



Energy & Water  
Ombudsman NSW  
Free, fair and independent



Annual Report  
2023–24



# Our mission

To provide high quality, independent dispute resolution and raise customer service standards in the energy and water industries.

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# About EWON

As a not-for-profit, industry-based ombudsman scheme, we provide free and independent dispute resolution services to New South Wales energy customers and Sydney Water, Hunter Water, Water NSW, Shoalhaven Water, Essential Water (Broken Hill) and private water utilities customers. We independently achieve fair and reasonable outcomes for all parties – we are not a consumer or industry advocate.

EWON was established 26 years ago as the Energy Industry Ombudsman NSW (EION). Initially comprised of the six government-owned electricity providers and one transmission company, our jurisdiction expanded in 1999 to include several water providers, initiating the name change to EWON. The following year, the first gas member joined the scheme and, in 2018, our membership expanded further to include exempt entities.

We investigate a broad range of complaints including billing, credit, customer service, transfer, digital meter exchange, supply, land, provision, marketing and privacy issues.

## Our purpose

- Provide high-quality independent advice, information and dispute resolution to NSW energy and water customers.
- Use our unique complaints data to enable energy and water providers to improve their customer service, systemically reduce the drivers of complaints and inform the development of regulations, codes and policy.
- Engage effectively with NSW consumers by promoting our service and the complaints processes of energy and water providers through our community outreach and stakeholder engagement program.

EWON acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands across New South Wales. We respect Elders past and present and we thank the many Aboriginal communities who welcome us onto their land.

**ngara ngwiya yudi – listen, give, guide**

## Our Charter

Our principal Charter responsibilities are to:

- Handle energy and water complaints independently, fairly, informally, efficiently and free of charge to the customer.
- Promote EWON to consumers and small businesses.
- Encourage and advise energy and water providers on good complaint-handling practices to help reduce and avoid complaints.

## About this report

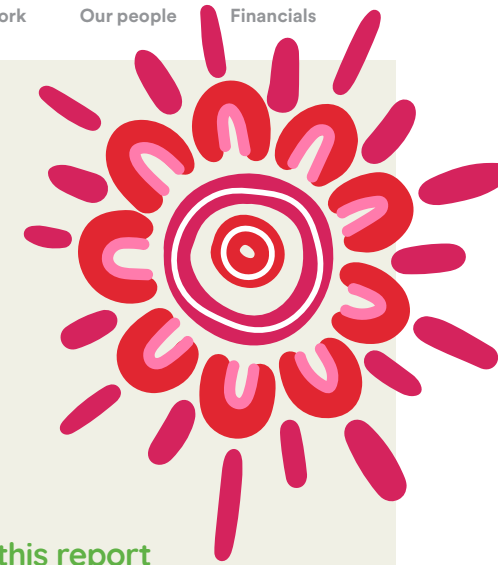
This Annual Report is published in accordance with EWON's Charter and the Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution. The benchmarks are accessibility, independence, fairness, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

## About our data

The data in this report is drawn from complaints received by EWON in the Financial Year (FY) 2024, unless otherwise specified. EWON's open complaint data varies in accordance with complaint progression, and figures in this report reflect complaint status as at 10 July 2024. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number so they may not always add up to 100%.

## About our case studies

Personal information about our customers has been changed to protect their privacy.



# 2023–24 Highlights



## 28,067

complaints received

## up 57%

on previous year



See our website for more FY24 complaint data



## 81%

Electricity complaints  
(up 65%)



## 15%

Gas complaints  
(up 31%)



## 3%

Water complaints  
(up 21%)

<1% of complaints were non energy/non water (105)



92% of complaints closed within 30 days



## \$1.31 million

in customer outcomes (up 13%)



## 27,650

complaints closed, up 55% from FY23



3,360 investigated complaints closed



## 74%

Billing complaints up 74%



## 8%

Credit complaints up 23%



## 5%

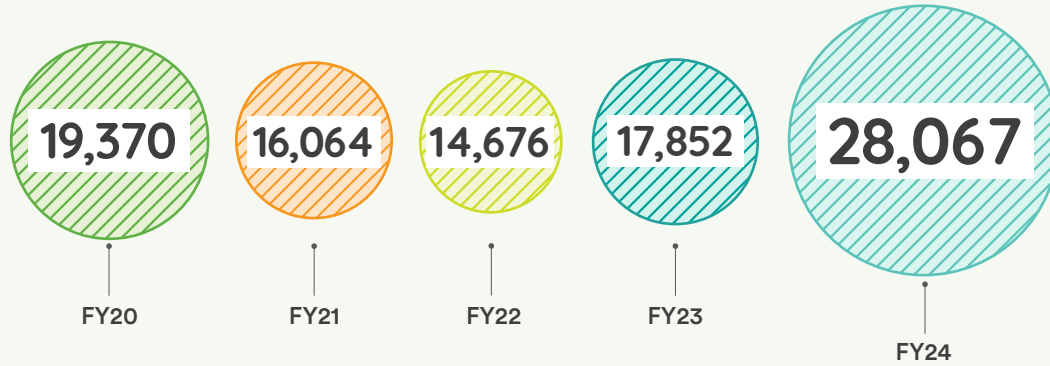
Digital meter exchange complaints, up 95%



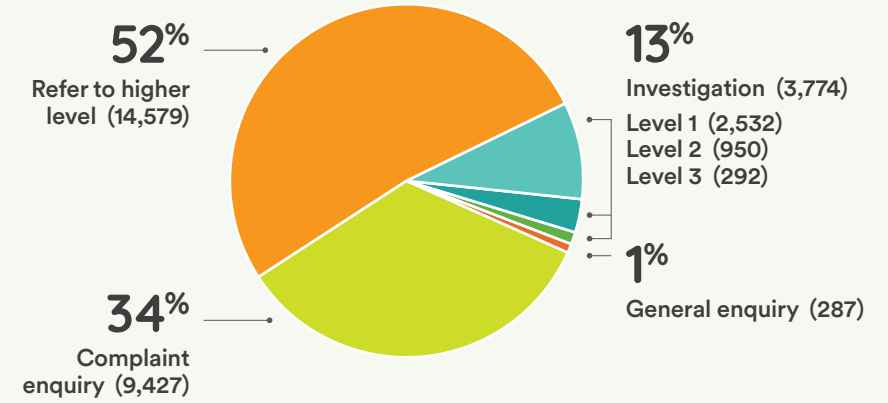
## 3%

Transfer complaints, up 15%

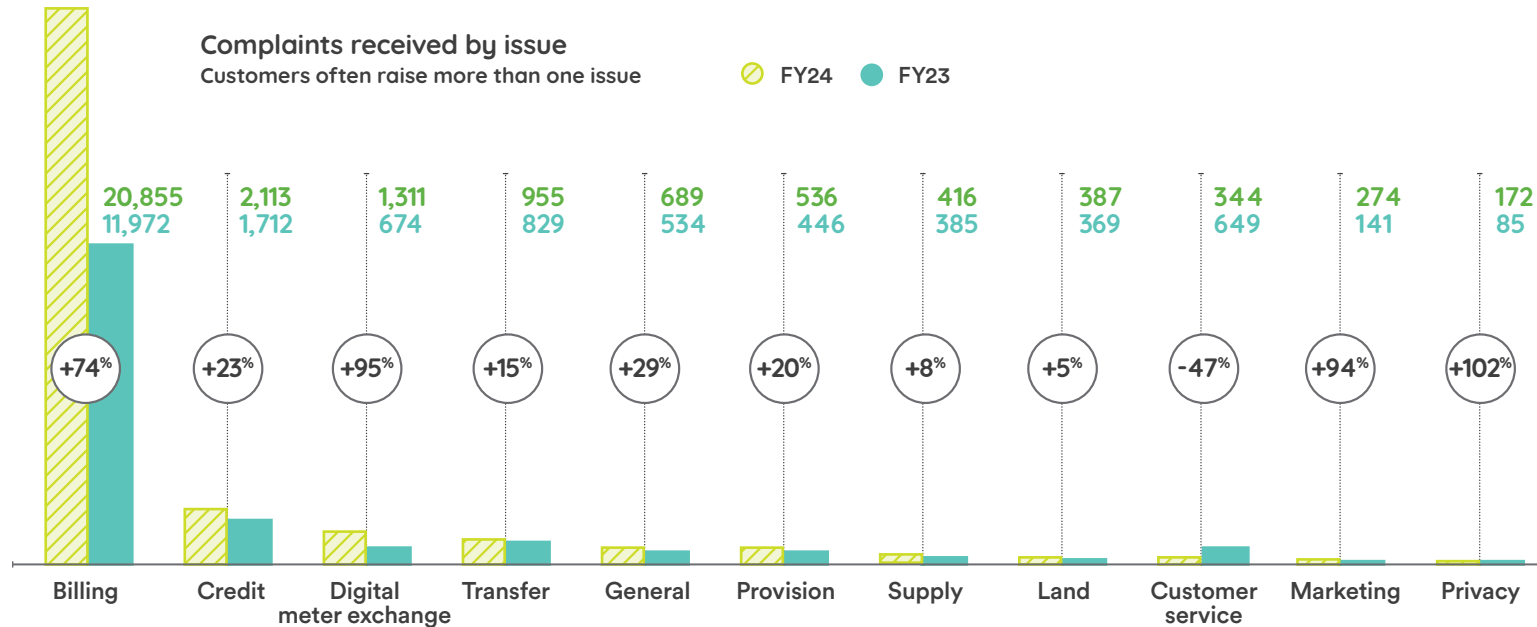
Complaints received by from FY20 to FY24



