Shepparton	55	59,730	254	4.25	4.13	3.36
City of Yarra	2	74,823	318	4.25	3.98	4.26
Towong Shire	69	6,256	26	4.16	1.93	3.50
Rural City of Wangaratta	56	27,569	114	4.14	2.72	2.45
City of Hume	24	157,145	647	4.12	2.45	2.61
Campaspe Shire	54	37,763	153	4.05	3.58	3.62
Rural City of Mildura	77	52,576	213	4.05	3.01	3.05
Gannawarra Shire	65	11,634	47	4.04	4.05	3.50
City of Stonnington	4	96,221	387	4.02	3.15	5.82
Melton Shire	23	85,613	341	3.98	2.54	2.88
West Wimmera Shire	73	4,578	18	3.93	4.53	1.65
Alpine Shire	57	12,592	49	3.89	2.15	3.75
Rural City of Wodonga	68	34,776	134	3.85	1.75	2.14
City of Greater Geelong	32	208,395	800	3.84	3.56	3.59
City of Latrobe	59	72,905	277	3.80	3.31	3.13
City of Brimbank	17	176,249	653	3.70	2.99	2.82
Baw Baw Shire	47	39,078	143	3.66	4.23	4.21
Surf Coast Shire	39	23,521	86	3.66	3.53	3.31
City of Greater Bendigo	44	98,323	359	3.65	3.66	3.37
City of Wyndham	22	123,163	443	3.60	2.69	3.49
City of Maroondah	18	103,005	368	3.57	2.84	2.73
Macedon Ranges Shire	34	40,353	144	3.57	3.60	3.23
City of Warrnambool	60	32,042	113	3.53	3.96	3.82
Yarra Ranges Shire	27	145,596	509	3.50	2.70	3.12
Bass Coast Shire	38	28,081	98	3.49	3.85	5.28
Colac-Otway Shire	49	21,183	73	3.45	3.80	3.95
Moira Shire	66	28,223	97	3.44	2.99	3.50
East Gippsland Shire	70	41,954	140	3.34	3.46	3.00
Mitchell Shire	35	32,760	109	3.33	2.85	3.17
Golden Plains Shire	40	17,345	57	3.29	2.62	2.61
Rural City of Benalla & Mansfield Shire	46	21,551	69	3.20	2.97	2.44
City of Boroondara	3	163,890	521	3.18	2.80	2.61
Southern Grampians Shire	72	17,311	55	3.18	3.09	2.07
Rural City of Ararat	62	11,671	37	3.17	3.85	2.89
Moynes Shire	61	16,102	51	3.17	3.78	4.61
South Gippsland Shire	48	26,830	84	3.13	3.09	3.34
City of Knox	19	153,151	466	3.04	2.04	2.32
Buloke Shire	64	7,038	21	2.98	3.47	3.99
Cardinia Shire	37	60,753	179	2.95	2.10	3.53
Wellington Shire	58	41,998	123	2.93	3.30	3.88
Corangamite Shire	50	17,188	48	2.79	3.32	2.61
Strathbogie Shire	45	9,733	27	2.77	2.35	3.32
Yarriambiack Shire	76	7,658	21	2.74	4.15	2.73
City of Casey	28	229,080	596	2.60	2.08	1.93
Borough of Queenscliffe	31	3,175	8	2.52	3.07	2.27
Indigo Shire	67	15,480	39	2.52	2.22	2.42
Rural City of Horsham	74	19,323	47	2.43	3.01	3.21
City of Whittlesea	25	133,156	304	2.28	1.63	2.00
Murrindindi Shire	36	14,228	30	2.11	1.52	4.14
Nillumbik Shire	26	62,310	126	2.02	1.72	1.78
Hindmarsh Shire	75	6,190	12	1.94	3.17	5.74
Northern Grampians Shire	63	12,301	22	1.79	3.70	4.17
City of Ballarat	41	89,665	20	0.22	3.00	3.41
		5,204,449	21,716	4.17	3.03	3.22

NOTES:

* Populations for 2007/08 based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data; populations for 2006/07 and 2005/06 based on www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au data.

^ Cases allocated to Council/Shire areas based on the suburb/postcode. Where a suburb/postcode bridges more than one Council/Shire, cases have been divided across those Councils/Shires. The sum of cases for each Council/Shire has then been rounded to the nearest whole number. It excludes 1,850 residential cases where the customer did not disclose a Victorian suburb/postcode or was from interstate or overseas.



Systemic issues

EWOV's jurisdiction on systemic issues matters is sourced directly from the *EWOV Charter and Constitution*.

In electricity and natural gas, our role is to identify systemic issues and report them to the Essential Services Commission (ESC) for investigation and any subsequent action — the ESC has a legislative mandate to investigate and obtain redress for affected customers. Issues we have thus reported in 2007/08 are summarised below.

Under a *Market Conduct Reporting Protocol*, we monitor cases about energy marketing and transfers for potential code compliance issues. Most transfer and marketing issues are also systemic in nature. Specific information about our reporting on energy marketing and transfer issues follows on page 22.

In water, our role extends to identifying and investigating systemic issues, and seeking redress for affected customers — then reporting these outcomes to the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The redress obtained by customers affected by systemic issues depends on the nature of the issue and, in energy, the ESC's response to it. Examples of redress include re-billing, refunds, apologies, explanatory letters and account reductions.

Defining a systemic issue

The definition EWOV uses (below) is drawn from those used by the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC), other Ombudsman schemes, current thinking on best practice, and the *Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes*.

A systemic issue may be defined as — but is not limited to — one or more of (1) an issue, (2) a problem or (3) change in member policy or practice that does affect, or has the potential to affect, a number of customers. It may be caused by a range of things in isolation or together. These include — but aren't limited to — a system change, an alteration in performance levels, a policy or procedure change, lack of policy/procedure, lack of clear regulatory guidelines, regulatory non-compliance, the conduct of a company's employee, agent, servant, officer or contractor, and the action of a stakeholder (e.g. a legislative/regulatory change which is misunderstood/wrongly applied).

Systemic issues can adversely affect large numbers of customers and/or particular customer groups, sometimes on an ongoing basis. Some customers contact EWOV, but others don't. By taking a proactive approach, we can work with scheme participants and regulators to bring about redress and reduce possible wider impact. This also promotes more efficient industry practices and a reduction in complaints.

Summary of issues

In 2007/08, we raised the following substantial systemic issues with the companies concerned and, where appropriate, the ESC. While most were identified through multiple complaints to EWOV, it's important to note that one complaint can indicate a systemic issue.

On our website (www.ewov.com.au), you will find more information about how the systemic issues listed below were addressed.

- Incorrect billing of solar generation customers

These customers of one energy retailer had certain metering configurations — 'solar buyback' credits weren't applied in line with their contracts. (SI/2007/33)

- Double-billing of network charges

This affected customers in embedded networks who had chosen a retailer other than the embedded network provider. (SI/2007/50)

- Multiplier not applied to electricity bills

Customers were underbilled after a multiplier of 40 wasn't applied — when corrected bills were sent, the previous incorrect bills were shown as cancelled estimations. (SI/2007/51)

- Gas bottle fee wrongly charged

After an LPG retailer scaled down to one distributor in the area, customers of the redundant distributor continued to be billed the bottle fee. (SI/2007/57)

- Billing system error led to billing delays

The retailer confirmed that this interval meter issue was caused by a fault in its billing system (replaced in December 2007) rather than a read error. (SI/2007/56)

- Customers wrongly charged a distributor pass-through cost

An energy retailer applied this cost to the bills of all customers — it was found by the ESC not to be fair and reasonable.

(SI/2008/1)

- Undercharging for gas consumption

When an energy retailer's billing system failed to recognise the meter type, customers with older imperial meters were billed in metric format, resulting in undercharges. (SI/2008/2)

- Reminder notices sent in error

After a systems upgrade, an energy retailer's billing system failed to recognise BPay payments made by about 10,000 customers — reminder notices were sent in error — some Centrepay customers were also affected. (SI/2008/3)

- Customers unable to get through to contact centre

After a systems upgrade, long on-hold times meant customers weren't able to get through to an energy retailer's contact centre. (SI/2008/4)

- Direct debits greater than customers had agreed to

After a systems upgrade, customers of an energy retailer who had direct debit arrangements found much larger amounts taken out than they'd agreed to. (SI/2008/5)

- Customers not notified of planned outages

Due to a batch file error by a printing contractor, an energy distributor didn't notify over 2,000 customers of planned outages. (SI/2008/8)

- Inconsistent advice to customers of EWOV's phone number

Retailers were inconsistently providing EWOV's contact details on credit notices — a time lapse between when customers received this information and when they were actually disconnected meant they were much less likely to have our phone number at hand at a critical time. (SI/2008/11)

- New connection requests not processed

Due to an address format error in a new billing system, an energy retailer didn't process new connection requests for some 400 customers. (SI/2008/12)

- Concession entitlements potentially affected

When an energy retailer introduced a new billing system, customer accounts established in joint names reverted to one name, causing potential detriment to customers eligible for concessions where the eligible person was recorded as a third party. (SI/2008/18)

- Inaccurate usage graphs on bills

Some customers' historical graphs won't be accurate for up to 12 months, due to one energy retailer's billing system upgrade — until historical usage data is available in the new billing system. (SI/2008/19)

- High catch-up bills after false meter reads

Some customers in an electricity distributor's network received low bills, followed by high catch-up bills from a series of false reads which were recorded as actuals — the affected reads were from the route of one meter reader, no longer employed by the company. (SI/2008/21)

Marketing and transfer issues

Retail competition in Victoria's energy industry gives all customers the opportunity to choose their electricity and gas retailers. In the context of retail competition, the issues customers raise with EWOV are about either transfer or marketing.

Transfer is the process of switching from one retailer to another. As Figure 8 shows, site ownership — that is, confusion about which retailer has billing rights for a property — was the most common transfer issue, followed by transfer error and contract terms. Because successful transfers rely on effective systems and processes between retailers and distributors, transfer cases can indicate both systemic and isolated issues.

