

About EWOV

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) is an external dispute resolution scheme, operating on an independent industry-based Ombudsman model. Our services are free to customers.

We can assist with most issues that arise between customers and electricity, gas and water companies—including the provision and supply of a service, the failure to provide or supply a service, billing, credit, payment arrangements, disconnection and restriction, marketing, transfer, poles, wires, pipes, meters, vegetation management and land.

We provide impartial advice, information and referral in response to enquiries.

We use alternative dispute resolution processes to resolve energy and water complaints independently, informally and speedily. Our aim is to achieve fair and reasonable outcomes, having regard to good industry practice and the law.

From the cases we receive, we identify potential systemic issues and, as appropriate, report these to the relevant energy or water company and industry regulator.

We put information about energy and water complaints, issues and trends into the public arena. We work with energy and water companies, regulators and consumer groups to drive customer service improvements and help prevent complaints.

Our policies and processes comply with the *Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution Schemes (National Benchmarks)* 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 vision

EWOV will provide a wholly impartial and highly esteemed dispute resolution service for Victorian energy and water consumers and our scheme participants. The strength of our stakeholder relationships is paramount and our scheme will be respected by customers, energy and water companies, consumer groups, regulators and government. We will be an employer of choice.

Our mission

We will achieve our vision by:

- persistently maintaining our independence and high professional standards
- living our cultural values
- continually evolving as an organisation to implement the most effective and efficient processes
- continuously benchmarking our performance against world's best practice
- ensuring consumers have an awareness of their rights and responsibilities
- enhancing customers' capability and knowledge
- assisting energy and water providers to generate the sustainable resolution of complaints
- recognising that our staff remain the heart of our scheme and providing them with support, encouragement and the environment to succeed
- remaining vigilant of, and responsive to, changes within the industry landscape impacting on EWOV.

Our guiding principles

Independence: impartial complaint resolution not advocacy

Access: ready access for individual consumers

Equity: fairness to all parties

Quality: highest professional standards

Effectiveness: high calibre people, supported by training and technology

Efficiency: optimal resource use

Community awareness: community awareness building

Linkages: effective stakeholder links and working relationships



About this report

This Annual Report is prepared and distributed in accordance with the Ombudsman's responsibility under the *EWOV Charter* and the *National Benchmarks*

Included in this year's report is an overview of EWOV 2.0, our rethinking of EWOV. EWOV 2.0 was implemented in early 2012 after a tough, intensive, rethinking exercise and an incredibly valuable step-by-step objective analysis of everything we were doing and why. The result is a more responsive, flexible and efficient EWOV. The EWOV 2.0 review is a work in progress which continues into 2012-13, as we reflect on the changes and take feedback from our key stakeholders. Read more in the Ombudsman's report on pages 5-7.

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) 2012 Annual Report

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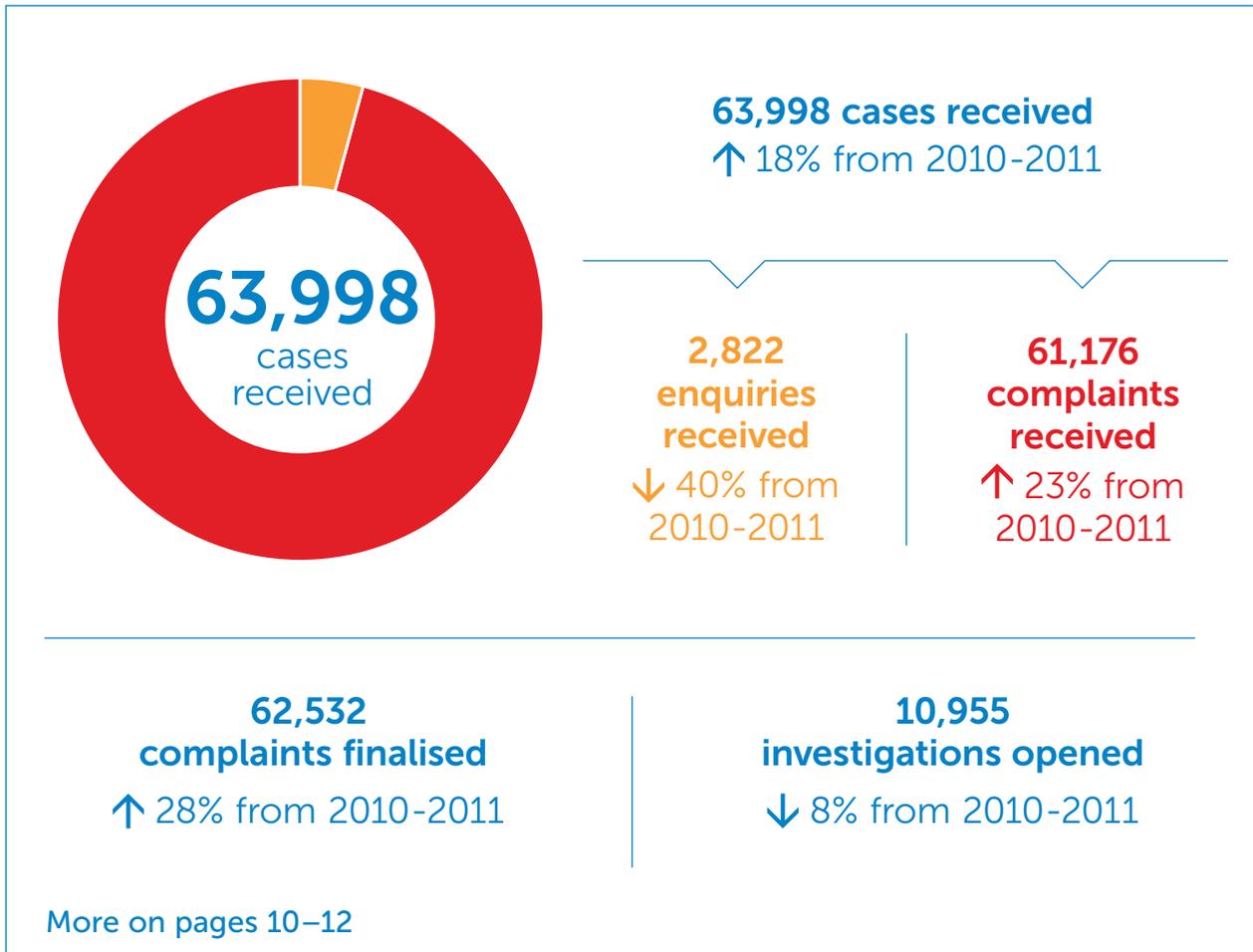
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Quick guide

A guide to acronyms, tables, graphs and charts used throughout the report



Cases





Customers and issues

60,101 residential customers

whose main issues were

- high bills
- supply disconnection or restriction for arrears
- provision at existing connections, largely metering
- the application of tariffs
- billing delays

3,682 business customers

whose main issues were

- high bills
- supply disconnection or restriction for arrears
- billing errors
- backbills
- estimated bills

215 not-for-profit/government customers

whose main issues were

- backbills
- the application of tariffs
- supply disconnection or restriction for arrears
- estimated bills
- high bills

More on pages 13–27



Investigation outcomes

12,279 investigations finalised

↑ 10% from 2010–2011

10,435 investigations conciliated

an 85% conciliation rate

6,504 apologies provided to customers

3,189 payment plans arranged

\$3,966,292 in redress for customers

\$1,874,435 in billing adjustments

\$1,611,204 in recognition of customer service issues

\$389,783 in debt reductions/waivers

\$54,872 in guaranteed service level payments

\$35,998 in waived fees

More on pages 28–29



By industry

47,790 electricity cases

↑ 26% from 2010–2011

54% billing

14% credit

12% provision

More on pages 34–38

13,485 gas cases

↑ 2% from 2010–2011

38% billing

25% credit

19% transfer

More on pages 39–43

2,282 water cases

↑ 2% from 2010–2011

62% billing

10% credit

10% land

More on pages 44–48

99 dual fuel cases

342 other industry cases

Given the significance of the changes within EWOV over the past year, the Board is delighted that the transitions have been achieved so smoothly.

As I foreshadowed in last year's annual report, founding Ombudsman, Fiona McLeod, resigned at the end of January 2012 to pursue non-executive directorships. As the Chair of EWOV Limited and before that the EWOV Council, I worked closely with Fiona for most of her time as Ombudsman. Her leadership at EWOV and indeed, within the wider Ombudsman community over some 16 years, was widely recognised and highly valued.

Following an extensive recruitment process, the Board appointed Cynthia Gebert as Ombudsman from 1 February 2012. Highly qualified in law and dispute resolution, Cynthia was most recently EWOV's General Manager Investigations, responsible for all of our scheme's dispute resolution processes. She has transitioned into the Ombudsman role impressively, demonstrating a strong commitment to impartiality and independence.

The change of Ombudsman occurred in the midst of the most extensive procedural changes EWOV had faced.

Despite significant operational expansion during 2010-11 to help the scheme deal with its growing workload, the beginning of the 2011-12 year saw complaint volumes continue to climb, causing a significant investigations backlog. Concerned that EWOV may be overwhelmed and that Victorian customers were not receiving timely dispute resolution, the Board was monitoring the scheme's key performance indicators carefully. In this context, in late August 2011, we agreed to the Ombudsman's proposal for an independent diagnosis of the situation EWOV found itself in and, on the basis of that, in late October 2011 we supported a full operational review.

To their enormous credit, our Ombudsmen delivered a remarkable and fundamental turnaround for customers and scheme participants. The Board is grateful they had the foresight and the leadership to embark on and carry through a ground-breaking operational review. We are delighted at the progress made and that, as a result, we look set to return some \$1.5 million to the members of EWOV Limited.

Looking to the Board itself, there were a number of changes during the year, including the departure of two of our longest serving directors. Richard Gross of Powercor Australia stepped down in August 2011, having been appointed to the Board in December 2001 and serving on the original Electricity Industry Ombudsman (Victoria) Council from 1995 to 1997. Consumer director, John Mumford, a financial counsellor from Bass Coast Regional Health in Wonthaggi, was appointed to the Board in June 2004 and stepped down in June 2012.

With over 18 years of service between them, Richard and John made significant and lasting contributions. Joining us during the year were industry directors, Tim Hunt-Smith (Neighbourhood Energy) whose tenure was brief due to a change of employment, Claire Hamilton (SP AusNet) and Josephine Monger (AGL).

EWOV moves into 2012-13 with a fresh approach, well positioned to tackle the challenges which will no doubt come its way over the year.



Hon. Tony Staley AO
Chairperson, EWOV Limited Board

2011-12 was a demanding but exciting year for us, as we reflected, refreshed and refocused.

Sharing the Ombudsman duties

In January 2012, Ombudsman Fiona McLeod moved from full-time employment to non-executive directorships, having announced her departure in September 2011. Within EWOV, she left a strong legacy of 16 years of leadership and service.

As Australia's first electricity industry Ombudsman, Fiona left a broader legacy as well. She was at the forefront of EWOV's drive for effective dispute resolution for Victoria's energy and water customers and its calls for better customer service and complaints handling from energy and water companies. All the while, she promoted the value of readily available public information about energy and water complaints and encouraged initiatives to build the capability of customers to resolve complaints themselves.

The strength of Fiona's commitment to the effectiveness of the Ombudsman model has been widely acknowledged, as has her preparedness to push the boundaries around how an Ombudsman office should work. Combining these traits, she used her last few months at EWOV to champion and initiate an expert review of our scheme's operations framework and dispute resolution processes.

For my part, I was honoured to be appointed to the Ombudsman role by the EWOV Board from 1 February 2012. As General Manager Investigations, I was deeply involved in the operational review and welcomed the opportunity to lead the implementation phase and deliver the anticipated outcomes. Making the necessary changes was certainly challenging and I acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of the whole EWOV team in helping us deliver them.

Rethinking our approach to complaint increases

By August 2011, despite our best efforts to recruit and train staff and adapt our processes, rising complaints had taken EWOV to a tipping point. Our capacity to deliver high quality services to customers and scheme participants was severely challenged and we faced a significant complaint backlog which had to be addressed.

Supported by the EWOV Board, we embarked on a tough, intensive 'rethinking' exercise, facilitated by independent experts.



Chairperson of EWOV Limited, the Hon. Tony Staley AO with Ombudsman, Cynthia Gebert

During the last few months of 2011, everything we were doing, and why we were doing it, was scrutinised—case handling processes and procedures, systems, structure, resource effectiveness, management processes, and indicators and incentives. This step-by-step analysis was incredibly valuable, enabling us to step back, look objectively at the EWOV 'process' and identify opportunities to:

- streamline our case handling processes to deliver a better experience for customers and scheme participants
- produce more efficient resolutions earlier in the life of a complaint
- restructure roles to create a more flexible and responsive workforce
- reduce complaint handling administrative functions
- quickly implement strategies to deal with contingencies, such as complaint surges.

Alongside the in-depth analysis, in November 2011, we committed to a strategy for addressing the complaints backlog. A new Triage Team became responsible for assessing complaints and calling customers to determine whether their issue could be resolved quickly without an investigation. This team also handled all failed Assisted Referrals. Committed, focused and pulling together, we managed to clear the complaint backlog within four weeks. This meant that, despite receiving 32% more complaints from October to December 2011 (against the same quarter the previous year), we finalised 68% more open Investigated Complaints.

Greater responsiveness and flexibility through streamlining and innovation

EWOV 2.0 (as we call our rethinking of EWOV) was implemented in stages from January 2012 to March 2012. It delivered significant and positive change to our processes and procedures almost immediately. Underpinning EWOV 2.0 are Best Practice Procedures—operational processes that enable us to effectively and efficiently manage incoming calls and the resolution of complaints. Fine-tuning of these processes is ongoing, especially to ensure we're supporting vulnerable customers appropriately.

With Best Practice Procedures training, tailored questions and more efficient processes, the Intake Team is better equipped to control the flow and outcomes of incoming calls.

We built on the success of the former Triage Team to introduce a permanent Real Time Resolution Team. Real Time Resolution enables us to quickly progress the complaints of customers whose Assisted Referral has failed. It brings conciliation forward in the complaint handling process, with experienced Real Time Resolution Conciliators focussed on faster resolutions. This additional process step is keeping Investigated Complaints down. The positive impact of the work we've undertaken through Intake and Real Time Resolution is reflected in the Investigated Complaints trend graphs on page 11.

By the end of March 2012, with the successful introduction of other initiatives, our Investigated Complaints had fallen to just over half the investigations we undertook in March 2011. In addition, the extension of the Best Practice Procedures to the Investigations Team has enabled more complaint resolutions to be achieved within 28 days.

Bi-monthly email and phone surveying of customer satisfaction—across all referral types and investigations—is helping us check how well the changes are working for customers. We're actively using this surveying to ensure that the efficiencies we've brought about don't affect our capacity to be fair and impartial and that customer satisfaction is maintained. It's also enabling us to act on identified opportunities for improvement.

Handling a 23% increase in complaints

We received 63,998 cases during the year—61,176 complaints and 2,822 enquiries. Complaints were up 23%, largely due to a 31% increase in electricity complaints. Driving this increase were community concerns about solar and Smart Meters, and billing system problems (of two large retailers in particular) which affected hundreds of thousands of customers. Affordability also remained an issue for a significant number of customers. On pages 10–25, we review the year's cases, common issues and the experiences of some customers.

On pages 26 and 27, you'll find information on EWOV's systemic issues process and the systemic issues we identified and closed during the year. Identification of systemic issues is an important part of EWOV's work. Even one complaint lodged with us can be a sign of a systemic problem, which potentially affects many more customers who haven't contacted us. This is especially so when the issue is related to billing—and over half the systemic issues we closed during the year were billing-related. Systemic issues will continue to be an area of focus for us, because we know our attention to it helps achieve redress for a greater number of affected customers.

Building community awareness

The outcomes of EWOV 2.0 have been well supported by the work of our Research and Communications Team.

In April 2012, we launched a new EWOV website at www.ewov.com.au, with a strong focus on building customer capability. An exciting site addition is a series of public education videos. Presented by EWOV staff, and focused on customer rights and responsibilities and common energy and water issues, these are aimed at helping customers resolve complaints themselves directly with their companies. Our former bi-annual *Resolution* publication has been taken online in a quarterly format that presents more transparent and timely complaint trends information for all of our stakeholders. We're also publishing quarterly online reports on particular issues of customer concern (energy marketing, solar and Smart Meters).

We continued to contribute to public policy debate, making 26 written submissions and taking part in 18 policy forums—largely on state and national energy and water developments, but also on associated issues such as credit reporting and alternative dispute resolution. Some of this work was undertaken in association with the other schemes in the Australia & New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (ANZEWON).

We also maintained a regular program of community outreach, taking part in a range of events run by community groups, government agencies, regulators and tertiary institutions.

Key indicators highlight how much we achieved

The EWOV 2.0 review helped us really understand the aspects of our work we must focus on, consistently, to manage the inherent tensions between fairness, impartiality and efficiency. It also enabled us to introduce more flexible work practices and use our human resources differently and more productively. We now have a more responsive, flexible and efficient EWOV, better positioned to meet case handling, resourcing, workforce and strategic challenges.

Looking back, some things in particular stand out for me.

Notwithstanding the extent of the changes during the year, in June 2012 we achieved a staff engagement score of 68% in the 2011-12 AON Hewitt Staff Survey (up from 64% in 2010-11). This is an excellent and very pleasing result—a testament to the focus of the Leadership and Management Teams on effectively managing the impacts of EWOV 2.0. It places EWOV in the AON Hewitt Best Employer Range.

We met all but one of the case closure key performance indicators (KPIs) set by the Board, with a narrow miss of 0.4% on the KPI for 90-day closure of energy complaints. These KPI results highlight the strong commitment of the EWOV team to achieve a dramatic turnaround from rising complaint volumes and backlogs, over a hard 12 months of changing roles, changing issues and a changing work environment.

We also achieved most of our planned strategic tasks. On pages 30-32 of this report, there's a summary of our performance across the six strategic focus areas designated by the EWOV Board—customer service, scheme participant management, community/stakeholder management, innovation, human resources and finance.

Looking ahead

Our rethinking of EWOV continues in 2012-13. It's a work in progress, as we consolidate and refine what we've achieved so far, and reflect and take feedback from customers and scheme participants on how we can do things even better.

We achieved much during 2011-12. My sincere thanks go to the EWOV staff, the Board and the scheme participants for their solid contributions to and support of the scheme throughout the year.

Underpinning our performance were EWOV's strong working relationships. I look forward to building on that co-operation and collaboration in the year ahead, as we continue to work for the benefit of Victoria's energy and water customers and the broader Victorian community.



Cynthia Gebert

Energy and Water Ombudsman
(Victoria)



Carolyn Bond

Neil Brennan

Claire Hamilton

David Headberry

A company limited by guarantee, Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) Limited (EWOV Limited) is legally separate from, and independent of, its industry participants and government.

EWOV Limited's principal activity is to receive, investigate and facilitate the resolution of customer complaints about electricity, gas and water services. For this purpose, it has set up an external dispute resolution scheme, known as the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV), and has appointed an Ombudsman.

The EWOV Limited Board consists of an independent chairperson, four consumer directors nominated by the Essential Services Commission, and four industry directors elected by the company's electricity, gas and water participants (listed on page 33).

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

Hon. Tony Staley AO

Chairperson, appointed 30 November 1998
Made an Officer of the Order of Australia in January 2007, Tony Staley is also Chairperson of the internet regulator, auDA, the Cooperative Research Centres Association of Australia, and the Board of Advice, Partners in Performance International. A former Commonwealth Government Minister, he is educated in law and political science.

Carolyn Bond

Consumer Director, appointed 27 June 2007
Co-Chief Executive Officer of the Consumer Action Law Centre, Carolyn Bond brings to the Board over 20 years' experience working in the consumer advocacy field. A past Chair of the Consumers' Federation of Australia, she represents consumer interests on a range of bodies.

Neil Brennan

Industry Director, appointed 22 August 2002
Managing Director of Western Water, Neil Brennan has over 30 years' experience in the water industry. A Past President of the Institute of Water Administration, he is also a director of the Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Project.

Claire Hamilton

Industry Director, appointed 1 December 2011
Claire Hamilton is General Manager, Risk and Assurance, for transmission and distribution business, SP AusNet. She is responsible for improving operations by leading enterprise risk management and providing an independent assurance service. A chartered accountant, Claire brings over 15 years' experience in the energy industry.



Josephine Monger

John Mumford

Mark O'Brien

Christina Wilson

David Headberry

Consumer Director,
appointed 20 June 2002
David Headberry is Managing Director, Headberry Partners P/L, which specialises in assisting energy customers secure low-cost, reliable energy supplies and providing customer input to government and regulatory reviews and investigations on energy supply issues. A qualified engineer, he is also the public officer for Major Energy Users Inc, a national group representing the views of major energy consumers.

