

## Ombudsman's Overview

### Assisting vulnerable customers

In the feature article in this issue of *Res Online*, we interview Greg Brown, Western Water's Customer Services Manager, about a collaborative initiative to assist Office of Housing tenants with water supply issues. It's a program that focuses on the timely repair of faulty appliances (such as hot water systems), fittings (such as leaking taps) and leaking pipes in OoH properties, and it's delivering good outcomes all round. [Read more](#)

### Case trends

Against the same quarter in 2013, EWOV cases for the October to December 2014 quarter were down 42% overall. While Billing remained the most common issue, Billing cases were down 46% against those for the October to December 2013 quarter. And while Credit remained the second most common issue, Credit cases were down 30% against those for the October to December 2013 quarter. [Read more](#)

### Our new Affordability Report

Given the widespread interest in EWOV's experience of cases that raise affordability and hardship issues, we've introduced a new quarterly [Affordability Report](#). This report reflects the style of our quarterly [Marketing and Transfer](#) and [Solar and Smart Meter](#) reports, combining quantitative and qualitative data from our Credit cases with case studies. The first issue came out in December 2014. The second issue was published on 5 February 2015. Both are on our website in full PDF and online sections.

### Contribute to future issues

If the feature article (or something else) in this issue sparks an idea for an article you'd like us to consider for *Res Online*, please let us know via Matt Helme, EWOV's Research and Communications Manager: [RCT.EWOV@ewov.com.au](mailto:RCT.EWOV@ewov.com.au)



Cynthia Gebert  
Energy and Water Ombudsman  
(Victoria)

A blue ink handwritten signature of Cynthia Gebert.



Against the same  
quarter in 2013,  
EWOV cases for the  
October to  
December 2014  
quarter were down  
42% overall.

# Cases, Complaints, Enquiries - a Snapshot

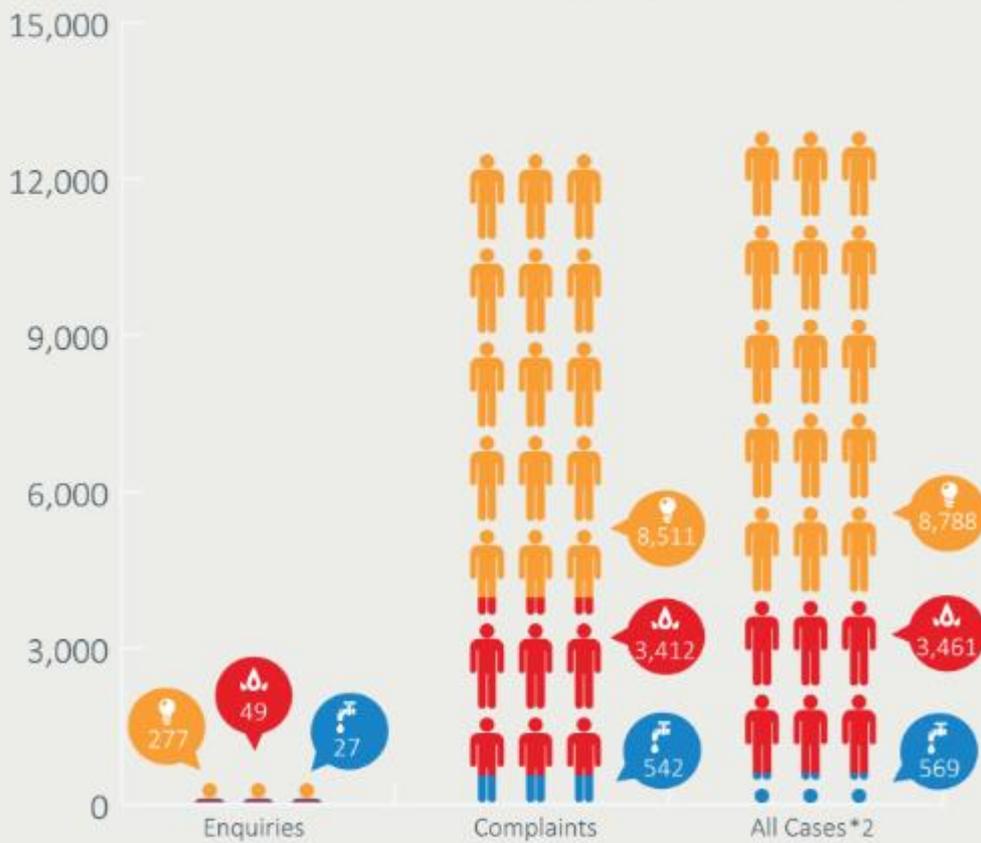
## A Snapshot



Cases customers lodged from  
**1 October 2014 to 31 December 2014**

## Cases Customers Lodged

Number of cases customers lodged from  
**1 October 2014 to 31 December 2014:**

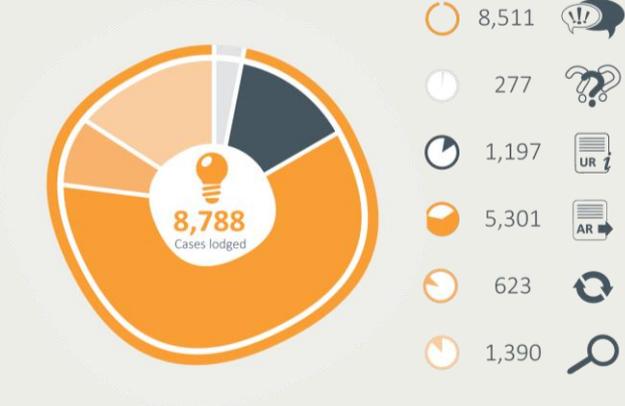


\*1 Gas includes Natural Gas and LPG cases

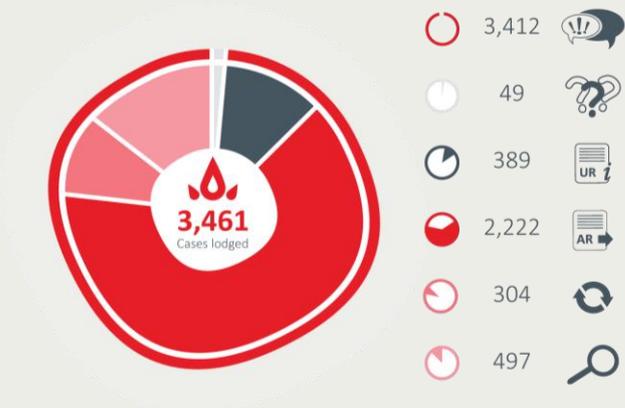
\*2 This does not include 20 Dual Fuel and 87 other industry cases

## Cases, Complaints, Enquiries - Industry

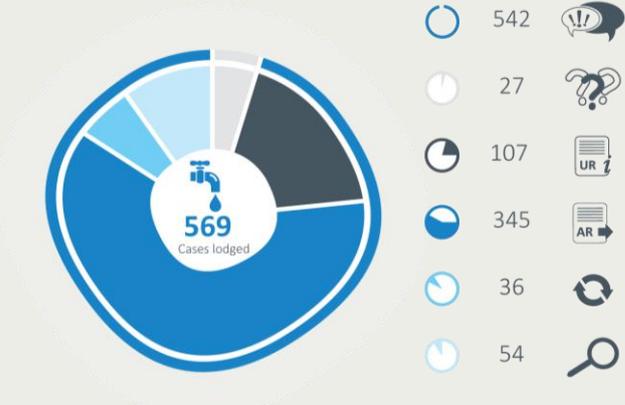
### Electricity



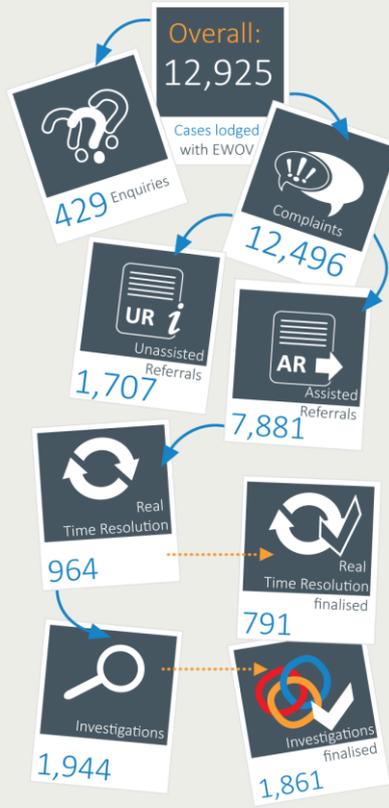
### Gas



### Water



-   
Complaints
-   
Enquiries
-   
Unassisted Referrals
-   
Assisted Referrals
-   
Real Time Resolutions
-   
Investigations

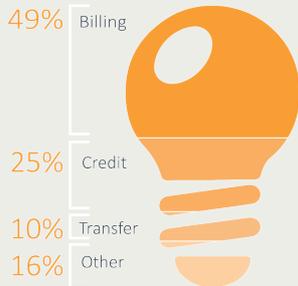


# Trends

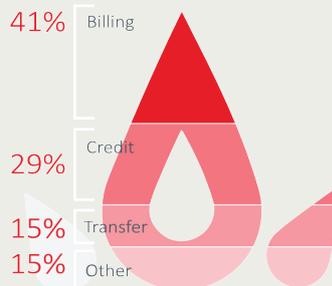
From 1 October 2014 to 31 December 2014

Please refer to company individual line graphs for more details

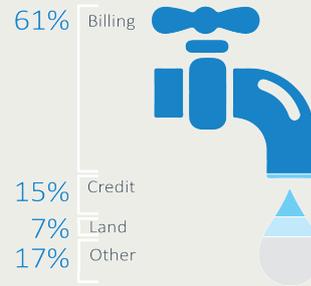
## Electricity Overall:



## Gas Overall:



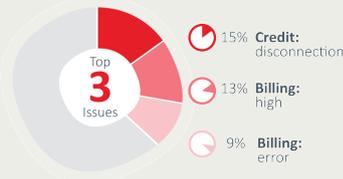
## Water Overall:



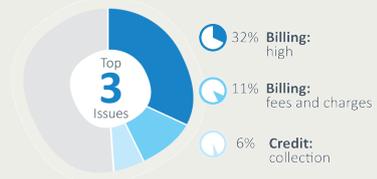
### Electricity Retail Sector



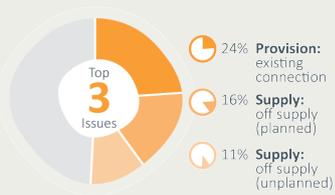
### Natural Gas Retail Sector



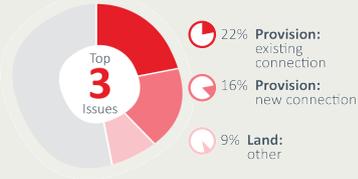
### Metropolitan Retail Water Sector



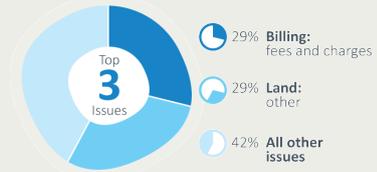
### Electricity Distribution Sector



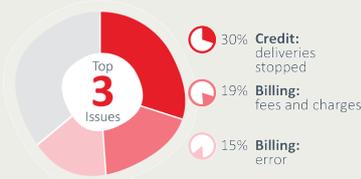
### Natural Gas Distribution Sector



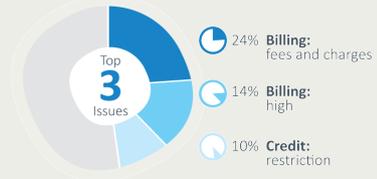
### Metropolitan Wholesale Water Sector



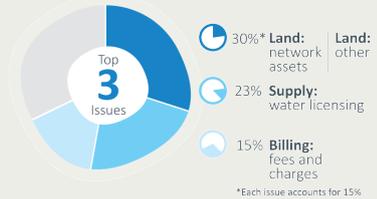
### LPG (Liquefied Petroleum GAS) Retail Sector



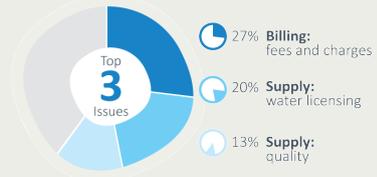
### Regional Urban Water Sector



### Rural Water Sector



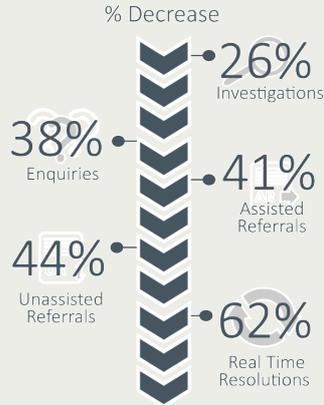
### Rural Urban Water Sector



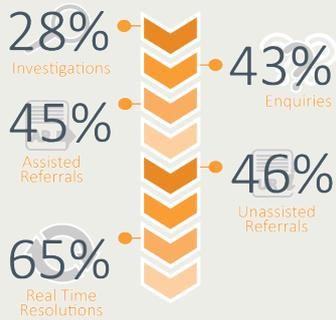
## Case Trends

1 October 2014 to 31 December 2014 quarter compared with 1 October 2013 to 31 December 2013

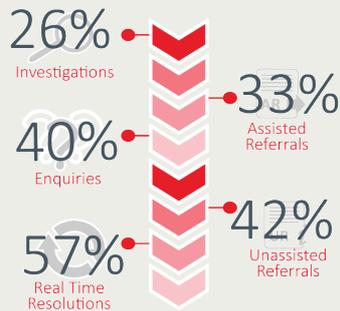
### Overall:



### Electricity Overall:



### Gas Overall:



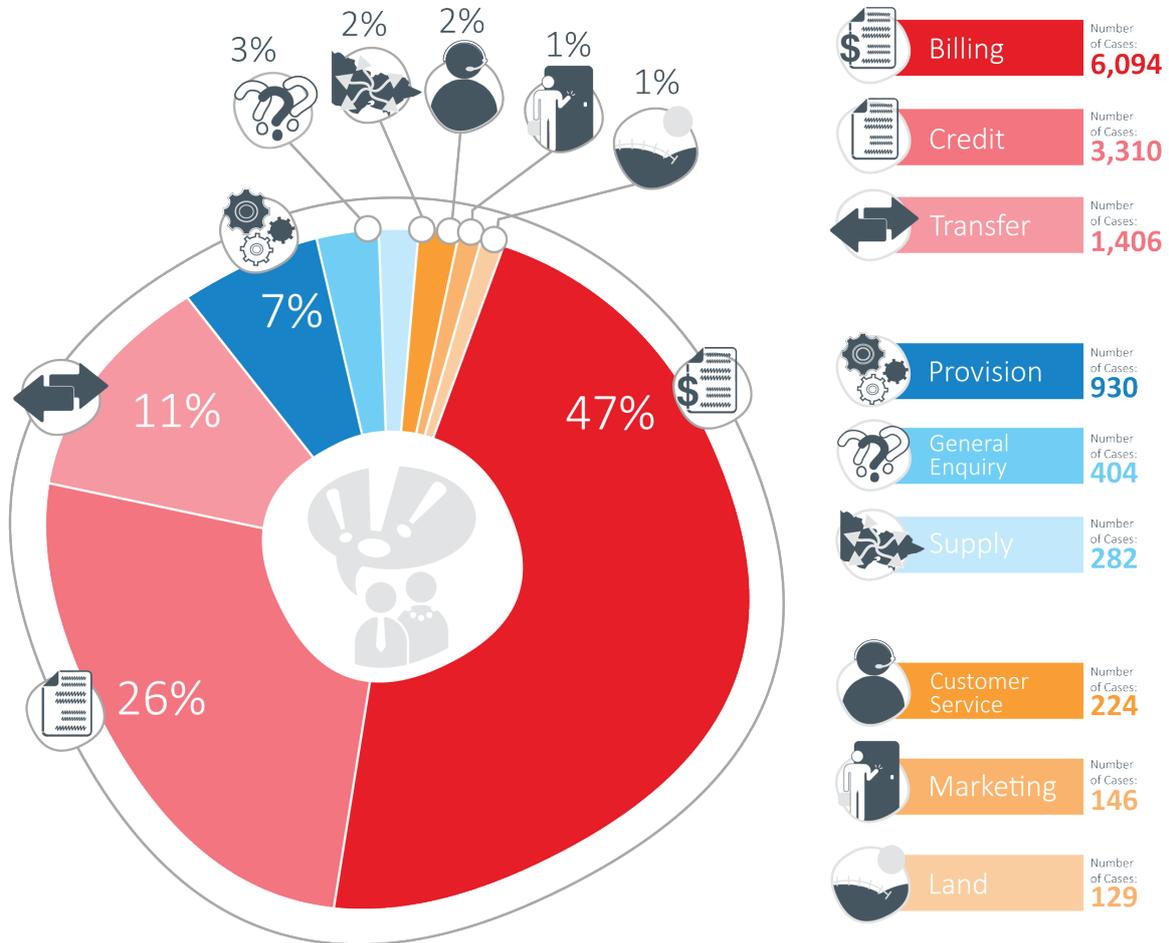
### Water Overall:



# Most Common Issues

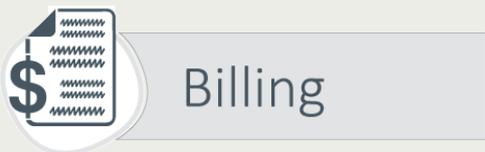
The Issues Customers Complained About Across Electricity, Gas and Water

Most Common Issues (overall) from 1 October to 31 December 2014



Click on the following links for more detail on the most common issues

Click on the following links for more detail on the most common issues



[47% Billing](#)

In the October to December 2014 quarter, 6,094 customers raised Billing as their main issue:

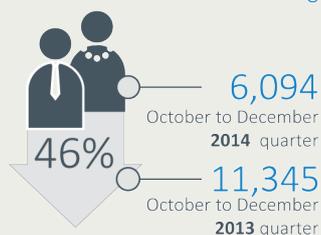
- down 46% from 11,345 customers in the October to December 2013 quarter, and

- down 23% from 7,866 customers in the July to September 2014 quarter.

Percentage of Billing Cases



Number of customers whose main issue was Billing

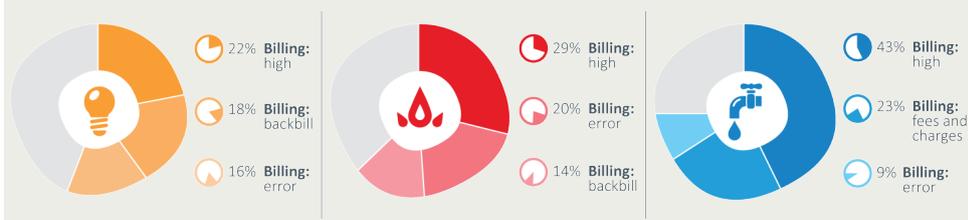


## Most Common Billing Issues - By Industry

47% of all EWOV cases were about Billing, down from 51% in the October to December 2013 quarter.

Of the 6,094 customers, 4,313 were electricity customers, 1,425 gas customers, 348 water customers and 8 dual fuel customers.

74% of Billing complaints were managed through our Assisted Referral and Real Time Resolution process. 14% of Billing complaints required an EWOV Investigation.



## Case Study

### Billed on the wrong meter

The customer contacted EWOV to complain about billing errors. In late July 2014, she had received two electricity bills — one for \$413.40 and one for \$1,788.55. When she rang her retailer, she was told that the meter she was being billed on wasn't the meter at her property. She said the retailer undertook to arrange a meter inspection and a meter reading by the electricity distributor, but there was no follow-up with her.

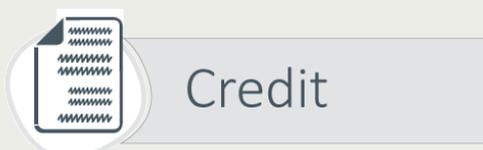
The complaint was initially handled as an Assisted Referral, but the customer recontacted us dissatisfied with unexplained resolution delays. At this point, the retailer asked us to open an Investigation, because resolution required a site visit by the distributor.