Marketing covers energy retailers' sales or advertising activities. As Figure 9 shows, misleading marketing was the most common marketing issue, followed by information and pressure sales.

Recognising that systemic and individual complaints can arise through marketing and transfer processes, we monitor the energy retail cases we receive for potential compliance issues in relation to the *Energy Marketing Code* and *Energy Retail Code*, the *Fair Trading Act 1999* (Vic) and the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cwlth). As appropriate, we provide reports on these issues to the energy retailers concerned, and to the ESC, Consumer Affairs Victoria, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Australian Energy Regulator.

During 2007/08, the following potential compliance issues came to our attention through EWOV cases. Most times, the complaint was able to be referred back to the retailer for resolution, but some required our investigation.

- Customers saying that, in the marketing process, they were presented with potentially misleading information — misleading is a broad term which can include omission, as well as misrepresentation, of relevant information

- Customers saying they were exposed to excessive pressure in the course of a marketing representation
- Marketing to someone who wasn't the energy account holder for the property — the account went into someone else's name without the account holder's knowledge, usually with a different retailer — the original account holder found themselves up against a privacy wall when they tried to get information about what had happened
- Account holders discovering the billing rights for their property had been transferred to a different retailer without their consent — sometimes a long time after the marketing occurred
- Account holders finding the billing rights for their property transferred to another retailer in error — their existing payment arrangements were disrupted — some customers fell into arrears and faced disconnection for non-payment
- Customers questioning the terms of the contract — alleging lack of explicit informed consent, saying they weren't given appropriate information before their account was transferred, or that they were quoted different rates to those they subsequently found themselves on
- Customers saying they'd cancelled the contract within the cooling-off period, but the transfer took place anyway

Complaints involving transfer and marketing issues are resolved in a variety of ways. A retailer may agree to cancel a contract and not apply an exit fee. There may be a verbal or written apology. A payment in recognition of the inconvenience caused to the customer is sometimes warranted. In some cases, a retrospective transfer may be needed to switch the customer's account back to their preferred retailer — see, for example, case study F/2007/166 on page 43.

Figure 8: What were the most common transfer issues?

Site Ownership	654
In Error	634
Contract Terms	569
Without Consent	448
Delay	352
Cooling Off Rights	200
Billing	177
Objection	22
Total	3,056

Figure 9: What were the most common marketing issues?

Misleading	639
Information	260
Pressure Sales	117
Non Account Holder	49
Other	24
Total	1,089

Credit-related disconnection and restriction

During 2007/08, EWOV received 1,521 cases from customers whose electricity or gas supply had been disconnected or who were facing disconnection — or whose water supply had been restricted or was about to be restricted. This was up from 892 cases in 2006/07. Figures 10 and 11 show the trends in cases received over the last few years, by industry.

In electricity, cases about actual disconnection increased from 2.1% to 2.5% of all electricity retail cases we received. Cases about imminent disconnection increased from 2.8% to 4.2% of all electricity retail cases.

In natural gas, cases about actual disconnection fell from 7.4% to 4.9% of all natural gas retail cases. Cases about imminent disconnection increased from 3.2% to 3.4% of all natural gas retail cases.

During the year, energy retailers agreed to make a wrongful disconnection payment (WDP) in 156 of the complaints we investigated, up from 102. Most payments related to disconnection for debt, but some related to disconnection in error.

In *Resolution 25* and *26* published during the year, we included WDP case studies — illustrating why payments were made and why they weren't. Some customers, although disconnected, weren't assessed as eligible for a WDP — because their energy retailers had followed all of the steps required of them under the *Energy Retail Code* and the *Wrongful Disconnection Operating Procedure*.

Our review of EWOV's WDP complaint assessment tools has resulted in a faster turnaround of WDP complaints and a reduction in complaint resolution timeframes. We also reviewed the WDP materials we provide to energy retailers — thus enabling retailers to more quickly identify when a payment should be made. As a result, we found it necessary to refer fewer WDP complaints to the ESC for final decision.

Figure 10: How have actual disconnection/restriction cases trended?

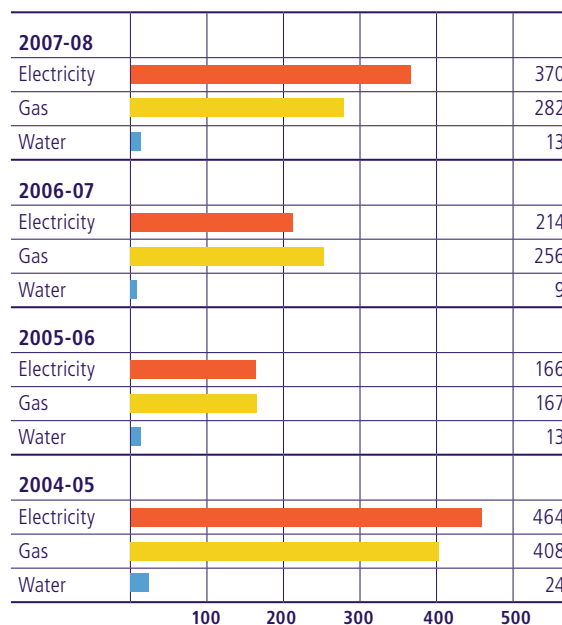
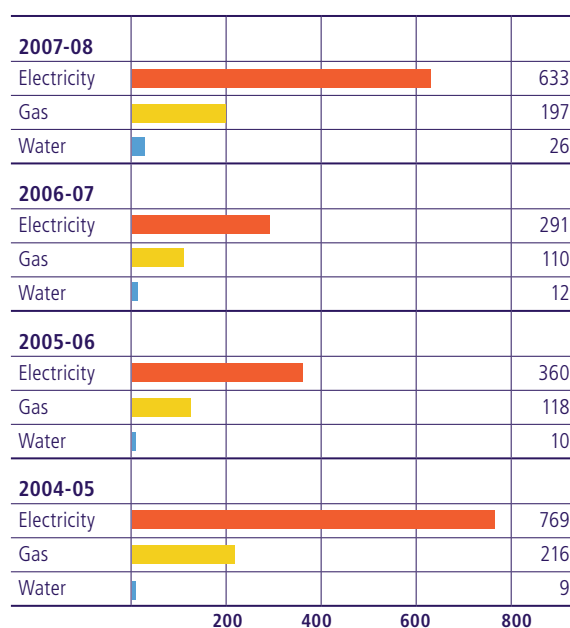


Figure 11: How have imminent disconnection/restriction cases trended?



'...input to public policy dialogue...'

There's a close relationship between our policy work and our casework — the reports and submissions we make are founded on analysis of the cases EWOV receives.

Policy perspective

Policy work delivers a range of benefits — internal and external.

The Policy team is a ready internal resource — informing the Conciliation team about new industry and regulatory developments and lesser known codes — and adding valuable content to our community presentations, publications and website. Its monitoring of external public policy developments helps EWOV prepare for emerging issues likely to affect our case receipt.

The relationships built through policy work also facilitate effective co-operation between us and EWOV's various stakeholders — in particular regulators. Over the years, we've developed a productive working relationship with the Essential Services Commission (ESC) here in Victoria. We're now working to do the same with the new national regulators.

To this end, we've signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), as we did with the ESC. It covers matters such as the reports we'll provide to the AER on case issues and referral of complaints between us — and includes a commitment to meet regularly to discuss issues of joint interest. It's being used as a template for memoranda discussions between the AER and other Energy Ombudsman schemes around Australia.

Our policy work is perhaps most obvious in the submissions we make to the public consultation processes of other bodies. Which consultations we submit to is generally determined by either the issues arising from EWOV cases, or our belief that planned developments will affect EWOV's case receipt. Where our suggestions are adopted, the effect is often to lower complaint numbers and/or prevent complaints arising in the first place.

Energy and water issues

Victorian regulator

The move to national energy regulation is progressing, with a national energy consumer framework likely to apply from late 2009. In the meantime, the ESC's work on energy issues in Victoria continues — so too does our input to that work.

For example, in July 2007, the ESC published performance indicators for energy companies' financial hardship policies. From our experience of customer concerns, we supported the indicators' intent — and the ESC's collaborative work in developing them. We made some suggestions for indicator clarity and value — and noted the opportunity for the ESC to align performance indicators for water and energy hardship programmes and publicly report comparable performance data.

We supported the ESC's proposals for distributor reporting of the extent of call centre overloads. We also provided input to its consultations on retailer of last resort charges, its reviews of regulatory instruments, and energy efficiency guidelines. In relation to water, we provided input to the ESC's 2008 Water Price Review.

Metering

The roll-out of about 2.4 million advanced (remotely read) interval electricity meters across Victoria is planned to take place from mid 2009². Ahead of that, we've been providing input to a number of consultations and compiling six-monthly reports — highlighting issues we're seeing in cases involving interval meters, to enable discussion and work to prevent recurrent complaints.

A number of issues stand out for us. Billing is the most common — high bills mainly, but also estimated or substituted bills, billing errors and delayed billing. Data substitution — and the absence of start and end reads on bills — are already causing customer confusion and dissatisfaction.

There's also an expectation that installation of interval meters will give more customers access to off-peak tariffs (i.e. time of use tariffs, not controlled load). Our experience to date, however, is that it's more likely to lead to the loss of previously existing off-peak.

² In September 2008, the Minister for Energy advised the commencement of the roll-out has been deferred from early 2009 to mid 2009.

We also think retailers should clarify the circumstances in which they'll offer off-peak tariffs following the installation of the meter.

Some customers with an interval meter have a solar generation capability and are to be credited with electricity they contribute to the grid. As case study C/2006/9835 on page 33 illustrates, customers may not be able to see solar buyback credits on their bills, so they think they're not getting them — this may be due to the metering set-up, but it may also be that the customer is trying to 'read' the meter as they could read their previous analogue meter.