Josephine Monger

Industry Director,
appointed 14 June 2012
Head of Customer Experience for AGL Energy, Josephine has over 15 years' experience in the retail energy industry. Prior to joining AGL in 2008, she worked in management consulting, delivering business strategy and change programs for large energy companies across Australia, UK and Europe. She also serves on the Board of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW.

John Mumford

Consumer Director,
appointed 30 June 2004
John Mumford is a financial counsellor at Bass Coast Regional Health in Wonthaggi. He brings a strong background in grassroots consumer advocacy, specialising in issues affecting rural consumers.

Mark O'Brien

Consumer Director,
appointed 30 June 2004
Chief Executive Officer of the Tenants Union of Victoria, Mark O'Brien has worked in tenancy advice and advocacy, in both paid and unpaid capacities, since 1987. He previously worked in government and the construction industry as a civil and structural draftsman.

Christina Wilson

Industry Director,
appointed 10 February 2011
Group Manager Energy Markets, Risk, Regulatory Compliance and Assurance, Christina joined Origin Energy in 2009 from senior roles in banking and retail. A chemical engineer by profession, Christina's career spans the manufacturing, financial and retail sectors, with strong backgrounds in quality, supply chain, program management, sales and operations.

Richard Gross

Industry Director,
appointed 14 December 2001
resigned 25 August 2011

Tim Hunt-Smith

Industry Director,
appointed 25 August 2011
resigned 9 February 2012

Christopher See

Company Secretary,
appointed 21 October 2008

We use the overall term 'case' for all customer contacts with EWOV. Each case is registered and classified as either an 'enquiry' or a 'complaint' and handled in accordance with EWOV's Best Practice Procedures.

Enquiries and complaints

When a customer contacts us with an enquiry (defined as a request for information), we provide them with general information. Often, we also refer them to their energy or water company. Sometimes we refer them to another body, such as a regulator, government department or other Ombudsman.

We define a complaint as 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.

Our approach to complaint handling is informal and based on the principles of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). The work we do is often described as external dispute resolution (EDR) because we are independent, impartial and external to the companies participating in our scheme (the scheme participants).

Essentially, we look to uncover the facts to help the customer and the company better understand the issues and each other's point of view. We work towards agreement on a resolution and what needs to be done to achieve it. This outcome may be achieved directly between the customer and the company, or it may be conciliated by us. Where an agreed outcome can't be achieved, the Ombudsman may make a Binding Decision.

Referral

While energy and water customers are able to seek EWOV's help, the primary responsibility for resolving customer complaints rests with the energy and water companies. Before we accept a complaint for investigation, the customer must have given their company a reasonable opportunity to resolve it through the company's own internal dispute resolution (IDR) process. Where the customer hasn't contacted their energy or water company, we refer them back to its call centre. Before we do this, we provide the customer with an overview of their rights and responsibilities to help them reach a satisfactory outcome with their company directly.

Assisted Referral

Assisted Referral is the process we use when a customer has already tried to resolve their complaint directly with their company—through it, we facilitate contact with the customer by a higher level contact within the company. Once an Assisted Referral is provided, the company has three days to contact the customer and 15 business days to reach a resolution with them.

While we've always used a higher level contact referral process, an outcome of the EWOV 2.0 review is that we're now placing a greater focus on it—as a means of achieving direct resolution between the customer and their company—before we open an EWOV investigation. Exceptions include complaints from vulnerable customers whom we believe may have difficulty participating in the Assisted Referral process.

Undertaken effectively, Assisted Referrals can significantly reduce the number of Investigated Complaints we need to undertake. They also enable companies and customers to reconnect, building goodwill and customer confidence in their company's capacity to resolve any future problems.

That said, and despite the resolution opportunities an Assisted Referral affords, not all Assisted Referrals result in resolution—some customers return to us still unhappy with the resolution proposed by their company. To help turn around failed Assisted Referrals, we've introduced a phone-based Real Time Resolution Team. Taking a 'What can be done today to resolve this complaint?' approach, one of this team's dedicated Conciliators will speak with the customer about the offer made by their company, why they weren't satisfied with it and what would resolve the problem for them. Each failed Assisted Referral is assessed to decide the best way for us to progress the complaint—whether to resolve it directly with the customer, facilitate further discussion between the company and the customer, or open an investigation.

Real Time Resolution, coupled with greater use of the Assisted Referral process, has delivered a significant fall in the number of complaints requiring an EWOV investigation. As figure 1 shows, for every Investigated Complaint we opened in 2010-11, there was an average of 2.1 Assisted Referrals. In 2011-12, due to our new processes, that increased to an average of 3.5 Assisted Referrals for every Investigated Complaint opened. Figure 2 tracks monthly progress from a low of 1.6 Assisted Referrals per Investigated Complaints in August 2011 to a high of 6.3 Assisted Referrals per Investigated Complaints in June 2012.

Investigation

Having opened an investigation, it's our task to arrive at an independent view of what happened. In doing this, we take account of what's fair and reasonable, as well as good industry practice and current law and codes.

An investigation has a number of stages. As a result of the EWOV 2.0 review, we're now 'batching' complaints we've registered for investigation. Having done this, we schedule a Batch discussion with the company to achieve faster information flows and faster resolution, without the need for a detailed investigation and lengthy written responses.

Complaints attempted at Batch/ Stage 1, but not resolved in a timely manner, are upgraded to Stage 2 in line with EWOV's upgrade policy. Similarly, Stage 2 complaints are upgraded to Stage 3 and Stage 3 complaints to Final Stage.

Binding Decision

If, at Final Stage, the complaint isn't resolved within 60 days, the Ombudsman has the power to close it (if it's assessed that further investigation isn't warranted) or make a Binding Decision. This decision is binding on the company, if the customer accepts it. Otherwise, the customer may choose to take action in another forum, such as a court. It hasn't been necessary for the Ombudsman to make a Binding Decision since 2003.

Fig 1: The change in Investigation to Assisted Referral ratios over the past 5 years

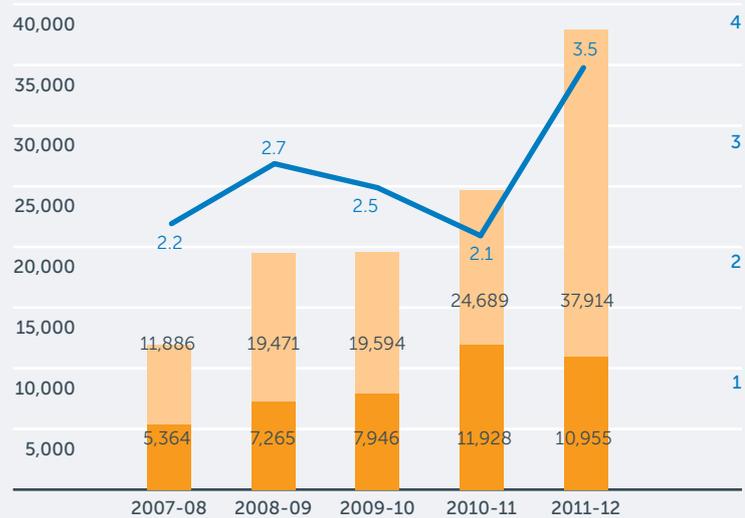


Fig 2: The change in Investigation to Assisted Referral ratios by month through 2011-12



EWOV received a total of 63,998 cases in 2011-12, up 18% from 2010-11.

As Figure 3 shows, 2,822 of the cases were enquiries (down 40%) and 61,176 were complaints (up 23%).

Figure 4 tracks the complaints received by EWOV over the past five years. In 2007-08, EWOV received 22,903 complaints. By 2011-12, complaints were up 167% to 61,176.

By industry (2011-12 compared with 2007-08), electricity complaints were up 197%, natural gas complaints were up 126% and water complaints were up 74%. LPG complaints were down 2%.

Fig 3: All cases received by EWOV in 2011-12 (total 63,998)

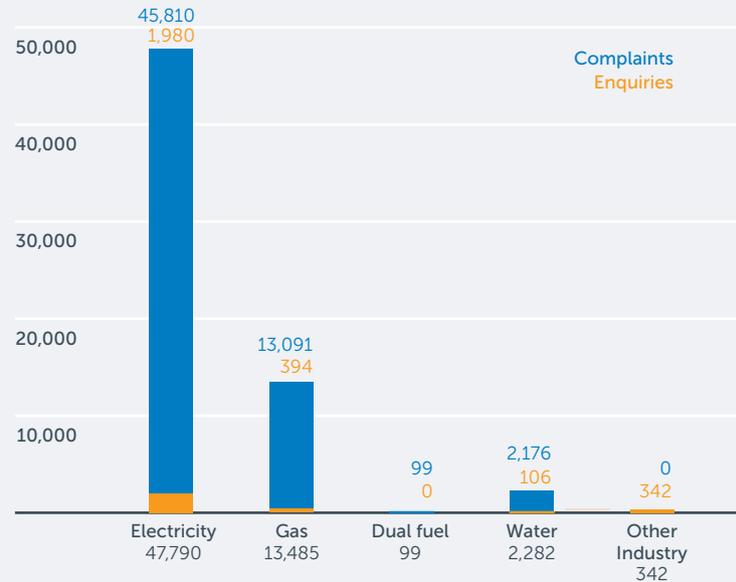
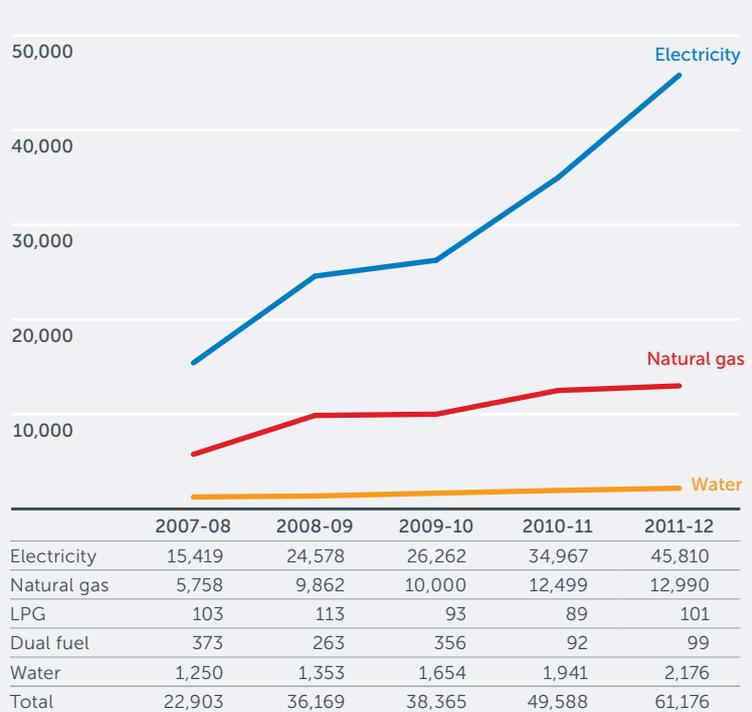


Fig 4: Complaints received, overall and by industry, over the past 5 years



In 2011-12, we assisted 60,101 residential customers (94%), 3,682 business customers (6%) and 215 not-for-profit or government customers (<1%). The customer mix reflects that of 2010-11.

74% of customers were from metropolitan Melbourne and 26% were from regional and rural Victoria, compared with 76% and 24% respectively in 2010-11.

Asked why they contacted us, 70% of customers said they were dissatisfied with the outcome of the contact they'd had with their company and a further 14% were dissatisfied because the company responded slowly or didn't take action to address their complaint. These percentages were up from 68% and 5% respectively in 2010-11.

86% of customers contacted us by phone and 13% by email or through our website. While phone contacts were down from 89%, email and website contacts were up from 9%, reflecting the work we've put into updating our website information and complaint lodgement facilities.

Asked how they found out about EWOV, 42% of customers said they were already aware of our services, 13% said they found out about us through their energy or water company and 11% cited word of mouth.

Figure 10 tracks trends in EWOV cases received from residential customers in each Victorian council and shire area for the past three years. In 2011-12, the parts of Victoria with the highest rates of EWOV cases (energy and water combined) per 1,000 of population were Mount Alexander Shire, City of Banyule, Central Goldfields Shire, Moorabool Shire, Macedon Ranges Shire and East Gippsland Shire.

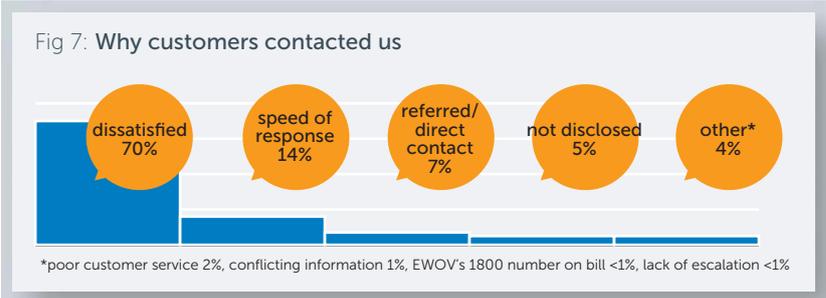


Fig 10: By Council/Shire, EWOV cases received from residential customers

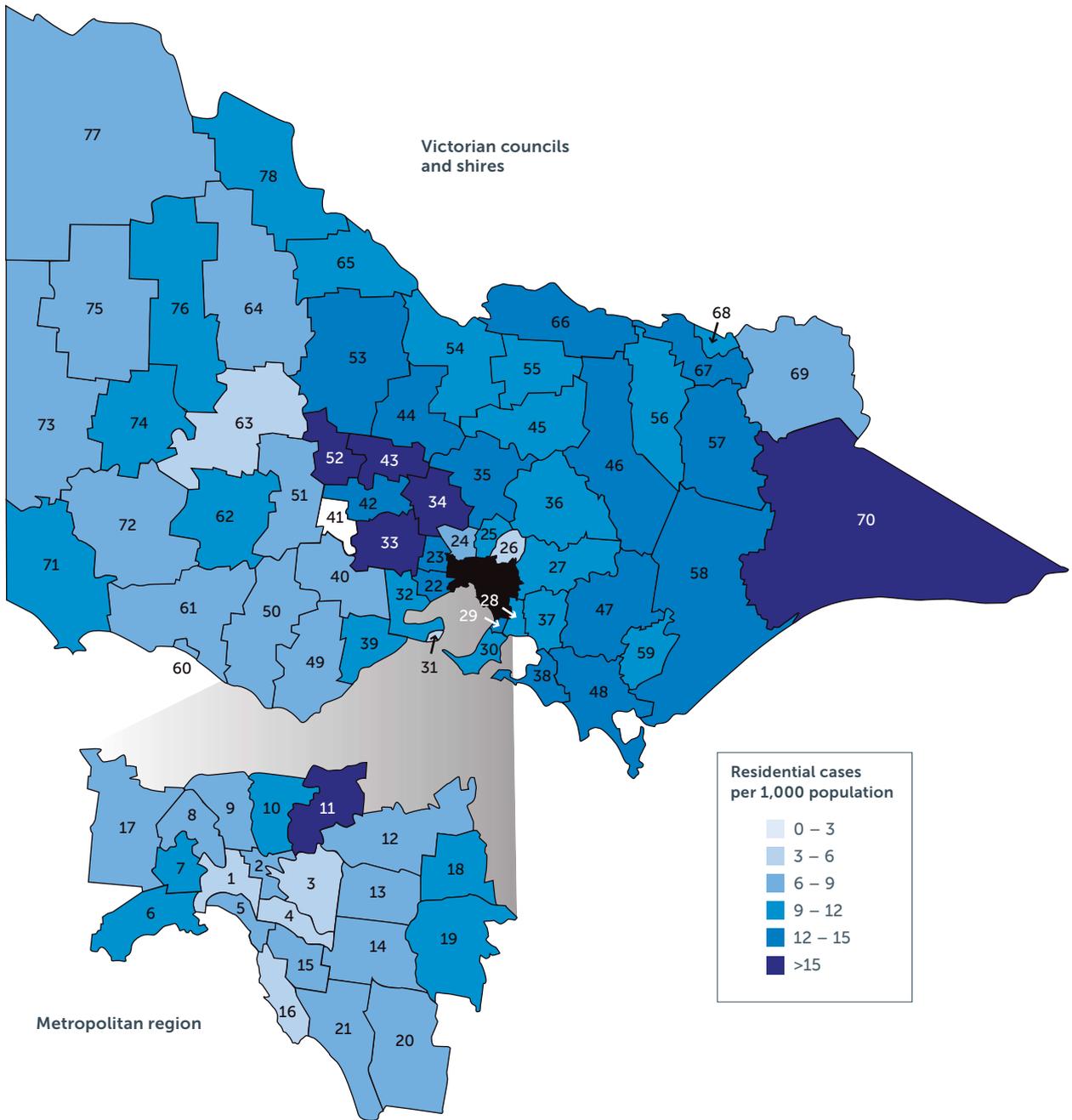
Council/Shire area	map no.	Population 2011-12	Residential cases 2011-12	Residential cases per 1,000 population		
				2011-12	2010-11	2009-10
Alpine S	57	12,690	159	12.53	8.27	6.90
Ararat RC	62	11,752	122	10.38	9.62	8.42
Ballarat C	41	91,787	56	0.61	1.12	0.75
Banyule C	11	121,409	1,910	15.73	18.25	12.53
Bass Coast S	38	28,802	429	14.89	11.91	7.90
Baw Baw S	47	40,114	519	12.94	11.42	8.10
Bayside C	16	94,618	559	5.91	7.48	7.45
Benalla & Mansfield	46	21,712	270	12.44	10.32	8.89
Boroondara C	3	165,393	944	5.71	5.82	4.76
Brimbank C	17	181,115	1,601	8.84	9.35	6.26
Buloke S	64	7,051	60	8.51	8.37	6.36
Campaspe S	54	38,339	393	10.25	9.94	8.50
Cardinia S	37	64,310	684	10.64	9.44	5.46
Casey C	28	238,336	2,465	10.34	7.69	5.37
Central Goldfields S	52	12,766	199	15.59	11.04	9.07
Colac Otway S	49	21,448	137	6.39	6.85	7.11
Corangamite S	50	17,270	108	6.25	5.56	5.07
Darebin C	10	137,360	1,455	10.59	11.92	9.28
East Gippsland S	70	42,742	642	15.02	9.76	6.56
Frankston C	29	125,728	1,518	12.07	12.38	10.28
Gannawarra S	65	11,630	126	10.83	8.94	7.78
Glen Eira C	15	133,807	1,102	8.24	8.68	7.88
Glenelg S	71	20,871	192	9.20	10.49	6.97
Golden Plains S	40	17,681	148	8.37	8.65	5.70
Greater Bendigo C	44	100,054	1,422	14.21	11.53	8.19
Greater Dandenong C	20	135,243	982	7.26	7.02	6.21
Greater Geelong C	32	211,841	2,401	11.33	9.00	6.93
Greater Shepparton C	55	61,014	717	11.75	11.19	8.88
Hepburn S	42	14,489	175	12.08	15.67	11.26
Hindmarsh S	75	6,179	54	8.74	9.71	6.31
Hobsons Bay C	6	86,121	811	9.42	8.88	6.33
Horsham RC	74	19,648	178	9.06	6.46	7.00
Hume C	24	162,260	1,404	8.65	9.02	7.27
Indigo S	67	15,710	193	12.29	7.19	5.76
Kingston C	21	143,727	985	6.85	7.17	6.66
Knox C	19	153,988	1,797	11.67	7.08	5.08
Latrobe C	59	73,982	729	9.85	10.53	7.76
Loddon S	53	8,073	113	14.00	11.52	7.66
Macedon Ranges S	34	40,939	618	15.10	10.65	7.69
Manningham C	12	116,983	800	6.84	8.23	6.16
Maribyrnong C	7	69,825	675	9.67	10.58	7.67
Maroondah C	18	104,297	1,209	11.59	10.27	6.10
Melbourne C	1	89,759	479	5.34	11.04	7.76
Melton S	23	92,465	1,246	13.48	11.57	7.02
Mildura RC	77	53,122	393	7.40	7.19	5.31
Mitchell S	35	33,374	494	14.80	10.34	7.49
Moira S	66	28,752	398	13.84	10.05	7.32
Monash C	14	172,740	1,216	7.04	6.74	6.31
Moonee Valley C	8	108,909	830	7.62	9.22	8.57
Moorabool S	33	27,247	423	15.52	12.48	8.56
Moreland C	9	145,900	1,007	6.90	8.27	6.71
Mornington Peninsula S	30	145,356	1,653	11.37	11.43	10.19
Mount Alexander S	43	18,116	331	18.27	17.06	17.40
Moyne S	61	16,405	133	8.11	8.41	6.55
Murrindindi S	36	14,369	147	10.23	9.40	6.69
Nillumbik S	26	63,181	263	4.16	6.44	3.89
Northern Grampians S	63	12,322	43	3.49	3.90	3.47
Port Phillip C	5	93,752	794	8.47	9.80	8.36
Pyrenees S	51	6,800	42	6.18	12.94	7.48
Queenscliffe B	31	3,256	15	4.61	5.53	4.30
South Gippsland S	48	27,165	367	13.51	10.86	7.45
Southern Grampians S	72	17,451	113	6.48	7.22	6.88
Stonnington C	4	97,711	478	4.89	5.81	5.90
Strathbogie S	45	9,855	112	11.36	8.88	6.04
Surf Coast S	39	24,442	288	11.78	8.67	6.24
Swan Hill RC	78	21,765	217	9.97	6.80	5.24
Towong S	69	6,273	54	8.61	7.81	4.86
Wangaratta RC	56	28,117	316	11.24	9.03	7.13
Warrnambool C	60	32,712	260	7.95	7.98	7.17
Wellington S	58	42,576	574	13.48	9.56	7.07
West Wimmera S	73	4,597	36	7.83	4.79	4.13
Whitehorse C	13	153,407	1,042	6.79	8.23	6.21
Whittlesea C	25	139,250	1,302	9.35	7.78	4.31
Wodonga RC	68	35,064	420	11.98	9.01	6.45
Wyndham C	22	132,793	1,665	12.54	10.68	6.25
Yarra C	2	76,402	656	8.59	9.38	5.36
Yarra Ranges S	27	146,886	1,602	10.91	9.15	6.05
Yarriambiack S	76	7,658	69	9.01	7.83	7.18

NOTES:

Excludes residential cases where the customer didn't disclose a Victorian suburb/postcode or was from interstate or overseas, as well as non-residential cases.

