

Overview of Trade Waste Cases Received by EWOV

December 2010

This document provides an overview of cases received by the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) that involved trade waste management issues.

1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009

EWOV registered two cases relating to trade waste management. Neither of these cases was investigated by EWOV. One was an Assisted Referral, i.e. the customer was referred to a higher level contact at the provider having only spoken to the call centre thus far. In the other case the customer withdrew the complaint after it was explained to him that EWOV does not have jurisdiction over the setting of prices and tariffs.

W/2009/662 (Assisted Referral)

The customer was dissatisfied with a bill he received after signing a trade waste agreement. The customer stated that he was confused because the water company had indicated that there would be no fees if he signed the agreement. He acquired the business six months ago and was unsure if he was required to sign a trade waste agreement.

To resolve the issue the customer wanted the water company to confirm if a trade waste agreement was mandatory and an explanation of the billing. The customer had made several contacts with the water company but chose to give the business another opportunity to resolve the matter at a higher level.

W/2009/702 (Unassisted Referral)

The customer contacted EWOV because he was concerned about the charges associated with a trade waste agreement. The customer bought a laundry business in December 2008 and believed that the water company did not disclose applicable charges, which were also not outlined in an information statement obtained prior to purchasing the property.

In recognition of the error it had made, the water company offered a reduced payment plan and a credit. Prior to approaching EWOV, the customer believed that the trade waste charges, and hence the credit offered, were incorrect for a business of its size. After a conversation with a Conciliator, the customer decided that he wanted to accept the water company's offer of resolution as he believed it to be reasonable.

1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010

During this period EWOV received five cases involving trade waste agreements. Two of the cases were referred back to a higher level contact at the water company and three cases were fully investigated by EWOV.

W/2009/911 (Investigation)

The customer owned a bakery and was dissatisfied that he was charged a trade waste agreement fee on his water bills. The customer advised that he had a grease trap installed at the property and as a result of this, the water company no longer attended the property to remove waste. To resolve the complaint, the customer was seeking an explanation for the charges. In response to contact from EWOV the water company provided a satisfactory explanation to the customer about the different categories of trade waste customers and what the trade waste charges cover.

W/2009/1346 (Assisted Referral)

The customer, a hotel owner, contacted EWOV after receiving a bill for trade waste. He noticed that there was an application fee of \$172.89 which he felt was unreasonable. The customer believed that a fair outcome would be for the water company to waive the fee. The customer chose to give the water company another opportunity to resolve the matter at a higher level.

W/2009/1485 (Investigation)

After the customer moved her business into a new property the water company attended the site and advised that the installation of a 600-litre grease waste trap would be required within the next three months. She contacted EWOV to express her dissatisfaction and question the necessity of a grease trap for the business.

She stated that the Health Department had attended the property and advised a grease trap was not necessary and could not understand why the water company would disagree with this assessment. To resolve the complaint the customer wanted the water company to review its decision, provide the reasons for its decision and give her permission to wash utensils in the hand basin.

The water company responded by explaining that the customer's business was classified by the council as a delicatessen and therefore it was required to have a food and oil interceptor to treat the waste before it enters the sewer. The water company agreed to arrange a site visit to further discuss and explain the customer's obligations. It also agreed to provide the customer with contact details for food and oil inceptor manufacturers as well as plumbing contractors.

W/2009/1538 (Assisted Referral)

The customer contacted EWOV because she was experiencing difficulties with obtaining a trade waste permit. She stated her business was located in a factory which was subdivided and the other business in the factory was a butcher.

She advised that there was a trade waste interceptor located at the front of the factory that her company could not use as it did not have the necessary permit. The water company had issued a permit to the butcher even though her company owned the grease trap. The water company requested proof that her company owned the grease trap and although this was provided, the matter remained unresolved.

The customer chose to give the water company another opportunity to resolve the matter at a higher level.

W/2010/664 (Investigation)

The customer operated a charcoal chicken business in a rented premise although the water account was established in his landlord's name. The water company advised him that a separate trade waste account was required. As he had no contractual relationship with the water company, the customer believed the trade waste account should be established in the landlord's name.

He was further dissatisfied with the water company for not sending a representative out to clean the grease trap as previously agreed. To resolve the matter the customer was seeking for the water company to explain why a grease trap was required and who was responsible for it. The complaint was resolved after the water company provided the required information.