We envisage the meter rollout leading to greater complexity and variation in electricity prices — adding weight to the need for clear and effective information for consumers. There's also uncertainty about how faulty wiring and other safety defects uncovered during the installation will be fixed — and by whom.

National regulators

On the national energy regulation front, the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) released reports on the effectiveness of competition in electricity and gas markets in Victoria. Even though we believe the AEMC understated energy marketing issues in this state, we were very pleased with the support its *Second Draft Report* gave to the Victorian consumer protection framework. We've consistently supported this framework in our submissions to the Ministerial Council on Energy's consultation processes.

We contributed to submissions the members of the Australia & New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (ANZEWO) made to national consultations on community service obligations, the national smart meter roll-out and the proposed service target performance incentive scheme for energy distributors.

We also continued to participate in public policy dialogue on other aspects of the national framework for energy.

Related consumer issues

In September 2007, the Parliament of Victoria's Law Reform Committee put out an issues paper entitled *Alternative Dispute Resolution*. Our submission addressed the nature of industry-based Ombudsman schemes and EWOV in particular. In March 2008, the Committee held a hearing at EWOV.

Responding to the Victorian State Services Authority's *Review of Government Funded Financial Counselling Services: Issue Paper*, we supported better and more reliable funding sources for financial counselling in Victoria.

Our comments on the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission's *Water Ways: Inquiry into Reform of the Metropolitan Water Sector* consultation paper supported the publication of comparative data and highlighted the importance of hardship programmes.

Nationally, we responded to the Productivity Commission's *Review of Australia's Consumer Policy Framework Draft Report* in a joint submission with other members of ANZEWO.

Internationally, we took up a number of invitations from overseas bodies to comment on developments in relation to consumer redress and Ombudsman schemes.

Fast facts:

- A close relationship exists between our policy work and our case work
- We further developed our working relationships with key regulators
- We made significant submissions on national energy regulation
- We continued to report on interval meter developments
- We commented on the extent of the effectiveness of competition in Victoria

'...ensuring access and building awareness...'

An integrated community liaison strategy helps us reach different stakeholder groups with information relevant to their interests and needs.

Community visits

Accompanied by other EWOV team members, the Ombudsman undertook a series of regional visits — travelling to Ballarat and Horsham (February 2008) and Bairnsdale, Sale, Morwell and Warragul (early July 2008) — and metropolitan visits to Ferntree Gully (November 2007), Melton (March 2008) and Epping and South Morang (May 2008).

In undertaking these visits, we met with a broad range of community support organisations which provide information, advocacy, housing, outreach, family and youth services — as well as seniors groups, specific purpose local community groups and larger community organisations, such as the Salvation Army and UnitingCare. We provided information on EWOV's role, and how and why we do what we do — community representatives raised a range of concerns, commonly about supply disconnection/restriction, financial hardship, energy marketing and billing.

On the web

Through the visits programme, we identified the need for a section on our website which would bring together information specifically for community agencies. We consulted closely with our target audience on what would be most useful — and, in June 2008, the information went live.

The new section contains a wide range of practical information which community workers can use to assist their clients — from tips on moving into and out of a property, through to what's available in the way of payment assistance, the legal framework protecting energy and water consumers, and understanding energy and water prices.

Fact sheets

We produced and distributed four new consumer fact sheets — each addresses issues customers commonly raise with us:

- Payment assistance — explains what someone should do if they can't pay an energy or water bill — and gives some information on assistance that may be available to them
- Disconnection/restriction for debt — information to help people understand their rights and responsibilities in a debt-related disconnection or restriction situation — and the assistance they may be able to receive

- Meters — as we've noted elsewhere in this report, meter technology is changing — this fact sheet covers the different types of meters and explains what's changing
- Transitional housing issues — having signed the lease, a transitional housing tenant becomes responsible for the electricity, gas and water — this fact sheet helps community workers advise clients on how to avoid problems with these services.

Indigenous consumers

As we have for some years now, we took part in the multi-agency *Koories: Know Your Rights!* project. We met with Indigenous communities in Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance (July 2007), Shepparton (October 2007), Thornbury (November 2007), and Geelong, Warrnambool, Portland, Heywood and Hamilton (May 2008).

Having identified the value of using a specific Indigenous design, we engaged an Indigenous artist to help us prepare a brochure and poster to reach Indigenous consumers who may be experiencing problems with their electricity, gas or water.

Publications

We continued to publish a number of regular newsletters.

Our six-monthly newsletter, *Resolution*, provides detailed cases and issues information — overall, by industry, industry sector and individual companies. It has broad distribution to EWOV stakeholders. *Resolution Bulletin*, a two-page summary of each issue is distributed to community agencies.

EWOV Link is an electronic newsletter, sent quarterly to all scheme participants. It provides information on cases, case trends and suggestions for internal dispute resolution improvements.

EWOV Connect is also prepared quarterly, for emailing to Victorian community, welfare and health service workers — giving them another resource to draw on in assisting clients who present with electricity, gas and water issues.

Joint projects

With other schemes which are part of the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA), we contributed to the production of a second postcard in ANZOA's 'youth' series — this time with the theme, *Ombudsman services are fair, free and independent and you have a right to complain* — and the preparation of a consumer fact sheet, *Ombudsman services in Australia*. We also took part in joint promotions at Orientation Week activities at a number of universities and TAFE colleges.

EWOV on bills and notices

Having our contact information on bills and warning notices has continued to be a very valuable way of raising awareness of the scheme, particularly among low income and vulnerable customers. We also have an agreement with scheme participants for information about EWOV to be included on one bill each year.



Fast facts:

- An integrated community liaison strategy was planned and implemented
- We held face-to-face meetings with community agencies and Indigenous communities
- New web pages were launched to provide information for community workers
- New fact sheets on payment assistance and disconnection for debt were released
- We continued to publish regular newsletters for stakeholder groups

Electricity

16,831 cases **up 41%** 8% enquiries and 92% complaints

Complaints 10,904 referred to company and 3,511 EWOV investigations finalised

Common issues billing 49% and transfer 14%

Cases by sector retail 89% and distribution 7%

EWOV had 29 electricity industry scheme participants at 1 July 2008 — 22 retailers, 5 distributors and 2 transmission companies. EWOV has been handling electricity cases since it opened for full service in May 1996.

All electricity customers in Victoria (2,132,226 domestic customers and 280,943 business customers³) can choose their electricity retailer. They can't choose their electricity distributor, because each distribution company owns the 'poles and wires' network in a specific part of the state.

Three 'local' electricity retailers each have a part of Victoria where they must offer to sell electricity to customers. They can also sell to customers across the state generally — in competition with all other electricity retailers.

In the mid-1990s, Victoria's electricity industry was corporatised then privatised. Regulatory oversight is the responsibility of the Essential Services Commission, Victoria. This is transitioning to the Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Energy Market Commission.

All electricity retailers, distributors and transmission companies operating in Victoria are required by their operating licences to participate in an Ombudsman scheme.

³ Essential Services Commission's Energy Retail Business Comparative Performance Report for the 2006-07 Financial Year, December 2007, page 3

Figure 12: How many electricity cases did EWOV receive and finalise in 2007/08?

	customer bandwidths [^]	Total cases		Enquiries	Total Complaints	Complaints				investigations finalised
		2007/08	2006/07			complaints referred elsewhere and other complaints ⁺	complaints referred to company	complaints referred to higher-level contact at company ^{**}	complaints received for investigation	
RETAIL										
AGL Sales	■■■	5,965	2,425	239	5,726	206	801	3,165	1,554	1,359
Aurora Energy	■	3	0	0	3	0	0	2	1	1
Australian Power & Gas	■	171	7	18	153	13	42	75	23	13
Click Energy	■	29	0	4	25	1	2	17	5	5
Country Energy	■	226	210	41	185	9	44	102	30	30
Dodo Power & Gas ⁺⁺	■	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EnergyAustralia [*]	■	1		0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Energy One	■	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Integral Energy	■	5	3	1	4	2	1	1	0	0
Jackgreen	■	47	83	6	41	3	7	24	7	8
Momentum Energy	■	116	172	6	110	3	16	60	31	25
Origin Energy	■■■	4,027	3,458	332	3,695	144	689	1,921	941	939
Our Neighbourhood Energy	■	145	2	14	131	15	31	75	10	9
Powerdirect (Australian Energy Services)	■	326	443	25	301	10	68	132	91	99
Powerdirect Australia (AGL)	■	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Red Energy	■	471	332	41	430	23	89	232	86	79
Simply Energy [#]	■	912	787	69	843	37	172	446	188	182
Sun Retail	■	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRUenergy	■■■	1,505	1,511	72	1,433	75	291	728	339	365
Victoria Electricity	■	1,047	803	60	987	63	181	545	198	199
Total retail		14,997	10,240	928	14,069	605	2,435	7,525	3,504	3,313
DISTRIBUTION										
	% customers ⁻									
Alinta AE [»]	(12%)	195	151	17	178	6	55	93	24	28
CitiPower	(12%)	65	91	6	59	7	19	20	13	13
Powercor Australia	(27%)	263	308	23	240	17	64	95	64	70
SP AusNet	(24%)	346	313	29	317	23	98	157	39	43
United Energy Distribution ^{##}	(25%)	297	227	12	285	15	78	152	40	44
Total distribution		1,166	1,090	87	1,079	68	314	517	180	198
TRANSMISSION										
National Grid (Basslink)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SP AusNet		9	11	0	9	1	4	4	0	0
Total transmission		9	11	0	9	1	4	4	0	0
NON COMPANY SPECIFIC										
Non company specific		659	568	394	265	160	105	-	-	-
ELECTRICITY TOTALS		16,831	11,909	1,409	15,422	834	2,858	8,046	3,684	3,511

NOTES:

Reflects data run at 15 July 2008. Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

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

⁺ 423 complaints were referred elsewhere. 411 other complaint issues did not require referral or investigation.