Populations are based on Australian Bureau of Statistics 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.



Some customers contact us with one (main) issue of complaint. Others raise a main issue and associated issues. For example, their main issue may be a high bill, with the associated issue of payment difficulties. We record both the customer's main issue and any associated issues they may raise.

51% of cases were about Billing

In 2011-12, 32,593 customers (51%) raised Billing as their main issue (up 29%, from 25,243 customers in 2010-11). A further 17,703 customers raised Billing as an associated issue.

High bill remained the most common Billing issue overall—but, at 18%, it was down from 23% the previous year. This reflects a greater number of cases received about other Billing sub-issues.

After high bill, 15% of the Billing cases were about tariffs (up from 13%); 14% were about delays (up from 9%); 13% were about errors (down from 14%); and 11% were about backbills (up from 8%).

Across the three industries the most common sub-issues varied:

- In electricity, tariff (18%) was followed by high bill (16%) and delay (16%).
- In gas, high bill (22%) was followed by error (21%) and estimation (9%).
- In water, high bill (40%) was followed by fees and charges (19%) and error (16%).

On pages 20 and 21, we take a closer look at the Billing sub-issues of high bill and tariff, including insights into the experiences of some customers.

On pages 24 and 25, there's a closer look at solar and Smart Meter cases, in which Billing was often the customer's main concern.

16% of cases were about Credit

In 2011-12, 10,322 customers raised credit as their main issue (up 20%, from 8,566 customers in 2010-11). A further 5,997 customers raised it as an associated issue.

Credit is about the capacity of customers to pay their bills and stay on supply. The main sub-issues are energy disconnection or water restriction, debt collection and payment difficulties.

Overall, 53% of the Credit cases were about disconnection or restriction of supply (up from 48% the previous year), 28% were about debt collection (unchanged) and 18% were about payment difficulties (down from 24%).

5,487 customers raised supply disconnection or restriction as their main issue, up 35% from 4,079 customers the previous year. Much of this increase can be attributed to the billing system problems of one large energy retailer—which led to many of its customers receiving large backbills, followed by threatened or actual disconnection for non-payment.

2,930 customers raised collection as their main issue, up 22% from 2,396 customers the previous year. We think this reflects a continuing harder line being taken by some energy retailers on account arrears and pursuit of energy debt.

1,894 customers raised payment difficulties as their main issue, down 9% from 2,085 customers the previous year. We believe this fall highlights action by energy retailers to obtain payment through threatened or actual disconnection—so the customer's main reason for contacting EWOV switched from payment difficulties to supply disconnection.

On pages 22 and 23, you'll find more on the Credit sub-issues of energy disconnection, debt collection and payment difficulties, and insights into the experiences of some customers.

ISSUES CATEGORIES AT A GLANCE

Billing — bills and payment processes

Credit — unpaid bills and the action taken to collect arrears

Transfer — switching an account to a new energy retailer

Provision — the connection of a property to the energy or water network

Marketing — how energy retailers go about winning new customers

Supply — the physical delivery of the energy or water service

Customer Service — service received or not received

Land — the effect on property of company activities or network assets

12% of cases were about Transfer

Transfer is the process of switching an electricity or natural gas account from one energy retailer to another.

In 2011-12, 7,445 customers raised Transfer as their main issue (down 2%, from 7,593 customers in 2010-11). A further 3,277 customers raised it as an associated issue.

21% of Transfer cases were about contract terms (down from 30% the previous year), 17% were about delays (up from 12%) and 16% were about transfer in error (up from 13%).

1,533 customers raised contract terms as their main issue (down from 2,261 customers the previous year). These complaints usually related to termination fees and variations in contract terms and/or price.

1,291 customers raised transfer delay as their main issue (up from 921 customers the previous year). Most commonly, these customers complained about retailer delay in processing the transfer request.

1,185 customers raised transfer in error (as a result of human and system errors) as their main issue (up from 983 customers the previous year).

11% of cases were about Provision

Provision is about the connection of a property to the electricity, gas or water network.

In 2011-12, 6,750 customers raised Provision as their main issue (up 58% from 4,280 customers in 2010-11). A further 2,031 customers raised it as an associated issue.

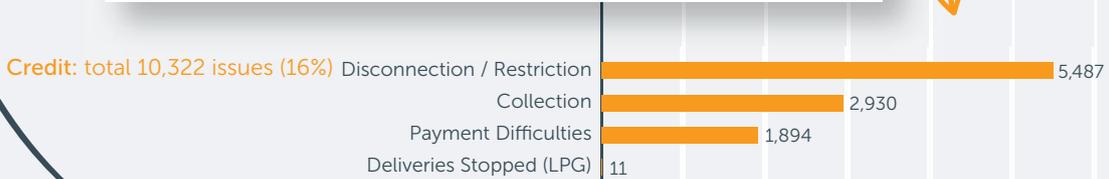
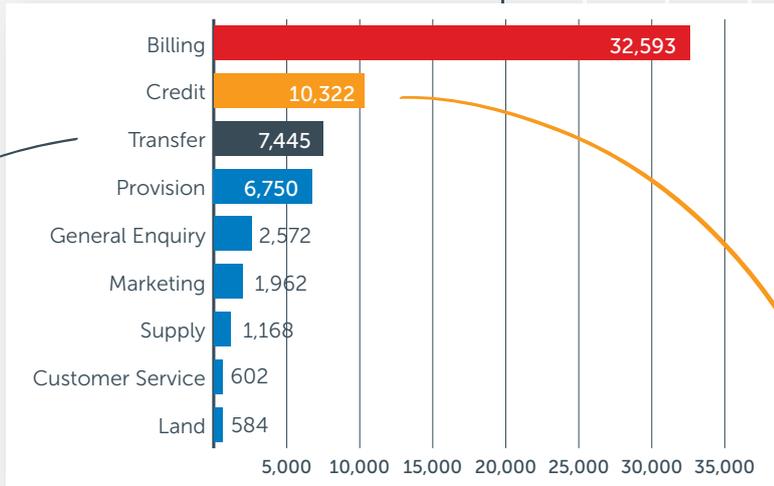
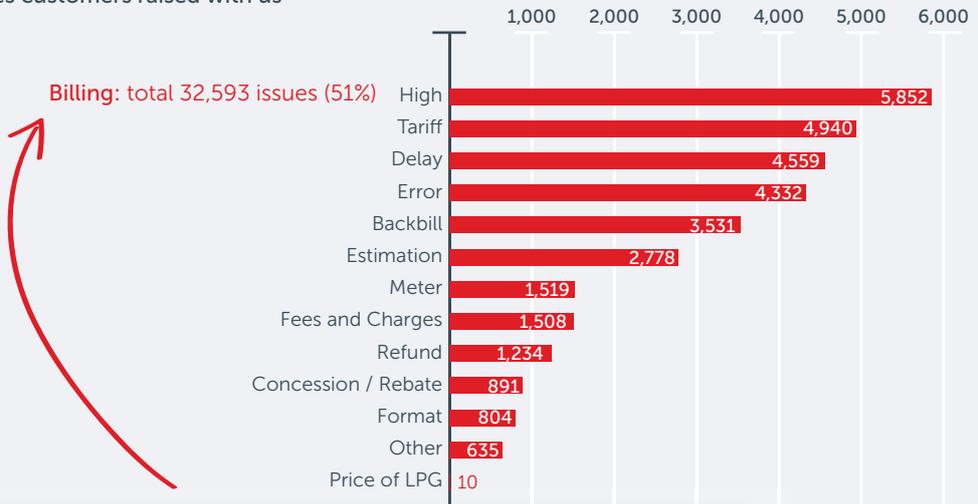
77% of Provision cases concerned existing connections (up from 74% the previous year), 18% were about new connections (down from 19%) and 5% were about supply disconnection or restriction (down from 8%).

5,189 customers raised existing connection as their main issue (up from 3,154 customers the previous year). Most commonly these customers were complaining about solar and/or Smart Meters. Smart Meter issues tended to be raised by customers who wanted the meter exchange to be deferred (or not go ahead at all) or who had health and safety concerns. In addition, with the announced deadline of 30 September 2011 for Premium Feed-in Tariff (PFIT) applications, customers rushed to lodge these in time. Electricity distributors and retailers were overwhelmed with new meter and meter reconfiguration requests, the result being significant delays to the completion of the solar process for some customers. Retailer billing delays and errors caused further confusion around PFIT eligibility.

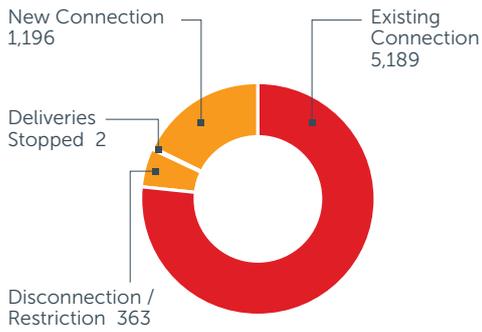
1,196 customers raised new connection as their main issue (up 50% from 800 customers the previous year), with delays the most common concern.

363 customers raised supply disconnection or restriction in the context of Provision as their main issue. While customers were usually concerned that this action had been taken in error, these cases often raised issues related to health and safety as well.

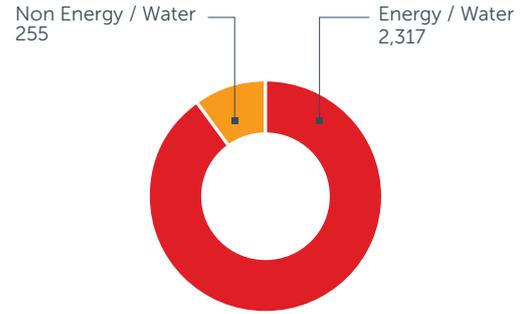
Fig 11: The main issues customers raised with us



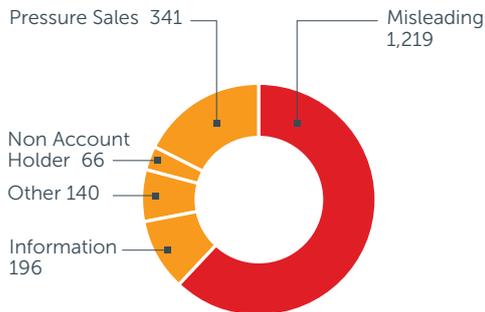
Provision: 6,750 issues (11%)



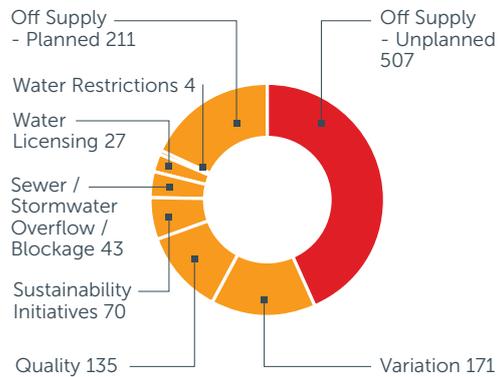
General Enquiry: 2,572 issues (4%)



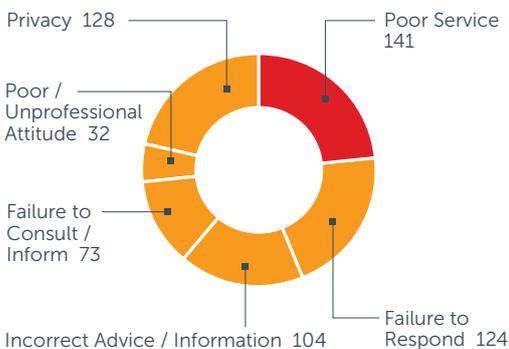
Marketing: 1,962 issues (3%)



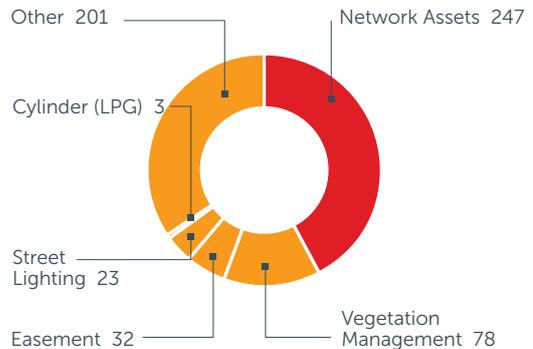
Supply: 1,168 issues (2%)



Customer Service: 602 issues (<1%)



Land: 584 issues (<1%)



Raised by 51% of customers as their main issue, Billing continues to be the biggest source of customer complaint to EWOV overall.

In 2011-12, 32,593 customers raised Billing as their main issue. 80% of these were electricity customers, 16% were gas customers and 4% were water customers. Another 17,703 customers raised Billing as an issue associated with their main issue.

While high bills was the most common Billing issue overall, in electricity the issue of tariff overtook that of high bill for the first time.

High bills

5,852 customers raised high bill as their main issue. A further 1,793 customers raised high bill as an associated issue. 94% of high bill cases were lodged by residential customers.

71% of high bill cases were lodged by electricity customers, 19% by gas customers and 10% by water customers.

High bill was the most common Billing issue for gas and water customers and the second most common Billing issue for electricity customers (after tariff).

Small business electricity bill more than 8 times its usual bills

The operator of a small retail food business received an electricity bill for \$19,318.35 for three months' usage. The customer said that, in the 20 years the business had been operating, none of its monthly bills had been more than \$800. After an Assisted Referral from EWOV, the electricity retailer arranged a meter test. This showed the meter was faulty and it was replaced. The retailer advised that the bill would be adjusted down by \$590.93. The customer returned to EWOV dissatisfied with this response, believing the bill was still too high. As part of our investigation of the customer's complaint, we analysed the business' usage patterns and sought independent technical advice. This demonstrated that the property wasn't capable of using the amount of electricity for which the customer had been billed. We took this up with the electricity distributor which, after undertaking its own review, agreed to amend the meter readings in line with the customer's historical consumption. This resulted in a billing adjustment of \$18,307.07, which left the customer \$158.72 in credit. 2011/37964

Tenant billed for cost of water lost due to leak

After a water leak under the driveway of the property the customer rented was fixed by his landlord's plumber, the customer received a bill for \$955.25. Given his quarterly water bills were usually \$40 to \$50, he contacted the water corporation to complain. Responding to his complaint, the water corporation reduced the bill by \$662.60 to \$292.65. This represented a reduction of 75% on water consumption and sewage disposal charges, the maximum reduction available under the water corporation's leak allowance policy. Not fully satisfied with this outcome, the customer lodged a complaint with EWOV. Our investigation included a review of the high bill, the application of the leak allowance policy and industry practice advice. We found that the water corporation had offered a good level of customer service (including a four-month payment plan for the balance) and had applied relevant industry guidelines correctly. We advised the customer that the waiver of 75% (for tenants) was in line with the Victorian Water Industry's *Guideline for Unexplained High Usage and Undetected Leak Enquiries* and with industry practice. We also provided him with information on his option, through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the Tenants Union of Victoria, to seek reimbursement from his landlord of the extra amount he had to pay. 2011/1866

Bulk hot water thermostat set 30% too high

The customer's apartment building had a bulk hot water service. Following a bulk hot water meter exchange, she received a bill of \$185.49. Her previous bill of \$73.84 had been calculated using a volume conversion factor of 4.546. The high bill was calculated on a conversion factor of 10, which she thought was the reason for the increase, but she couldn't resolve the issue with her gas retailer directly. In line with EWOV's *Payment of Undisputed Amounts Policy*, the customer made a part-payment of the bill at the start of our investigation. We reviewed billing and other information, and arranged a site visit attended by our independent technical advisor, the customer and the apartment building manager. Meter and volume tests, an inspection for leaks and checks of the master bulk hot water meter, the individual apartment meters and the water heating units were all undertaken. Safety issues with the bulk hot water system were detected and advised to the building management for rectification. The multiplier had increased from 4.546 to 10, but that was because the older meter was imperial and the new one metric. Our technical advisor's report concluded that over-heating (the hot water thermostat was set about 30% too high) had caused excessive pressure and the discharge of water from the heating units, contributing to the high bill. The building management agreed to turn the temperature down. Our technical advisor returned to the property the next week and confirmed the bulk hot water system and meters were working correctly. We discussed the results of gas and water audits with the customer. The gas retailer credited a customer service payment of \$85 to her account, leaving a balance of \$63.87 which was in line with her historical consumption. It also gave her a three-week payment extension. G/2011/5546

Electricity tariffs

In 2011-12, and for the first time, cases about electricity tariffs overtook those about high electricity bills. 4,785 customers raised electricity tariff as their main issue, up 57% from 3,046 the previous year. A further 2,410 customers raised it as an issue associated with their main issue. 96% of billing tariff cases were lodged by residential customers.

Customers have been most commonly concerned about solar feed-in tariffs—in particular that their electricity retailer hadn't applied the correct solar tariff to their account, or hadn't applied any solar tariff or any solar credits. During the year, the State Government announced the end of the Premium Feed-in Tariff (PFIT). As the PFIT scheme drew to a close, we received a surge of calls from solar customers, concerned that their new solar installation may not be set up in time for them to qualify for it. Once the deadline for applications passed, customers commonly raised concerns about missing out on the PFIT when they thought they were eligible for it.

Unfortunately, in many of these cases, while the customer did everything required of them, they missed out on the PFIT because of an error on the retailer's part. As a result, they found themselves on either the Standard Feed-in Tariff (SFIT) or the Transitional Feed-in Tariff (TFIT). Because this can't be corrected now the scheme is closed, a significant number of customers are being reimbursed by retailers for the difference between the tariff they're now on and the tariff they should have been on. These payments range from hundreds of dollars to tens of thousands of dollars.

No PFIT despite correct paperwork

The customer missed out on the PFIT. He said he submitted the required paperwork the day after his solar panels were installed in September 2011, and then resubmitted it four days later when his electricity retailer advised some of the required information was missing. He said he waited two days before contacting the retailer again. When he did, he was told everything had been lodged correctly, he was eligible for the PFIT and his meter should be installed within two weeks. In November 2011, his retailer told him it had no record of the paperwork he'd submitted and the local distributor said it didn't have the documentation relating to his PFIT application. Responding to our investigation of the complaint, the retailer confirmed the customer had submitted the paperwork correctly before the 30 September 2011 deadline for the PFIT. Admitting it was its fault the customer missed out, the retailer credited his account with \$15,200—the difference between the PFIT and the TFIT for the life of the PFIT scheme. This left his account with a credit balance of \$14,514.22, which he chose to receive as a cheque payment. 2012/19448

Affordability is at the heart of our Credit issues category, with sub-issues that are indicators of the capacity of customers to pay their energy and water bills and stay on supply. 16% of customers raised Credit as their main issue in 2011-12, making it our second biggest source of customer concern. Affordability clearly continued to be an issue for many customers.

10,322 customers raised Credit as their main issue, 20% more than in 2010-11. 65% of them were electricity customers, 33% were gas customers and 2% were water customers. A further 5,997 customers raised Credit as an associated issue.

53% of Credit cases were about disconnection or restriction of supply, up from 48% of Credit cases the previous year. 28% of Credit cases were about debt collection (in line with the previous year) and 18% were about payment difficulties (down from 24%).

It's common for a Credit complaint to present as a mix of issues around supply disconnection/restriction, payment difficulties and debt collection—one of these being the main trigger for the call to EWOV.

For example, the 9% fall in cases where the customer's main issue was payment difficulties largely reflects the 35% increase in cases where the customer's main issue was the imminent (threatened) or actual disconnection of their energy supply. This doesn't mean these customers weren't experiencing payment

difficulties—it means that, at the time they called EWOV, their main issue was the imminent or actual disconnection of their energy supply. Payment difficulties was raised as an associated issue by 4,200 customers, many of whom cited their main issue as supply disconnection. When all Credit issues (main and associated) are taken into account, payment difficulties comes out on top at 37%, followed by disconnection/restriction at 35% and collection at 27%.

