



## POSITION STATEMENT

### Energy and water complaints and sovereign citizenship

#### EWON's role

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) is the industry-based Ombudsman scheme which provides all NSW energy and some water customers with independent, free, informal dispute resolution services.

We work towards achieving fair and reasonable complaint outcomes for all parties, provide leading customer service and influence energy and water public policy. We are not a consumer advocate, nor do we represent industry.

We achieve fair and reasonable outcomes for complaints based on laws, codes and regulations, good industry practice and by considering the individual circumstances of each complaint and parties to the complaint. This may include consideration of prior complaint outcomes, independent legal, technical or regulatory advice, and where they exist, special customer circumstances.

#### Sovereign citizenship

In EWON's experience, people who declare that they are sovereign citizens question the legitimacy of government and business legal/payment processes. Some may propose that they are morally and legally justified to opt out of being subject to the law, believing that they possess a true understanding of legal processes.

From time to time, some customers contact EWON about a non-payment complaint with their energy/water provider, advising that they are sovereign citizens and that they have made payment of their account in accordance with the *Bills of Exchange Act 1909*.

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#### EWON's position

EWON's jurisdiction, as outlined in our Charter, includes complaints by consumers of energy or water services including about issues relating to marketing, sales, contracts, billing, credit and payment services, disconnection, service restrictions and customer service issues.

In response to complaints where the *Bills of Exchange Act* is cited, EWON provides advice and shares information about energy and/or water provider business operations including about payment methods provided to their customers. EWON also explains that regulators, including the Australian Energy Regulator (energy sector) and IPART (water sector), require energy/water companies to provide a number of payment options to their customers but this does not include bills of exchange.

EWON is not a legal forum and is unable to provide advice about the *Bills of Exchange Act*. EWON is able to provide advice about the payment options available to energy and water customers. EWON expects customers who are seeking EWON's advice or complaints handling service to show good faith, including making payments to their energy/water accounts using one of the regulated options offered by the customer's energy/water provider.

If a customer wants to pursue their view that they have the right to make payment in accordance with the *Bills of Exchange Act*, EWON will provide advice about impacts of non-payment i.e. disconnection, debt collection and credit reporting that the customer may face and advise the customer to seek advice from a legal forum.

EWON will finalise the complaint on that basis.