^{**} 3,773 of the 8,046 electricity complaints referred back to a higher-level contact would normally have been investigated, but for an interim complaint receipt process of offering customers a final opportunity for direct resolution, if they agree.

⁺⁺ Dodo Power & Gas joined EWOV on 4 December 2007.

^{*} EnergyAustralia re-entered the Victorian market in May 2008, retailing electricity to residential and business customers.

[#] Prior to 1 August 2007, Simply Energy was EA-IPR Retail Partnership.

[»] Prior to October 2006, Alinta AE was AGL Electricity Distribution. Since 4 August 2008, Alinta AE has been known as Jemena Electricity Networks.

^{##} Alinta Asset Management, known since 4 August 2008 as Jemena Asset Management, is the prime contractor for United Energy Distribution.

[^] Customer bandwidths: ■ denotes less than 250,000 customers at 30 June 2008; ■■■ 250,001 - 500,000 customers; ■■■■ 500,001 - 750,000 customers; ■■■■■ 750,001 - 1,000,000 customers. This is based on information provided to EWOV by each retailer.

⁻ Electricity distributors' customer shares are based on 2006 customer numbers in the ESC's *Electricity Distribution Businesses - Comparative Performance Report 2006* (October 2007).

Figure 13: How are electricity cases trending? What issues arise most commonly?

Trend data

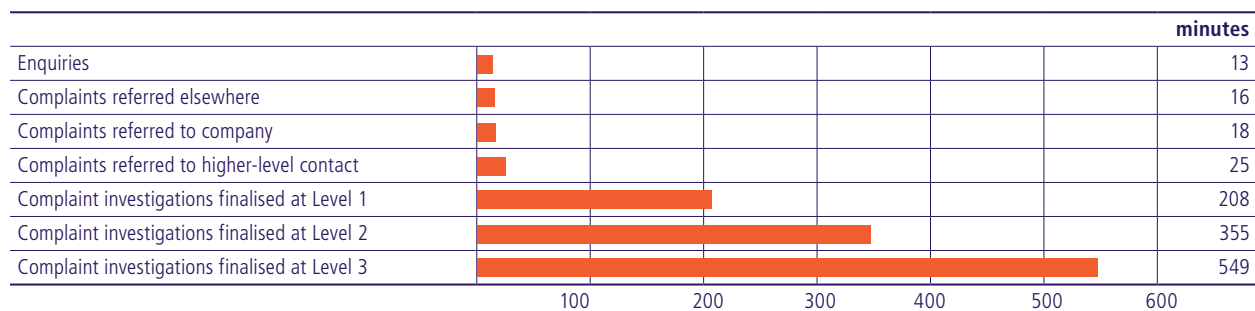
	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008
Electricity total	13,491	12,636	11,909	16,831
Electricity retail	11,252	10,216	10,240	14,997
Electricity distribution	1,346	1,424	1,090	1,166
Electricity transmission	5	3	11	9

Most common issues

	%	Issues
Billing	49	10,628
Billing > High	9	1,953
Billing > Error	8	1,828
Billing > Meter	6	1,330
Transfer	14	2,999
Transfer > Without Consent	4	796
Transfer > Contract Terms	3	621
Transfer > Site Ownership	2	445
Credit	13	2,870
Credit > Payment Difficulties	5	1,128
Credit > Disconnection / Restriction	5	1,057
Credit > Collection	3	685
Customer Service	7	1,506
Customer Service > Failure to Respond	3	560
Customer Service > Poor Service	2	424
Customer Service > Incorrect Advice / Information	<1	170
Provision	6	1,357
Provision > Existing Connection	3	651
Provision > New Connection	2	478
Provision > Disconnection / Restriction	1	228
Marketing	4	881
Marketing > Misleading	2	487
Marketing > Information	<1	150
Marketing > Pressure Sales	<1	135
Supply	4	821
Supply > Off Supply - Unplanned	3	571
Supply > Variation	<1	113
Supply > Off Supply - Planned	<1	97
General Enquiry	2	476
Land	1	313
Land > Network Assets	<1	187
Land > Other	<1	67
Land > Vegetation Management	<1	29
Total issues		21,851

NOTE:
Some cases raised more than one issue.

Figure 14: On average, how much time did we spend on each type of electricity case?



NOTE:
Only a small percentage of complaint investigations were finalised at Level 2 or Level 3.

Figure 15: How did we finalise electricity enquiries?

		%
Provided general information and referred to company	760	54
Provided general information	449	32
Referred to a Regulator	114	8
Referred to another Ombudsman	30	2
Referred to Government/MP	16	1
Referred elsewhere	40	3
Total	1,409	100



Figure 16: On average, how many days did it take to finalise electricity complaint investigations?

Electricity industry overall average (days)						59
Retail						
AGL Sales						57
Aurora Energy						149
Australian Power & Gas						53
Click Energy						64
Country Energy						24
Jackgreen						61
Momentum Energy						57
Origin Energy						60
Our Neighbourhood Energy						14
Powerdirect						60
Red Energy						64
Simply Energy						63
TRUenergy						63
Victoria Electricity						43
Retail average						58
Distribution						
Alinta AE						84
CitiPower						88
Powercor Australia						87
SP AusNet						50
United Energy Distribution						90
Distribution average						79
	30	60	90	120	150	

NOTES:

397 electricity complaint investigations were upgraded to Level 2 during the year. 103 investigations were upgraded to Level 3.

List excludes scheme participants for whom no investigations were finalised by EWOV in 2007-08.

Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

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

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

Figure 17: How many electricity complaint investigations were finalised within 28, 60 and 90 days?

		%
Within 28 days	1,304	37
Within 60 days	2,335	67
Within 90 days	2,807	80
Above 90 days	704	20
Total	3,511	100

Electricity case studies⁴

C/2008/6843

Understanding a new interval meter

In mid-January 2008, Mr G received a higher than usual electricity bill of \$534.16. When he queried it, he was told it was estimated. Mr G asked for further information. He said the retailer undertook to provide him this — including the actual reads for his interval meter — but didn't ever come back to him.

Contacted by EWOV, the retailer initially said the electricity distributor had substituted Mr G's meter data, using an industry-approved methodology — and that this led to the estimated bill. It turned out that the retailer had, in fact, obtained the actual meter data from the distributor in January 2008 — when it tried to load the data into its billing system, an error caused Mr G's account not to be updated. As a result of our investigation, Mr G received replacement bills based on actual data. His account was credited with \$72.93, the meter read fee was waived and he was given three months to pay the bill. We also explained to Mr G that interval meters are read differently from the older accumulation meters — a probe downloads data about usage — there's no 'reading' as such of the numbers on the meter.

Interval meters are very topical, given that the rollout of them across Victoria will start from mid-2009. Substituted data and customers wanting reads on their bills are issues we see frequently in these cases. Customers expect to be able to double-check the 'read' figures on their bills. In the absence of other information about their usage, they can find the billing from an interval meter confusing.

C/2006/9835

Setting up solar generation

In May 2005, Mr D installed solar panels. His meter was also updated to a new interval meter. Although he'd entered into a solar generation contract with an electricity retailer in April 2005, Mr D received no bills until May 2006 — when he received three bills and advice of a billing delay. There was no mention of solar generation, he thought the bills were too high and he wanted the billing delay explained.

Despite trying for several months, Mr D couldn't get answers. The retailer also direct-debited the entire disputed amount from his bank account — despite assurances that the bill would be put on hold.

Contacted by EWOV, the retailer initially said Mr D wasn't receiving any buyback credits for the solar generation he fed into to the grid. It didn't believe the bills were high — but conceded they may be higher than expected, as the buyback credits weren't applied.

The retailer subsequently advised that Mr D was on a 'net' metering arrangement — the buyback credits were accounted for in the 'net' usage shown on his bill. It said the bills were accurate — with Mr D's meter tested and working correctly for his arrangement.

We set up an on-site meeting, attended by the retailer, the distributor, an independent technical advisor, a representative of the company which installed the solar panels and Mr D. This gave all parties a common understanding of 'net' vs 'gross' metering. While it helped to clarify the issues, it also raised questions about the data the meter was recording — and the data the retailer was receiving from the distributor.

We worked out that the meter was recording correctly and correct data was being provided to the retailer by the distributor. However, the retailer wasn't interpreting the data correctly and, in turn, incorrectly billing Mr D — and other customers in the same position.

A systems change was put in place by the retailer to ensure customers with 'net' metering would be billed accurately — with the buyback credits shown on their bills. It re-billed Mr D including a buyback credit of \$451 for a 31 month period. It also credited an outstanding balance on his account of some \$340, in recognition of the inconvenience caused and the length of time it took to resolve the matter. Mr D was satisfied with this and happy that he now understood the way his metering worked.

With an increasing number of customers having solar power installed, there's a growing need for energy company staff to be well informed about solar generation matters. Our investigation of this long-running complaint also led to the identification and rectification of a systemic issue — as all customers of the retailer who had 'net' metering in that distributor's area weren't being billed correctly.



"On-site meetings are great. They really clarify the issues."

Vanessa Vega, Conciliation Team Manager

⁴ Case studies demonstrate the range of electricity complaints received and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. The initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer in each case.

Gas

6,279 cases

up **61%** 7% enquiries and 93% complaints

Complaints

4,218 referred to company and 1,304 EWOV investigations finalised

Common issues

billing 47% and transfer 16%

Cases by sector

natural gas retail 92% and distribution 4%, LPG 2%

EWOV had 18 gas industry scheme participants at 1 July 2008 — 9 natural gas retailers, 4 natural gas distributors and 5 LPG retailers. EWOV has handled natural gas cases since March 1999 and LPG (liquefied petroleum gas, or bottled gas) cases since July 2005.

All natural gas customers in Victoria (1,634,871 domestic customers and 44,940 business customers⁵) can choose their natural gas retailer. They can't choose their natural gas distributor, because each distribution company owns the network of pipes in a specific part of the state.