Energy disconnection and water restriction for account arrears

Figure 12 illustrates trends, over the past five years, in EWOV cases about Credit-related supply disconnection and restriction. Most commonly, these cases involved energy customers, and payment difficulties and/or account arrears.

In electricity, 936 Credit cases were about actual disconnection, down 12% from 1,058 cases in 2010-11, but still up 153% from 370 cases in 2007-08. A further 2,574 cases were about imminent disconnection, up 45% from 1,773 cases in 2010-11 and up 314% from 622 cases in 2007-08.

In natural gas, 925 Credit cases were about actual disconnection, up 9% from 847 cases in 2010-11 and up 228% from 282 cases in 2007-08. A further 989 cases were about imminent disconnection, up 50% from 659 cases in 2010-11 and up 405% from 196 cases in 2007-08.

By way of comparison, 24 Credit cases were about the actual restriction of water, up 60% from 15 in cases in 2010-11 and up 71% from 14 cases in 2007-08. A further 39 cases were about imminent restriction, up 26% from 31 cases in 2010-11 and up 56% from 25 cases in 2007-08.

Collection

2,930 customers raised collection of debt as their main Credit issue, up 22% from 2,396 customers in 2010-11. 69% of cases came from electricity customers, 28% from gas customers and 3% from water customers. A further 1,496 customers raised Collection as an associated issue.

Payment difficulties

1,894 customers raised payment difficulties as their main issue, down 9% from 2,085 customers in 2010-11. But, a further 4,200 customers raised payment difficulties as an associated issue. So, looking at all Credit issues (main and associated), payment difficulty sits above supply disconnection/restriction. As explained earlier, we believe a focus by energy retailers on imminent (threatened) and actual disconnection of supply led to disconnection being the main reason many customers sought EWOV's assistance. What must not be overlooked here is that many of those customers also said they were unable to pay the bill and/or arrears.

Customer in hardship asked for \$995 before reconnection

A customer in long-term financial hardship had electricity arrears of \$1,420.77 and gas arrears of \$1,796.07, owed to the same energy retailer. He wasn't on a payment plan, but was making regular payments of \$40 a fortnight towards each account. He said his electricity supply was disconnected due to the arrears and he was asked to pay \$995 before it could be reconnected, with no assistance or other options offered. Under EWOV's *Reconnection/Derestriction Policy*, the customer's electricity supply was reconnected while we investigated his complaint. The energy retailer found that its disconnection of his supply didn't meet the requirements of the Energy Retail Code. As a result, a wrongful disconnection payment of \$3,500 applied. After this cleared his electricity account arrears, he asked that the remainder be used to clear his gas account. The retailer accepted his undertaking to continue paying \$40 a fortnight toward each account and provided a higher level contact in case he had further payment problems. 2012/9615

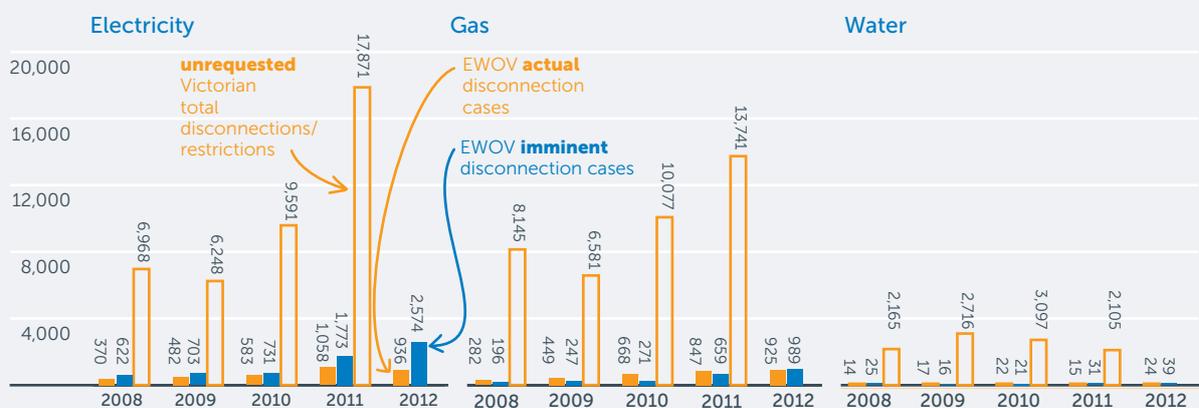
Home loan refused due to incorrect gas default listing

The customer's home loan application was refused because of a \$1,800 default listing by a gas retailer for arrears relating to a property she hadn't lived at. The customer said she'd provided the retailer with proof that she hadn't lived there, but it insisted it had no record of default listing her and didn't respond to several subsequent attempts she made to sort the problem out. To assist with the resolution of this complaint, the customer undertook a credit file search. This confirmed the default listing by the retailer and the address it related to. The customer also provided us with the proof that she hadn't lived at the address. In resolution of the complaint, the retailer apologised for the inconvenience caused, reimbursed the \$51.95 for the credit search and provided her with an additional \$150 customer service payment. The customer was sent a cheque for \$201.95 and the default listing was lifted within 48 hours. 2012/2580

Financial hardship leads to water restriction

The customer was having difficulty paying for his utilities generally and had built up some \$1,300 in water arrears. His water supply was restricted for non-payment and he couldn't negotiate full restoration. In line with EWOV's *Reconnection/Derestriction Policy*, the restriction was lifted while we investigated his complaint. Our investigation found that the process the water corporation followed leading up to the supply restriction was appropriate—including several attempts to contact the customer about the arrears and visits to his home before the restriction was put in place. We facilitated an agreed payment arrangement of \$50 a fortnight—\$30 to cover the customer's ongoing usage and \$20 to reduce his arrears. If he met his payment obligations for 12 months, he would receive a \$400 account credit. The water corporation also offered a water audit to help him reduce his usage and accepted him into its hardship program. 2011/2245

Fig 12: Tracking EWOV's credit-related actual and imminent energy disconnection and water restriction cases against unrequested disconnections and restrictions by energy and water companies



The data on unrequested electricity and gas disconnections and water restrictions in Figure 12 has been published in the Essential Services Commission's Comparative Performance Reports. The corresponding data for 2011-12 has not been published yet.

EWOV received 9,777 solar cases in 2011-12, 269 enquiries and 9,508 complaints. Compared with those for 2010-11, solar cases increased 79% from 5,449. Issues around solar feed-in tariffs largely drove the increase.

Almost 80% of these cases were referred back to the customer's electricity retailer or distributor, after we assisted the customers with general information. Some 796 cases were about solar installation companies, with customers usually complaining that installers had delayed the installation process and paperwork submission. These complaints are outside EWOV's jurisdiction, so customers were referred to Consumer Affairs Victoria. We investigated 1,852 solar complaints.

Solar trends

Complaints increased in the last quarter of 2011 with the closure of the Premium Feed-in Tariff (PFiT) scheme. Many customers were concerned that solar process delays would mean they'd miss out on the PFiT. There was evident confusion about the solar paperwork, a situation customers said wasn't helped when they received incorrect or conflicting information about aspects of the process from their electricity retailer, distributor or solar installer. Delays in issuing bills also meant customers couldn't check whether they were on the PFiT or not. Our overall assessment is that customers had trouble resolving complaints themselves because they found it hard to obtain good information on (and then understand) the complex solar process, the required forms and the responsibilities of the different parties involved in the process. We believe energy company front-line staff must be better equipped to respond to customer questions and concerns about solar, and be able to direct customers to specialist staff for assistance where necessary.

Solar issues

Billing was the most common source of solar complaint, usually to do with feed-in tariffs. As noted above, much of this was around the closure of the PFiT scheme, with customers concerned about missing out. Sometimes this was found to be due to their own action or inaction, but often it was due to an error on the part of their retailer or distributor. Even when the customer qualified for the PFiT, the credits weren't always applied to their bills. Other Billing issues included delays and backbilling. Customer service issues included poor service (including multiple contacts with electricity companies without resolution) and inadequate or incorrect information. Provision issues included connection delays, upgrade costs and metering.

Customer misses out on PFiT due to retailer error

The customer said she'd sent the PFiT paperwork to her electricity retailer before the cut-off date of 30 September 2011 and had contacted the retailer several times to confirm everything was in order. Despite this, she said that in February 2012 she was told she was on the Standard Feed-in Tariff (SFiT) and couldn't receive the PFiT because the retailer hadn't submitted the tariff change application to the local distributor in time. Responding to the customer's EWOV complaint, the retailer said it couldn't change the customer over to the PFiT retrospectively. It credited her account with \$1,178 (the difference between the SFiT and the PFiT to February 2012). It then changed her over to the Transitional Feed-in Tariff (TFiT), and agreed to credit her account with the difference between the PFiT and TFiT in January each year for the life of the PFiT scheme, as long as she didn't switch to another retailer. 2012/9230

High bills after solar meter was set up incorrectly

The customer said his quarterly bills of \$500 to \$700 increased considerably after he installed solar panels and a solar capable meter in June 2011. A bill for \$3,019 (including \$298 for the meter) was followed by one for \$1,437. Given his usage hadn't changed, he couldn't understand the increase. Contacted by the customer, the retailer sent him the meter usage data, advising that his higher bills could be the result of the meter being faulty or incorrectly wired. It offered the customer a meter test, on the proviso that he would pay the \$450 test fee if the meter was found to be operating correctly. Dissatisfied with this response, the customer contacted EWOV. In response to an Assisted Referral, the electricity retailer had the meter tested. It was found to be working correctly. After receiving a monthly bill for \$172, the customer started taking daily readings himself and a full EWOV investigation was undertaken. An independent energy audit concluded that the property wasn't capable of using the amount of electricity billed or generating the amount of solar credited. Our technical consultant detected large discrepancies in the data and bills, and suspected a problem with the meter registers (peak, off-peak and solar) and subsequent billing. We contacted the electricity distributor, which was responsible for the solar meter exchange and set-up of the meter's registers. It investigated and found its installers had set the solar meter up incorrectly, causing billing issues for the retailer. Based on the distributor's advice, the retailer recalculated the customer's bills, resulting in a credit of \$2,852.41. With a customer service payment of \$50 and \$314.09 for lost discounts, the customer's account ended up \$1,957.23 in credit. 2012/9186

By 30 June 2012, 1,280,031 Smart Meters* had been installed in Victoria.

EWOV received 5,234 Smart Meter cases in 2011-12 (272 enquiries and 4,962 complaints), up 66% from 3,150 in 2010-11. Around 80% of these were referred back to electricity retailers and distributors, after we assisted with general information about the meter replacement program—such as whether installation was mandatory and whether it could be deferred. Some 520 cases fell outside our jurisdiction, so the customer was referred to another agency—often to their local Member of Parliament, because the complaint was about the State Government policy underpinning the Smart Meter rollout. We investigated 757 Smart Meter complaints.

Smart Meter trends

We received more Smart Meter cases in the second half of 2011 than in the first half of 2012. We attribute this to more customers learning that the meter at their property would be replaced, more meters subsequently installed and media coverage. Newspapers, television and radio programs all reported on a range of Smart Meter developments. In July 2011, customers were told they could refuse to have a Smart Meter installed. In November 2011, health and safety issues were in the spotlight, including switchboard fires—despite the release of safety regulator reports which indicated the fires weren't caused by Smart Meters, public concern was evident. Also in November 2011, the Australian Energy Regulator brought

down its decision about electricity distributor budgets for the Advanced Metering Infrastructure and charges for 2012-15. In December 2011, the State Government announced the Smart Meter rollout would continue as originally planned.

Smart Meter issues

Customers most commonly raised issues around the meter exchange, customer service and billing. Meter exchange concerns included whether having a Smart Meter was compulsory, safety and health issues, and contractor actions. Customers were also worried that the meter exchange may affect the progress of their solar application and, therefore, their eligibility for the Premium Feed-in Tariff (PFiT). Poor service from retailers and distributors was another common issue—customers complained that electricity company staff weren't equipped to answer their questions, gave incorrect advice and/or dismissed health or safety concerns. Post-installation complaints included higher and/or delayed bills and, in the absence of start and end reads, concerns about how bills could be verified.

Unauthorised property access by meter installer

The meter at the customer's property was due to be exchanged for a Smart Meter. Because it was behind a locked door, she arranged to be home on the designated day. Three days before this, the meter was exchanged in her absence. The customer said she was told the

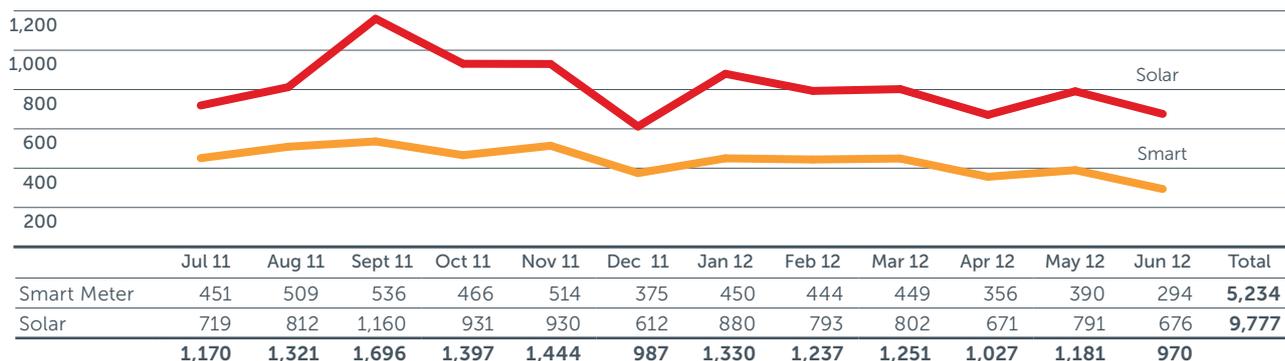
contractor had used a screwdriver to lift the lock. She contacted EWOV, concerned about the security breach and seeking replacement of the deadlock, or compensation so she could replace it. Contacted by EWOV, the distributor sent the installer and his team leader to the customer's property to apologise to her personally. The customer accepted \$100 as payment towards a new lock and said she'd consider relocating the meter. 2012/5944

Smart Meter disputed as cause of fire

After the Smart Meter at the customer's home caught fire, her electricity was disconnected. It cost her \$1,980, which she said she couldn't afford, to have an electrician rewire the house. She said the inspector who assessed the damage told her she could claim the cost from her electricity distributor. Her claim was rejected on the basis that the wiring behind the Smart Meter caught fire, not the meter itself. Contacted by EWOV, the distributor said its technical assessment of the incident showed the fire had started in cabling behind the meter panel—likely due to an electrical overload or faulty wiring—making it the customer's responsibility. On this basis, and because the fire occurred a year after the meter replacement, the distributor disagreed with advice that the meter exchange led to the fire. However, it recognised the cost to the customer and agreed to reimburse the \$1,980. C/2011/33928

*Source: Department of Primary Industries

Fig 13: Solar and Smart Meter cases



How we define a systemic issue

Our definition of what constitutes a systemic issue is drawn from the definitions used by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), other Ombudsman schemes, current best practice thinking and the *National Benchmarks*. It's an issue, problem or change in company policy or practice that affects, or has the potential to affect, a number of customers.

It may be caused by (but isn't limited to) one or more of the following:

- a system change
- an alteration in performance levels (i.e. quality of supply, access to call centre)
- a policy or procedure change
- a lack of policy/procedure
- a lack of clear regulatory guidelines
- regulatory non-compliance
- the conduct of an energy or water provider's employee, agent, servant, officer or contractor (e.g. a door-to-door marketer)
- the action of a stakeholder (e.g. legislative or regulatory change leading to misunderstanding or misapplication of the change).

Our systemic issues role

A number of documents underpin EWOV's systemic issues identification and reporting responsibilities. These include the *EWOV Charter* at sections 7.1 and 7.2, the *EWOV Constitution*, our regulatory memoranda of understanding and reporting protocols, and the *National Benchmarks*. Monitoring and identification of systemic issues gives us the opportunity to alert the company concerned—to help bring about a speedy and efficient solution and reduce the potential effect on a wider group of customers. Our reporting of systemic issues brings a greater level of transparency to industry practices, helping to drive customer service improvements and prevent complaints.

Our systemic issues process

Our systemic issues process involves identification, registration, assessment, referral, investigation and reporting.

Identification

We identify systemic issues through case receipt, review of case numbers and issues, staff feedback and advice from stakeholders, including scheme participants, regulators and consumer groups.

Registration and assessment

Where a case is identified as having a systemic aspect, this is referred to our Systemic Issues Specialist who handles it separately to the resolution of the particular customer's complaint. We register the issue, check for similar complaints and establish the likelihood of the issue being systemic.

Referral

We contact the scheme participant. Sometimes it's already aware of the problem, but sometimes it isn't. Often this will result in the issue being addressed without any further action on our part. We may also refer the matter to the

industry regulator for investigation—for example, where the scheme participant doesn't take timely or appropriate action to address the issue, or because of its significance.

Investigation

In water, we investigate and seek redress for affected customers, with a report to the Department of Sustainability and Environment on the outcome and whether the water corporation has co-operated with us to resolve the issue appropriately. This differs from our energy role, where we refer the issue to the Essential Services Commission, which has a statutory responsibility to carry out its own investigations.

Reporting

We inform regulators through meetings and written reports. Scheme participants receive de-identified reports, as does the EWOV Board. We publish de-identified systemic issues through the quarterly *Res Online* publication and the *Annual Report*. Internally, systemic issue updates are provided to EWOV staff via training sessions and case reports.

Systemic issues overview 2011-12

In 2011-12 we opened 126 systemic issue investigations, up from 59 in 2010-11. Not all of these investigations resulted in the issue being assessed as systemic.

In a trend we've seen for some years, systemic issues continued to emerge when companies upgraded their billing systems.

In a change to a longstanding trend, systemic issues to do with energy marketing reduced considerably between January 2012 and June 2012. This was likely due to a combination of factors—less marketing activity, media coverage about unethical marketing practices, regulator action on door-to-door marketing, the introduction of Energy Assured Limited (a

self-regulated industry scheme that seeks to improve door-to-door energy marketing practices), better customer information during the marketing process, greater customer understanding of their right to say 'no', and increased use of the Do Not Call Register and Do Not Knock stickers.

Systemic energy issues EWOV closed in 2011-12

- Ongoing gas supply issues due to water in gas lines SI/2011/35 & SI/2011/36
- EWOV's telephone number appeared on bills sent to South Australian energy customers SI/2011/26
- Inaccurate high bills for residents of two different retirement villages after the villages switched to solar power SI/2011/1 & SI/2011/14
- Electricity bills issued on gas bill letterhead SI/2011/15
- Cooling-off provisions not enacted after customer notification SI/2010/47
- Insufficient wording and timeframes on disconnection warnings to dual fuel customers SI/2011/7
- Energy telemarketer claims that price increases were due to the carbon tax SI/2011/41
- Inaccurate solar billing SI/2009/66
- Energy billing delays often in excess of six to eight months SI/2011/23
- Significant increase in one retailer's transfer in error cases SI/2010/48
- Behaviour of certain door-to-door marketers SI/2011/56
- Significant delays for customers attempting to transfer to an energy retailer SI/2011/21
- Damage to ducted heating from dust in the gas supply following supply upgrade SI/2011/76
- Pre-disconnection obligations to customers weren't fulfilled by the gas retailer SI/2011/72
- Limited notice of gas disconnection, then personal information required for reconnection SI/2011/42
- Electricity accounts for a group of properties on a specific street incorrectly transferred SI/2011/53
- Delays in solar meter and PFIT upgrades in a rural area following a bulk buy of solar panels SI/2011/54
- Full arrears not shown on the electricity disconnection notices sent to customers SI/2011/51
- Misleading information and abusive door-to-door marketer behaviour; transfer without consent SI/2011/65
- Reminder notices sent before the bills were sent SI/2011/90
- Confusing energy terminology for peak and off-peak rates SI/2011/79
- No EWOV contact information on disconnection notice SI/2012/1
- Ongoing gas supply outages and interruptions SI/2011/97
- Solar generation added to usage graphs on bills, instead of subtracted SI/2011/92
- Potential transfer delays due to difficulty raising service orders SI/2011/93
- Incorrect information in customer advice letters SI/2012/22
- Billing delays due to non-provision of meter read data SI/2011/48
- Direct debits processed despite billing delays SI/2011/94
- Interval meter data not able to be provided on customer request SI/2012/16
- Disconnection for unauthorised usage despite contact with retailer to set up account SI/2012/10
- Solar billing did not display a kilowatt measurement for usage; just a dollar figure SI/2012/50
- First bills after switching retailer showed higher rates than those offered by door-to-door marketer SI/2011/63
- Customers received the Standard Feed-in Tariff instead of the Premium Feed-in Tariff SI/2011/89
- Market contract customers received automatically generated renewal notices with out-of-date rates SI/2012/5
- Recovery of extensive bulk hot water charges as a result of cross-metering of central gas meters SI/2012/15
- Customer accounts not recognised by retailer's Interactive Voice Response phone system SI/2012/34
- Next scheduled meter read dates not included on bills SI/2012/42
- Transfer without consent based on old marketing contracts SI/2012/25
- Non-removal of default listings despite retailer request SI/2012/6
- Comparative historical data not included in graphs on bills SI/2012/33
- Eligible customers not receiving the Transitional Feed-in Tariff SI/2012/43
- Double billing when retailer's billing system couldn't withdraw original incorrect bills SI/2012/30

Systemic water issues EWOV closed in 2011-12

- Residential customers billed for the entire residential/commercial complex SI/2009/45 & SI/2010/1
- Severe water quality issues in a specific area from heavy rainfall and flooding SI/2011/39
- Customers on hardship assistance charged interest on arrears SI/2010/35
- Billing delays of up to 18 months after system transition SI/2011/83
- Meter reader was making up the water meter readings SI/2011/96
- Not clear that billing for multiple meters was based on estimates SI/2012/9
- Water quality contamination in specific localities SI/2012/19 & SI/2012/31
- Property damage during major sewerage project SI/2012/36
- Undercharging of multi-dwelling properties in change to collection of service charge SI/2012/37

Enquiries

In 2011-12, we responded to 2,822 enquiries, providing information and referral where appropriate. Of these, 1,806 people were provided with general information (and 1,077 of them were referred on to their energy or water company) and 1,016 people were referred to a Regulator, other Ombudsman, Government or another body.