As part of our Investigation, we reviewed the customer's meter read history, account history and amended billing. Our search of the Market Settlement and Transfer Solutions system (MSATS) showed multiple active meters at the address. From a photo taken by the customer, the distributor confirmed she was being billed on the wrong meter. It corrected the error without the need for a site visit.

The retailer reversed incorrect billing of \$4,899.71 from January 2014 to September 2014 and rebilled for the correct amount of \$488.43, inclusive of payments the customer had made and

discounts she was entitled to. An apology was provided and a customer service payment of \$540 was credited to her account in recognition of the inconvenience to her. The retailer confirmed the correct information was in MSATS. At December 2014, the customer's account was \$51.57 in credit. She was satisfied with the outcome and the complaint was closed. (2014/43832)

From a photo taken by the customer, the distributor confirmed she was being billed on the wrong meter.

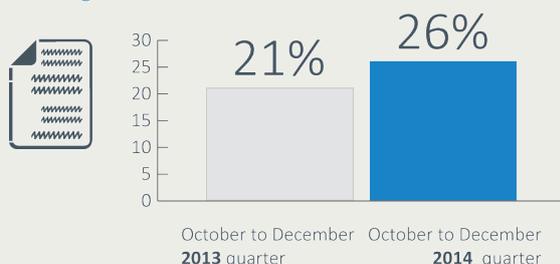


26% Credit

In the October to December 2014 quarter, 3,310 customers raised Credit as their main issue:

- down 30% from 4,709 customers in the October to December 2013 quarter, and
- down 13% from 3,804 customers in the July to September 2014 quarter.

Percentage of Credit Cases



Number of customers whose main issue was Credit

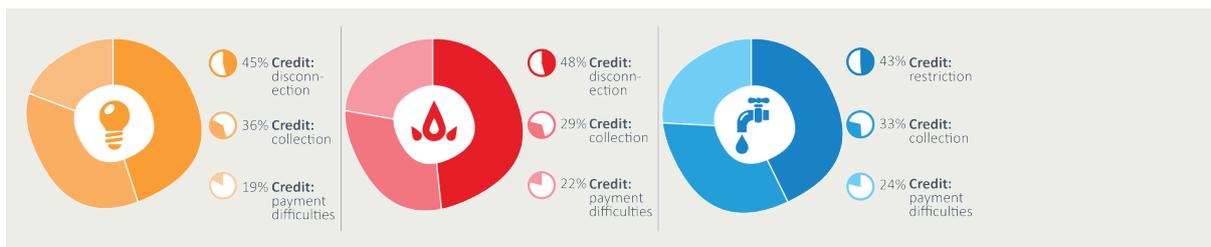


## Most Common Credit Issues - By Industry

26% of all EWOV cases were about Credit, up from 21% in the October to December 2013 quarter.

Of the 3,310 customers, 2,214 were electricity customers, 1,002 gas customers, 87 water customers and 7 dual fuel customers

65% of Credit complaints were managed through our Assisted Referral and Real Time Resolution process. 24% of Credit complaints required an EWOV Investigation.



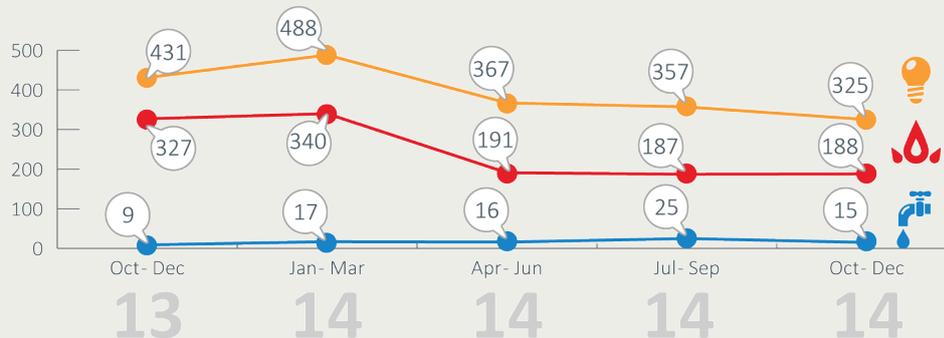
### Disconnection/Restriction cases

**Electricity:** We received 325 cases about 'actual' electricity disconnection in the October to December 2014 quarter — down 25% from 431 in the October to December 2013 quarter. We received a further 668 cases about 'imminent' electricity disconnection — down 42% from 1,151 in the October to December 2013 quarter.

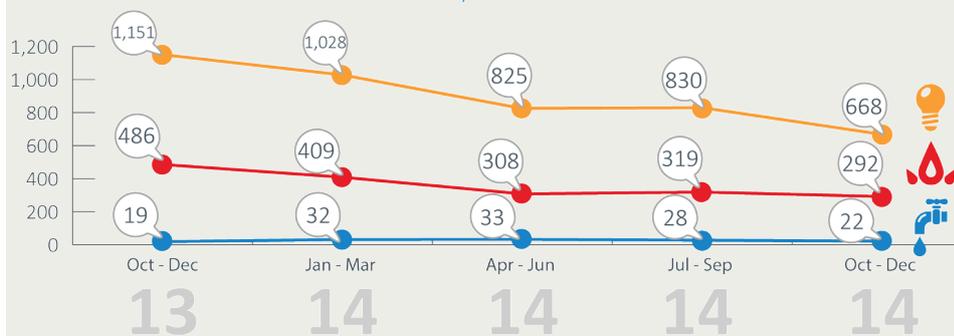
**Gas:** We received 188 cases about 'actual' natural gas disconnection in the October to December 2014 quarter — down 43% from 327 in the October to December 2013 quarter. We received a further 292 cases about 'imminent' natural gas disconnection — down 40% from 486 in the October to December 2013 quarter.

**Water:** Water restriction cases remained low, but showed increases. We received 15 cases about 'actual' water restriction in the October to December 2014 quarter — up 6 cases from 9 in the October to December 2013 quarter. We received a further 22 cases about 'imminent' water restriction — up 3 cases from 19 in in the October to December 2013 quarter.

Number of 'Actual' Disconnection/Restriction Cases



Number of 'Imminent' Disconnection/Restriction Cases

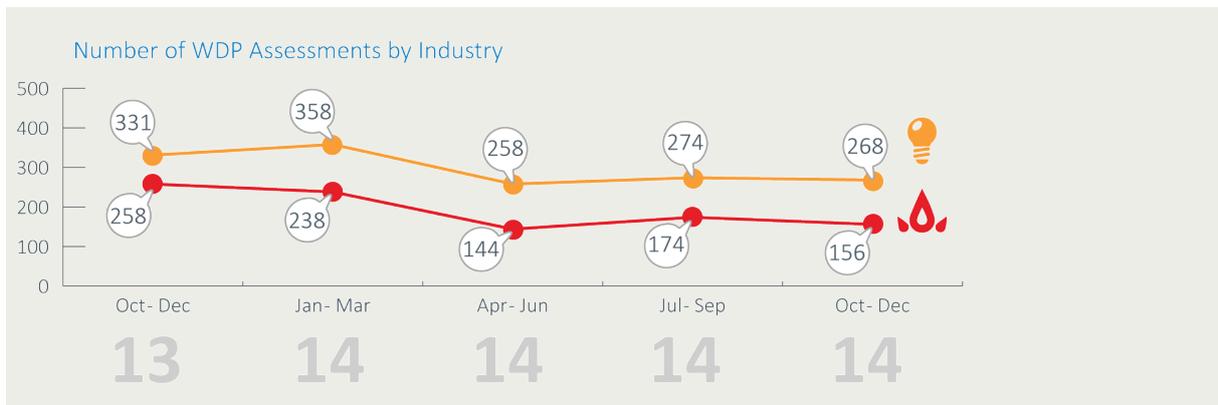


### Cases about wrongful energy disconnection

We opened 424 assessments for a Wrongful Disconnection Payment (WDP) and finalised 427 WDP assessments in the October to December 2014 quarter. 229 assessments resulted in WDPs being paid to customers. 88% of the payments were under \$1,000 and 12% were over \$1,000. The largest voluntary payment was \$8,282.12.

The main issues arising from the WDPs paid were:

- Affordability (49%) — for example, the retailer not offering the required two payment plans prior to disconnection, not advising of the availability of a financial counsellor, or not providing advice about energy efficiency, concessions or the Utility Relief Grant Scheme.
- Non-compliant notices (24%) — for example, the required timeframes not being adhered to or the required notices not being issued by the retailer.
- Retailer error (18%) — for example, disconnecting the wrong property, failing to correctly establish accounts (leading to a disconnection), or incorrectly closing accounts.



### Case Study

Customer's payment difficulties combine with retailer's billing delays to result in disconnection

Customer's payment difficulties combine with retailer's billing delays to result in disconnection

In mid-October 2014, the electricity supply to the customer's business was disconnected for non-payment of arrears. The customer rang EWOV to complain about the disconnection and associated delayed billing. She also wanted help to set up a payment plan. The customer said she received no bills for six months after she switched to a monthly billing cycle. Then, in August 2014, she received a bill for over \$8,600. She said one of her staff members, who had since left the business, had contacted the retailer about a payment plan. After receiving a disconnection warning in late September 2014, the customer made two payments (\$1,700 and \$1,442) in October 2014. She told us she'd tried to contact the retailer to say the payments were made, but couldn't get through.

Given the assessed complexity of the issues (supply disconnection and a business customer with high arrears), we opened an Investigation. We also arranged for the customer's supply to be reconnected while we investigated her complaint. Contacted by us, the retailer confirmed that, at the time of the disconnection, the customer owed \$9,640.38 and was on monthly billing. It said it would need more information about the customer's capacity to pay, before it would agree to set up a payment plan.