Three 'local' natural gas retailers each have a part of Victoria where they must offer to sell natural gas to customers. They can also sell to customers across the state generally — in competition with all other natural gas retailers.

Customers using LPG at home, or in their business, can choose to purchase it from LPG retailers or resellers operating in their area. EWOV's jurisdiction extends to 5 LPG retailers only.

In the mid-1990s, Victoria's natural gas retail and distribution sectors were corporatised then privatised. Regulatory oversight is the responsibility of the Essential Services Commission, Victoria. This is transitioning to the Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Energy Market Commission.

All natural gas retailers and distributors operating in Victoria are required by their operating licences to participate in an Ombudsman scheme. EWOV membership is also a requirement for the LPG retailers that volunteer to comply with the Victorian *LPG Retail Code*.

⁵ Essential Services Commission's Energy Retail Business Comparative Performance Report for the 2006-07 Financial Year, December 2007, page 3

Figure 18: How many gas cases did EWOV receive and finalise in 2007/08?

		Total cases		Enquiries	Total Complaints	Complaints				investigations finalised
		2007/08	2006/07			complaints referred elsewhere and other complaints*	complaints referred to company	complaints referred to higher-level contact at company**	complaints received for investigation	
NATURAL GAS RETAIL		customer bandwidths^								
AGL Sales	☺☺	2,611	947	78	2,533	68	327	1,421	717	652
AGL Sales (Queensland) »	☺	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australian Power & Gas	☺	24	0	1	23	1	6	10	6	6
Origin Energy	☺☺☺	1,387	1,242	108	1,279	35	237	723	284	292
Red Energy *	☺	36	-	1	35	0	10	22	3	3
Simply Energy #	☺	758	1,242	59	699	102	226	299	72	71
TRUenergy	☺☺	671	720	25	646	23	125	370	128	135
Victoria Electricity	☺	281	234	16	265	5	42	141	77	76
Total retail		5,768	3,456	288	5,480	234	973	2,986	1,287	1,235
NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION		% customers~								
Envestra	(30%)	56	33	5	51	2	15	19	15	18
Multinet Gas	(39%)	85	44	14	71	3	20	38	10	8
SP AusNet	(31%)	110	52	7	103	3	28	55	17	14
Total distribution		251	129	26	225	8	63	112	42	40
NON COMPANY SPECIFIC										
Natural gas		127	140	73	54	32	22	-	-	-
LPG		9	14	4	5	5	-	-	-	-
LPG (RETAILER SPECIFIC)										
Elgas		63	60	11	52	9	10	17	16	20
Kleenheat		45	56	13	32	1	15	12	4	5
Origin Energy LPG		12	11	0	12	2	3	4	3	3
Powergas		1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Supagas		3	19	1	2	0	1	0	1	1
Total LPG (retailer specific)		124	149	26	98	12	29	33	24	29
GAS TOTALS		6,279	3,888	417	5,862	291	1,087	3,131	1,353	1,304

NOTES:

Reflects data run at 15 July 2008. Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

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

+ 190 complaints were referred elsewhere. 101 other complaint issues did not require referral or investigation.

** 1,428 of the 3,131 gas complaints referred back to a higher-level contact would normally have been investigated, but for an interim complaint receipt process of offering customers a final opportunity for direct resolution, if they agree.

» AGL Sales (Queensland) was formerly Sun Gas Retail, which was in turn formerly ENERGEX Retail.

* Red Energy joined EWOV as a gas retail scheme participant on 25 October 2007.

Prior to 1 August 2007, Simply Energy was EA-IPR Retail Partnership.

^ Customer bandwidths: ☺ denotes less than 250,000 customers at 30 June 2008; ☺☺ 250,001 - 500,000 customers; ☺☺☺ 500,001 - 750,000 customers; ☺☺☺☺ 750,001 - 1,000,000 customers. This is based on information provided to EWOV by each natural gas retailer. LPG customer numbers are not currently available.

~ Natural gas distributors' customer shares are based on 2006 customer numbers in the ESC's *Gas Distribution Businesses - Comparative Performance Report 2006* (October 2007).

Figure 19: How is gas case receipt trending? What issues arise most commonly?

Trend data

	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008
Gas total	3,882	3,528	3,888	6,279
Natural gas retail	3,568	3,096	3,456	5,768
Natural gas distribution	169	205	129	251
LPG (retailer specific)	-	89	149	124

Most common issues

	%	Issues
Billing	47	3,815
Billing > Error	9	734
Billing > Fees & Charges	7	530
Billing > High	6	469
Transfer	16	1,284
Transfer > Without Consent	4	290
Transfer > Contract Terms	3	263
Transfer > Site Ownership	2	184
Credit	14	1,099
Credit > Disconnection / Restriction	6	492
Credit > Payment Difficulties	5	383
Credit > Collection	3	212
Provision	10	813
Provision > New Connection	4	362
Provision > Existing Connection	4	360
Provision > Disconnection / Restriction	1	90
Customer Service	8	621
Customer Service > Failure to Respond	3	219
Customer Service > Poor Service	2	184
Customer Service > Incorrect Advice / Information	<1	76
Marketing	2	147
Marketing > Misleading	1	81
Marketing > Pressure Sales	<1	26
Marketing > Non Account Holder	<1	17
Supply	2	125
Supply > Off Supply - Unplanned	<1	58
Supply > Quality	<1	46
Supply > Variation	<1	15
Land	1	96
Land > Network Assets	<1	54
Land > Other	<1	34
Land > Cylinder (LPG)	<1	3
General Enquiry	1	95
Total issues		8,095

NOTE:
Some cases raised more than one issue.

Figure 20: On average, how much time did we spend on each type of gas case?

	minutes
Enquiries	14
Complaints referred elsewhere	16
Complaints referred to company	18
Complaints referred to higher-level contact	25
Complaint investigations finalised at Level 1	169
Complaint investigations finalised at Level 2	288
Complaint investigations finalised at Level 3	323

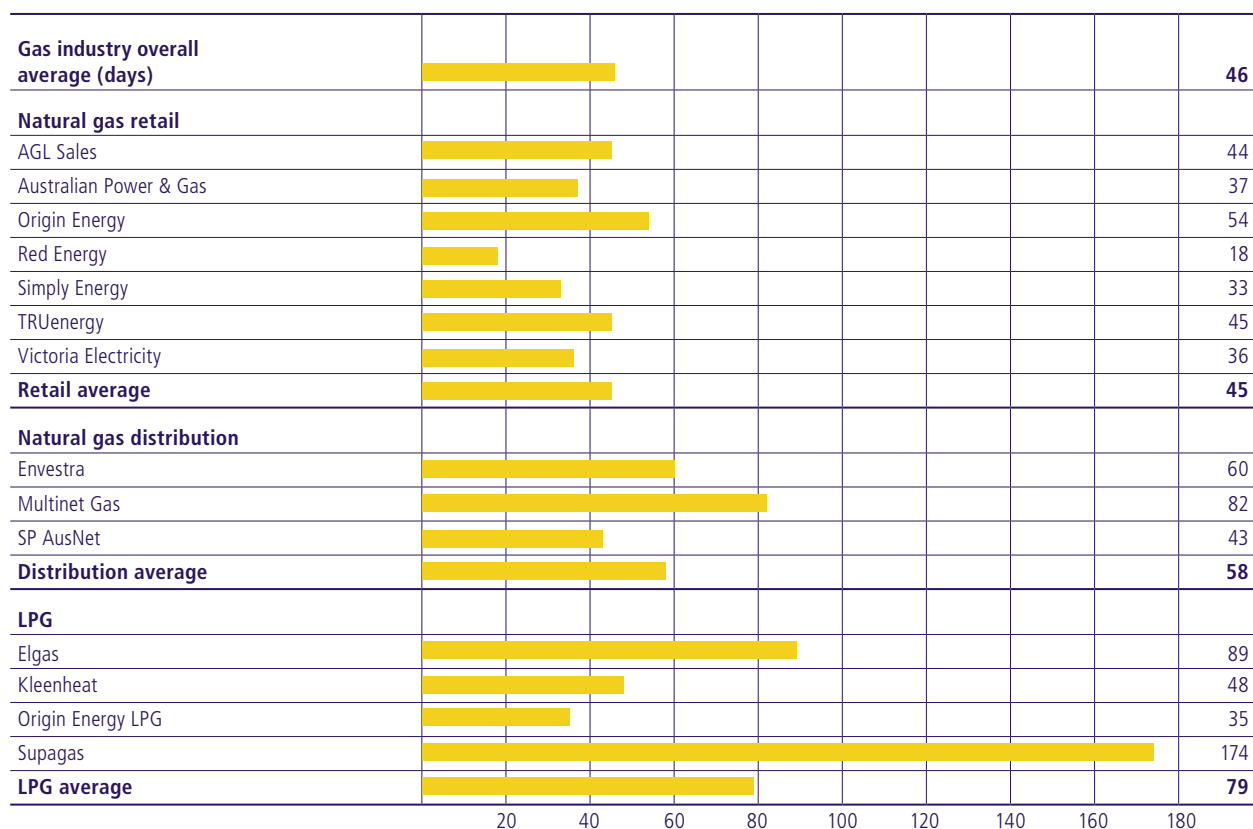
NOTE:
Only a small percentage of complaint investigations were finalised at Level 2 or Level 3.

Figure 21: How did we finalise gas enquiries?

		%
Provided general information and referred to company	259	62
Provided general information	122	29
Referred to a Regulator	20	5
Referred to another Ombudsman	3	1
Referred to Government/MP	2	<1
Referred elsewhere	11	3
Total	417	100



Figure 22: On average, how many days did it take to close gas complaint investigations?



NOTES:

108 gas complaint investigations were upgraded to Level 2 during the year. 31 investigations were upgraded to Level 3.

List excludes scheme participants for whom no investigations were finalised by EWOV in 2007-08.

Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

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

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

Figure 23: How many gas complaint investigations were finalised within 28, 60 and 90 days?

		%
Within 28 days	552	42
Within 60 days	975	75
Within 90 days	1,144	88
Above 90 days	160	12
Total	1,304	100

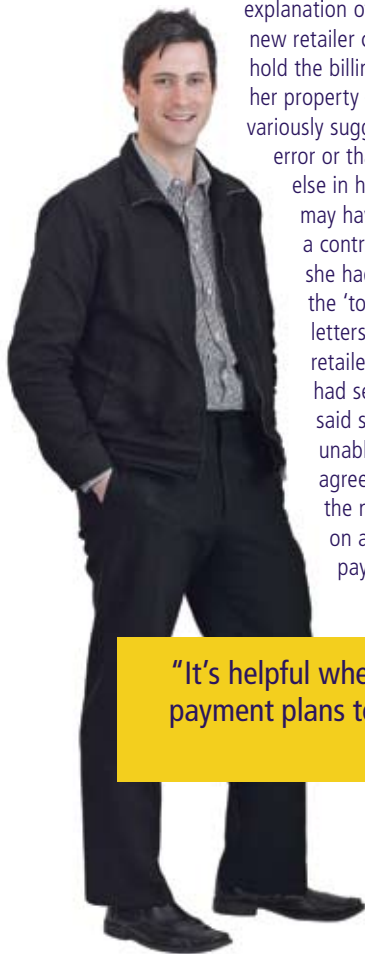
G/2008/4444

Disconnection confusion

In mid-2008, the gas supply to Ms V's unit was disconnected. When she phoned the gas retailer which had been billing her, she was told it had discovered that another gas retailer was responsible for her property — and had been for the previous 12 months. Ms V was told she'd receive a refund of around \$513 for the bills she'd paid.

The retailer then referred her to the new gas retailer. The new retailer reconnected Ms V's gas supply the next day — but also told her she owed around \$1,180 for she'd gas used in the previous 13 months.

Ms V was dissatisfied that her gas supply had been disconnected — and that she hadn't been given a clear explanation of how the new retailer came to hold the billing rights for her property — it had variously suggested a site error or that someone else in her household may have agreed to a contract. She said she hadn't received the 'to the occupier' letters the new retailer told her it had sent. She also said she'd been unable to reach agreement with the new retailer on an affordable payment plan.



"It's helpful when retailers offer incentive payment plans to customers in hardship."

Nicholas Butcher, Conciliator

In response to our investigation, the new retailer advised it had transferred Ms V's property to itself in error in June 2007 — the meter identification registration number (MIRN) for her property had mistakenly been attached to another property's address — the other address should have been transferred, not Ms V's.

Our investigation found that no wrongful disconnection payment (WDP) applied in Ms V's case — the new retailer had, prior to the disconnection of her gas supply, sent the requisite letters and warnings.

Nevertheless, the new retailer recognised the inconvenience caused to Ms V and her family — it credited her account with \$270, equivalent to what the WDP would have been.

In line with the *Energy Retail Code*, it also limited its recovery of the outstanding charges to the previous 9 months, rather than the full 13 months. This further reduced the amount outstanding to \$436.

To address the \$436 arrears and her ongoing usage, Ms V agreed to an incentive payment plan of \$40 a fortnight, using Centrepay — for every 3 consecutive fortnightly payments of \$40 she made, the new retailer would credit her account with \$40. She also entered the new retailer's hardship programme, was provided with a Utility Relief Grant application form, and was offered a free home energy audit.

Site errors in retailers' billing systems can cause significant customer inconvenience and dissatisfaction. In this complaint,

however, a substantial resolution was achieved — with the cause of the site error clarified, the account arrears

significantly reduced and the customer connecting with the new gas retailer's hardship team.

G/2008/2509

Meter confusion

In November 2007, Mr and Mrs H began to receive bills from a different gas retailer — the bills cited a meter number different from that on their usual bills. They were also receiving bills from their usual gas retailer.

When Mrs H rang the second retailer to query the bills, she was told that, according to its data, the meter was installed at their property in November 2007 — so they were responsible for the payments.

In its first response to EWOV, the retailer said it received a 'meter fix' request in Mr H's name in November 2007. It also said that, when Mrs H rang, it had arranged a cross-meter investigation to confirm the correct meter identification registration number (MIRN) and meter number for their property. It admitted there'd been a delay in completing this.

Once the retailer's investigation was completed, it was found that the meter was actually installed on a neighboring property — the account in Mr H's name was closed and all bills sent to him reversed.

The matter was clarified further when Mrs H advised that her husband had been assisting with the building of the neighbouring property in a professional capacity — and had ordered the meter for his neighbour through the second retailer. It seems that, as the order was in Mr H's name, the retailer had linked it to his address and billed him accordingly.

Retailers commonly rely on the data they have in their systems, which are centralised and managed nationally — this includes MIRN and meter number information. Sometimes, a meter inspection is the fastest way to resolve this type of dispute.

⁶ Case studies demonstrate the range of gas complaints received and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. The initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer in each case.

Dual fuel

400 cases **down 7%** 7% enquiries and 93% complaints

Complaints 281 referred to company and 63 EWOV investigations finalised

Common issues billing 39% and transfer 26%

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

At 30 June 2008, seven energy retailers offered dual fuel — that is, electricity and natural gas — in Victoria.

Dual fuel cases are those where the customer's complaint isn't specifically related to either electricity or natural gas. A customer may, for example, be complaining about the general conduct of a salesperson selling a dual fuel (electricity and natural gas) contract.

Where a customer has a dual fuel contract, but their issue is specific to either electricity or natural gas, we take the case as electricity or natural gas, not as dual fuel.



Figure 24: How many dual fuel cases did EWOV receive and finalise in 2007/08?

	Total cases		Enquiries	Total Complaints	Complaints				investigations finalised
	2007/08	2006/07			complaints referred elsewhere and other complaints [†]	complaints referred to company	complaints referred to higher-level contact at company ^{**}	complaints received for investigation	
DUAL FUEL									
AGL Sales	91	53	2	89	3	10	59	17	12
Australian Power & Gas	5	0	1	4	1	0	1	2	0
Origin Energy	28	62	2	26	1	5	17	3	3
Red Energy*	11	-	0	11	2	4	5	0	0
Simply Energy [#]	17	38	2	15	1	7	7	0	0
TRUenergy	76	143	3	73	4	7	48	14	18
Victoria Electricity	165	115	10	155	9	28	83	35	30
Non company specific	7	18	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTALS	400	429	27	373	21	61	220	71	63

NOTES:

Reflects data run at 15 July 2008. Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

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

[†] 8 complaints were referred elsewhere. 13 other complaint issues did not require referral or investigation.

^{**} 101 of the 220 dual fuel complaints referred back to a higher-level contact would normally have been investigated, but for an interim complaint receipt process of offering customers a final opportunity for direct resolution, if they agree.

* Red Energy joined EWOV as a gas retail scheme participant on 25 October 2007 and has since offered dual fuel.

[#] Prior to 1 August 2007, Simply Energy was EA-IPR Retail Partnership.

Figure 25: How are dual fuel cases trending? What issues arise most commonly?

Trend data

	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008
Dual fuel	529	296	429	400

Most common issues

	%	Issues
Billing	39	196
Transfer	26	131
Marketing	16	81
Customer Service	9	44
Credit	8	38
General Enquiry	2	8
Total issues		498

NOTE:

Some cases raised more than one issue.

Figure 26: On average, how much time did we spend on each type of dual fuel case?

	minutes
Enquiries	15
Complaints referred elsewhere	13
Complaints referred to company	20
Complaints referred to higher-level contact	25
Complaint investigations finalised at Level 1	134
Complaint investigations finalised at Level 2	169

NOTE:

Only a small percentage of complaint investigations were finalised at Level 2, with none finalised at Level 3.

Figure 27: How did we finalise dual fuel enquiries?

		%
Provided general information and referred to company	14	52
Provided general information	10	37
Referred to a Regulator	2	7
Referred to another Ombudsman	1	4
Total	27	100

Figure 28: On average, how many days did it take to close dual fuel complaint investigations?

AGL Sales	26
Origin Energy	33
TRUenergy	41
Victoria Electricity	24
Average (days)	30

10 20 30 40 50

NOTES:

5 dual fuel complaint investigations were upgraded to Level 2 during the year. 1 investigation was upgraded to level 3, but not finalised in 2007-08.

List excludes scheme participants for whom no investigations were finalised by EWOV in 2007-08.

Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

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

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

Figure 29: How many dual fuel complaint investigations were finalised within 28, 60 and 90 days?

		%
Within 28 days	38	60
Within 60 days	54	86
Within 90 days	60	95
Above 90 days	3	5
Total	63	100

Dual fuel case studies⁷

F/2007/434

Billing systems confusion

In April 2007, Mr F signed a dual fuel contract — persuaded by a promised 5% rebate. In September 2007, he received a bill for \$260.30, but no rebate. The retailer agreed a rebate of \$52.59 was payable and said it would be given.

Mr F paid the remaining \$207.71. But, his next bill showed \$52.59 carried forward and unpaid. He said he rang the company, was on hold for over 20 minutes, and then couldn't get through.

Mr F's initial contact with EWOV was taken as a 'complaint referred to higher-level contact' — but he wasn't phoned as he should have been. He came back to us and we took his complaint for investigation.

The retailer explained that its installation of a new billing system has caused call centre problems. It apologised for the inconvenience caused and confirmed the 5% discount would be applied to Mr F's future bills. It also credited his account with the \$52.59. Mr F was satisfied with the resolution, particularly the company's apology.

Companies installing new systems must get on the front foot as far as anticipating problems and dealing with them effectively. This was one of multiple complaints EWOV received about one energy retailer's call centre congestion. This followed a billing system installation which inconvenienced and dissatisfied some customers.