Complaints received by level



Complaints received by issue  
Customers often raise more than one issue



# Chair's report

This is my final message as Chair after serving the maximum of two terms.



## Biography

Tony Crawford, EWON Chair since 2018, has board chair and non-executive director experience across the health, energy, insurance, professional services, sport and not-for-profit sectors. He had an extensive legal career over 30 years at national law firm DLA Phillips Fox, including as the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board.

When I joined the Board, EWON was expanding its jurisdiction to the thousands of NSW residents living in embedded networks. Now as I'm leaving, EWON is once again broadening its jurisdiction, this time to ensure it's aligned with Australia's major energy transition path to net zero. I've been privileged to see EWON grow and respond to these and other significant changes in the energy and water sectors during my time as Chair.

But now to this year. It was a highlight to see that 80% of EWON employees completed the staff engagement survey, up 10% on last year. Even more pleasing was the vast majority of staff who believe in our values, purpose and objectives, and who are proud to work for EWON. It's a positive reflection of the culture that has been led by the Board and Management and mutually developed by all staff.

We progressed a number of key IT projects including the launch of DataDive, our internal hub of interactive dashboards that provide staff with real-time complaints and outreach data. Our goal is to make this information accessible on EWON's website in the near future.

An improved phone system for the Dispute Resolution team was introduced, which includes call recordings, captures analytics and caller sentiment. This reduced telephony costs and enhanced our customer service capabilities.

Like all organisations that manage private information, we are committed to keeping up with the ongoing evolution of cybersecurity. We've completed security enhancements on all external portals, updated our firewall and developed incident plans so that we can act swiftly if needed, to ensure our customer data is protected.

I'm proud to announce that our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has been approved by Reconciliation Australia and will be launched later this year. Our Innovate RAP is a further commitment to ensuring EWON staff and stakeholders support First Nations peoples, not just for the duration of our RAP, but indefinitely – particularly through our outreach program. We express our deep gratitude to the First Nations communities who welcome us onto their land for community engagement.

This year, we farewelled three Directors who I would like to thank for their contribution to the EWON Board: Joanna Quilty (NSW Council of Social Service), David Stockler (Water NSW) and Jane Mills (Alinta Energy). We welcomed Kathy Hourigan (Sydney Water), Kerryn Graham (EnergyAustralia) and Jacqueline Crawshaw (Energy Consumers Australia).

As I reflect on my time as Chair since 2018, there are several initiatives the Board can be particularly proud to have been part of:

1. The introduction of our 2021–25 Tealprint scorecard and strategic impact register that keeps us accountable and measures progress against our strategic objectives.
2. The launch of EWONLink, our portal that allows members to access complaint data in real time.
3. The 2019 Independent Review by Queen Margaret University's Consumer Dispute Resolution Centre, which identified that we meet the Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution, and identified our community outreach and engagement program is best practice.

4. Our IT Roadmaps from 2018–2025, which have resulted in a significant uplift in EWON’s digital transformation.
5. Reviewing and embedding our new and sustainable funding model.
6. Collaborating with our ANZEWON peers to harmonise complaint management practices across jurisdictions.
7. Building and strengthening EWON’s governance; all of which I’m sure will continue.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank the Board Directors, both past and present, for their ongoing support during my tenure, and Helen Ford for her seamless governance support as Company Secretary up until her departure from EWON earlier this year. I can confidently hand over to incoming Chair Louise Sylvan knowing EWON is in safe hands.

Thank you also to the Ombudsman, Janine Young, and the EWON team for your dedication and commitment to delivering the mission of EWON day in, day out. It has been an honour to serve as your Chair.



### Tony Crawford

Chair  
Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW



Joanna Quilty, Tony Crawford, Helen Ford and Janine Young at EWON's April 2024 Consultative Council meeting.



# Ombudsman's report

## Is it stating the obvious to say that trust in the energy sector is low?



### Biography

Janine Young was appointed Ombudsman in 2014, having gained extensive experience providing independent dispute resolution services since 2003 including as Public Transport Ombudsman Victoria.

Energy consumers are reporting they have less trust in energy retailers than they do in banks. Not only that, they also think energy represents less value for money than supermarkets<sup>1</sup>. This is no surprise, since 2008 energy prices have increased more than any other service, culminating in a 34% electricity price rise in New South Wales for the default market offer in the past two years alone<sup>2</sup>. This has created a predictable domino effect with a 57% increase in complaints to EWON this year. Disputed high bill complaints, the main reason customers contact EWON, has also increased significantly to 92%.

Take a moment to absorb these statistics and what they mean for many NSW consumers.

Energy affordability has always been a key part of EWON's work, but until recently it was largely experienced by customers facing short to long-term financial vulnerability. Now, 50% more residential energy customers are accessing affordability programs to manage their power bills<sup>3</sup>. Many of these customers have never had to ask for financial support before, with a lot of people turning off their lights, heaters and air conditioners to avoid debt or disconnection.

No customer should have to make this choice.

Electricity is an essential service. Our lives are dependent on it in a way we could have never imagined 50 years ago. It is now essential for mobile and internet connection, education, shopping, banking, home security and, for a growing number of people, electric vehicles. This is why it is critical for all consumers to maintain connection, not be threatened by disconnection, and be able to access energy at an affordable price.

We need a paradigm shift to make energy affordable for everyone, which will help build trust in the energy sector. Analysis of the complaint drivers to EWON identify that the following initiatives would collectively trigger that shift:

1. More inclusive, accessible and proactively offered affordability programs for customers when they first miss paying a bill or start making late payments.
2. Engagement with customers with offers of suitable energy plans that align with customer energy usage, rather than expecting customers to find and understand their options in a maze of energy plan complexity.

3. Removing loyalty tax, that is, the price consumers pay when they're transferred to a basic contract once their energy contract ends, losing benefits like discounted rates.
4. Tariff change advice that is clearly communicated so consumers can opt in to a tariff that best suits their energy usage across each day.
5. Closing the equity gap for consumers who can't afford Consumer Energy Resources (CER) by introducing energy efficiency standards for social and community housing and private rentals. Combined with government and energy company-led heating and cooling appliance upgrade programs (see more on page 48).
6. Finally, perhaps it is time that we again explore the introduction by retailers of an affordable tariff, known in some markets as a 'social tariff' for customers who will never be able to afford their energy bill.

These initiatives aren't new – it's today's environment that makes implementing them so much more critical. Other initiatives, like energy literacy programs, which are often seen as solutions, could then be reconsidered. After all, an affordable bill is an understandable bill.

The water sector is also undergoing widespread change with water pricing likely to increase in coming years. This reinforces the need for both energy and water companies to better manage affordability.

Running parallel to the issues of trust in the energy sector and affordability, is the path we are now on to net zero.

The energy transition is reliant on large scale renewables and the increased uptake of CER including solar, batteries and electric vehicles. Unfortunately, the consumer protections, laws and regulations relating to these products are severely lagging, meaning customers with CER-related complaints are bounced between various organisations to resolve their issue.

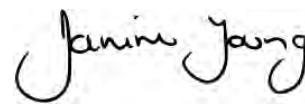
Unsolicited door-to-door CER marketing and telesales in NSW are also eroding consumer trust when it comes to adopting new products, particularly solar. I'm calling for a ban on this in line with other states, to stop increased consumer detriment.