As part of our Investigation, we reviewed the customer's meter read history, account history, billing and contract. The retailer said that, after the account was set up in mid-January 2014, the

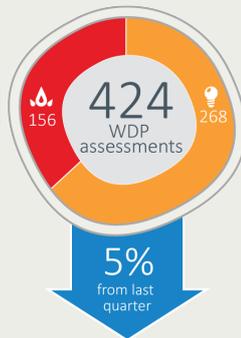
customer called in mid-February 2014 to change the billing cycle to monthly. The retailer could find no other notes of contact made by the customer up to July 2014. It said that, in late July 2014, it had sent the customer six monthly bills totalling \$8,620.15, for usage from January 2014 to June 2014. In early August 2014, it sent the customer the July 2014 bill for \$1,755.15. The retailer said the customer made contact in mid-August 2014 and a payment plan of \$400 a week was arranged to clear the accumulated arrears of \$10,375.30. Because she then made only one payment of \$400 a few days later, the plan was cancelled. In early September 2014 and October 2014, the retailer sent her the monthly bills for August 2014 (\$1,445.36) and September 2014 (\$1,420.23). In early October 2014, she paid the July 2014 bill, followed by the August 2014 bill.

The retailer confirmed it had disconnected for arrears of \$9,640.38 the day the customer contacted EWOV. The business was off supply for three hours. As our Investigation progressed, the customer made two further payments of \$1,500 each and also paid the October 2014 bill, in line with EWOV's policy about payments of undisputed accounts for the duration of an Investigation.

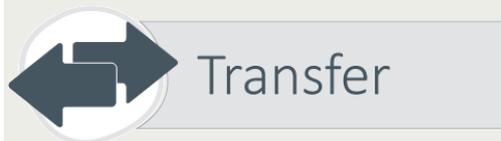
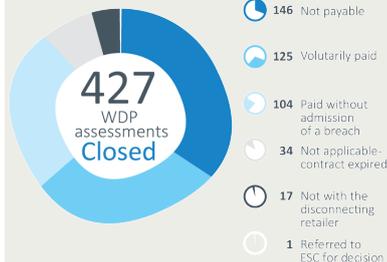
The retailer apologised for the delay in sending the six bills, attributing the problem to a system delay. Recognising the inconvenience the delay caused the customer, it offered a six-month payment plan for the arrears of \$6,640.38 which were on the account at late November 2014. The customer agreed to make weekly payments of \$255.40 towards the arrears, and pay all new monthly bills by the due date. Our WDP team checked that the retailer had correctly assessed whether the disconnection of the business' supply was wrongful — in this case, because the amount of electricity the business used was more than 40MWh/yr, a WDP wasn't applicable. The customer was satisfied with the outcome and the complaints were closed. (2014/45722 and WDP/2014/1677)

**The retailer apologised for the delay in sending the six bills, attributing the problem to a system delay.**

Number of WDP Assessments Received



Number of WDP Assessments Finalised

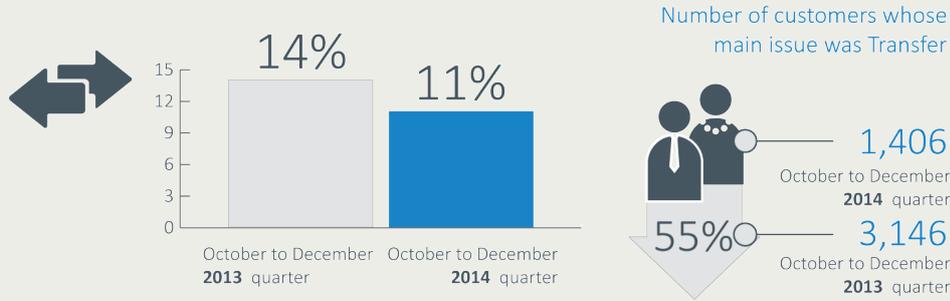


## 11% Transfer

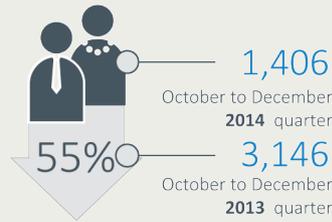
In the October to December 2014 quarter, 1,406 customers raised Transfer as their main issue:

- down 55% from 3,146 customers in the October to December 2013 quarter, and
- down 25% from 1,876 customers in the July to September 2014 quarter.

Percentage of Transfer Cases



Number of customers whose main issue was Transfer

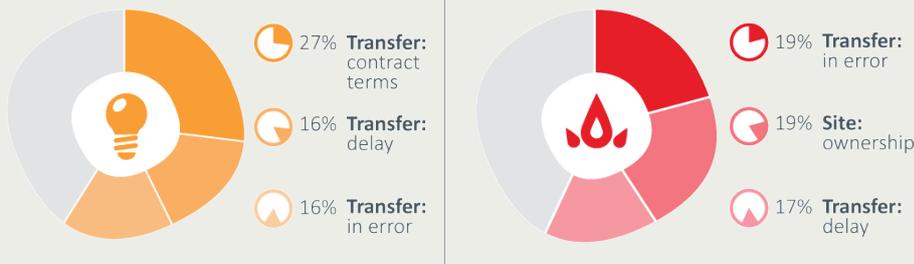


## Most Common Transfer Issues - By Industry

11% of all EWOV cases were about Transfer, down from 14% in the October to December 2013 quarter.

74% of Transfer complaints were managed through our Assisted Referral and Real Time Resolution process. 8% of Transfer complaints required an EWOV Investigation.

Of the 1,406 customers, 875 were electricity customers, 528 gas customers and 3 dual fuel customers.



Transfer case numbers in the *Marketing and Transfer Report* EWOV released on 29 January 2015 differ slightly from those reported in Res Online 10. The data for these EWOV reports is compiled on different dates and, in the meantime, some cases may have been re-opened, escalated or re-categorised as more information came to light.



### Case Study

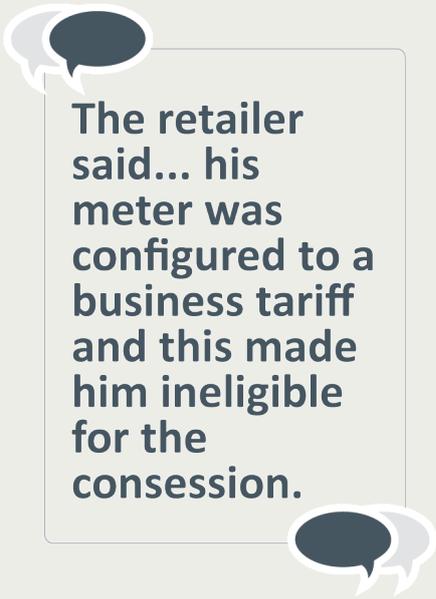
Business questions a large contract termination fee

The customer contacted EWOV to complain about a contract termination fee. Half-way into his business' three-year electricity contract, the property's body corporate changed over to an embedded network. As a result, the customer had to cancel his contract. Having done so, he received a bill for \$10,293.98, including a termination fee of close to \$10,000. The customer said he'd called his electricity retailer to find out why the fee was so high, but the matter remained unresolved.

Following an Assisted Referral, the customer recontacted us. He was dissatisfied that the retailer had provided the formula used to calculate the termination fee, but hadn't provided a breakdown of the fee itself and hadn't sent further information when he requested it. When we contacted the retailer, it asked for an EWOV Investigation.

We received and reviewed the terms and conditions of the customer's contract, the business' account history and the billing. We found that, although the contract was signed with a commencement date of 1 March 2013, the actual transfer to the retailer didn't take place until almost four months later (in mid-July 2013) because of meter reading and paperwork delays. The standard terms and conditions provided to the customer indicated that a transfer from the commencement date was possible and that the retailer would make reasonable endeavours to transfer from that date. This was important because, had the transfer occurred on the stated commencement date, the customer's termination fee would have been lower as he would have been further into the contract.

As a result of our Investigation, the retailer accepted that it should have started the contract from 1 March 2013 and offered a \$6,357.12 reduction of the termination fee from \$10,179.93 to \$3,836.81 in acknowledgement of the delay. The customer was satisfied with the reduction and agreed a date with the retailer by which he would pay the business' outstanding balance. The complaint was closed on this basis. (2014/40398)



**The retailer said... his meter was configured to a business tariff and this made him ineligible for the consession.**

## **EWOV Issues Watch**



### **Assisting vulnerable customers: A case study in delivering results through collaboration**

In 2005, we initiated a project that would draw on EWOV's casework to help place a higher priority on energy and water issues facing public housing tenants. Over the years since, this project has helped us develop better working relationships with OoH staff. It's also seen us provide regular reports to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on OoH cases where energy and/or water issues have contributed to a customer's difficulties and require DHHS attention.

Given our work in this area, we were very interested to learn of a program initiated by Western Water, in which the water corporations are working with the Department of Human Services to address issues in OoH housing. The program involves the repair of appliances, fittings and pipes in OoH properties. It's a success story that's worth sharing. EWOV interviewed Western Water's Customer Services Manager, Greg Brown, for this feature story.

#### **Greg Brown of Western Water talks about an initiative to assist vulnerable customers**

##### ***Greg, this is a great collaborative initiative. What prompted it?***

The concept came up at a Utilities Forum hosted by Kildonan Uniting Care in early September 2013. During the forum discussions, it became clear that a better relationship and process between Western Water and the Department of Human Services around repairs to appliances, fittings and pipes would benefit OoH tenants. These consumers are arguably some of our most vulnerable customers. Having them receive ever-increasing water bills, due to things like faulty hot water services, leaking taps and leaking pipes, simply wasn't working for anybody — certainly not the customers and not Western Water which was carrying substantial debt it was unlikely to be able to collect. We also thought DHS may benefit from timely maintenance, so these items didn't have to be replaced or upgraded as often or as quickly.

##### ***How did it move from concept to action?***

In late September 2013, I approached EWOV for help to arrange a meeting with senior DHHS staff, to discuss the situation and identify some possible outcomes and actions. Western Water and Yarra Valley Water represented the water corporations at the DHHS meeting.

##### ***How did the other Victorian water corporations become involved?***

The water industry association, the Institute of Water Administrators (IWA), is very active in hosting regular meetings where industry participants can share ideas and learn from each other. The initiative was discussed in detail at a meeting of one of the IWA's Special Interest Groups and gained quick endorsement from the water corporation staff who were there. I acted as the conduit between DHHS and the water corporations to get everyone on board.

##### ***How does it all work?***

DHHS maintenance staff undertake the repair work. The water corporation sends a request to DHHS identifying the problem and requesting the necessary repairs. Sometimes this allows the works to be completed sooner than they would have been as part of the general DHHS repairs schedule. Also, because OoH customers are tenants, they're often reluctant to complain. For this reason, DHHS may not know the property has a problem until a water corporation raises it.