F/2007/166

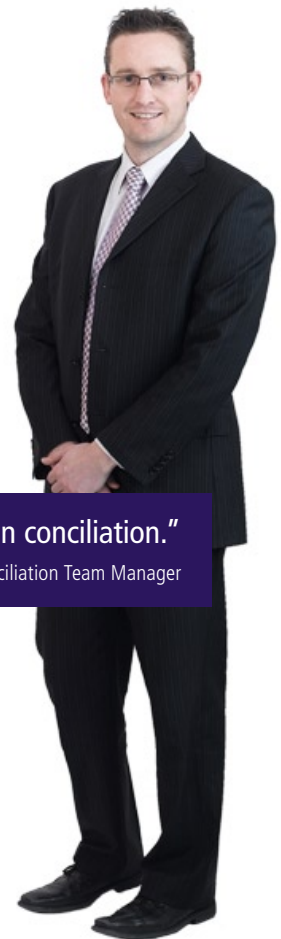
Consent wasn't fully informed

Ms T, an elderly customer, signed a dual fuel contract. She then received bills from her previous electricity and gas retailers, as well as the new dual fuel retailer.

Ms T said she'd been unsure what she was signing up for — and had twice rung the new retailer seeking to cancel the contract and revert to her previous arrangements. Unsure whether her request had been acted on, she rang EWOV. At that time, she was waiting on a final bill.

The dual fuel retailer apologised to Ms T and confirmed that it would send her no more bills. It said both of her accounts would be transferred back to her previous retailers — retrospectively and without a termination fee. It also made a customer service payment of \$50 in recognition of the inconvenience she'd been caused.

To ensure the customer's informed consent is given, retailers marketing to elderly customers should take extra care in explaining the terms of new contracts and the effects on their existing arrangements. This case also highlights the availability of a retrospective transfer—which backdates the transfer as if it didn't ever happen.



"An apology is an important tool in conciliation."

Matt Chable, Conciliation Team Manager

⁷ Case studies demonstrate the range of dual fuel complaints received and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. The initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer in each case.

Water

1,562 cases **up 5%** 20% enquiries and 80% complaints

Complaints 859 referred to company and 251 EWOV investigations finalised

Common issues billing 45% and land 15%

Cases by sector metro retail 58%, regional urban 26%, rural 6%

EWOV had 20 water industry scheme participants at 1 July 2008 — 3 metropolitan retailers, 1 metropolitan wholesaler, 11 regional urban water corporations, 3 rural water corporations and 2 rural urban water corporations. EWOV has handled water cases since April 2001.

Victoria's water businesses are state government-owned corporations. They operate in five sectors. All, except the metropolitan wholesaler, have both retail/billing and distribution/supply functions.

The Essential Services Commission is the economic regulator of the Victorian water industry.

All of the water companies are required by licence and/or legislation to participate in an Ombudsman scheme.

Figure 30: How many water cases did EWOV receive and finalise in 2007/08?

	Total cases		Enquiries	Total Complaints	Complaints					
	2007/08	2006/07			complaints referred elsewhere and other complaints*	complaints referred to company	complaints referred to higher-level contact at company**	complaints received for investigation	investigations finalised	
METROPOLITAN RETAIL										
	sector share									
City West Water	(20%)	380	374	43	337	15	90	151	81	72
South East Water	(39%)	190	209	26	164	9	59	67	29	29
Yarra Valley Water	(41%)	334	208	98	236	14	96	89	37	37
Total metropolitan retail water		904	791	167	737	38	245	307	147	138
METROPOLITAN WHOLESALE										
Melbourne Water		41	20	8	33	6	8	12	7	6
REGIONAL URBAN										
Barwon Water	(21%)	72	89	10	62	7	20	26	9	6
Central Highlands Water	(10%)	37	23	6	31	4	4	15	8	7
Coliban Water	(11%)	46	41	7	39	5	12	13	9	8
East Gippsland Water	(3%)	17	24	4	13	2	7	2	2	2
Gippsland Water	(10%)	37	33	8	29	4	7	12	6	7
Goulburn Valley Water	(9%)	40	22	8	32	3	7	16	6	5
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water	(5%)	20	33	2	18	2	2	9	5	4
Lower Murray Water	(5%)	28	6	4	24	0	8	10	6	4
North East Water	(7%)	22	21	6	16	2	3	6	5	7
South Gippsland Water	(3%)	10	24	2	8	1	5	2	0	0
Wannon Water	(6%)	29	26	2	27	5	6	10	6	5
Western Water	(8%)	36	45	10	26	4	8	10	4	3
Westernport Water	(2%)	16	28	2	14	2	2	4	6	8
Total regional urban water		410	415	71	339	41	91	135	72	66
RURAL										
First Mildura Irrigation Trust [^]	(5%)	7	1	0	7	1	1	3	2	2
Goulburn-Murray Water	(55%)	44	59	1	43	4	11	14	14	20
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water	(13%)	14	13	0	14	1	1	7	5	5
Lower Murray Water [^]	(7%)	16	5	1	15	0	2	6	7	5
Southern Rural Water	(21%)	16	32	1	15	2	3	4	6	9
Total rural water		97	110	3	94	8	18	34	34	41
Non company specific		110	148	63	47	38	9			
TOTALS		1,562	1,484	312	1,250	131	371	488	260	251

NOTES:

Reflects data run at 15 July 2008. Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

* 99 complaints were referred elsewhere. 32 other complaint issues did not require referral or investigation.

** 183 of the 488 water complaints referred back to a higher-level contact would normally have been investigated, but for an interim complaint receipt process of offering customers a final opportunity for direct resolution, if they agree.

Urban water companies' sector shares are based on the water customer numbers in the ESC's *Water Performance Report 2006-07* (April 2008).

Rural water companies' sector shares are based on customer numbers provided by the Victorian Water Industry Association.

[^] On 19 August 2008, the Minister for Water gazetted Determinations abolishing First Mildura Irrigation Trust and appointing Lower Murray Water to take over its powers, functions and duties.

Figure 31: How is water case receipt trending? What issues arise most commonly?

Case trends

	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008
Water overall	1,256	1,303	1,484	1,562
Metropolitan retail	678	675	791	904
Metropolitan wholesale	20	24	20	41
Regional urban	357	455	415	410
Rural	101	68	110	97
Rural urban *	54	69	57	78

NOTE:

* There are two rural urban water providers - Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water and Lower Murray Water. They were formed in July 2004.

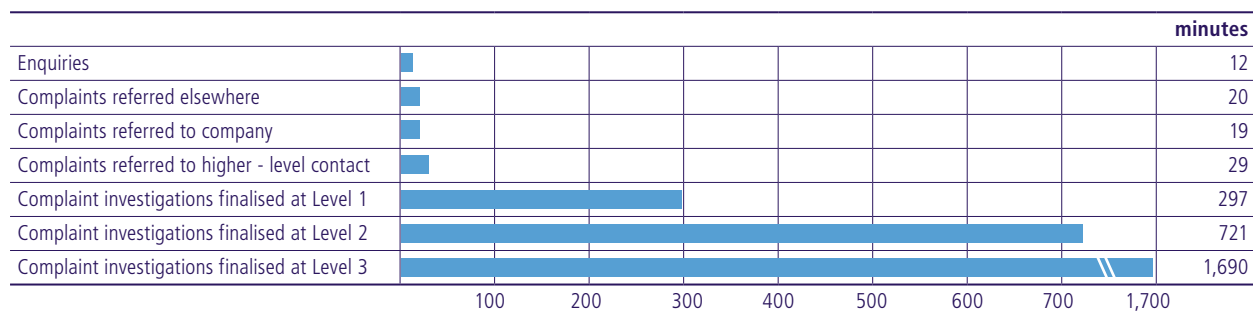
Most common issues

	%	Issues
Billing	45	849
Billing > Fees & Charges	11	212
Billing > High	9	175
Billing > Other	7	130
Land	15	277
Land > Network Assets	7	135
Land > Other	6	113
Land > Easement	1	23
Supply	14	253
Supply > Water Licensing	4	70
Supply > Quality	2	46
Supply > Sewer / Stormwater Overflow / Blockage	2	42
Credit	8	153
Credit > Payment Difficulties	4	66
Credit > Collection	3	47
Credit > Disconnection / Restriction	2	40
General Enquiry	6	118
Customer Service	6	111
Customer Service > Failure to Respond	2	31
Customer Service > Poor Service	2	29
Customer Service > Incorrect Advice / Information	1	19
Provision	6	108
Provision > New Connection	3	52
Provision > Existing Connection	3	51
Provision > Disconnection / Restriction	<1	5
Total issues		1,869

NOTE:

Some cases raised more than one issue.

Figure 32: On average, how much time did we spend on each type of water case?



NOTE:

Only a small percentage of complaint investigations were finalised at Level 2 or Level 3.

Figure 33: How did we finalise water enquiries?