National or NSW-based regulation change is also needed so that consumer protections are provided by all retailers of CER products and services. Membership of EWON would ensure all energy consumers have equitable access to dispute resolution services, and will help rebuild trust in both the sector and the energy transition.

This annual report outlines EWON's ongoing efforts to address affordability and the gaps in consumer protection relating to CER through our policy contributions; systemic issues investigations and reporting; and consumer, member and stakeholder engagement.

The EWON team continues to inspire me with their dedication to working effectively and collaboratively with consumers and businesses, to help make energy and water more understandable and manageable.

In closing, thank you to our Chair, Tony Crawford. All the best for the future Tony, your strategic and people-focused impact is now woven into the fabric of EWON. Together with our great team and our incoming Chair, Louise Sylvan, we're positioned for another challenging and rewarding year.



**Janine Young**  
Ombudsman  
Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

## Farewell Helen Ford

In May 2024, EWON farewelled Deputy Ombudsman and Company Secretary, Helen Ford. Joining EWON in 2015, Helen shaped EWON's governance, awareness and policy work as General Manager Governance, Awareness and Policy (GAP). In 2019, Helen took on the role of Deputy Ombudsman, supporting the Ombudsman while continuing to lead the GAP team as it evolved its program of work and influence.

Reflecting on her decision to leave EWON, Helen said:

*It's been a privilege to work at EWON and contribute to the impact we make with our work. I shall miss working with such a great group of people who are committed to social justice and making a positive difference to individuals and systems. The world of Ombudsman, industry and parliamentary, is a very special place. It's been my (work) home for over 20 years all up. I am deeply grateful for that.*

Helen's legacy of exceptional leadership and dedication contributed greatly to EWON's success and will influence our culture for years to come.

1 Energy Consumers Australia, June 2024, [Energy Consumer Sentiment & Behaviour Surveys](#)

2 Default Market Offer rates FY22 – FY24.

3 Australian Energy Regulator, June 2024, [Retail Energy Market Performance, Quarter 3, 2023-24](#)

# Our Board



**Tony Crawford**  
Chair, EWON

EWON’s Board is responsible for corporate governance, budget approval and strategic direction. The Board is comprised of an independent chair, five industry directors and five community directors.

In FY24, we welcomed two new industry directors Kathy Hourigan from Sydney Water and Kerryn Graham from Energy Australia. We also welcomed Jacqueline Crawshaw from Energy Consumers Australia as a new Community Director.

**Kate Temby**  
Community Director, EWON  
Specialist Consultant, Social Outcomes



**Rod Stowe**  
Community Director, EWON  
Board Chair, Super Consumers Australia



**April Blair**  
Community Director, EWON  
Senior Ombudsman, Australian Financial Complaints Authority



**Jacqueline Crawshaw**  
Community Director, EWON  
Director Policy Energy Services and Markets, Energy Consumers Australia



**Craig Memery**  
Community Director, EWON  
Senior Advisor Energy and Water Justice, Justice and Equity Centre (previously known as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre)



**Candice Suttor**  
Industry Director, EWON  
Executive Manager Retail, Altogether



**Rob Amphlett Lewis**  
Industry Director, EWON  
Group Executive Distributed Services, Ausgrid



**Kerryn Graham**  
Industry Director, EWON  
Head of Business, Energy Australia



**John Bowie**  
Industry Director, EWON  
General Manager Retail X, Origin Energy



**Kathy Hourigan**  
Industry Director, EWON  
General Manager Customer Services, Sydney Water



# Our goals

## Strategic objectives

Our strategic objectives set our direction and enable us to provide high-quality independent advice, information and dispute resolution to NSW energy and some water consumers. They ensure we achieve fair and reasonable outcomes for all conciliated and investigated complaints, identify and address systemic issues, expand our reach across NSW, work effectively with members, and influence evolving and emerging energy and water policy and regulation.

Our strategic objectives are:

- best practice dispute resolution
- influential policy contribution
- valued membership
- expanded awareness.

## The Benchmarks

EWON develops its policies and processes in accordance with the Australian Government's Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution, and is independently reviewed against those benchmarks every five years. The benchmarks encourage best practice, industry-based customer dispute resolution and set standards regarding:

- accessibility
- independence
- fairness
- accountability
- efficiency
- effectiveness.

Read more about EWON's work to increase accessibility in our awareness-raising section on page 74, and more about our efficiency improvements in the dispute resolution area on page 33.

## The Industry-based Benchmarks



Accessibility



Independence



Fairness



Accountability



Efficiency



Effectiveness

# Energy transition

EWON has been granted funding by the NSW Government to expand our jurisdiction to managing complaints from community members and landowners impacted by renewable energy and transmission infrastructure projects.

The NSW Government identified EWON as the most appropriate organisation to take on this work based on our reputation as an established, trusted and independent dispute resolution service. Our capacity to provide an efficient and impartial avenue for community engagement, education and complaints management was also considered.

Transmission and distribution network service providers Transgrid, Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Essential Energy are existing members of EWON, so our experience in this area is well established.

A dedicated Energy Transition team is being established to provide a ‘no wrong door’ referral service for residents, connecting them with the most appropriate channels if their complaint is outside EWON’s jurisdiction.

The team will provide an investigation and resolution process for residents dissatisfied with the way their complaints are handled by the relevant transmission and renewable energy entities.

We will also actively engage with communities to better understand the issues they are facing, while informing the NSW Government of any systemic issues requiring action.

The expansion in jurisdiction will complement EWON’s substantive energy and water dispute resolution functions, particularly for regional, rural and remote consumers who will see EWON in the community more often.

We will work closely with other entities involved in handling complaints from communities impacted by

renewable energy projects. This will include government agencies such as the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure; the NSW Energy Corporation; the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner; and the Centre for Property Acquisition.

The service will be rolled out in late 2024.



EWON staff at the Energy Charter’s Landholder Engagement Training in Wagga Wagga.

# Reconciliation Action Plan

EWON's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), launched in 2021, outlined how we would engage, strengthen and maintain our relationships with First Nations communities. We embedded our Reflect RAP in our day-to-day work, including through policy changes and operational enhancements.

**Our Reflect RAP objectives were fully implemented in FY24.**

## Key achievements included:

- Introducing a dedicated phone line for First Nations customers who choose to self-identify so that they are directed to specialist EWON team members.
- Expanding our stakeholder networks, building partnerships and collaborating with organisations that work with First Nations communities across New South Wales through our outreach program.
- Increasing staff awareness and understanding of First Nations peoples and the issues they face through internal initiatives including a National Reconciliation Week documentary featuring Professor Megan Davis, Co-chair of the Uluru Dialogues; cultural awareness training with Mirri Mirri – an Aboriginal owned cultural education provider, for staff and directors; and Anti-Discrimination NSW training on how to effectively manage complaints from First Nations customers.
- Joining Supply Nation, with most of our outreach collateral now being purchased from Supply Nation suppliers.

## Next steps

We have now developed our Innovate RAP, which will be launched in FY25. It will build on our Reflect RAP, as a further commitment to ensuring EWON staff and stakeholders support First Nations communities.

**Always Was Always Will Be**  
—Maddison Gibbs, Barkindji woman

# Our management team



**Janine Young**  
Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is also the Chief Executive Officer of EWON Limited and is responsible to the Board for the overall strategic direction and management of EWON. The Ombudsman’s consideration and resolution of individual disputes is conducted independently from the Board.

EWON has three core teams responsible for delivering EWON’s Charter responsibilities under the leadership of the Ombudsman. They work collaboratively and effectively, ensuring we achieve service excellence and are responsive to the evolving energy and water landscapes.



**Rosa Krilic**  
Deputy Ombudsman



In May 2024, Rosa Krilic, General Manager Dispute Resolution, was appointed Deputy Ombudsman. Rosa continues to lead the Dispute Resolution team as she has done since February 2021.

The Dispute Resolution team manages all customer complaints about energy and water providers. This includes receiving, assessing, referring, investigating and reviewing complaints to ensure EWON achieves its key objective of fair, reasonable and independent complaints management.