##### ***Has it helped build better relationships between water corporations and DHS?***

DHHS staff presented on the initiative at an IWA session held in November 2014. The key contacts at DHHS have always been available to us and ready to assist and discuss any issues as they arise. DHHS is very positive about the initiative and has indicated that it's keen to discuss any other opportunities that may present. So, yes it has helped build better relationships all round.

### ***How are OoH tenants benefitting?***

Some long-standing water leaks have been rectified. As a result, those tenants are no longer building up an increasing amount of unserviceable debt. Overall, the repairs mean tenants benefit financially through lower water bills and water corporations benefit through reduced arrears.

### ***What does the future hold for the initiative?***

The program will be reviewed in 2015, with an eye to improvements and other possible (related and unrelated) opportunities.

### ***Do think it would work for in electricity, gas and other utilities?***

There's no reason that the initiative wouldn't work just as well elsewhere — for the utility, for DHHS and most importantly, for tenants.

### **The value of early intervention**

This water industry/DHHS initiative is an example of the value all round of early intervention. Addressing some of the housing issues facing OoH tenants has reduced the potential that those customers will need to contact EWOV for help with Credit issues, particularly payment difficulties and supply disconnection/restriction. We strongly support a focus on early invention — by both energy and water companies — for OoH customers who are having payment difficulties. This should include advice about how to use energy and water efficiently to reduce their consumption and how to identify inefficient appliances which may be contributing to their bills.

### **Cases lodged with EWOV by OoH tenants (October 2014 to December 2014)**

In our experience, OoH tenants tend not to seek help immediately, often waiting until their supply is disconnected or restricted (or about to be) before they contact us. Reflecting this trend, OoH tenants have long been disproportionately represented among the customers who contact EWOV having had their supply, particularly their electricity or gas supply, disconnected or (in the case of water) restricted. Annually since 2010-11, OoH tenants have lodged between 2.5% and 3.4% of all EWOV cases, but between 10% and 11% of EWOV energy disconnection/water restriction cases.

In the October to December 2014 quarter, EWOV received a total of 467 cases from OoH tenants.

52% (242) of these cases were about Credit, compared with 26% for customers overall.

<b>Top three issues overall</b>	<b>Billing</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>Transfer</b>
Customers overall	47%	26%	11%
OoH tenants	28%	52%	10%
<b>Breaking down the Credit sub-issues</b>	<b>Energy disconnection/water restriction</b>	<b>Collection</b>	<b>Payment difficulties</b>
All customers	46%	34%	20%
OoH tenants	60%	11%	29%



Greg Brown

Western Water

The program involves the repair of appliances, fittings and pipes in OoH properties. It's a success story that's worth sharing.

It became clear that a better relationship and process between Western Water and the Department of Health and Human Services... would benefit OoH tenants.



### Case Study

Customer was entitled to a payment plan and a Wrongful Disconnection Payment

The customer, an OoH tenant, had received an electricity bill of \$438.64, due for payment on 10 December 2014. On 1 December 2014, his electricity supply was disconnected. The customer rang EWOV to lodge a complaint, saying the retailer told him a payment of \$300 was required before it would reconnect. He said he told the retailer he couldn't afford that much and requested a payment plan of \$50 a fortnight, but the retailer wouldn't agree to it.

We arranged for the customer's supply to be reconnected while we investigated his complaint. The retailer told us the customer's account was set up in November 2013. Five quarterly bills had been sent to him, but only one was paid — \$147.33 in March 2014. As a result the customer's

supply was disconnected for non-payment. Because the customer had said he could pay an amount that both covered his fortnightly usage and helped pay down his arrears, a referral to the retailer's hardship program wasn't made. Concessions weren't applied to his account after his concession card expired in late October 2014.

We received and reviewed the customer's meter read history, account history, contact notes and billing. His average fortnightly usage (based on a year's data) was confirmed as 48.7kWh (\$20.80). We checked his concession details to ensure concessions would be applied to all bills (including those that had been missed). We also provided him with information about how to make payments at the post office if he wished to.

The customer was off supply for 3.5 hours. Our Wrongful Disconnection Payment (WDP) assessment was that the disconnection didn't comply with the requirements of the Energy Retail Code (Version 11), because the customer hadn't been offered two payment plans prior to the disconnection. As a result, he was entitled to a WDP of \$36.46, which was applied to his arrears.

The retailer set up a \$50 a fortnight payment plan for the customer — enough to cover his fortnightly consumption and start clearing his accumulated arrears of \$413.38 (reduced to \$376.92 by the WDP). It provided him with a direct phone line to its complaint team, in case he had any issues meeting the payment plan. The customer was satisfied with this outcome and the complaint was closed. (2014/51594 and WDP/2014/1937)



## Case Study

Customer provided with an affordable short-term solution

The customer, an OoH tenant, received a disconnection warning for \$1,840.28, payable by mid-October 2014. She rang EWOV in early October 2014, saying she'd been on a payment plan arrangement since early 2012, but plans had been cancelled a number of times due to payment issues. The customer said she'd scheduled her payments to be made a day before the due date, but her retailer had told her that caused problems in its systems. She said she'd rung the retailer in September 2014 to discuss her account, but nothing was resolved. When the customer first contacted us, an Assisted Referral was raised. She came back to us just over a week later saying the retailer hadn't contacted her. Because of the impending disconnection, we opened an Investigation. The customer had a similar gas complaint, which we also investigated.

The retailer confirmed the customer had arrears of \$2,009.77 for electricity and \$1,135.82 for gas. It said it had told the customer that the way she had scheduled her payments was causing problems. It said she'd been removed from its hardship program because she'd missed payments and hadn't stayed in contact. Her last payment plan had been set up in March 2014. It advised that she'd already received a Utility Relief Grant but, because two years had passed, she could now apply for another one.

We reviewed the customer's meter read history, account history and billing. We also completed an independent financial assessment, including potential savings from energy efficiency changes. This showed that the customer's capacity to pay her bills had been affected when her partner was injured and couldn't work. Our recommendation was a stepped payment plan, which increased the customer's repayments over a number of months as her partner recovered and returned to work.

The retailer accepted the customer back onto its hardship program and agreed to a stepped payment plans of \$10 a fortnight for each fuel, increasing to \$20 a fortnight for each fuel, then \$50 a fortnight for electricity and \$30 a fortnight for gas over a six-month period. It also provided a direct contact, should the customer have trouble maintaining the payment plans. The customer was satisfied with this outcome and the complaint was closed. (2014/44085 and 2014/44097)



The customer said she'd scheduled her payments to be made a day before the due date, but her retailer had told her that caused problems in its systems.



We checked his concession details to ensure concessions would be applied to all bills (including those that had been missed).



## **EWOV Public Submissions**

Public policy submissions made by EWOV  
October 2014 to December 2014

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### **ESC Proposed Hardship Related Guaranteed Service Level Checklist Amendment – Further Advice Sought**

*November 2014*

We welcomed the ESC's inclusion of a timeframe of 20 business days in the Minimum 'Reasonable Endeavours' Checklist and supported its work with water corporations to increase customer engagement in the payment process before restricting supply. We drew on our casework to highlight the size of account arrears we typically find when we open a water Investigation, stressing that it's important that water corporations engage early with customers who have affordability concerns — not allow account arrears to accumulate and not wait until a supply restriction is imminent to make contact with the customer.

[Full submission on the EWOV website](#)

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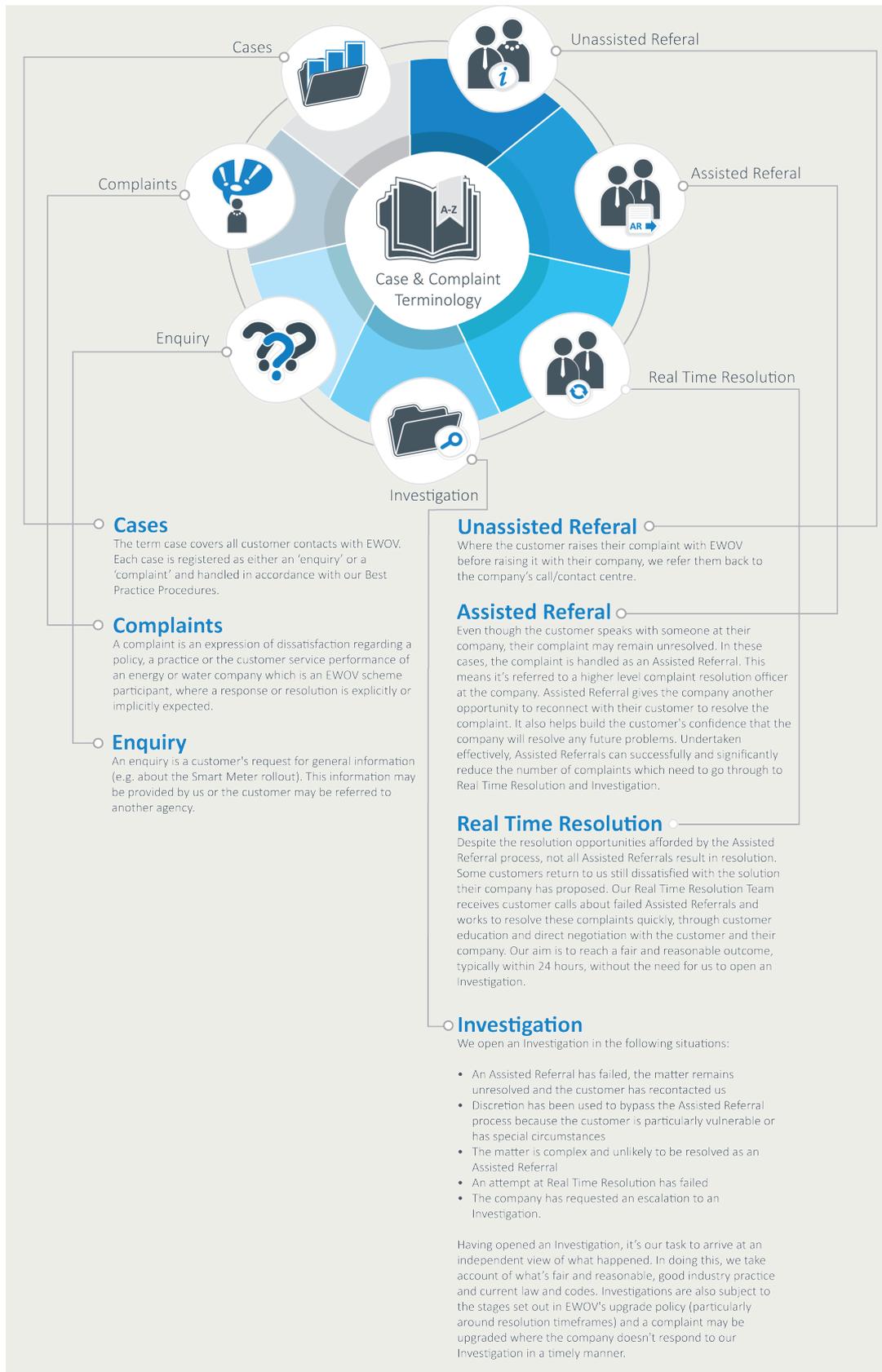
### **CitiPower and Powercor Australia Directions and Priorities Consultation Paper**