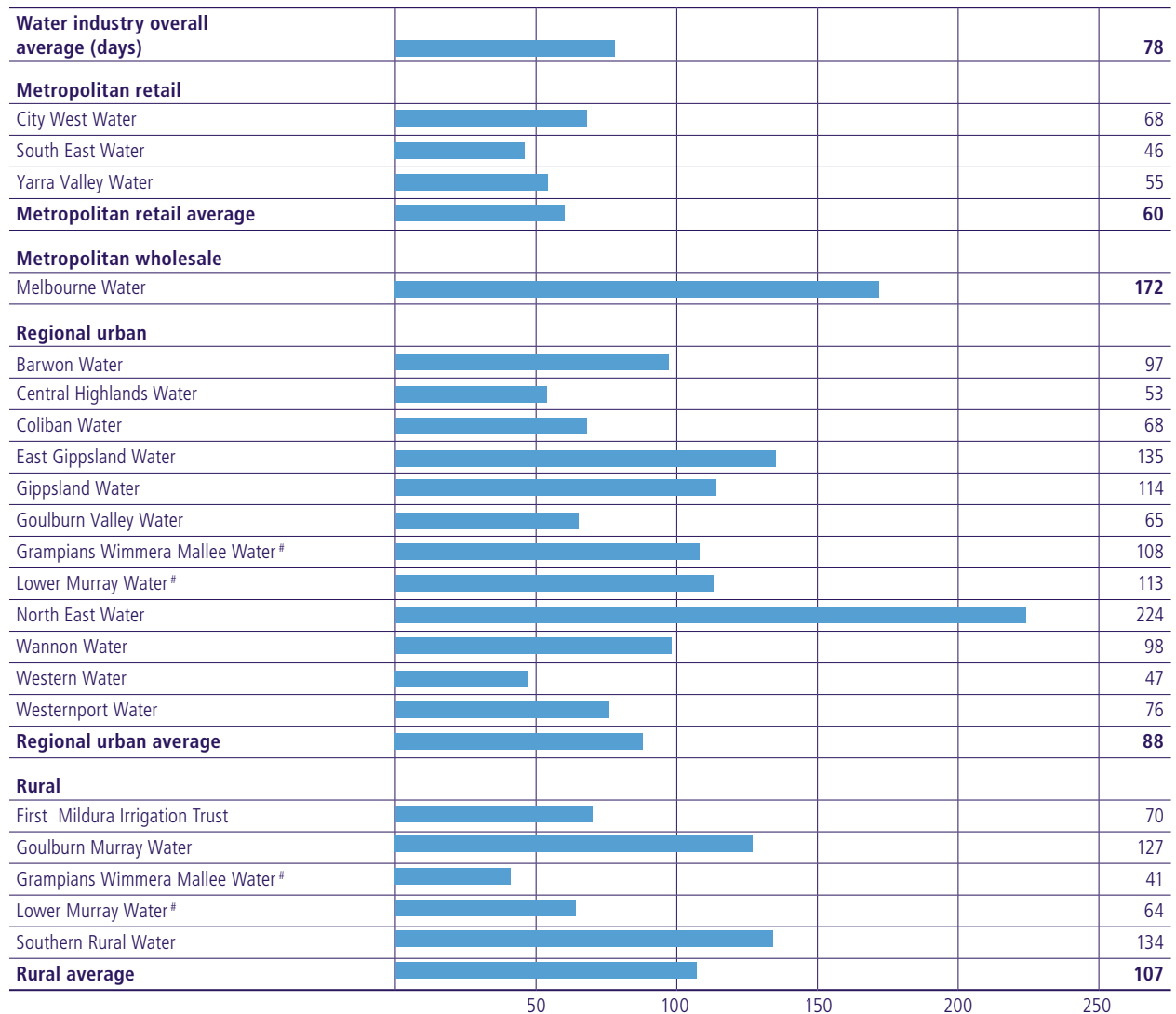
		%
Provided general information and referred to company	196	63
Provided general information	68	22
Referred to a Regulator	19	6
Referred to another Ombudsman	2	1
Referred to Government/MP	15	5
Referred elsewhere	12	4
Total	312	100

Figure 34: How many water complaint investigations were finalised within 28, 60 and 90 days?

		%
Within 28 days	82	33
Within 60 days	152	61
Within 90 days	184	73
Above 90 days	67	27
Total	251	100



Figure 35: On average, how many days did it take to close water complaint investigations?



NOTES:

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water and Lower Murray Water are rural urban water companies. Their urban and rural cases are separated here for sector share purposes.

28 water complaint investigations were upgraded to Level 2 during the year. 3 investigations were upgraded to Level 3.

List excludes scheme participants for whom no investigations were finalised by EWOV in 2007-08.

Some of the complaints which were investigated and finalised were received prior to July 2007.

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

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

Water case studies⁸

W/2008/193

Years of legal action

In July 2005, Ms P reported a blocked sewer. Water company staff were sent out that day (Friday) and the next (Saturday), but it couldn't be cleared — she was told contractors would be back on Monday to make repairs. When Ms P rang on Sunday to say the sewer was blocked again, the contractor went out, but couldn't get it working.

Next morning, the sewer was dug up. Broken pipes were found on the house connection branch and cracked pipes on the reticulation sewer. The entire length of the branch and several pipe lengths of the reticulation were replaced. Work was completed early Tuesday morning.

The company also put in an inspection shaft, in place of the previous buried inspection opening. It said this would enable ready identification of any future blockages — and was in line with current plumbing regulations which require inspection shafts in new properties.

It seems Ms P's son didn't appreciate the inspection shaft being installed. He ordered the workers off the property — even though the normal site clean-up hadn't been completed.

For some three years, the water company, Ms P and her lawyer exchanged letters without resolution. Ms P said a side fence came down for bobcat access, a house step was broken and she lost fruit trees. The water company said it tried to explain that the inspection shaft was to her advantage — and it had to get access to her property to complete its works. Ms P, through her lawyer, claimed trespass and damages. There were offers and rejections of compensation. In July 2007, the water company made a final offer and gave Ms P 14 days to respond.

When we received this complaint, we looked for a way to move the issue forward, given it had been ongoing for close to three years. The water company had offered what it considered was a generous offer of \$3,500 to cover Ms P's legal costs and incidentals.

We asked Ms P to substantiate the \$5,000 she was claiming. We discussed actual losses with her, including her expenditure of some \$3,000 on legal assistance.

We discussed EWOV's process of conciliation — how the water company's offer would be oriented towards restoring things to how they were, while not disadvantaging her. We also discussed what could be considered fair and reasonable.

The complaint was resolved. Through EWOV, the water company contacted Ms P directly to arrange a time when its staff could inspect and rectify any sewerage pipe damage. It confirmed it would pay for removal of the inspection shaft, rectify any damage to the step and fence, supply topsoil, and grass all affected areas. It also made an ex-gratia payment of \$3,500 to Ms P in full and final settlement.

While direct personal contact with this customer by the water company much earlier on may have achieved a resolution, it was evident she had an unrealistic expectation of the outcome. She also appeared more oriented towards litigation than informal resolution. The case highlights EWOV's role in reality-testing customer perspectives, where necessary, to bring matters back into the realm of what is fair and reasonable.



"Conciliation and compromise often go hand in hand."

William Smith, Conciliator

W/2007/640

Differences over compulsory metering

Ms R was unhappy with the charge for installation of a compulsory irrigation meter and doubted it was appropriate for her needs.

Unable to resolve this issue with the company directly, she phoned EWOV. Contacted by us, the water company said the meter was the most appropriate one available. It also offered Ms R a 10% discount and a three month payment plan.

We checked and confirmed the water company's right to charge for the installation. We sought advice about best practice consultation — and how labour and equipment costs had been calculated.

We explained to Ms R how the meter met her needs. While she remained dissatisfied with the costs, she accepted that the company had made an effort to accommodate her.

We also identified for the water company the aspects of the meter that prevented Ms R from using it effectively. A representative of the water company met with Ms R at her property — modifications were agreed, with both parties contributing to the costs.

In resolution, the company waived \$150 in costs and Ms R agreed to make four monthly instalments of \$530.34 — the first on settlement and the remainder once the modifications were finished.

An on-site meeting provides the parties with an opportunity to discuss their needs on a more personal level. In this case, it resulted in a creative outcome that met the specific requirements of the site. It also facilitated a compromise between the parties which may not have been possible otherwise.

⁸ Case studies demonstrate the range of water complaints received and the outcomes achieved through EWOV investigation. The initials used have no relevance to the name of the actual customer in each case.

INCOME STATEMENT

For the year ended 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
Revenue	6,015,900	5,778,360
Employee benefits expense	(4,284,629)	(3,821,870)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(168,121)	(169,451)
Rental expense	(355,700)	(366,128)
Administration expenses	(782,575)	(646,598)
Consultancy expenses	(387,586)	(408,556)
Marketing expenses	(216,587)	(138,175)
Training & development	(136,517)	(105,820)
Profit/(loss) before income tax expense	(315,815)	121,762
Income tax expense	-	-
Profit/(loss) attributable to members of the entity	(315,815)	121,762

BALANCE SHEET

As at 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,357,424	1,401,658
Trade and other receivables	2,640	23,246
Other	62,357	34,496
Total Current Assets	1,422,421	1,459,400
Non-Current Assets		
Plant and equipment	493,550	494,945
Total Non-Current Assets	493,550	494,945
Total Assets	1,915,971	1,954,345
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	698,711	495,564
Provisions	311,466	237,171
Total Current Liabilities	1,010,177	732,735
Total Liabilities	1,010,177	732,735
Net Assets	905,794	1,221,610
Members' Equity		
Retained earnings	905,794	1,221,610
Total Members' Equity	905,794	1,221,610

CASHFLOW STATEMENT

For the year ended 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Levy receipts from Members (inclusive of goods and services tax)	6,677,420	6,271,209
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods and services tax)	(6,627,738)	(6,083,535)
Interest received	72,811	77,261
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities	122,493	264,935
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Payments for plant and equipment	(166,727)	(271,969)
Net cash outflow from investing activities	(166,727)	(271,969)
Net Decrease in Cash Held	(44,234)	(7,034)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the Financial Year	1,401,658	1,408,692
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the Financial Year	1,357,424	1,401,658

Acronyms used in this report

ACCC – Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

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 & Investments Commission

CAV – Consumer Affairs Victoria

ESC – Essential Services Commission

EWOV – Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)

EWON – Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

KPI – Key performance indicator

LPG – Liquefied Petroleum Gas, also known as bottled gas

MCE – Ministerial Council on Energy

MIRN – Meter identification registration number

NEMMCO – National Electricity Market Management Company

VENCorp – Victorian Energy Networks Corporation

WDP – Wrongful disconnection payment

Contacting EWOV

EWOV can help if you have a problem with an electricity, gas or water company which you can't resolve directly with that company. Our services are free and available to everyone. Calls from restricted phone services — ring 12550 (Telstra reverse charges) and ask for (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.

Freecall: **1800 500 509**

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 3001



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Ombudsman (Victoria)**

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