Complaints

We finalised 62,532 complaints in 2011-12.

8,824 complaints were referred back to energy or water company call centres, because the customer hadn't contacted the company before contacting EWOV.

37,927 complaints were also referred back to companies, but at a higher level.

2,270 complaints were referred to a Regulator, other Ombudsman, Government or another body.

1,232 complaints didn't require referral or investigation. Some customers simply wished to register their complaint with us without further action.

12,279 Investigated Complaints were finalised. 85% of investigated complaints were conciliated, down slightly from 86% the previous year. A further 14% of investigated complaints were closed because the customer didn't stay in contact with us during the investigation or take some action required of them as part of our conciliation process, e.g. not taking up a referral to a financial counsellor for an assessment of their capacity to pay. This was up slightly from 13% the previous year. Overall, the average days to close EWOV Investigated Complaints was 51.2 days, down from 53.7 days in 2010-11.

From the 10,435 Investigated Complaints that we conciliated:

- 6,504 apologies were provided to customers
- 3,189 payment plans were negotiated
- \$3,966,292 was achieved in redress for customers:
 - » \$1,874,435 in billing adjustments
 - » \$1,611,204 in recognition of customer service issues
 - » \$389,783 in debt reductions/waivers
 - » \$54,872 in guaranteed service level payments
 - » \$35,998 in waived fees

Fig 14: Outcomes from all cases finalised in 2011-12



* Some customers wish to register their complaint with us, e.g. about energy marketing, but don't seek referral or investigation.

For example, a customer not taking part in EWOV's conciliation process, including not taking up a referral to a financial counsellor for an assessment of the customer's capacity to pay.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

EWOV's strategic plan focuses on six areas—customer service, scheme participant management, community/stakeholder management, innovation, human resources and finance.

Customer service

Our goal is to provide quality service to energy and water customers contacting EWOV.

We achieved a major operational review. Known as EWOV 2.0, this produced significant and positive change to EWOV's processes, procedures and work practices, delivering more timely outcomes for customers.

We introduced Best Practice Procedures at all stages of the EWOV process to ensure consistent, efficient and effective case handling and reduce unnecessary contacts with scheme participants and customers.

We achieved more timely outcomes for customers whose complaints we investigated. On average, we closed investigated complaints in 51.2 days, down from 53.7 days the previous year. We achieved a low of 40.2 days in May 2012, against a high of 72.3 days in January 2012 (Figure 15b).

Using targeted questioning to obtain key information from customers, we reduced Intake Officers' average call handling time by 50%, resulting in an increase in the number of calls answered in 20 seconds (Figure 16).

Fig 15a: Time taken to finalise the 12,279 Investigated Complaints

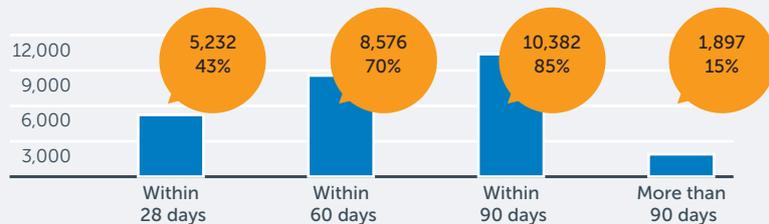


Fig 15b: Open complaints and average days to close investigations

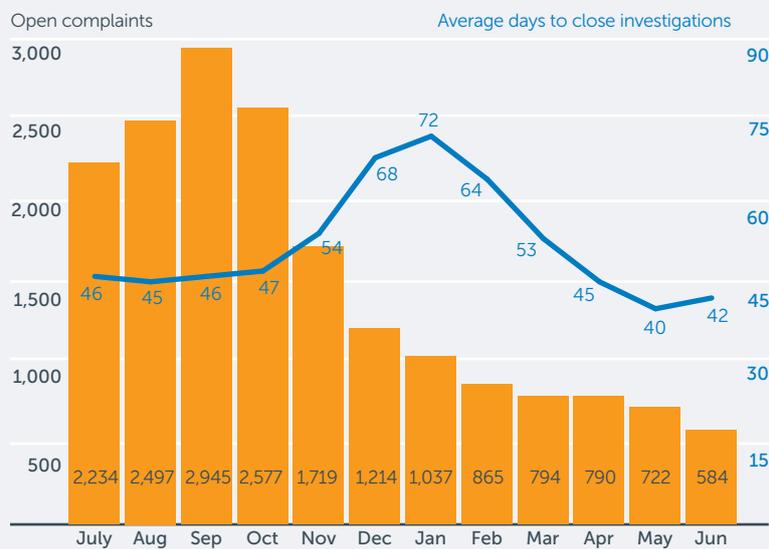
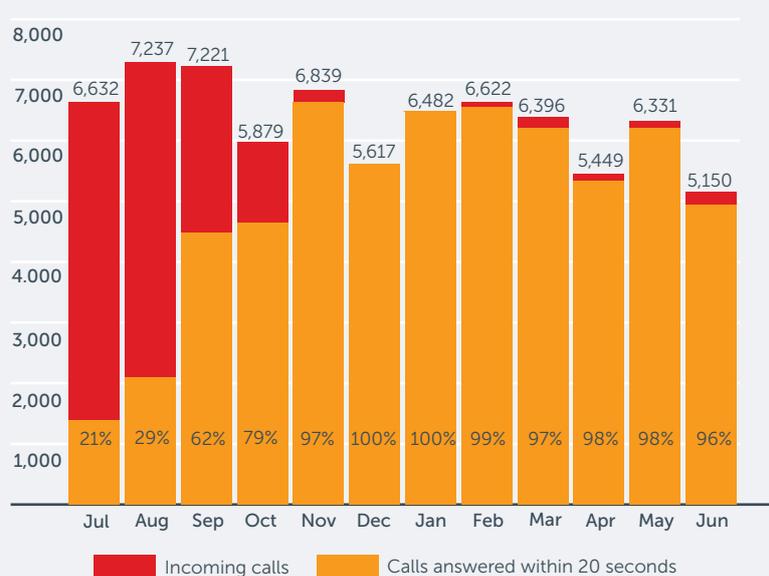


Fig 16: Incoming call volumes



A new web-based complaint lodgement capacity linked to our case management system reduced the data entry requirements for Intake Officers.

Creation of a Real Time Resolution Team brought conciliation forward in the resolution process—to deliver timely resolution of complaints that can be addressed by providing customers with additional relevant information/education.

We expanded our customer survey methodology to include online surveying and more regular and extended phone surveying.

Throughout the year, we maintained high levels of customer satisfaction—75.8% for Unassisted Referrals; 85.7% for Assisted Referrals and 81.5% for Investigated Complaints.

A revised Quality Control and Quality Assurance Framework is focused on a balance between immediate feedback from Team Managers and independent Quality Assurance.

We made greater use of face-to-face and phone discussions with scheme participants to help us progress batches of complaints without the need for lengthy written communication.

We contracted a financial assessor to assist with hardship, conducting 80 assessments in-house and 52 via a community agency.

We contracted a technical advisor to assist with high bill complaints.

Scheme participant management

Our goal is to foster effective scheme participant relationships and drive continued customer service improvement.

We developed a framework that, while maintaining EWOV's independence, enables scheme participant representatives to work from our office for days, weeks and months, as necessary, to resolve complaints. This facilitates face-to-face discussion, and therefore faster information sharing, complaint resolution and improved working relationships.

We held more frequent meetings with the scheme participants which had the highest complaint volumes.

We conducted quarterly briefing and feedback sessions on the process changes arising from the EWOV 2.0 operational review. This was particularly important given the impact that EWOV's backlog and subsequent process changes had on the resource decisions made by scheme participants. Sessions were videotaped and made available to scheme participants.

Ombudsman Cynthia Gebert commenced a schedule of meetings with scheme participant Chief Executive Officers soon after her appointment in February 2012.

We delivered monthly scheme participant training sessions and independently facilitated complaint handling workshops.

We ran a very successful conference for scheme participants, maintaining a traditionally high delegate approval rating.

Community/stakeholder management

Our goals are to:

- build customer capability for handling their own complaints
- provide effective input into public policy dialogue
- foster effective stakeholder relationships.

We launched a new, more easily navigable, website in April 2012. It includes customer education videos and revised fact sheets, both focused on building customer capability. We've tailored our publications to encourage customers to check our website for useful information.

We contributed EWOV's independent complaint data and customer stories to public policy dialogue, through 26 written submissions and participation in 18 forums.

We actively participated in a range of consumer education and outreach programs, workshops and conferences run by community groups, regulators, government agencies and tertiary institutions.

Innovation

Our goal is to pursue continuous improvement.

EWOV 2.0 was our primary innovation initiative for 2011-12. The focus on innovation and improvement that underpinned it sparked teams beyond the Intake and Investigations team to review how they operate and adopt new processes and procedures.

We established a Continuous Improvement Manager role, with specific responsibility for the identification, implementation and review of improvements to EWOV's operations, to ensure this remains a key focus area.

Human resources

Our goal is to foster a stimulating and healthy workplace.

Despite the challenges of a changing organisation, we achieved an engagement score of 68% in the annual AON Hewitt Staff Survey. This was up from 64% the previous year and placed EWOV in the 'best employer' range.

We developed and implemented ten online induction modules to improve the accessibility of EWOV's induction training.

We ran a comprehensive Leadership Development Program for Conciliation Team Managers, Senior Intake Officers and Senior Conciliators to build long-term leadership capacity and improve EWOV's succession planning.

We completely reviewed EWOV's internal and scheme participant training.

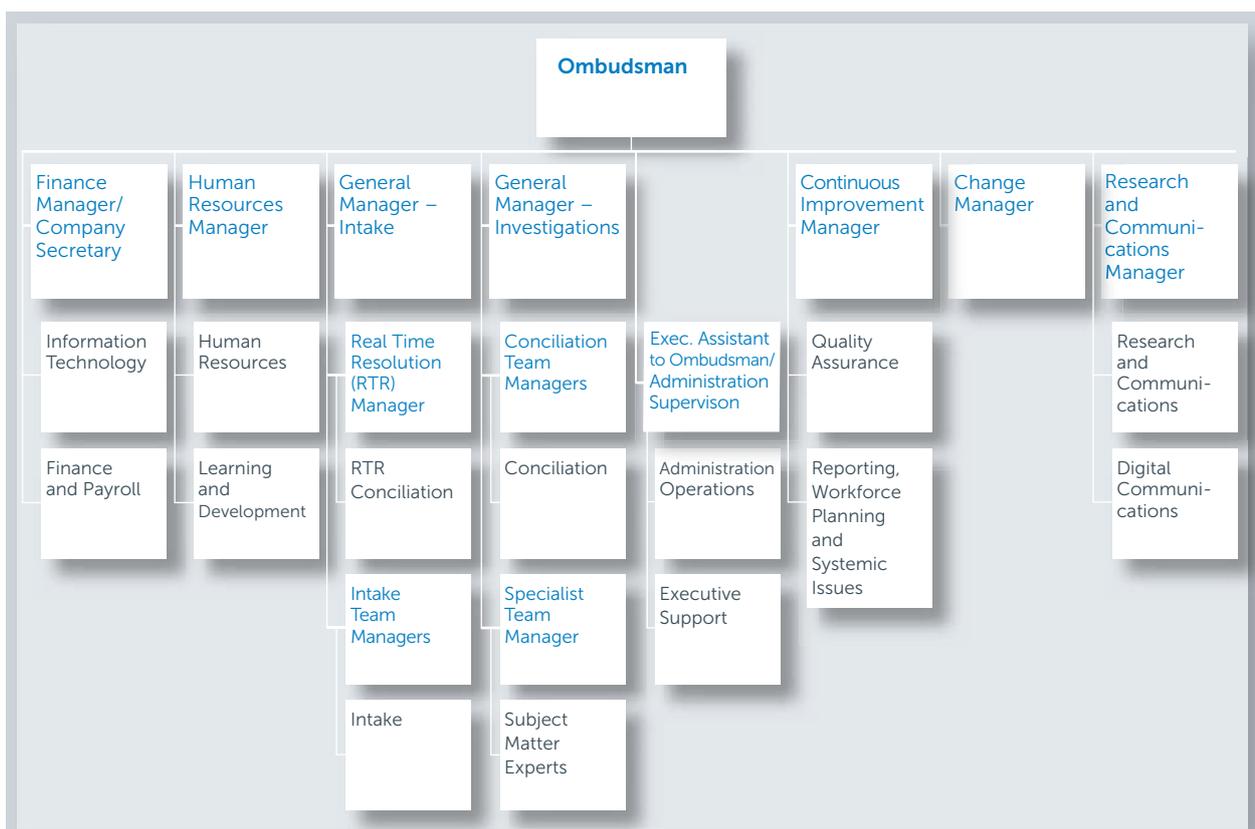
Finance

Our goal is to responsibly manage scheme resources—efficiencies balanced with effectiveness.

We brought EWOV's 2011-12 costs in at \$15,900,000. This was 3% over budget, due to two special unbudgeted items—consultancy fees for the EWOV 2.0 review and for Ombudsman recruitment.

Positively, we are able to return \$1.5 million, half of an additional \$3 million levy on scheme participants in January 2012.

Fig 17: Organisational chart at 30 June 2012



EWOV Limited register of members at 30 June 2012

24 electricity retailers

AGL Sales Pty Ltd
Alinta Retail Energy Pty Ltd
Aurora Energy Pty Ltd
Australian Power & Gas Pty Ltd
Blue NRG Pty Ltd #
Click Energy Pty Ltd
Country Energy (OE)
Diamond Energy Pty Ltd
Dodo Power & Gas Pty Ltd
EnergyAustralia (TRUenergy)
ERM Power Retail Pty Ltd #
Go Energy Pty Ltd/CO Zero #
Lumo Energy Pty Ltd
Momentum Energy Pty Ltd
Neighbourhood Energy
Origin Energy Electricity Ltd
Powerdirect Pty Ltd (AGL)
Powerdirect Australia Pty Ltd
Powershop Australia Pty Ltd/
Meridien Energy #
Red Energy Pty Ltd
Simply Energy
SP AusNet (SPI Electricity Pty Ltd)
Sun Retail Pty Ltd (an Origin
company) <
TRUenergy Pty Ltd (SPI Retail
Pty Ltd)

5 electricity distributors

Jemena
CitiPower Pty Ltd Electricity
Powercor Australia Networks
SP AusNet (SPI Electricity Pty Ltd)
United Energy (Vic) Ltd

2 electricity transmission companies

Basslink Pty Ltd
SP AusNet (SPI PowerNet)

10 natural gas retailers

AGL Sales Pty Ltd
AGL Sales (Queensland) Pty Ltd
Australian Power & Gas Pty Ltd
EnergyAustralia (Gas) (TRUenergy)
Lumo Energy Pty Ltd
Origin Energy Retail Ltd
Origin Energy (Vic) Pty Ltd
Red Energy Pty Ltd
Simply Energy
TRUenergy Pty Ltd (SPI Retail
Pty Ltd)

4 natural gas distributors

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

5 liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) retailers

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

3 metropolitan water corporations

City West Water
South East Water
Yarra Valley Water

1 metropolitan water wholesaler

Melbourne Water Corporation

11 regional urban water corporations

Barwon 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

2 rural water corporations

Goulburn-Murray Rural Water
Corporation
Gippsland and Southern
Rural Water Corporation

2 rural urban water corporations

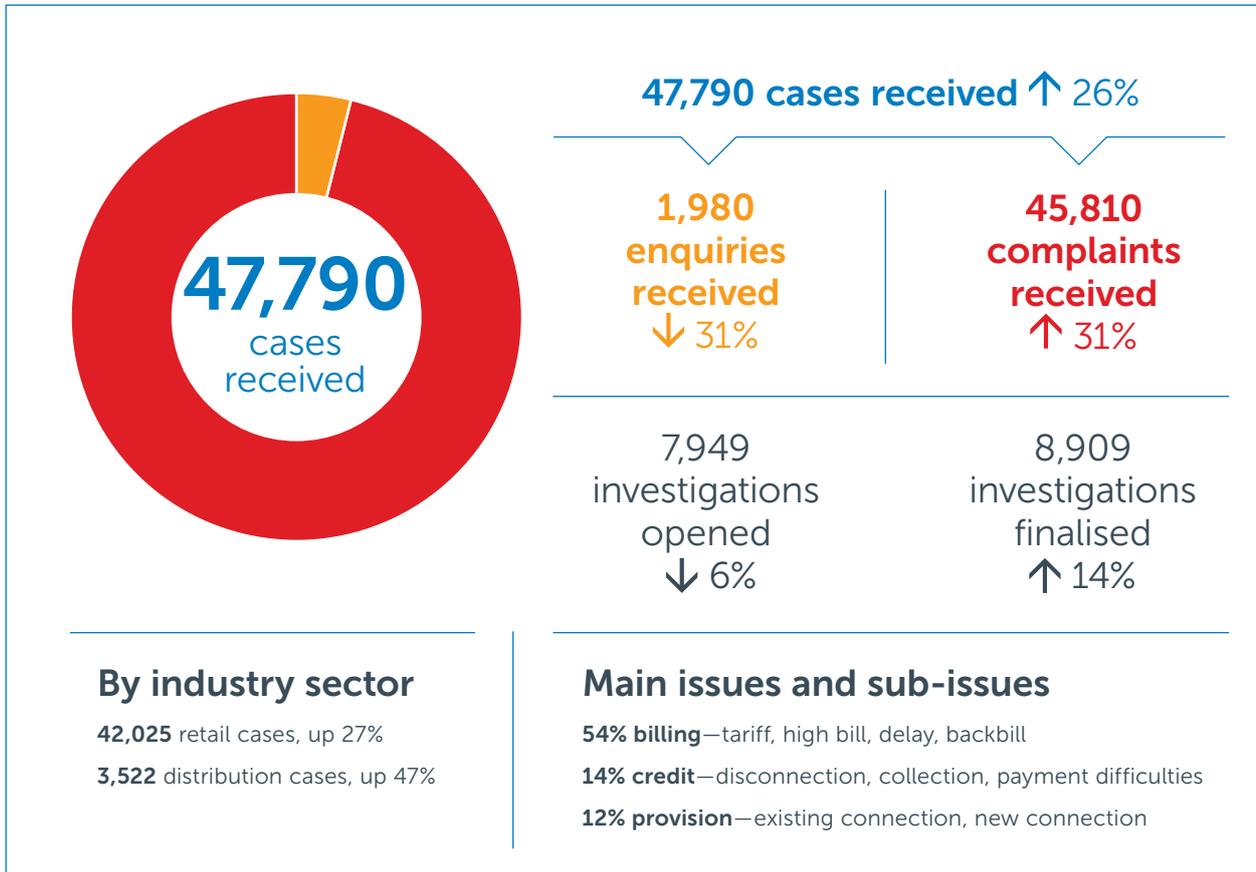
Grampians Wimmera Mallee
Water Corporation
Lower Murray Urban and
Rural Water Corporation

NOTES

Blue NRG Pty Ltd, Powershop Australia Pty Ltd/Meridien Energy, Go Energy Pty Ltd/COZero and ERM Retail Pty Ltd all joined EWOV on 14 June 2012.

* Central Gippsland Region Water Corporation is commonly known as Gippsland Water.
< Sun Retail Pty Ltd (Origin) remains an electricity retail member, but it is not active.

2011-12 cases overall



The electricity industry in Victoria is privately owned, independently regulated and operates within the National Energy Market.