**David Kneeshaw**  
General Manager  
Finance & Corporate Services



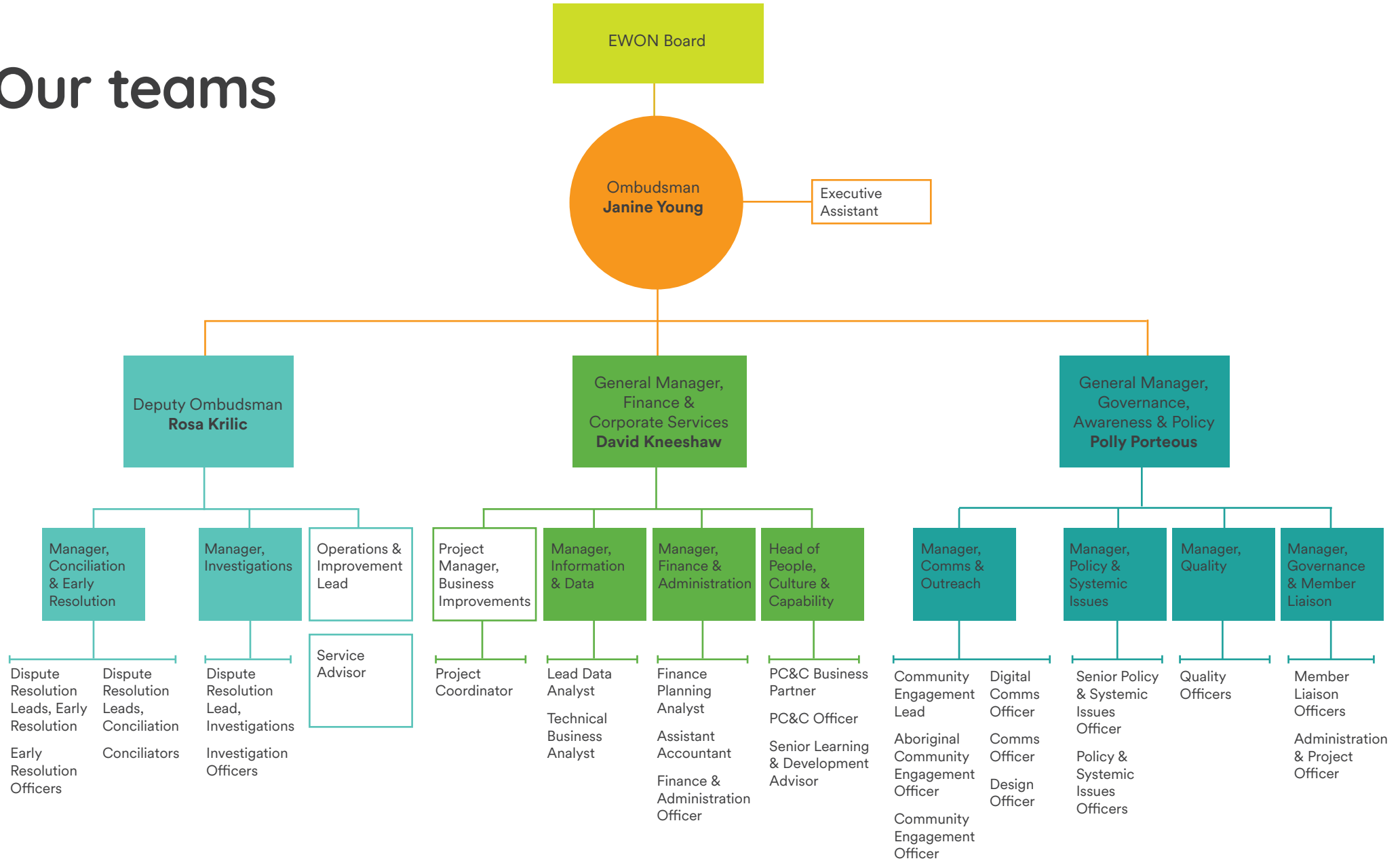
David Kneeshaw joined EWON in May 2023 and leads our Finance & Corporate Services team. This team includes infrastructure and service delivery; financial management; information technology and data analytics; people, culture and capability; and general administration.

**Polly Porteous**  
General Manager  
Governance, Awareness & Policy



Polly Porteous joined EWON in May 2024 and leads the Governance, Awareness & Policy team. The team oversees our governance, quality, member relations, communication, community outreach and policy, and systemic issues functions. Polly was also appointed Company Secretary by the EWON Board in June 2024.

# Our teams





# EWON Consultative Council

Consultative Council meetings form an integral part of EWON’s constitutional framework. These gatherings serve as an open platform for our members, consumer and small business representatives, and other stakeholders to discuss and present their perspectives. During these meetings, EWON engages with stakeholders, using their insights to inform our strategic planning.

Held twice a year, the meetings are hosted by the Board Chair and the Ombudsman who provide an update on EWON’s ongoing activities, current initiatives, complaint trends and relevant issues. The meetings also include guest speakers presenting on relevant themes. In FY24, the meetings were held in November 2023 and April 2024.

## November 2023: Renters need better – increasing standards for NSW rental properties

At the November Consultative Council meeting, Joel Dignam, CEO of Better Renting, and Leo Patterson-Ross, CEO of the Tenants’ Union NSW, spoke about the impact that inadequate housing can have on peoples’ health, social, mental and financial wellbeing. Both shared their experience noting that many more Australians are now tenants and for longer than ever before, while the quality of rental housing is, in some cases, very low. They called for urgent action on minimum standards for all rental properties as a means of increasing living quality for NSW renters.

Joel Dignam also spoke about the Healthy Homes for Renters initiative, the Community Sector Blueprint and why the Blueprint matters for people feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Leo Patterson-Ross spoke about the rental crisis, the issues renters face and how the Blueprint supports renters’ rights.

A key outcome of the meeting was establishing a working relationship with Ms Trina Jones, NSW Rental Commissioner. Ms Jones was newly appointed at that time and we have since built on this stakeholder relationship, an important collaboration given energy and rental housing are so closely linked.

*“My first time attending these meetings and it was very valuable.”*  
*“You clearly put a lot of effort into this session and it showed.”*

Attendee feedback

## April 2024: Natural disasters – the long-term customer experience

The Consultative Council heard from Ms Joanna Quilty, the NSW Reconstruction Authority’s Head of Preparedness and Recovery, who spoke about NSW’s State Disaster Mitigation Plan and Recovery Support Services.

Between July 2018 and October 2023, every local government area in NSW was included in a flood or bushfire disaster declaration at least once. The immediate response to these events is a combined effort from the community, industry and policymakers to find quick and effective solutions to ensure safety. However long-term impacts are not as critically managed, and support offered to residents and small businesses in the months and years that follow is often overlooked.

Joanna Quilty talked about the work of the NSW Reconstruction Authority in supporting individuals and communities over the long term.

Deputy Ombudsman, Helen Ford, also shared insights from EWON’s Spotlight On report, which looked at the long-term impacts of bushfires and floods on consumers as evidenced by EWON complaints.

These insights were appreciated by those working with customers impacted by disasters and those involved in ongoing recovery efforts.

*“Thanks for continuing to provide quality meetings for us community workers.”*  
*“Thanks for the invite and always bringing important issues to the forefront. Speakers were great. Update from EWON was also very interesting.”*

Attendee feedback

# EWON Operational Advisory Group

The Exempt Entity and Water Industry Competition Act Operational Advisory Group gives embedded networks and small water providers a voice within EWON.

Our biannual meetings provide valuable opportunities for all attendees to engage directly with representatives from government agencies and regulators. In FY24, our meetings were held in September 2023 and March 2024, with updates from the Australian Energy Regulator; Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART); NSW Fair Trading; and NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

An additional meeting was held in June 2024, when EWON facilitated a consultation involving NSW DCCEEW and embedded network operators to provide feedback on IPART's final report on the future of NSW embedded networks. The meeting helped inform DCCEEW's development of a comprehensive embedded network work program.



# Collaborating with our peers

## Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA)

Ombudsman, Janine Young, continued her role as a member of the Executive and Secretary/Treasurer of the ombudsman peak body in Australia and New Zealand, ANZOA. It ensures its members continue their professional development and support each other in upholding high standards of independence, effectiveness and impartiality. All ANZOA members meet and adhere to the Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution.

### Interest groups

ANZOA has eight interest groups that EWON staff participate in or facilitate. These groups provide a valuable opportunity to collaborate with staff working in similar roles in other ombudsman offices. Interest groups include People and Development, Corporate, Data and Analytics, Consumers and Vulnerability, Complaints Management, First Nations Engagement, Systemic Issues and Policy, and Public Relations and Communications.