*October 2014*

This public consultation paper put out by jointly CitiPower and Powercor Australia outlined the distributor's future plans and priorities. The consultation process will feed into the distributors' proposals for the 2016-2020 regulatory control period, to be lodged with the Australian Energy Regulator in April 2015. EWOV's submission noted reductions in EWOV cases related to Powercor Australia and CitiPower since the 2011-12 financial year and provided high level complaint trend and issues data.

[Full submission on the EWOV website](#)

# Case & Complaint Terminology



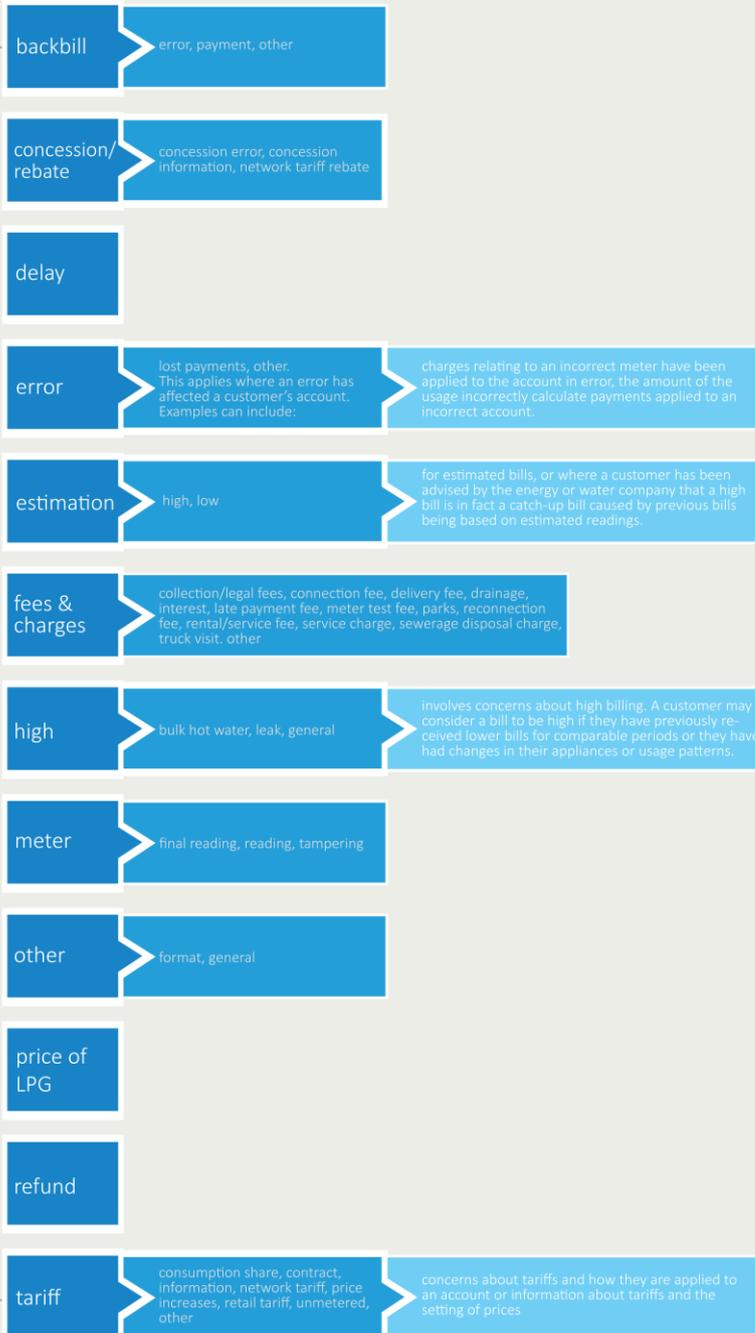
# EWOV Issue Categories



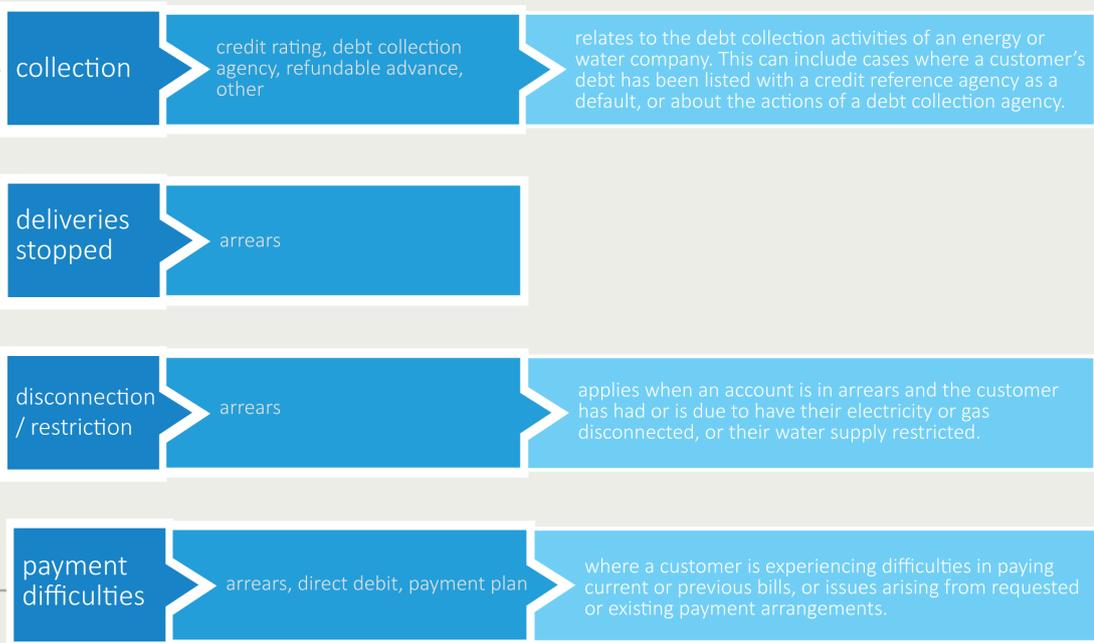
# Billing



Relates to generating and sending customer bills and processing payments



# Credit



# Transfer



**billing**      delay, double billing, error

**contract terms**      termination fee, variation price/terms, other      applies in cases relating to the terms of the contract including termination fees and variations in terms or price

**cooling off rights**      not actioned, not advised, other      applies in cases where a customer states they were not informed of their cooling-off rights or their cooling-off request was not fulfilled by the company

**delay**

**in error**      wrong site, other      where the customer is transferred due to an error in the transfer process

**objection**      debt, metering

**site ownership**      FRMP/FRO, disconnection, other

**without consent**      where a customer has been transferred to another retailer without their explicit informed consent

# Provision



**deliveries stopped** → safety, site access

**disconnection / restriction** → error, meter access, safety/defect → cases that involve a faulty, defective or dangerous installation. These issues do not have anything to do with the disconnection / restriction of supply due to credit or transfer issues

**existing connection** → de-energisation, energisation/ connection, interference, meter removal, repair, safety, supply up-grade, other → relates to problems arising from connections that are already in place. For example, cases about altering, up-grading, connecting or disconnecting an existing connection

**new connection** → capital contribution, delay, information, other → issues arising from new connections, such as the costs associated with the connection and the period of time taken to carry out the work

**restriction** → error, meter access, safety/defect

# Marketing



information	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	when a customer believes they have been provided with incorrect information about a company or is seeking to know if a company is legitimate
misleading	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	when a customer is dissatisfied about the misleading information of a door-to-door marketer, telemarketer or in the material provided
non account holder	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	when a non account holder is subject to marketing
other	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	
pressure sales	door-to-door, other sales channels, phone	a transfer has occurred due to pressure or coercion by a marketer

# Supply



conservation /restrictions

licensing      entitlement, information, none provided, transfer

off supply – planned      damage/loss, duration, frequency, health & safety, inconvenience, information/notice, other

off supply – unplanned      damage/loss, delivery delay, duration, frequency, health & safety, inconvenience, information /notice, loadshed      issue relating to planned or unplanned interruptions or outages. It can include cases about damage to property or appliances. It can also include cases about the duration or frequency of interruptions, the impact on health and safety of an interruption to supply and outage notifications

quality      colour, health/safety, pressure, taste/odour, other      relates to the smell/taste/appearance of the water or gas being supplied, and any associated health and safety issues

sewer/stormwater overflow/blockage      involves a leaking, blocked or overflowing sewer system

variation      damage/loss, frequency, health & safety, inconvenience, information      involving electricity voltage variations and gas or water pressure variations. It can include cases about damage to property or appliances. It can also include cases about the frequency of variations and the impact on health and safety

water licensing      entitlement, information, irrigation, none provided, transfer

water restrictions

# Customer Service



failure to  
consult /  
inform

failure to  
respond

where the company fails to follow up on actions or reply to customer correspondence

incorrect  
advice  
/information

where the customer receives information or advice from the company that they believe is incorrect

poor  
service

where the customer believes there has been a general lack of service provided

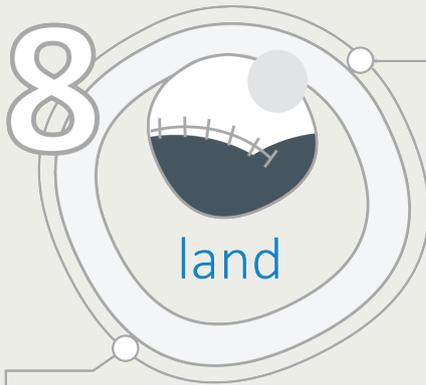
poor/  
unprofessional  
attitude

privacy

details released by company, details requested by company, disclosure refused by company, other

a perceived breach of the National Privacy Principles, including providing information such as an address or details about outstanding bills to someone who is not the account holder