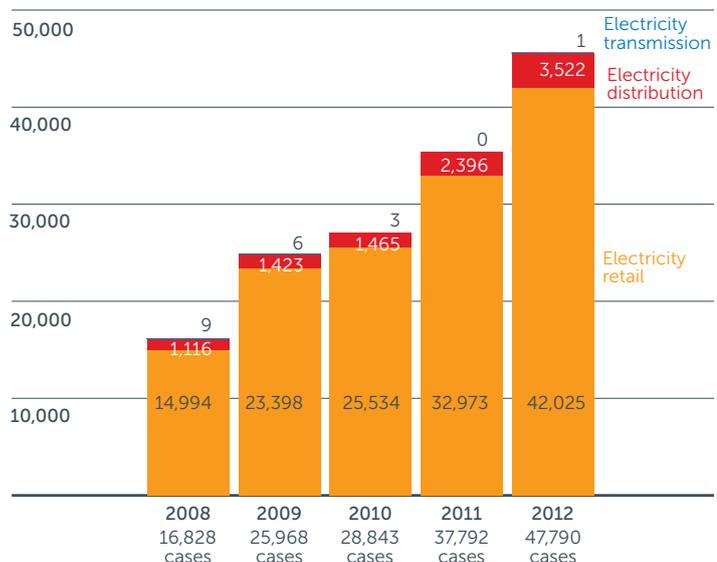
There are approximately 2.2 million electricity customers in Victoria. These customers can choose their retailer. They can't choose their distributor because each of the five electricity distributors owns the 'poles and wires' network in a specific part of the state.

At 30 June 2012, 24 retailers, 5 distributors and 2 transmission companies were electricity participants in the EWOV scheme.

For a closer look

- Behind the Billing cases on page 20
- Behind the Credit cases on page 22
- Behind the Solar cases on page 24
- Behind the Smart Meter cases on page 25

Fig 18: Trends in electricity cases



Note: the overall cases for each year also included a number of cases which were 'non company specific'

Fig 19: Electricity cases we received and finalised in 2011-12

	CUSTOMER BANDWIDTH ^A	OVERALL CASES		ENQUIRIES	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	COMPLAINTS			
		2011-12	2010-11			investigated complaints	assisted referrals	unassisted referrals	complaint investigations finalised
RETAIL									
AGL Sales	☺☺☺	6,057	6,482	145	5,912	1,231	3,653	1,028	1,362
Aurora Energy	☺	2	5	0	2	0	0	2	0
Australian Power & Gas	☺	1,963	2,014	57	1,906	388	1,216	302	432
Click Energy	☺	126	96	3	123	14	86	23	16
Country Energy ¹	☺	-	132	-	-	-	-	-	-
Diamond Energy ²	☺	18	-	1	17	1	11	5	0
Dodo Power & Gas	☺	157	46	7	150	10	88	52	0
EnergyAustralia	☺	1,155	919	46	1,109	115	736	258	128
Integral Energy Australia	☺	11	8	2	9	1	1	7	1
Lumo Energy	☺	3,578	4,544	95	3,483	594	2,262	627	711
Momentum Energy	☺	289	87	6	283	45	193	45	42
Neighbourhood Energy	☺	852	535	23	829	106	529	194	118
Origin Energy	☺☺☺	11,008	7,701	169	10,839	2,391	6,870	1,578	2,558
Origin Energy (Country Energy) ¹	☺	302	86	11	291	44	191	56	50
Powerdirect (AGL)	☺	528	389	12	516	76	343	97	87
Powerdirect Australia (AGL)	☺	2	1	0	2	0	0	2	0
Red Energy	☺	1,497	1,336	45	1,452	249	932	271	283
Simply Energy	☺	2,426	2,806	43	2,383	483	1,528	372	604
Sun Retail (Electricity)	☺	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
TRUenergy	☺☺☺	12,052	5,786	208	11,844	1,936	8,049	1,859	2,216
TOTAL RETAIL		42,025	32,973	873	41,152	7,684	26,688	6,780	8,608
DISTRIBUTION % customers~									
CitiPower	12%	223	151	19	204	14	86	104	16
Jemena Electricity Networks	12%	506	368	37	469	36	222	211	46
Powercor Australia	27%	759	592	38	721	54	353	314	63
SP AusNet	24%	1,093	791	59	1,034	87	565	382	90
United Energy Distribution	25%	941	494	51	890	74	431	385	86
TOTAL DISTRIBUTION		3,522	2,396	204	3,318	265	1,657	1,396	301
TRANSMISSION									
Basslink		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SP AusNet		1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
TOTAL TRANSMISSION		1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
NON COMPANY SPECIFIC									
Non company specific		2,242	2,423	903	1,339	0	4	1,335	0
ELECTRICITY TOTALS		47,790	37,792	1,980	45,810	7,949	28,350	9,511	8,909

NOTES:

575 electricity investigations were upgraded to Stage 2 during the year, 1,610 were upgraded to Stage 3 and 825 were upgraded to Final Stage.

^A Customer bandwidths (based on information provided to EWOV by each retailer and the ESC):

☺ denotes less than 250,000 customers at 30 June 2012

☺☺ 250,001 - 500,000 customers

☺☺☺ 500,001 - 750,000 customers

~ Electricity distributors' customer shares are based on 2009 customer numbers in the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER's) *Victorian Electricity Distribution Network Service Providers Annual Performance Report 2010 (May 2012)*.

1 Since 1 March 2011, Country Energy's cases have been recorded as Origin Energy (Country Energy).

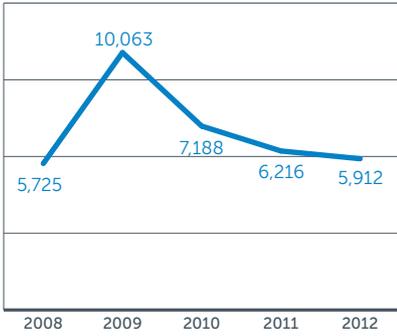
2 Diamond Energy joined EWOV as an electricity retail participant in December 2010, but wasn't marketing until 2011-12.

Electricity continued

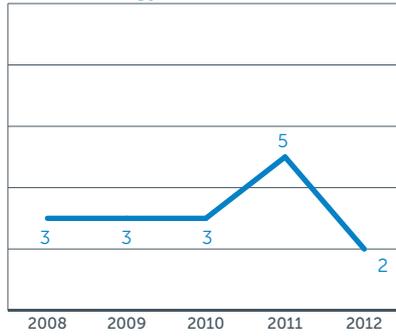
Fig 20: Complaint receipt trends for electricity companies – 5 years of data

ELECTRICITY RETAIL

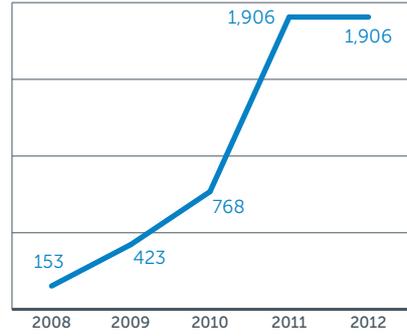
AGL Sales



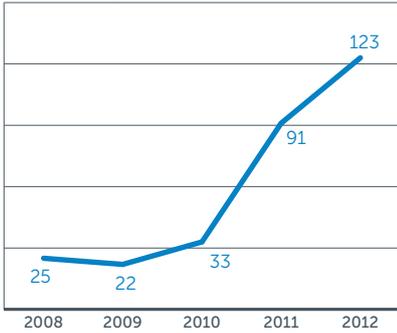
Aurora Energy



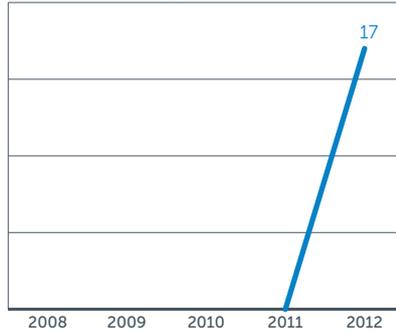
Australian Power & Gas



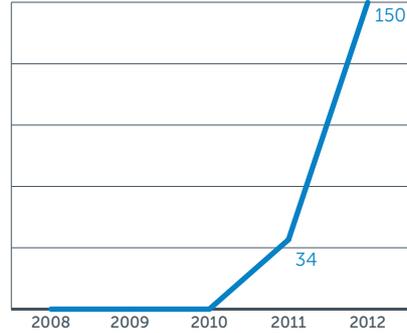
Click Energy



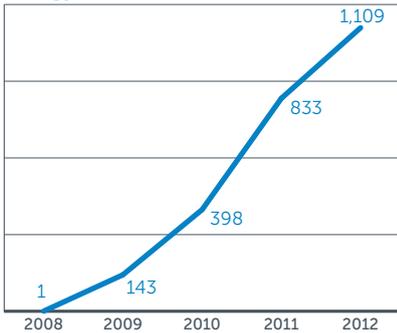
Diamond Energy ¹



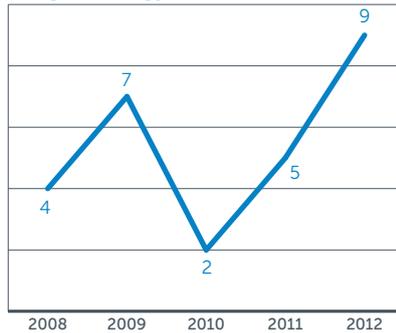
Dodo Power & Gas



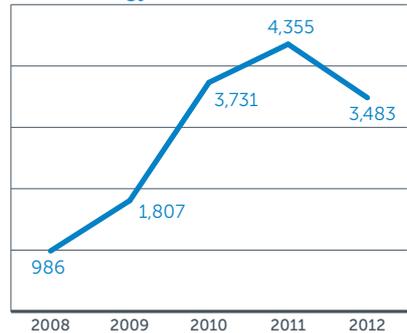
EnergyAustralia



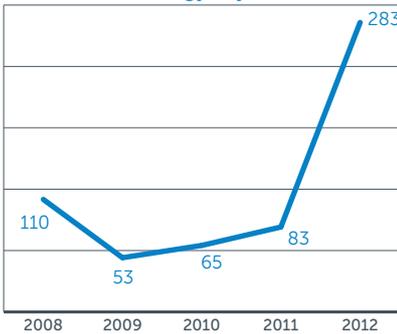
Integral Energy



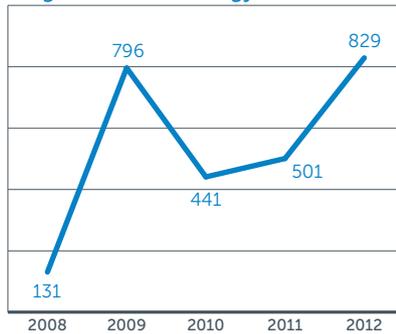
Lumo Energy ²



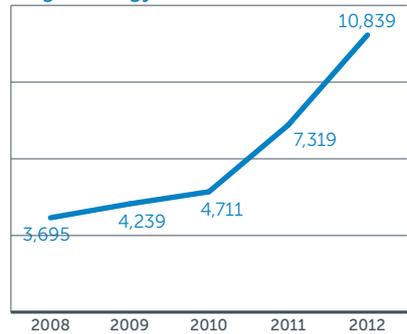
Momentum Energy Pty Ltd



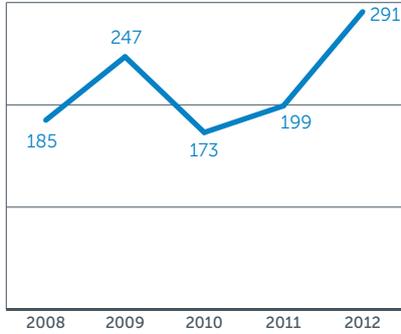
Neighbourhood Energy



Origin Energy



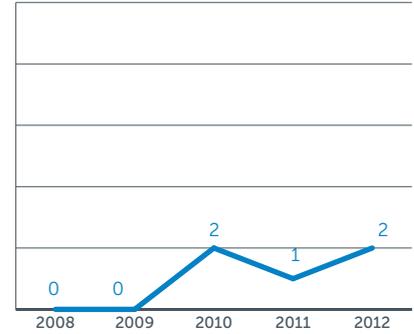
Origin Energy (Country Energy)



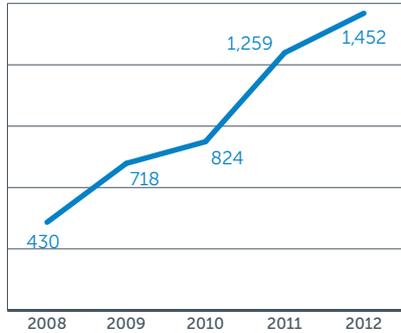
Powerdirect (AGL)



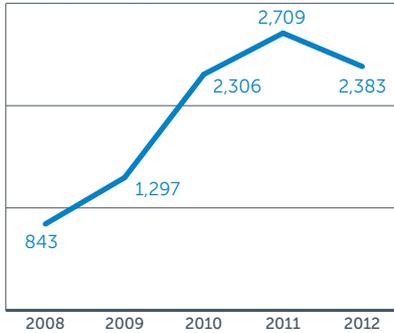
Powerdirect Australia (AGL)



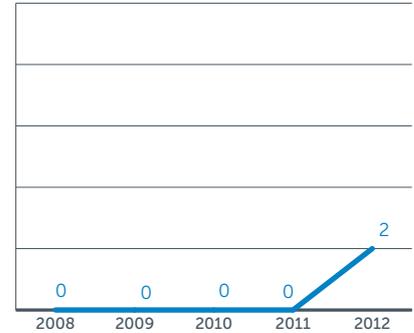
Red Energy



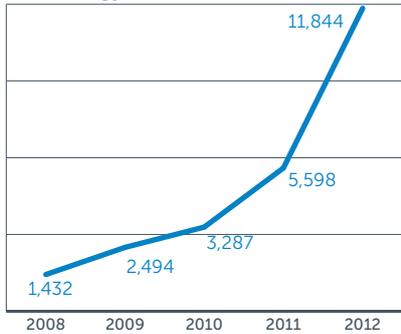
Simply Energy



Sun Retail (Electricity)

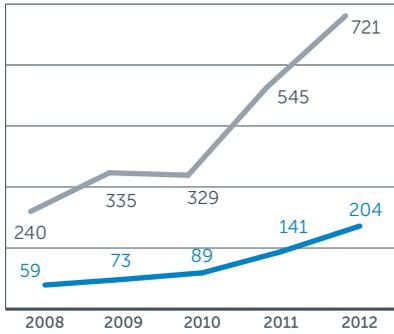


TRUenergy

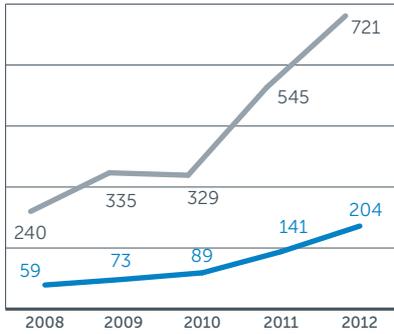


ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION

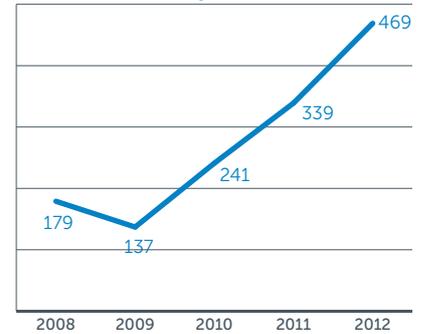
CitiPower



Powercor Australia



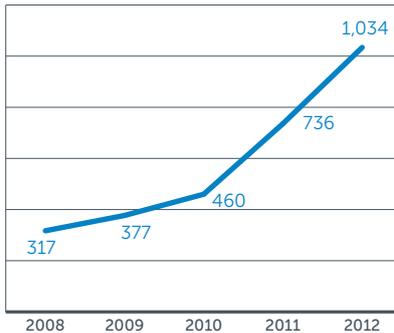
Jemena Electricity Networks



United Energy Distribution

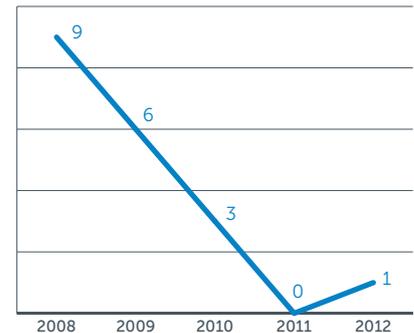


SP AusNet



ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION

SP AusNet



NOTES:

1 Diamond Energy joined EWOV as an electricity retail participant in December 2010, but wasn't marketing until 2011-12.

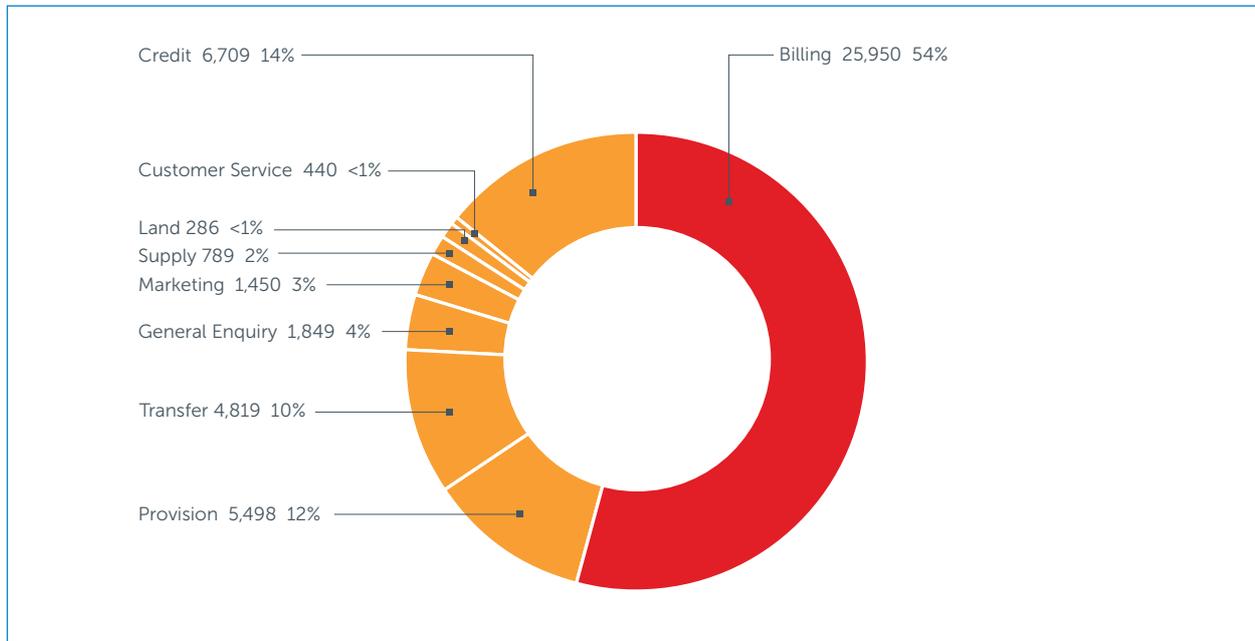
2 Until July 2010, Lumo Energy was known as Victoria Electricity.

No cases have been registered for transmission company, Basslink, over the past 5 years.