### Meeting of the Minds

ANZOA's annual Meeting of the Minds conference brings together the members of ANZOA – industry and parliamentary ombudsman from across Australia and New Zealand. The July 2023 forum celebrated the 20th



ANZEWON members (back) Mary-Therese Daniel, Catherine Wolthuizen, Sandro Canale, Richard Connock (front) Janine Young, Jane Pires at EWON's office.

Anniversary of ANZOA, with the aim of reflecting on the past 20 years as an organisation and focusing on the challenges that lay ahead.

The conference explored the evolution of the ombudsman institution over the past 20 years, including reflections on fairness and changing stakeholder expectations. It also included discussions on how we may begin to use AI to increase our accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness.

## Australia & New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (ANZEWON)

The Ombudsman is a member of ANZEWON. Quarterly forums provide Australia's energy and water ombudsman and New Zealand's Utilities Disputes Complaints Commissioner opportunities to work together to develop effective ways of addressing industry and policy issues that affect consumers.

Meetings this year focused on our future work relating to Customer Energy Resources complaints (solar, batteries

and electric vehicles). This included exploring broader transmission and land access complaints associated with Renewable Energy Zones and how we can expand our work in these areas. We also continued our work in identifying and closing consumer protection gaps for customers using new energy products and services not covered by existing frameworks. Finally, we collaborated with our ANZEWON peers on several EWON-led submissions that can be found in the policy section.

We also continued our joint initiative to improve member promotion of their internal dispute resolution and external dispute resolution, that referring customers to energy and water ombudsman, including increased engagement with energy and water providers and collaboration with other stakeholders. See page 59 for details.

We welcomed new ANZEWON members Mary-Therese Daniel, president of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and Neil Mallon, CEO and Commissioner of Utilities Disputes NZ.

# Best practice dispute resolution



# Complaints this year

We received 28,067 complaints in FY24, a 57% increase from 17,852 received in FY23. Electricity retail complaints were the main driver of this increase, with cost-of-living stress and higher energy prices the underlying cause.

Disputed high bills were the top reason customers contacted us, with 10,274 complaints received – up from 5,359 or 92% last year. Credit-related complaints, which include disconnection, payment difficulties and debt collection, have increased by 23% in FY24, with 2,113 complaints received (1,712 in FY23).

We received 1,311 complaints about digital meter exchange, up from 674 in FY23. Traditionally, complaints about digital meters have been about solar PV installations, as well as new products such as community batteries and virtual power plants. We have now seen an increase in complaints related to the retailer-led smart meter rollout, where the customer has no solar or battery.

We received 287 general enquiries and 9,427 complaint enquiries, increases of 32% and 72%, respectively.

The introduction of the Commonwealth Government’s National Energy Bill Relief was one of the drivers of the increased number of complaint enquiries, as customers sought our advice about the payment.

The number of complaint enquiries received could also be attributed to an increase in phone calls from customers who found EWON’s phone number on their bill. This followed the introduction of the Australian Energy Regulator’s Better Bills Guideline, which required this inclusion from 1 October 2024. While this initiative and its impact are positive, our joint energy and water



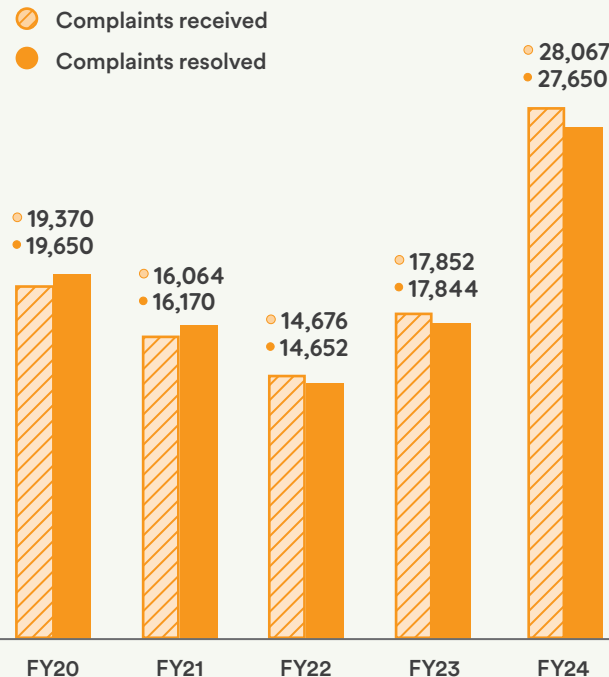
**71% increase in electricity retail complaints**

ombudsman project found very low levels of active promotion and referral of customers to our schemes by members, at the time customers made their complaint. See page 59 for an overview of this work.

We investigated 3,774 complaints, up 39% from 2,723 in FY23. There were 2,532 level one investigations,

up 81%. Level 2 (950) and level 3 (292) investigations remained low. The increase in level one investigations can largely be attributed to the work to improve efficiencies in the Dispute Resolution team, which are outlined on page 33.

## Complaints received and resolved



## Complaints received

Provider service	FY24	FY23	% change
Retail	21,814	12,772	71%
Network	708	753	-6%
Not allocated	141	173	-18%
Exempt entity	186	115	62%
Retail	3,963	2,969	33%
Network	188	178	6%
Not allocated	34	55	-38%
Exempt entity	1	2	-50%
Retail	540	414	30%
Network	273	247	11%
Not allocated	114	107	7%
Non energy/non water	105	67	57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,067</b>	<b>17,852</b>	<b>57%</b>

# How we categorise complaints



## General enquiry

A customer seeking information or help about an energy or water concern that is outside EWON’s jurisdiction.

Sometimes customers contact us about something outside EWON’s jurisdiction such as problems with a solar installer, phone provider or energy and water appliances. When this occurs, we note their phone call and refer them to other external dispute resolution organisations including Fair Trading or another ombudsman office.



## Complaint enquiry

Customers may contact us about enquiries or complaints they have not yet raised with their energy or water provider. We refer these customers to the energy or water provider’s contact centre to ensure procedural fairness.

We also provide general advice and information about their rights and responsibilities, and advise that they can contact us again if they are not satisfied with their provider’s response. These complaints may require us to also provide advice and/or a referral for assistance from another agency, as well as their energy or water provider. For example, we may advise them to seek Energy Accounts Payment Assistance vouchers, or access a financial counsellor for broader affordability support while seeking energy affordability support from their energy retailer.



## Refer to higher level (RHL)

A complaint referred to the provider’s specialist dispute resolution team.

Often customers contact us about complaints they have unsuccessfully tried to resolve with their energy or water providers, usually at contact centre level. If a customer has already tried once or twice to resolve their complaint through contact at their energy or water provider’s contact centre, we most often initiate a Refer to higher level (RHL) complaint, which requires the provider’s specialist dispute resolution team to contact the customer within five days. We share advice and information about their rights and responsibilities with the customer and advise the customer that if their energy or water provider does not contact them within five days, the customer should return to EWON.

The provider’s specialist team is required to resolve the complaint within 28 days through direct contact with the customer. We inform the customer verbally, and in writing, that if this does not occur and the complaint is not resolved, they should also return to us.

This approach gives the provider another opportunity to resolve the customer’s complaint directly. It also gives the customer a chance to have their complaint reviewed by senior staff in the provider’s specialist complaints area. In addition, customers receive a follow-up SMS from EWON about their provider’s responsibility to resolve the complaint and how to further access EWON if needed.



## Investigations

EWON investigates complaints that cannot be resolved between the customer and their energy or water provider. These are categorised as level 1, level 2 and level 3, based on the time taken for EWON to resolve the complaint.

We investigate complaints where the customer has tried to resolve this complaint three or more times directly with their provider. Complaints are also investigated when customers return to us after their complaint was referred to their provider’s specialist dispute resolution team via our Refer to higher level process, and the customer remained dissatisfied or was not contacted by their provider.

Investigations involve speaking to both parties to determine the facts and circumstances from each point of view. We analyse information from both the customer and their provider including billing information, metering data, telephone records and energy contracts. We also review relevant legislative provisions, conduct research and, in some cases, undertake site visits and consult independent experts. Some investigations

\*Data represents the number of received complaints

How we categorise complaints (continued)

involve referring the customer to other services such as welfare agencies, financial counselling and tenant advisory services.

**Level 1 investigations** These are most often resolved with conciliated outcomes in four to six weeks. They involve collecting information from the provider and the customer, and talking through issues and resolution options with both parties to reach an agreed outcome.