# Land



- cylinder** → LPG, placement
- easement** → access, other
- street lighting** → repair/GSL, other
- vegetation management**
- network assets** → health & safety, maintenance, placement
- other** → general, property damage/restoration

# General Enquiry



## Systemic Issues Update

### Systemic Issue investigations closed by EWOV

October 2014 to December 2014

#### Smart Meters unable to be read remotely

From six complaints to EWOV, we identified that some of the Smart Meters installed in a specific distribution area could not be read remotely. Affected customers largely experienced access and billing issues. The energy distributor confirmed that some 300,000 of the 700,000 Smart Meters it had installed in its distribution area couldn't be converted for remote reading until it made further investment in data management and infrastructure. It said this work would be underway shortly, but may not be completed until late 2016. We note that, under the Victorian Government's customer rebate policy, customers with Smart Meters which aren't converted to remote read capabilities by 31 March 2015 may be entitled to a once-off payment of \$125 by the distributor. The regulator was notified. (SI/2014/50)

#### Ongoing billing delays when bills had to be produced manually

Twelve complaints to EWOV highlighted ongoing billing delays for some customers. The energy retailer confirmed that, because of some system issues, its billing team had to produce bills for some 6,000 customers manually. The retailer said it was working through a series of permanent fixes for the issue and these were due to be completed in December 2014. Until that time, affected customers would be billed in line with the Energy Retail Code and offered extended time to pay. The regulator was notified. (SI/2014/51)

#### Disconnection dates on disconnection warnings earlier than permitted by code (1)

From 10 complaints to EWOV, we identified that the disconnection warning notices sent to some customers by one energy retailer specified disconnection dates earlier than allowed under clause 13.1(c) of the Energy Retail Code. The retailer said it had updated its notices in May 2014 to ensure compliance and had referred the issue to the ESC for further advice. It said that, because of vacant premises, it wasn't able to identify affected customers apart from those who contacted EWOV. The customers who contacted EWOV received Wrongful Disconnection Payments. The regulator was notified. (SI/2014/42)

#### Disconnection dates on disconnection warnings earlier than permitted by code (2)

One complaint to EWOV highlighted that the disconnection warning notice sent to the customer by his energy retailer (a different retailer from the one in SI/2014/42) specified a disconnection date earlier than allowed under clause 13.1(c) of the Energy Retail Code. The retailer advised that it complied with the requirements of the Energy Retail Code and hadn't disconnected any customer earlier than permitted. It said it had since updated its disconnection notice template. This systemic issue was referred to the ESC. The customer received a Wrongful Disconnection Payment. (SI/2014/43)

#### Back bills after concession calculation errors

Through five complaints lodged with EWOV, we identified that some customers of one energy retailer received a back bill for concessions wrongly calculated and applied to their previous bills. The energy retailer confirmed that an issue with its billing calculation method meant that, for nine months between late 2013 and mid-2014, a group of customers holding concession cards received higher concession credits than should have been paid. It said it subsequently notified the 7,998 affected customers and billed them for the overpayment, offering extended time to pay. It said that most of the affected customers were billed less than \$100 to correct the error. The regulator was notified. (SI/2014/76)

#### Transposition of meter data streams

One complaint to EWOV highlighted a problem an energy distributor was having with a group of meters at the properties of some 1,264 customers. When these meters were manually read, data streams became transposed (hot water was billed as solar and vice versa). The distributor confirmed the problem, saying it was corrected in 2013. However, while remote-read meters

could now be read without incident, the problem persisted with manually-read meters. It said that most of the meters had since been reprogrammed, resolving the manual read issue. The remaining meters are expected to be corrected by early 2015. It has provided revised data streams to energy retailers to allow rebilling as required. (SI/2014/86)

#### [Customers facing a price increase told they would receive a price decrease](#)

An energy retailer alerted EWOV that the renewal letters it sent to some of its existing customers informed them of a price decrease, when in fact a price increase was imminent. The retailer said it had sent a letter of apology to some 5,000 affected customers advising them of the error and to disregard the previous advice. It also advised that their price increases would be confirmed in early 2015. The retailer said it had taken steps to ensure no recurrence of the error. The regulator was notified. (SI/2014/90)

#### [Delay in gas energisation](#)

One complaint to EWOV highlighted a significant delay for the customer in the energisation of gas at their new property. The energy retailer confirmed that when a market offer is entered into for a gas customer at a new property, it needs to wait for the 10-day cooling-off period to lapse before the energisation occurs. The retailer said it was investigating a solution to enable new gas customers to choose their preferred energisation date, but a specific timeframe for that wasn't able to be provided. The regulator was notified. (SI/2014/88)

#### [No payment date on online payment receipts](#)

One complaint to EWOV highlighted that receipts for payments made through an energy retailer's website didn't include a date of payment. For the customer who contacted us, this caused subsequent problems of proof of payment. The energy retailer confirmed that payments made through its website don't specify the date of payment, but said the online receipt includes the customer reference number, payment amount, receipt number and credit card information. It said it would try to have the date added to the receipt for further clarity. The regulator was notified. (SI/2014/69)

#### [Water restriction notice missing required information](#)

One complaint to EWOV highlighted that the restriction notice issued to the customer didn't include some of the required information. Specifically, it was missing information stating that the water corporation may be able to recover the outstanding amounts at the time of any sale of the customer's property if the customer is also the property owner — a provision under section 6.2(e) of the Urban Customer Service Code. The water corporation confirmed the information oversight, saying it had since been corrected. It provided a copy of the new restriction notice template to confirm this. The regulator was notified. SI/2014/71

#### [Reminder notices issued for bills that weren't sent](#)

A water corporation alerted EWOV that reminder notices were sent to a group of some 1,600 customers for bills which hadn't been issued, due to an error by its contracted billing provider. EWOV received one related complaint. The water corporation said it had sent apology and explanation letters to the affected customers, and had offered them extended time to pay. The regulator was notified. SI/2014/73

#### [Billing errors due to billing system fault](#)

A water corporation alerted us to a problem with billing for around 1,800 of its customers. Some of the customers received bills for properties they didn't own or occupy. Others didn't receive any bill at all because it was sent to the wrong address. The water corporation advised that the problem spanned two months and was the result of a billing system fault. It said it had written to all affected customers, apologising for the issue and providing an accurate bill. It also said it had notified the Privacy Commissioner of the issue and had changed its processes to ensure no recurrence. EWOV didn't receive any related complaints. The regulator was notified. SI/2014/85

**Under the EWOV Charter, we have a responsibility to identify potential systemic issues and, as appropriate, report these to relevant companies and regulators.**

We identify systemic issues through the cases we receive and the complaints we investigate. A systemic issue may also be identified by the company itself and notified to us. Some affected customers contact us and some don't.

By being proactive about reporting potentially systemic issues, we can work with companies and regulators to bring about redress for everyone affected (not just those who complain), reduce possible wider impact and minimise complaints.

Our systemic issues responsibilities differ slightly between energy and water.



**The energy distributor confirmed that some 300,000 of the 700,000 Smart Meters it had installed in its distribution area couldn't be converted for remote reading until it made further investment in data management and infrastructure.**



**When these meters were manually read, data streams became transposed (hot water was billed as solar and vice versa).**

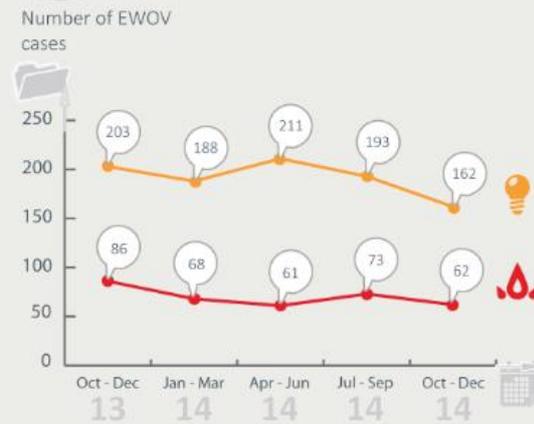
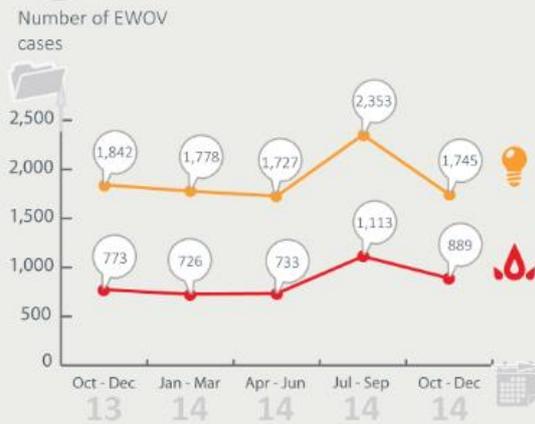


# Scheme Participant Data

## Quarterly Scheme Participant Case Data

The following Scheme Participant data is reported over the previous five quarters. Please click on the following links to view case numbers for each Scheme Participant by sector.

### Electricity and gas retail





Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



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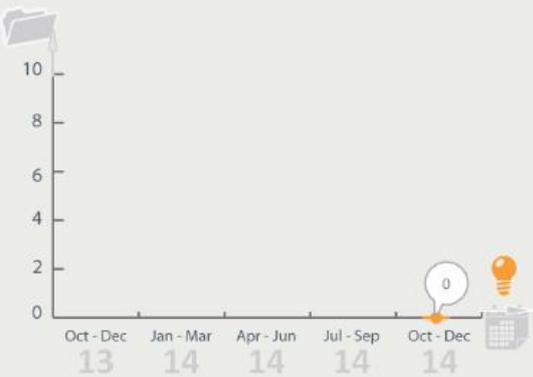


\* Dual Fuel numbers were previously reported together with electricity numbers and will now be reported separately.