Electricity continued

38

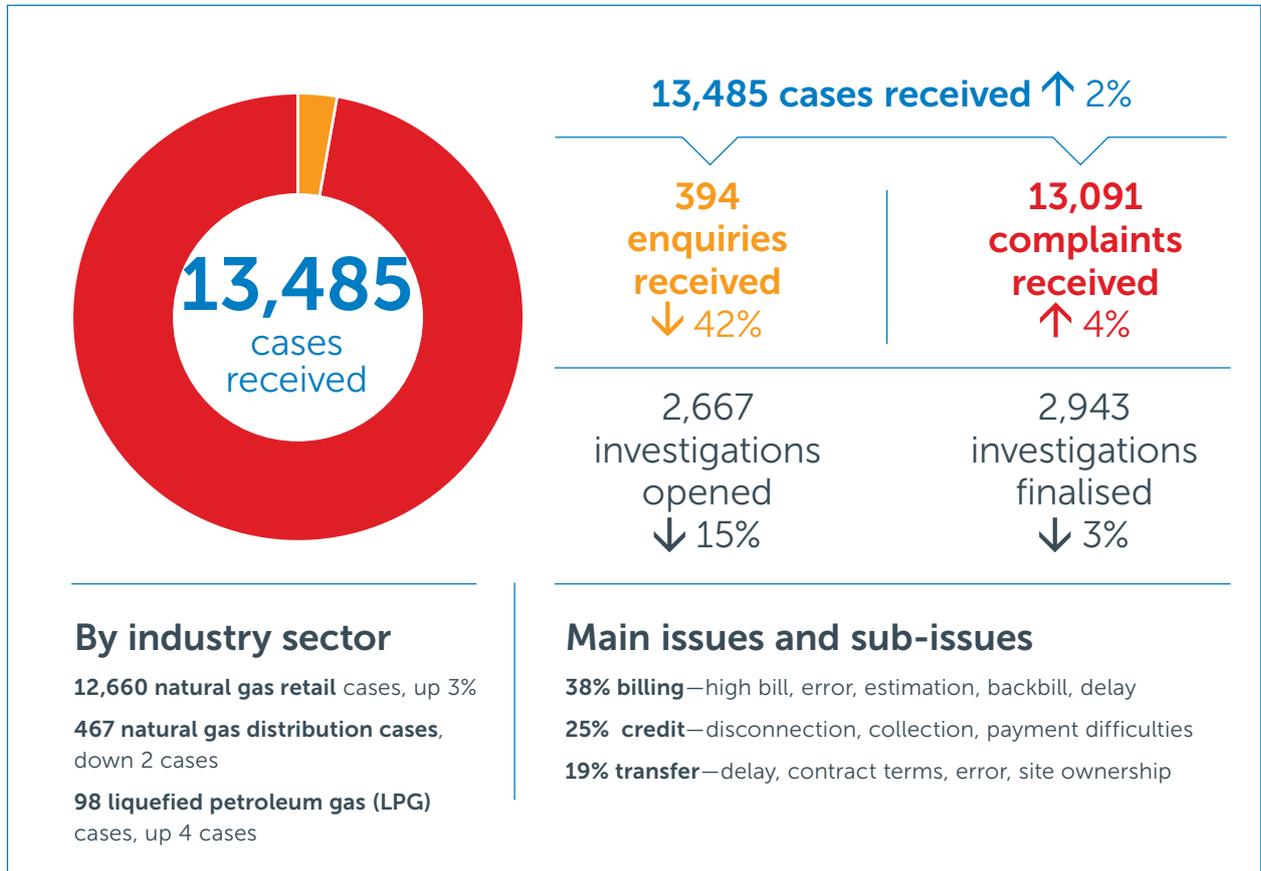
Fig 21: Main issues raised by electricity customers



All issues: 47,790	no. of issues	%
Billing issues: 25,950 (54%)		
Tariff	4,785	18
High	4,154	16
Delay	4,140	16
Backbill	3,044	12
Error	2,987	12
Estimation	2,252	9
Meter	1,153	4
Fees and Charges	1,009	4
Refund	842	3
Concession / Rebate	599	2
Format	573	2
Other	412	2
Credit issues: 6,709 (14%)		
Disconnection	3,510	52
Collection	2,000	30
Payment Difficulties	1,199	18
Provision issues: 5,498 (12%)		
Existing Connection	4,578	83
New Connection	682	12
Disconnection	238	4
Transfer issues: 4,819 (10%)		
Contract Terms	1,087	23
Delay	805	17
In Error	770	16
Without Consent	645	13
Billing	553	11
Site Ownership	412	9
Cooling Off Rights	323	7
Objection	224	5

	no. of issues	%
Marketing issues: 1,450 (3%)		
Misleading	883	61
Pressure Sales	262	18
Information	146	10
Other	117	8
Non Account Holder	42	3
Supply issues: 789 (2%)		
Off Supply - Unplanned	369	47
Off Supply - Planned	186	24
Variation	147	19
Sustainability Initiatives	70	9
Quality	17	2
Customer Service issues: 440 (<1%)		
Poor Service	100	23
Failure to Respond	91	21
Privacy	88	20
Incorrect Advice / Information	82	19
Failure to Consult / Inform	56	13
Poor / Unprofessional Attitude	23	5
Land issues: 286 (<1%)		
Network Assets	118	41
Other	79	28
Vegetation Management	54	19
Street Lighting	23	8
Easement	12	4
General Enquiry: 1,849 (4%)		
Energy	1,847	100
Non Energy	2	< 1

2011-12 cases overall



The natural gas industry in Victoria is privately owned, independently regulated and operates within the National Energy Market.

There are approximately 1.5 million natural gas customers in Victoria. These customers can choose their retailer. They can't choose their distributor, because each of the three natural gas distributors owns a network of pipes in a specific part of the state.

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 LPG retailers only.

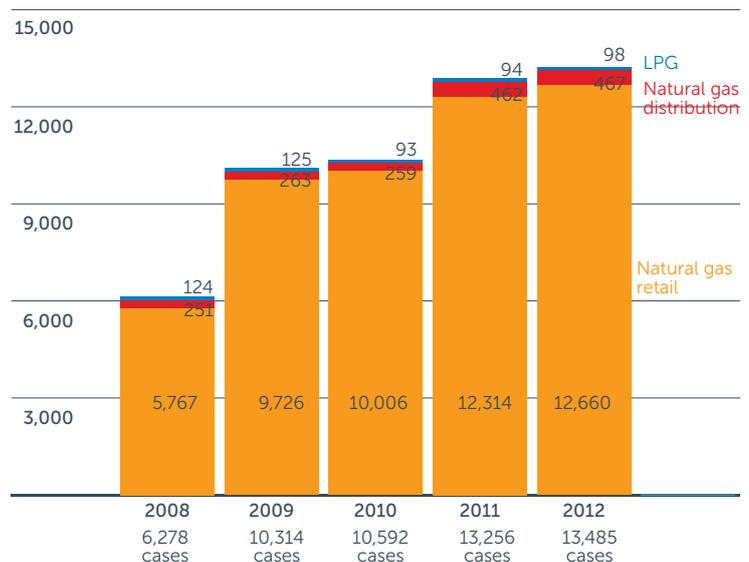
At 30 June 2012, 10 natural gas retailers, 3 natural gas distributors and 5 liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) retailers were gas participants in the EWOV scheme.

For a closer look

Behind the Billing cases on page 20

Behind the Credit cases on page 22

Fig 22: Trends in gas cases



Note: the overall cases for each year also included a number of cases which were 'non company specific'

Fig 23: Gas cases we received and finalised in 2011-12

	CUSTOMER BANDWIDTH [^]	OVERALL CASES		ENQUIRIES	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	COMPLAINTS			
		2011-12	2010-11			investigated complaints	assisted referrals	unassisted referrals	complaint investigations finalised
NATURAL GAS RETAIL									
AGL Sales	☺☺☺	2,585	3,022	50	2,535	581	1,578	376	634
AGL Sales Qld	☺	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australian Power & Gas	☺	1,082	1,081	22	1,060	216	670	174	229
EnergyAustralia	☺	294	391	20	274	28	178	68	31
Lumo Energy	☺	1,219	2,087	17	1,202	256	753	193	303
Origin Energy	☺☺☺	3,158	2,113	64	3,094	679	2,021	394	724
Red Energy	☺	415	401	10	405	77	248	80	87
Simply Energy	☺	815	1,082	11	804	185	492	127	216
TRUenergy	☺☺	3,092	2,137	53	3,039	587	2,038	414	650
TOTAL NATURAL GAS RETAIL		12,660	12,314	247	12,413	2,609	7,978	1,826	2,874
NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION									
	% customers~								
Envestra	31%	171	143	9	162	11	91	60	15
Multinet Gas	38%	192	200	13	179	30	103	46	35
SP AusNet	31%	104	119	5	99	10	58	31	11
TOTAL NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION		467	462	27	440	51	252	137	61
NON COMPANY SPECIFIC									
Natural gas		253	381	116	137	0	0	137	0
LPG		7	5	0	7	0	0	7	0
(LPG (RETAILER SPECIFIC))									
Elgas		63	55	4	59	5	34	20	6
Kleenheat		12	25	0	12	0	9	3	0
Origin Energy LPG		18	13	0	18	1	15	2	1
Powergas		2	0	0	2	1	1	0	1
Supagas		3	1	0	3	0	1	2	0
TOTAL LPG (RETAILER SPECIFIC)		98	94	4	94	7	60	27	8
GAS TOTALS		13,485	13,256	394	13,091	2,667	8,290	2,134	2,943

106 gas investigations were upgraded to Stage 2 during the year, 318 were upgraded to Stage 3 and 161 were upgraded to Final Stage.

[^] Customer bandwidths (based on information provided to EWOV by each natural gas retailer and the ESC; LPG customer numbers are not currently available):

☺ denotes less than 250,000 customers at 30 June 2012

☺☺ 250,001 - 500,000 customers

☺☺☺ 500,001 - 750,000 customers

~ Natural gas distributors' customer shares are based on customer numbers in the Australian Energy Regulator (AER)'s *Victorian Gas Distribution Businesses - Comparative Performance Report 2008 (May 2010)*.

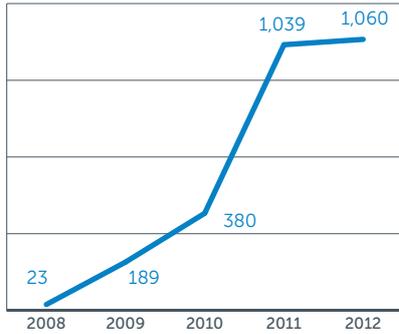
Fig 24: Complaint receipt trends for gas companies – 5 years of data

NATURAL GAS RETAIL

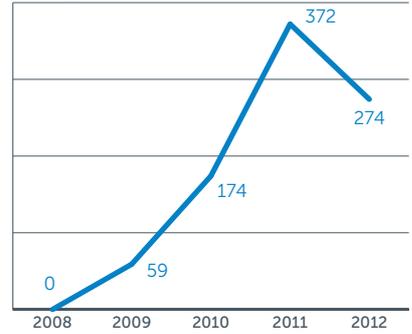
AGL Sales



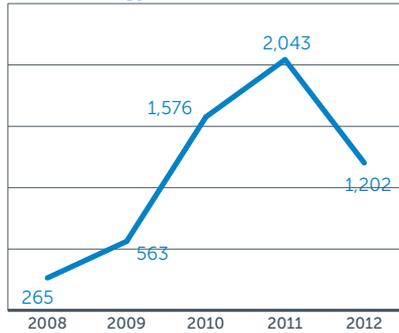
Australian Power & Gas



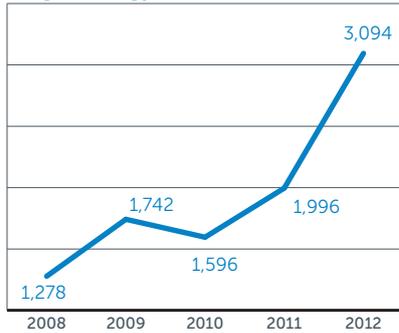
EnergyAustralia



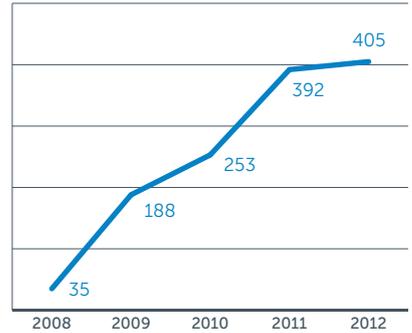
Lumo Energy



Origin Energy



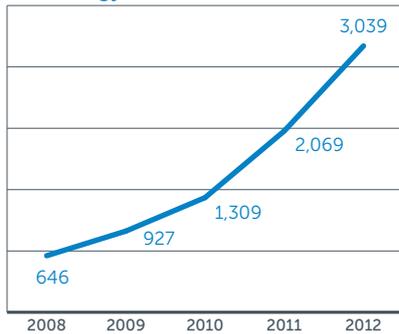
Red Energy



Simply Energy

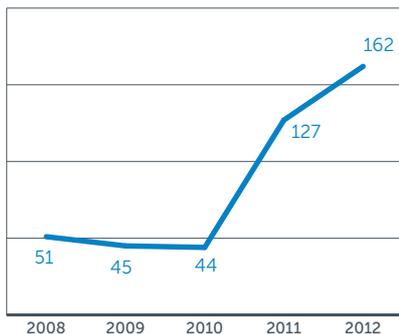


TRUenergy



NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION

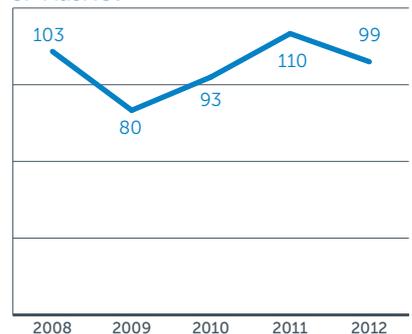
Envestra



Multinet Gas



SP AusNet

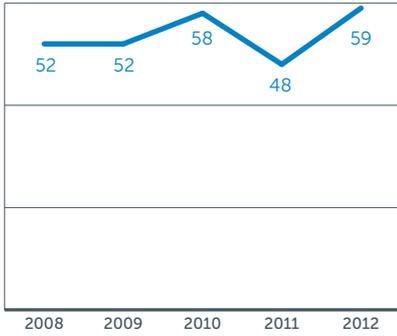


Gas continued

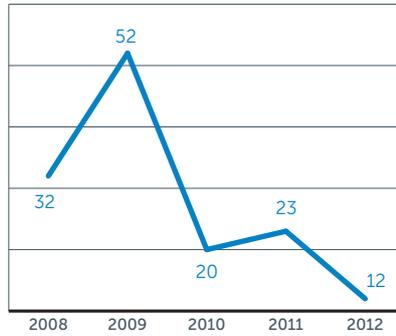
42

LPG

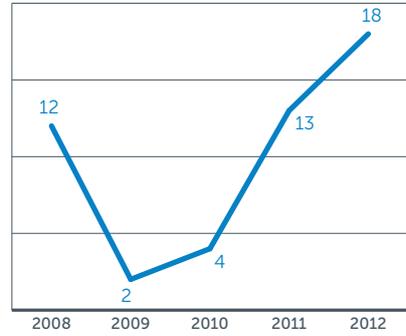
Elgas



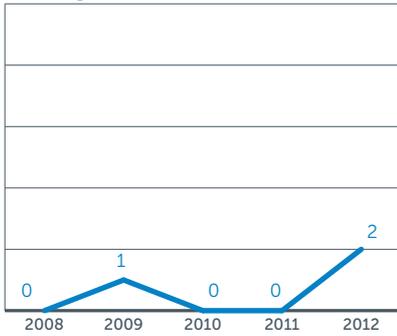
Kleenheat



Origin Energy LPG



Powergas



Supagas

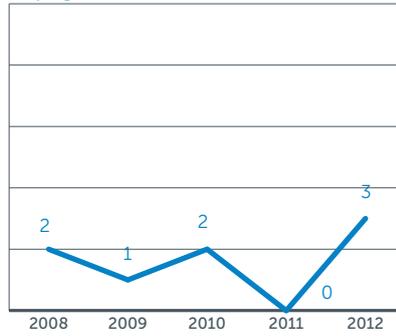
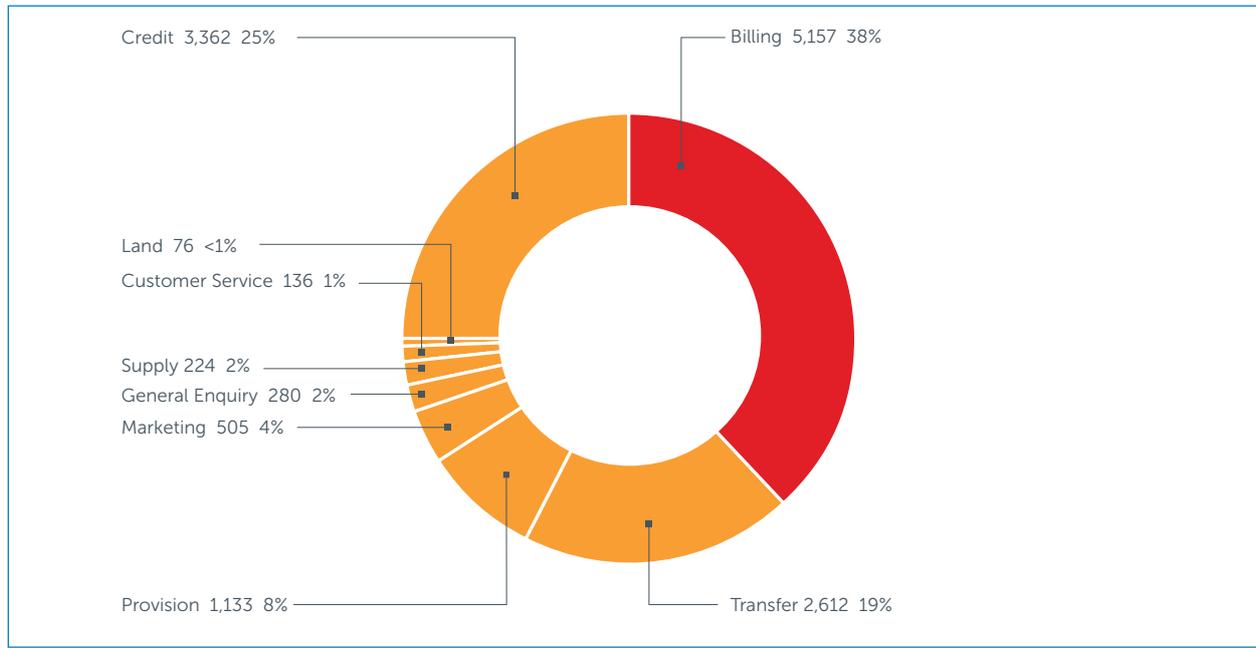


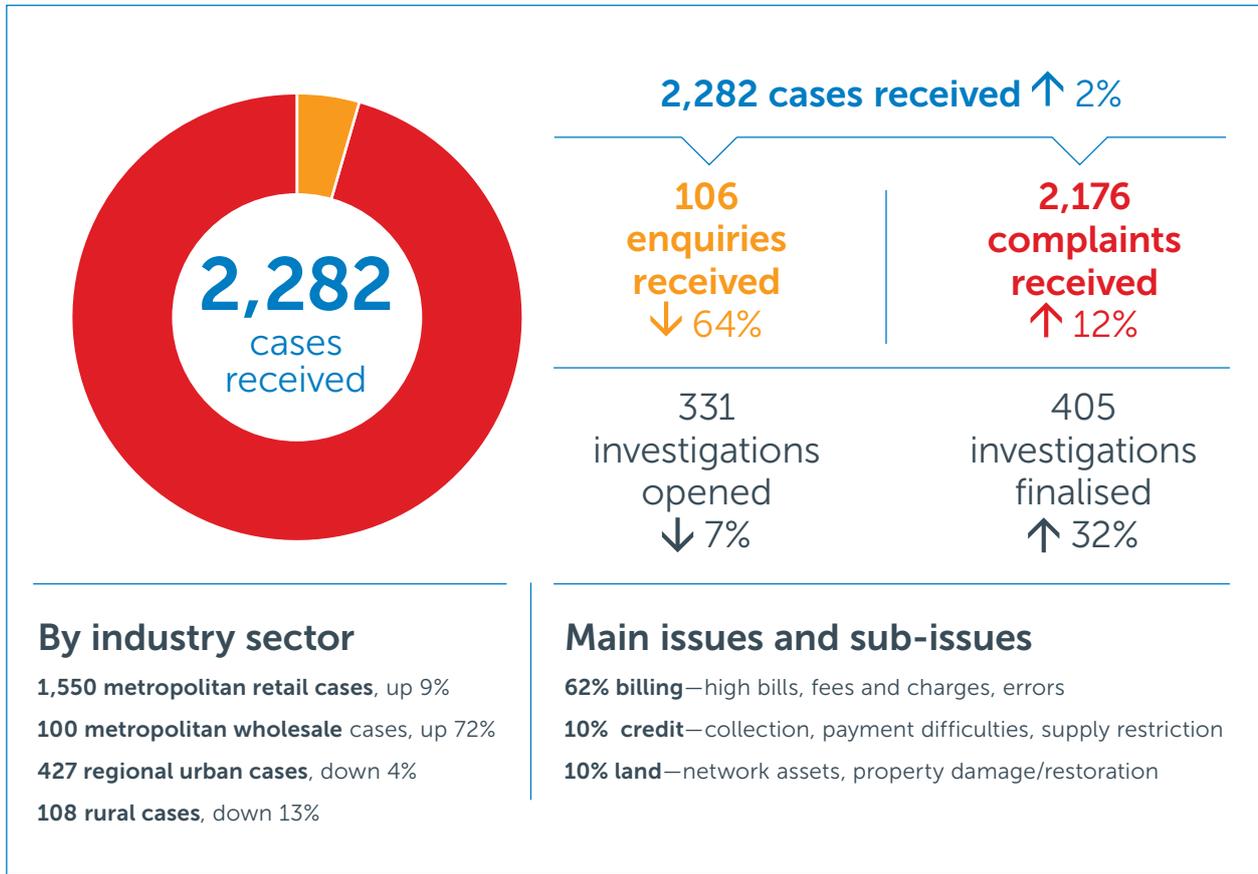
Fig 25: Main issues raised by gas customers



All issues 13,485	no. of issues	%
Billing issues 5,157 (38%)		
High	1,115	22
Error	1,097	21
Estimation	489	9
Backbill	429	8
Delay	395	8
Refund	330	6
Meter	322	6
Concession / Rebate	252	5
Fees and Charges	232	4
Format	183	4
Other	173	3
Tariff	130	3
Price of LPG	10	< 1
Credit issues 3,362 (25%)		
Disconnection	1,914	57
Collection	825	25
Payment Difficulties	612	18
Deliveries Stopped	11	<1
Transfer issues 2,612 (19%)		
Delay	486	19
Contract Terms	439	17
In Error	412	16
Site Ownership	396	15
Billing	320	12
Without Consent	290	11
Cooling Off Rights	159	6
Objection	110	4

Provision issues 1,133 (8%)	no. of issues	%
Existing Connection	543	48
New Connection	465	41
Disconnection	123	11
Deliveries Stopped	2	<1
Marketing issues 505 (4%)		
Misleading	333	66
Pressure Sales	79	16
Information	48	10
Other	21	4
Non Account Holder	24	5
Supply issues 224 (2%)		
Off Supply - Unplanned	118	53
Quality	74	33
Variation	17	8
Off Supply - Planned	15	7
Customer Service issues 136 (1%)		
Privacy	34	25
Poor Service	31	23
Failure to Respond	29	21
Incorrect Advice / Information	19	14
Failure to Consult / Inform	14	10
Poor / Unprofessional Attitude	9	7
Land issues 76 (<1%)		
Network Assets	34	45
Other	31	41
Vegetation Management	5	7
Cylinder (LPG)	3	4
Easement	3	4
General Enquiry 280 (2%)		
Energy	280	100

2011-12 cases overall



Victoria’s water sector is made up of 19 water corporations constituted under the *Water Act 1989*. These state-owned water corporations provide a range of water services to customers within their service areas—water supply, sewage and trade waste disposal and treatment, water delivery for irrigation and domestic and stock purposes, drainage and salinity mitigation services. A number of them also manage bulk water storages and designated recreational areas throughout Victoria.