**Level 2 investigations** These complaints require in-depth research, investigation and analysis. Providers are often asked to supply detailed billing and metering information, or reports from engineers or asset repairers. Customers need to provide supporting information for their position, including appliance receipts where a damage claim is made or records relating to interactions with their providers such as text messages or emails. Level 2 investigations require the investigator to provide a detailed assessment for the customer to review, to inform their position about accepting a provider resolution offer or position that the customer may challenge based on their experience. Most of these investigations are resolved with a fair and reasonable negotiated outcome agreed to by both parties.

**Level 3 investigations** These complex investigations involve detailed information requests to the provider and the customer, and may require independent expert advice to reach an outcome. Occasionally, these complaints are discussed with Deputy Ombudsman to inform the investigation and provide guidance about the steps needed to progress to resolution or binding decision. Most are resolved and finalised within six months, although some complex investigations can take between nine and 12 months to resolve.

Outcomes

Conciliated resolutions

Conciliated outcomes are achieved when EWON receives non-complex complaints that meet investigation criteria, including dissatisfied customers returning from the RHL process. After collecting relevant information from the customer and their energy or water provider, an EWON Conciliator works with both parties to identify the issues needing resolution. The Conciliator helps the parties to develop options, consider resolution alternatives and ultimately reach a fair and reasonable outcome agreed by both parties.

Negotiated resolutions

Negotiated resolutions involve a full investigation into a complex complaint. An EWON Investigations Officer receives all relevant information from the customer and provider including, when necessary, independent technical and/or expert advice. Customers are asked about their expectations and, where needed, are required to substantiate financial loss or impacts.

Equally, energy and/or water providers are asked to substantiate their position. The Investigations Officer involves both parties in negotiating a fair and reasonable outcome with regard to relevant laws, codes and regulations, good industry practice, and the individual circumstances of the complaint.

No further investigation

When our investigation finds no basis to further investigate the complaint and, in our view, the provider’s resolution offer is fair and reasonable (that is, it addresses all aspects of the complaint and how the customer was affected), the complaint is finalised on a no further investigation basis.

Before deciding a complaint requires no further investigation, we send the customer a complaint assessment detailing all aspects of our investigation, the provider’s resolution offer and any other actions it is taking to address the complaint, and an outline of our preliminary view about the content of the assessment. The customer is given the opportunity to provide further information to support

their position, agree with the proposed outcome or request our final decision. The timeframe for the customer to respond is within 10 business days of receiving our assessment. This can be extended to a further 10 days when a customer requests further time to consider the report.

When a no further investigation decision has been made, the customer has the right to request an internal review within 28 days of complaint closure. Grounds for an internal review are bias, error or omission, or provision of new information not previously provided to EWON.

Binding decisions

An investigation is escalated to the Ombudsman for a binding decision when it remains unresolved, and the Deputy Ombudsman is of the view that the energy or water provider’s resolution offer does not fully meet the merits of the complaint. The Ombudsman will then undertake an investigation to determine the outcome of the complaint.

In FY24, the Ombudsman made no binding decisions.

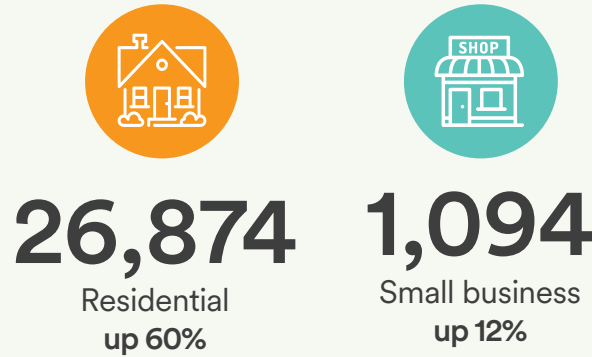
# Customer diversity

EWON’s diverse customer base is reflected in the complaints we receive. We do not routinely collect customer demographics; however, we do record them when they are offered. For this reason, these figures may under-represent the demographics of our customer base.

Our outreach and engagement program, in the community and online, had an increased focus on multicultural and First Nations communities across FY24. This led to an 18% increase in complaints from culturally and linguistically diverse customers, and a 44% rise in complaints from First Nations customers.

We also saw a 26% increase in customers on pensions or benefits coming to EWON, and a 4% decrease in complaints from social housing tenants. We aim to increase our awareness-raising activities to these customers throughout FY25.

Demographic reporting is inclusive – a customer with a culturally and linguistically diverse background may receive a pension and reside in social housing.

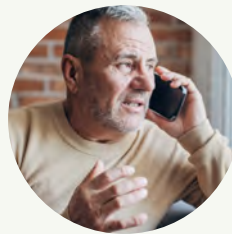


up 18%

**606**

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse customers

- Top 5 languages**
- Chinese (Mandarin)
  - Arabic
  - Vietnamese
  - Chinese (Cantonese)
  - Korean