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases





**Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers**  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014



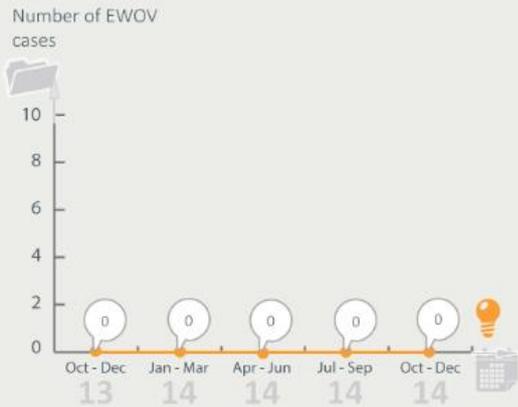
**Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailer:**  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014



**Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers**  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014



**Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers**  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014





Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

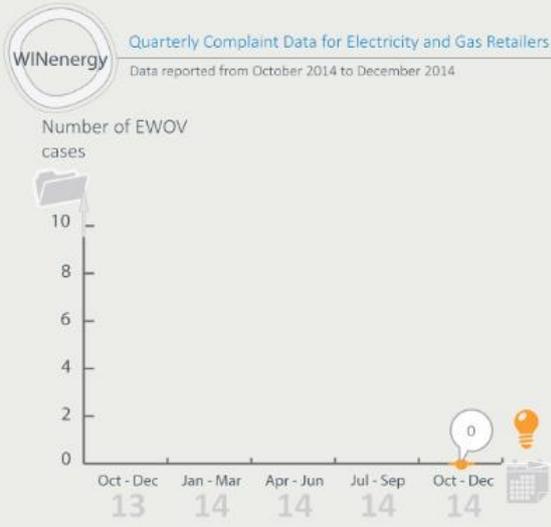
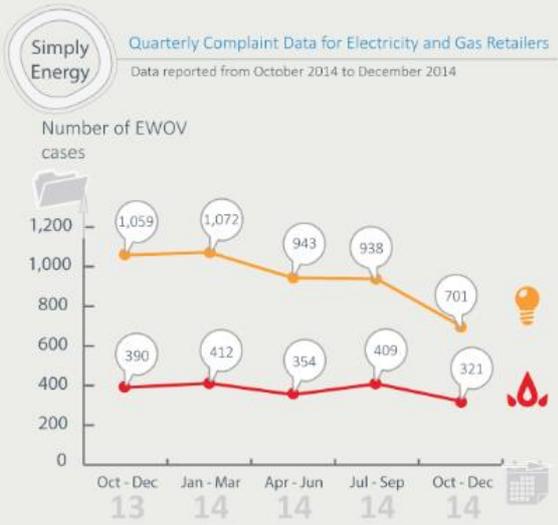
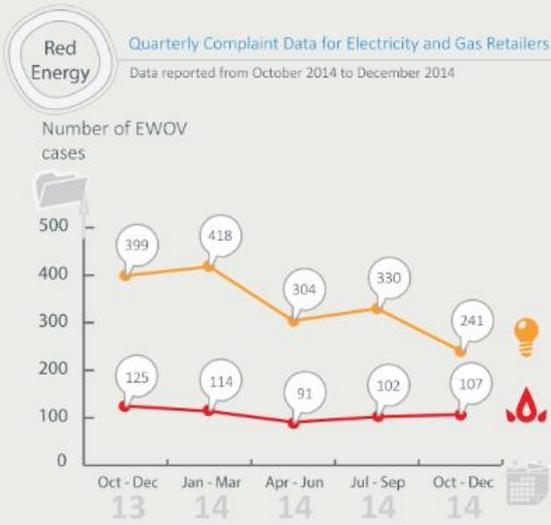


Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

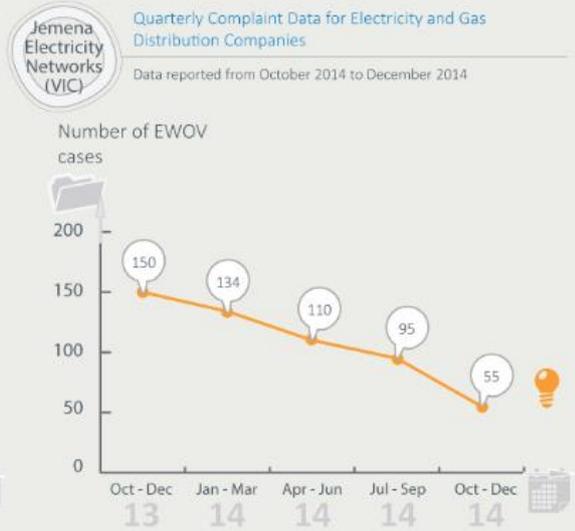
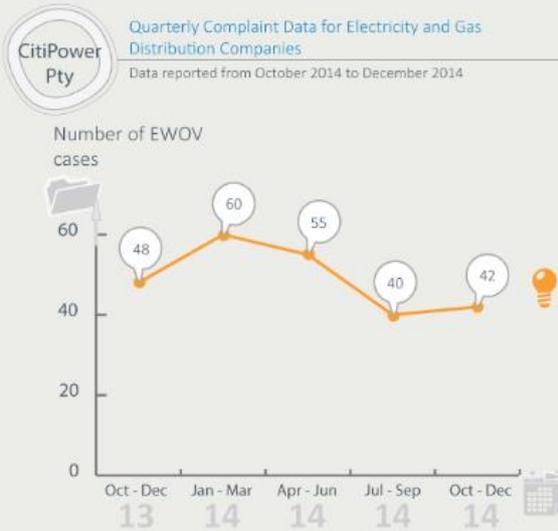
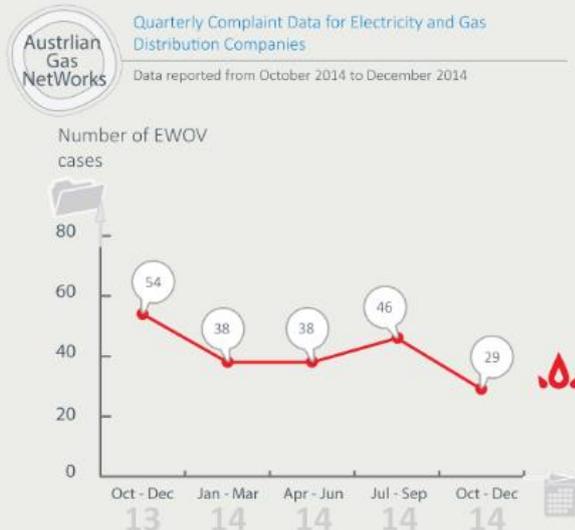
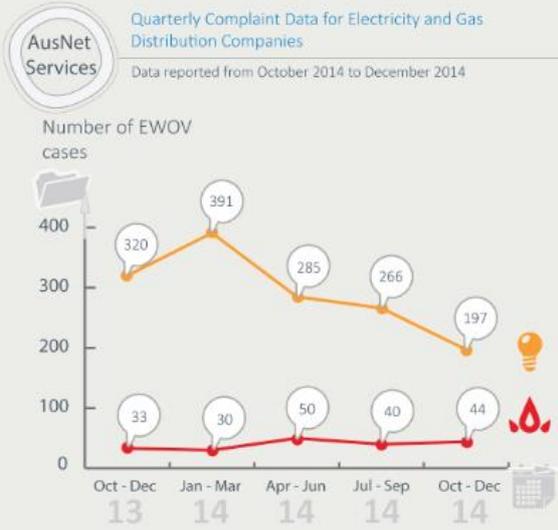


Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014





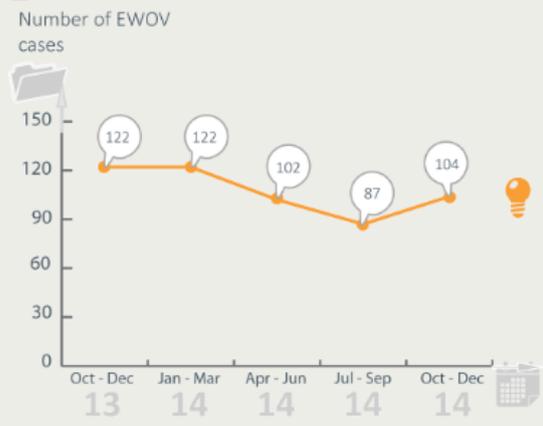
# Electricity and gas distribution



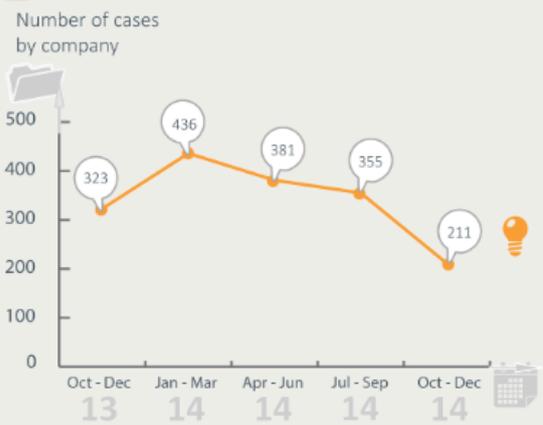
**Multinet Gas (VIC)**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
 Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014



**Powercor Australia**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
 Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014



**United Energy Distribution**  
 Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity and Gas Distribution Companies  
 Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014



# Electricity transmission



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity Transmission Companies

Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Electricity Transmission Companies

Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



# Water corporations



Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Retailers  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Metropolitan Water Wholesaler  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases





Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



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Number of EWOV cases



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Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations

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Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Regional Urban Water Corporations  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Water Corporations  
Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases





Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Water Corporations

Data reported from October 2014 to December 2014

Number of EWOV cases



Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Urban Water Corporations

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Quarterly Complaint Data for Rural Urban Water Corporations

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Number of EWOV cases