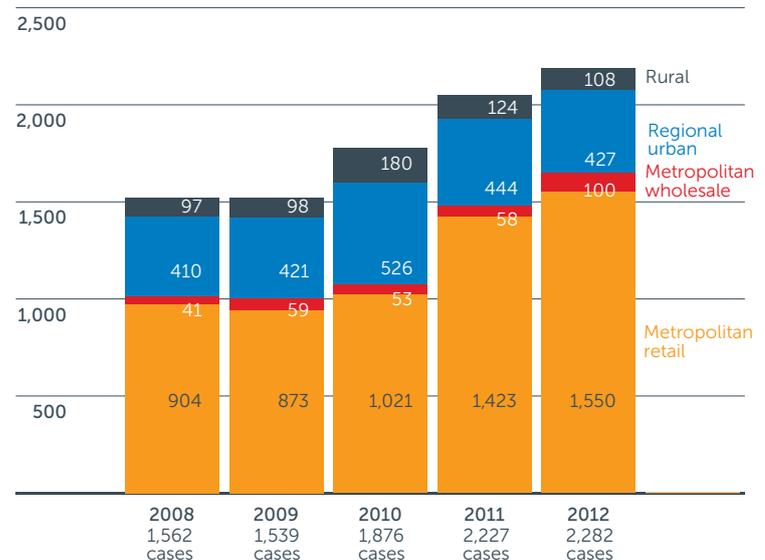
At 30 June 2012, 3 metropolitan retailers, 1 metropolitan wholesaler, 11 regional urban water corporations, 2 rural water corporations and 2 rural urban water corporations were water participants in the EWOV scheme.

For a closer look

Behind the Billing cases on page 20

Behind the Credit cases on page 22

Fig 26: Trends in water cases



Note: the overall cases for each year also included a number of cases which were 'non company specific'

Fig 27: Water cases we received and finalised in 2011-12

	OVERALL CASES		ENQUIRIES	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	COMPLAINTS			
	2011-12	2010-11			investigated complaints	assisted referrals	unassisted referrals	complaint investigations finalised
METROPOLITAN RETAIL (sector share)								
City West Water (21%)	424	364	14	410	71	227	112	87
South East Water (38%)	373	387	15	358	43	211	104	56
Yarra Valley Water (41%)	753	672	21	732	122	433	177	148
TOTAL METROPOLITAN RETAIL WATER	1,550	1,423	50	1,500	236	871	393	291
METROPOLITAN WHOLESALE								
Melbourne Water	100	58	2	98	18	43	37	17
REGIONAL URBAN (sector share)								
Barwon Water (21%)	65	81	6	59	7	35	17	9
Central Highlands Water (10%)	54	59	1	53	12	23	18	13
Coliban Water (11%)	52	42	2	50	9	28	13	9
East Gippsland Water (3%)	10	21	1	9	1	7	1	1
Gippsland Water (10%)	48	43	1	47	3	28	16	3
Goulburn Valley Water (8%)	21	31	1	20	3	14	3	3
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (5%)	25	22	1	24	8	13	3	9
Lower Murray Water (5%)	17	9	0	17	2	7	8	2
North East Water (7%)	20	14	2	18	3	10	5	3
South Gippsland Water (3%)	13	13	0	13	0	8	5	0
Wannon Water (6%)	39	46	0	39	5	23	11	8
Western Water (8%)	45	43	1	44	2	26	16	2
Westernport Water (2%)	18	20	1	17	5	5	7	5
TOTAL REGIONAL URBAN WATER	427	444	17	410	60	227	123	67
RURAL (sector share)								
Goulburn-Murray Water (55%)	58	81	3	55	11	28	16	20
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (23%)	28	27	0	28	4	20	4	8
Lower Murray Water (7%)	11	10	1	10	2	4	4	2
Southern Rural Water (15%)	11	6	0	11	0	8	3	0
TOTAL RURAL WATER	108	124	4	104	17	60	27	30
NON COMPANY SPECIFIC								
Non company specific	97	178	33	64	0	0	64	0
TOTALS	2,282	2,227	106	2,176	331	1,201	644	405

NOTES:

13 water investigations were upgraded to Stage 2 during the year, 12 were upgraded to Stage 3 and 2 were upgraded to Final Stage.

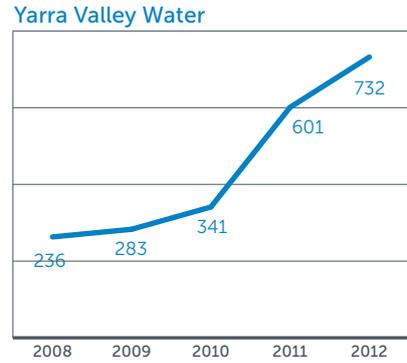
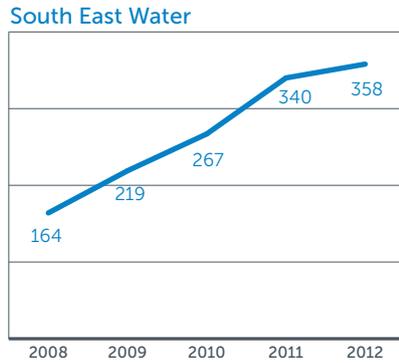
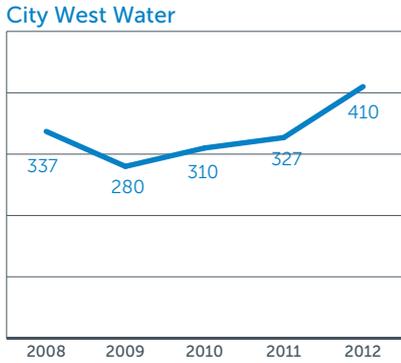
Metropolitan and regional urban water corporation sector shares are based on the water customer numbers in the ESC's *Water performance report - Performance of Urban Water and Sewerage Businesses 2010-11* (December 2011).

Rural water corporation sector shares are calculated from data provided to EWOV by those corporations.

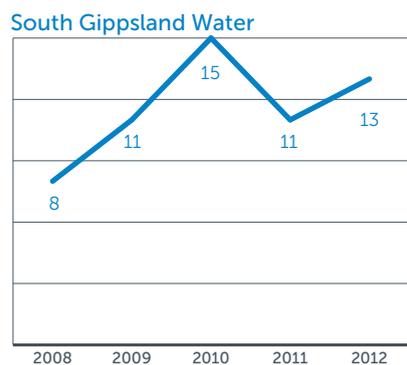
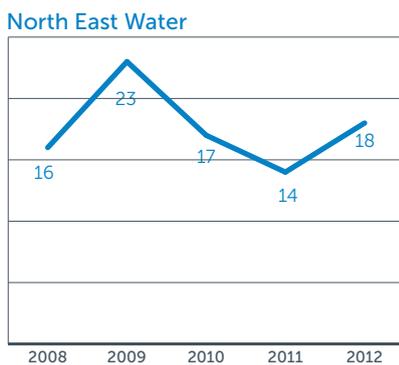
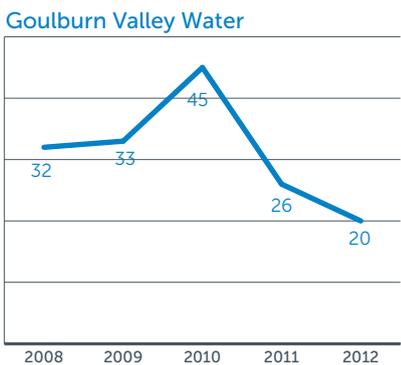
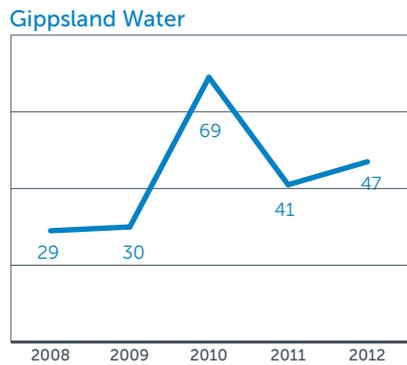
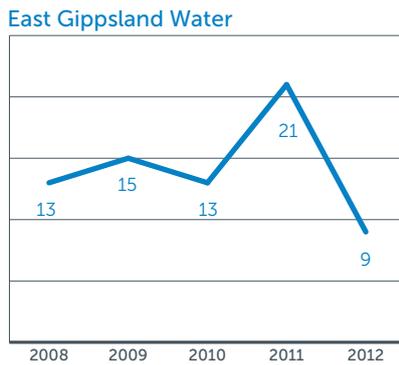
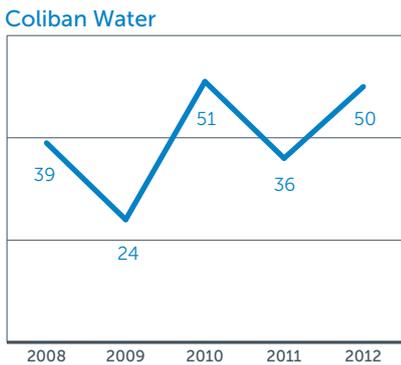
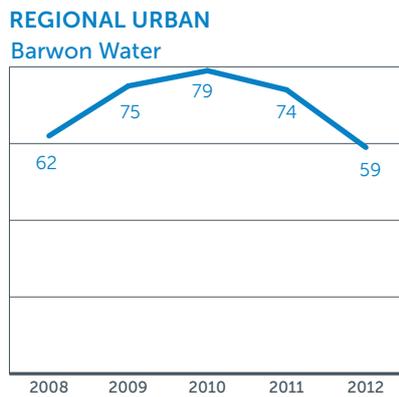
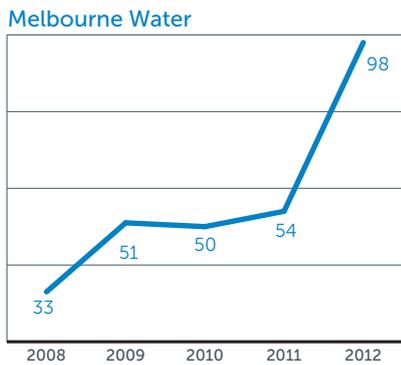
Water continued

Fig 28: Complaint receipt trends for water corporations – 5 years of data

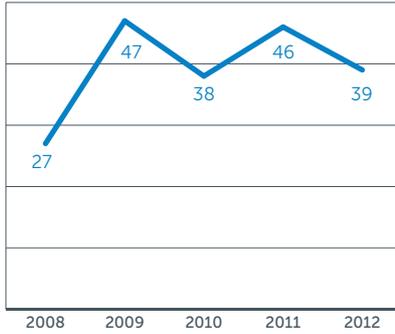
METROPOLITAN RETAIL



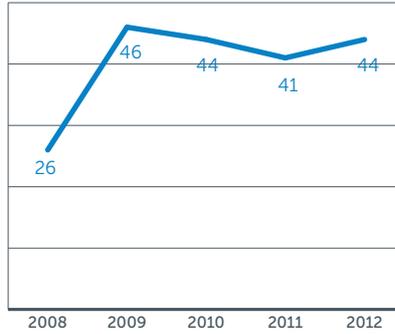
METROPOLITAN WHOLESALE



Wannon Region Water



Western Water

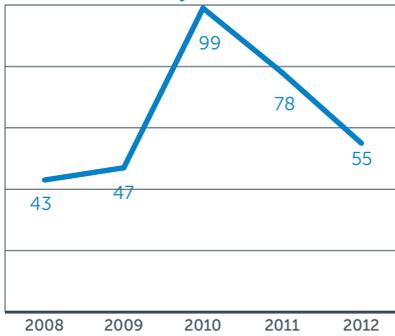


Westernport Water

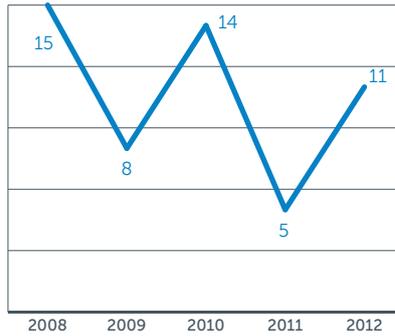


RURAL

Goulburn-Murray Water

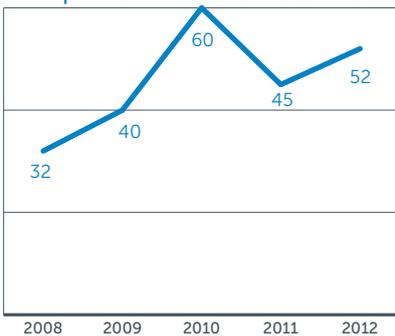


Southern Rural Water



RURAL URBAN

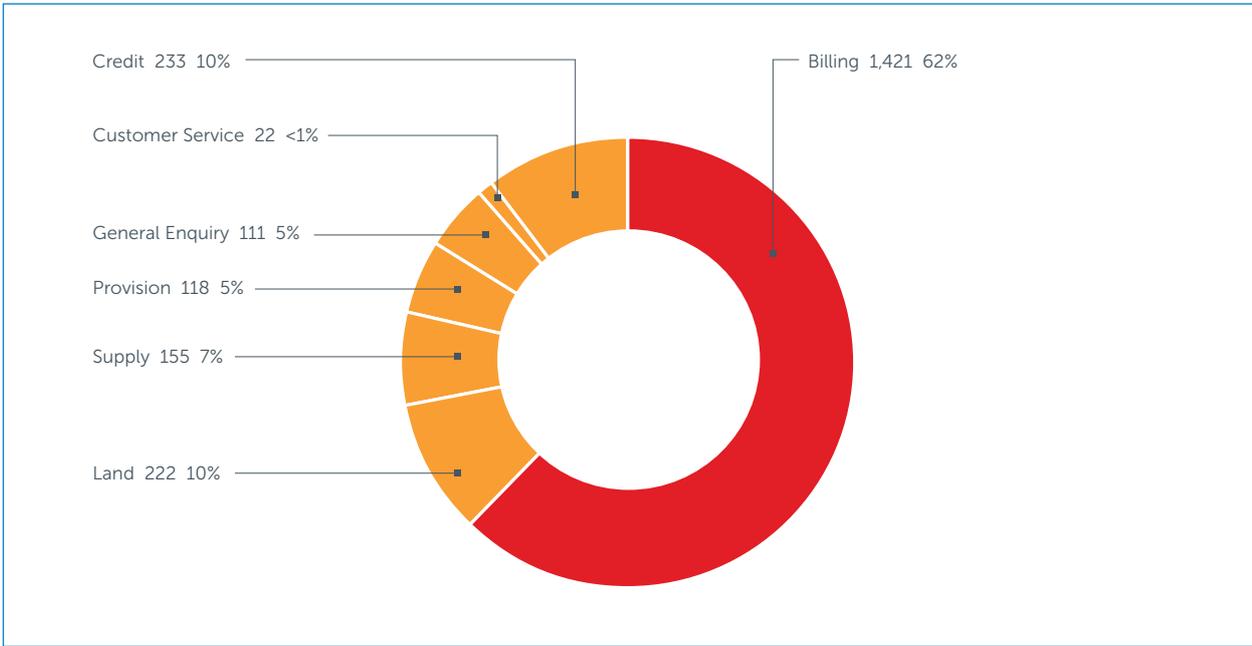
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water



Lower Murray Water



Fig 29: Main issues raised by water customers



All issues 2,282	no. of issues	%
Billing issues 1,421 (62%)		
High	569	40
Fees and Charges	266	19
Error	229	16
Backbill	57	4
Refund	54	4
Other	46	3
Meter	44	3
Format	41	3
Concession / Rebate	39	3
Estimation	33	2
Tariff	22	2
Delay	21	1
Credit issues 233 (10%)		
Collection	98	42
Payment Difficulties	72	31
Restriction	63	27
Land issues 222 (10%)		
Network Assets	95	43
Other	91	41
Vegetation Management	19	9
Easement	17	8

	no. of issues	%
Supply issues 155 (7%)		
Quality	44	28
Sewer / Stormwater Overflow / Blockage	43	28
Water Licensing	27	17
Off Supply - Unplanned	20	13
Off Supply - Planned	10	6
Variation	7	5
Water Restrictions	4	3
Provision issues 118 (5%)		
Existing Connection	67	57
New Connection	49	42
Restriction	2	2
Customer Service issues 22 (<1%)		
Poor Service	8	36
Privacy	6	27
Failure to Respond	3	14
Failure to Consult / Inform	3	14
Incorrect Advice / Information	2	9
Poor / Unprofessional Attitude	0	< 1
General Enquiry 111 (5%)		
Water	111	100

Income Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2012

	2012 \$	2011 \$
Revenue	16,035,598	12,826,134
Employee benefits expense	(10,767,683)	(8,773,093)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(377,071)	(339,450)
Loss on disposal of plant and equipment	0	(6,470)
Rental expense	(1,116,618)	(976,312)
Administration expenses	(1,429,544)	(1,163,116)
Consultancy expenses	(1,350,124)	(535,537)
Marketing expenses	(148,247)	(103,539)
Training and development	(347,293)	(235,176)
Office lease make good obligations	(33,600)	(20,670)
Surplus before income tax expense	465,418	672,771
Income tax expense	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	465,418	672,771

Financial statements continued

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Balance Sheet

As at 30 June 2012

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	7,026,703	5,465,652
Trade and other receivables	0	10,606
Other	71,192	145,483
Total Current Assets	7,097,895	5,621,741
Non-Current Assets		
Plant and equipment	1,191,714	1,170,980
Total Non-Current Assets	1,191,714	1,170,980
Total Assets	8,289,609	6,792,721
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	2,918,974	1,990,190
Provisions	535,616	587,256
Total Current Liabilities	3,454,590	2,577,446
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provisions	323,168	168,842
Total Non-Current Liabilities	323,168	168,842
Total Liabilities	3,777,758	2,746,288
Net Assets	4,511,851	4,046,433
Members' Equity		
Retained earnings	4,511,851	4,046,433
Total Members' Equity	4,511,851	4,046,433

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June 2012

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Levy receipts from Members (inclusive of goods and services tax)	18,066,114	10,765,736
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods and services tax)	(16,599,996)	(13,669,755)
Interest received	492,738	395,907
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities	1,958,856	(2,508,112)
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Payments for plant and equipment	(397,805)	(863,390)
Proceeds from sale of assets	0	2,958
Net cash (outflow) from investing activities	(397,805)	(860,432)
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents	1,561,051	(3,368,544)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the Financial Year	5,465,652	8,834,196
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the Financial Year	7,026,703	5,465,652

Quick guide to acronyms used in this report

ADR – alternative dispute resolution
 EDR – external dispute resolution
 ESC – Essential Services Commission
 EWOV – Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)
 IDR – internal dispute resolution
 KPI – key performance indicator
 LPG – liquefied petroleum gas (also known as bottled gas)
 PFiT – Premium Feed-in Tariff
 RTR – Real Time Resolution
 SFiT – Standard Feed-in Tariff
 TFiT – Transitional Feed-in Tariff
 WDP – wrongful disconnection payment

Quick guide to tables/graphs/charts in this report

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Contacting EWOV

We 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.

For calls from restricted phone services, ring 12550 (Telstra reverse charges) and ask for (03) 8672 4450. 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

ABN: 57 070 516 175



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