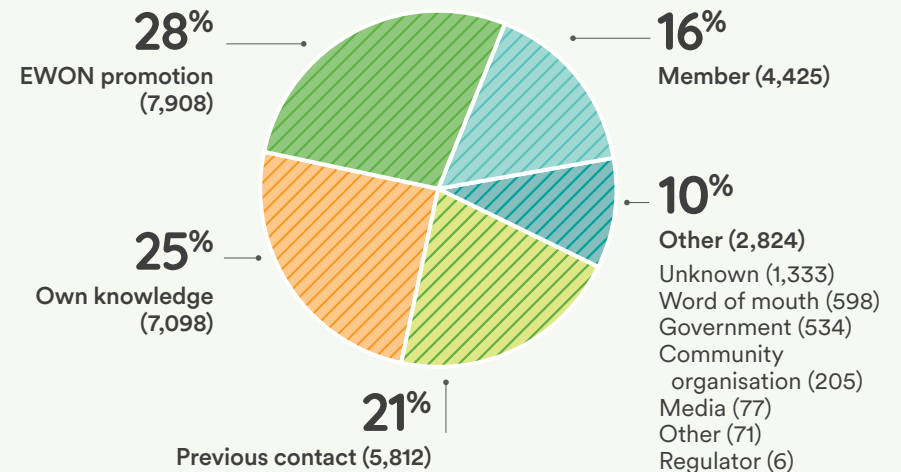


**+26%**  
3,638 complaints from customers on a pension or benefit



**+57%**  
increase in embedded network customers (653)

## How customers heard about us

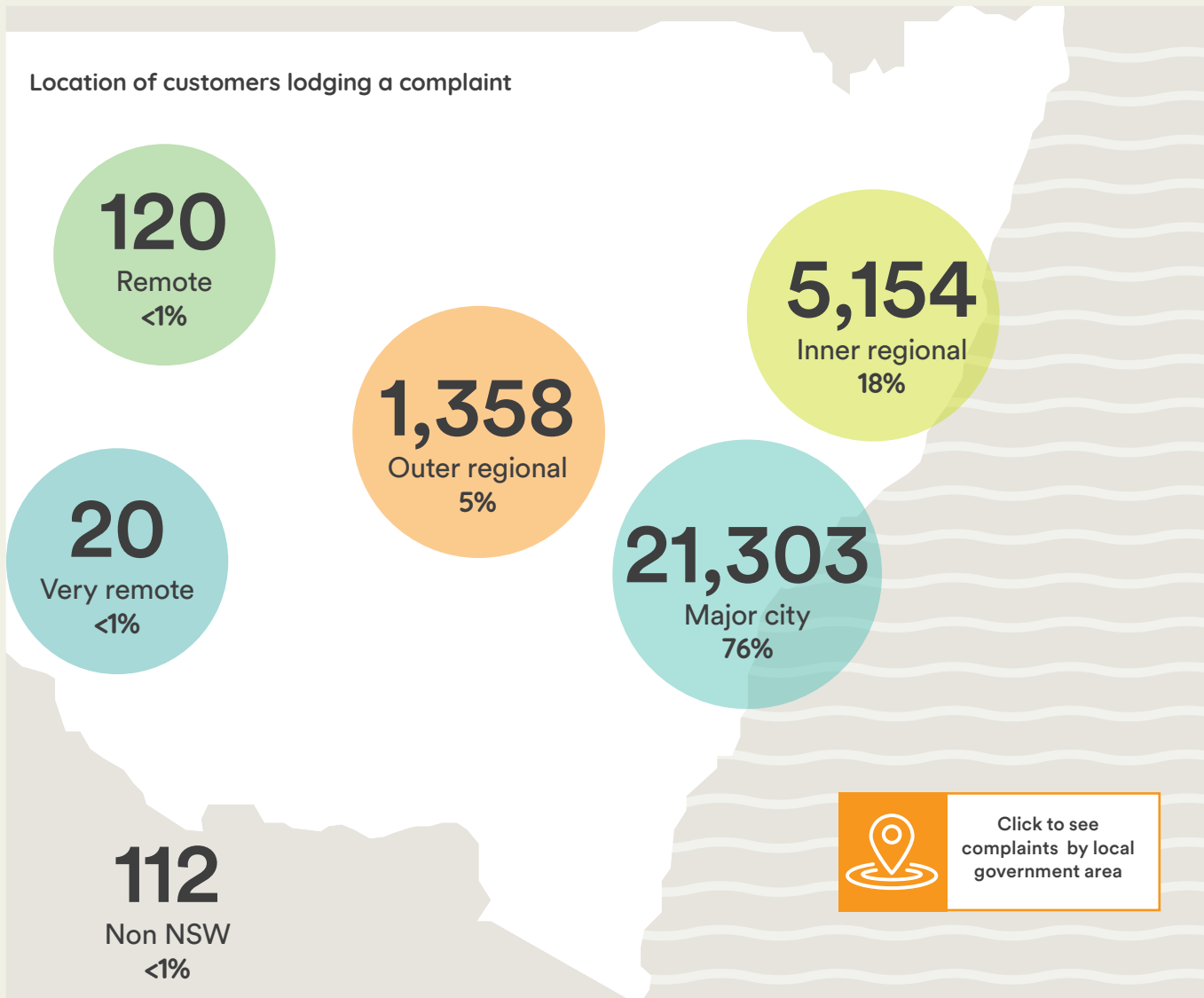


**452** up 44%  
First Nations customers



### Customer diversity (continued)

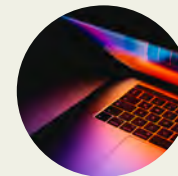
#### Location of customers lodging a complaint



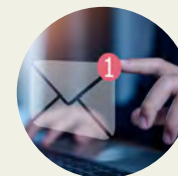
#### How we received complaints



Telephone: 18,105  
Up 87%



Website: 7,327  
Up 20%



Email: 2,504  
Up 34%



Other: 131  
Letter: 67  
In person: 36  
Outreach: 26  
Fax: 2



**22,849 electricity complaints received, up 65%**

# Electricity complaints

Electricity complaints continued to dominate in FY24, with 22,849 received, an increase of 65%, compared to 13,813 last year. General and complaint enquiries accounted for 7,943, while 11,819 customers were referred to a higher level because they had already tried to resolve

their complaint with their electricity provider. This demonstrates how customers most often try to resolve their own complaint without EWON.

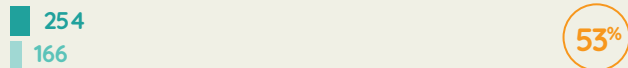
There were 3,087 electricity complaints that required investigation. Billing remains the main driver of electricity

complaints, with 17,184 complaints received, an 82% increase from the prior year. Electricity credit complaints increased by 27%, and digital meter exchange complaints increased from 674 to 1,311.

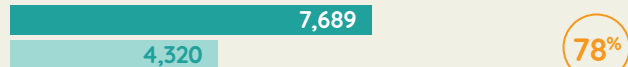
## Total electricity complaints

● FY24 ● FY23 ○ % change

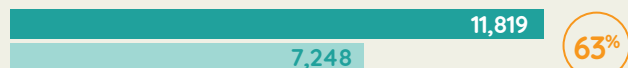
General enquiry



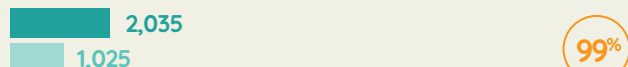
Complaint enquiry



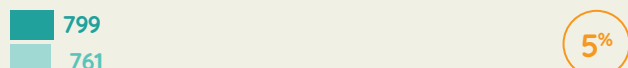
Refer to higher level



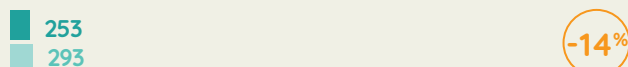
Level 1



Level 2

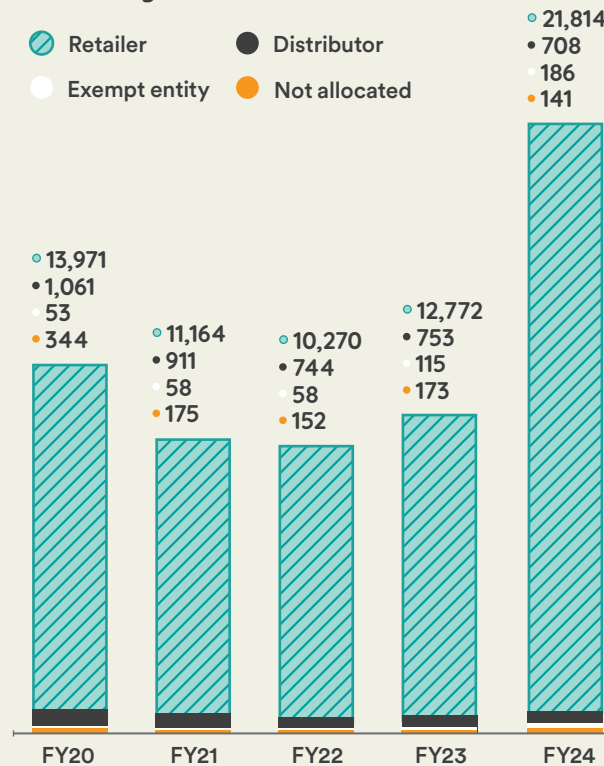


Level 3



## Electricity trends

● Retailer ● Distributor  
● Exempt entity ● Not allocated



## Electricity complaints by core issue

Issue	Complaints	% change
Billing	17,184	82%
Credit	1,753	27%
Digital meter exchange	1,311	95%
Transfer	719	26%
General	393	37%
Supply	325	2%
Provision	274	28%
Customer service	262	-47%
Marketing	244	88%
Land	223	3%
Privacy	148	106%
Unspecified*	13	-72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,849</b>	<b>65%</b>

\*Issue not selected at time of reporting

## INVESTIGATION

# Case study

Large business offered an out of jurisdiction referral following an increase in supply charges



Mr Aetos and his family own a large metal manufacturing business. After the business' meter was updated, they noticed the daily supply charge increased from \$50 to \$1,100 a month despite no change in tariff or usage. They raised their concerns with their retailer who stated that the increase to the daily supply charge because of the meter exchange was outside their control.

Mr Aetos called EWON explaining he was not informed a meter change would cause such a high increase to the daily supply charge. He complained that the retailer did not offer any further explanation or discuss if there were any options to seek a future tariff review or alternative plan offerings, which he considered to be poor customer service.

According to EWON's Charter, Mr Aetos's business is considered a large business in terms of size and number of employees; therefore, his complaint was outside EWON's jurisdiction.

We discussed our jurisdiction, but also offered to refer the issue to his retailer's specialist dispute resolution team. We explained to Mr Aetos, we would be unable to further review his case if the matter was unresolved and he may wish to consider legal advice.

The retailer contacted EWON 14 days after the out of jurisdiction referral to provide an update. It had discovered that while the network applied the correct tariff there was an error on the retailer's recorded network tariff, which was corrected. The retailer also confirmed that the adjusted bills had been resent to Mr Aetos who was satisfied with the outcome.

#### Issue

**Billing > fees and charges > service availability**

#### Outcome

**Investigation/complaint enquiry out of jurisdiction**

# Gas complaints



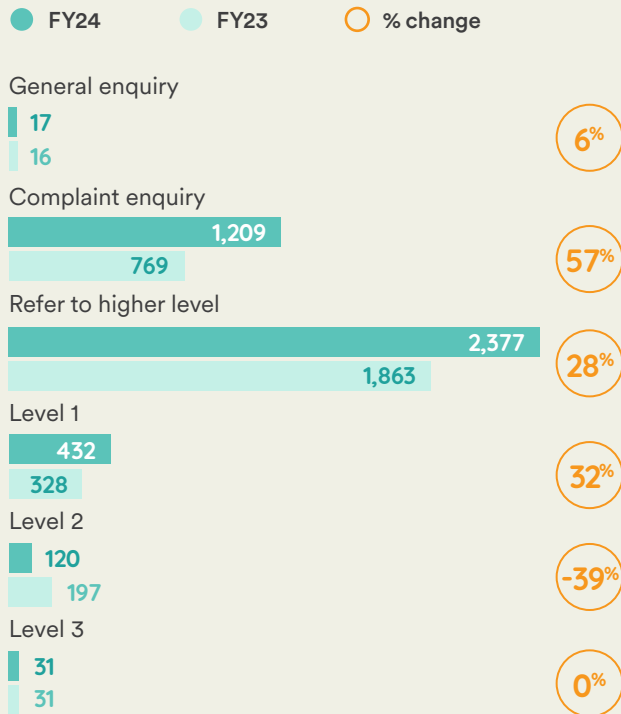
**4,186 gas complaints received, up 31%**

EWON received 4,186 complaints about gas, a rise of 31% compared to 3,204 last year. Gas complaints haven't increased in line with electricity complaints probably because price increases have not been as dramatic as they have been in electricity.

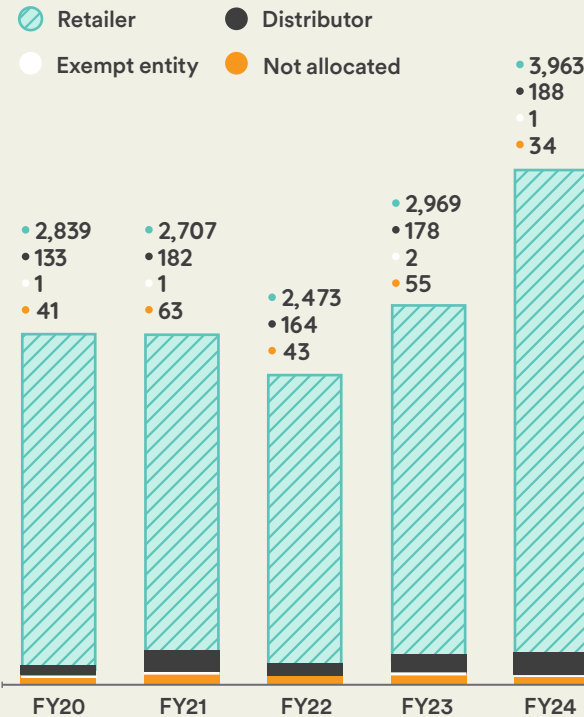
There were 1,226 general or complaint enquiries, while the majority were referred to a higher level because gas customers had already tried to resolve their complaint with their gas provider (2,377). There were 583 gas investigations. We received 3,234 complaints

about gas billing issues, an increase of 45% from last year. There was also a 9% increase in gas credit complaints (317 complaints) and a 17% rise in gas provision complaints (176).

## Total gas complaints



## Gas trends



## Gas complaints by core issue

Issue	Complaints	% change
Billing	3,234	45%
Credit	317	9%
Transfer	236	-9%
Provision	176	17%
General	63	-2%
Customer service	56	-59%
Land	49	26%
Marketing	30	173%
Privacy	20	100%
Supply	5	-38%
Unspecified*	–	-100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,186</b>	<b>31%</b>

\*Issue not selected at time of reporting

NEGOTIATED RESOLUTION

# Case study

## Burst pipe causes damage to home



A technician from a gas provider attended Mr Dodds’ unit to change the gas and hot water meters. During this process a pipe snapped, causing a leak and flooding Mr Dodds’ property and other properties in his complex. This caused extensive damage within his unit, including to his recently installed carpet and timber flooring.

Mr Dodds contacted EWON to investigate his complaint and sought compensation from the provider for the damage to the carpet, as it wouldn’t be covered by a claim to the Body Corporate’s building insurers.

The gas provider said the leak was Mr Dodds’ responsibility because it was in the piping system. It immediately reported the leak to the building manager with a request to isolate the water and stop the leak. The gas provider said any repairs and maintenance required, due to the failure of internal pipework and the delay isolating water, was not its responsibility.

EWON undertook an investigation and engaged a technical consultant to assist in the investigation. As a result of the investigation, it was determined that the condition of the pipe may have been compromised due to deterioration in the copper, and it was possible the technician undertook the work without due skill or care.

On that basis EWON negotiated an outcome between the gas provider and Mr Dodds, which led the gas provider to offer a goodwill gesture of \$4,580 for the cost of replacing the carpet. Mr Dodds accepted this offer.

Issue  
Land > property damage/  
restoration  
Outcome  
Investigation – negotiated  
resolution

# Water complaints



**927 water complaints received, up 21%**

EWON received 927 complaints about water, an increase of 21% compared to 768 last year. Most were complaint enquiries or general enquiries (440) that, in part, reflects the fact that EWON does not have jurisdiction for water complaints in most regional and rural towns where

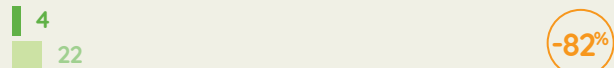
councils and shires are the water provider. These customers are most often referred to their council or shire for complaint resolution. There were 383 water complaints referred to a higher level and 104 required an investigation.

Water complaints about billing rose by 35%, and supply-related complaints by 51%. There was a 9% decrease in water credit complaints, a positive reflection on how EWON’s water members respond to affordability-related complaints.

## Total water complaints

● FY24 ● FY23 ○ % change

General enquiry



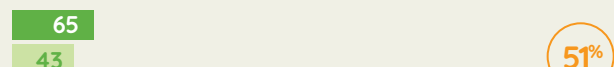
Complaint enquiry



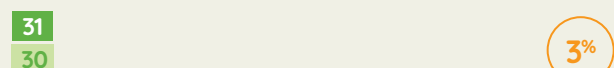
Refer to higher level



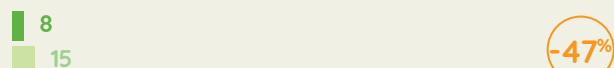
Level 1



Level 2

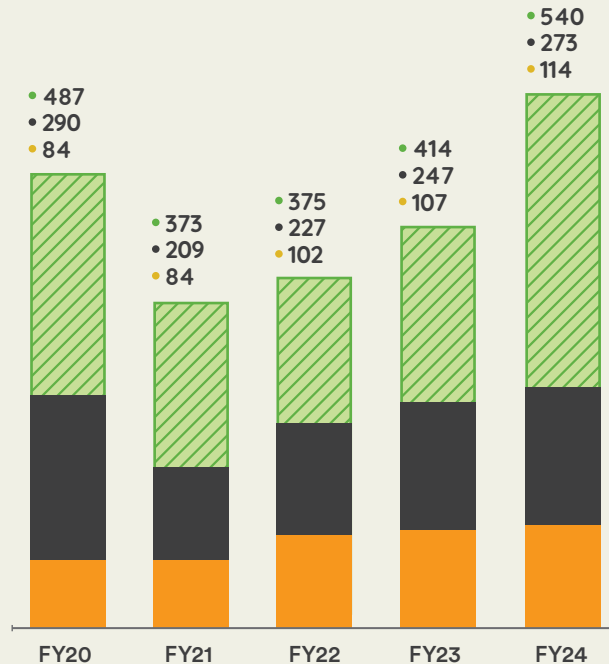


Level 3



## Water trends

● Retailer ● Distributor ● Not allocated



## Water complaints by core issue

Issue	Complaints	% change
Billing	437	35%
General	130	10%
Land	115	1%
Supply	86	51%
Provision	86	5%
Credit	43	-9%
Customer service	25	19%
Privacy	3	0%
Unspecified*	2	-33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>21%</b>

\*Issue not selected at time of reporting

NEGOTIATED RESOLUTION

# Case study

Overflowing sewer causes damage to property



Mr Abramovic’s fence and retaining wall were damaged following a period of heavy rain, causing the sewer to overflow and the ground to subside. He contacted his water provider about the damage and believed it had agreed to carry out the repairs. The water provider sent technicians to inspect the damage and claimed that it was not liable or responsible for the repairs. The provider then referred Mr Abramovic to the local council, which also said it could not assist as the problem was with the water provider’s asset.

Mr Abramovic contacted EWON for an investigation, seeking the damage to be repaired. We requested the water provider complete a CCTV inspection of the mains, and it found no blockages

or faults, maintaining it was not liable for damages. EWON reviewed the information and the water provider offered to consider the claim on the basis that Mr Abramovic would need to show the required repairs were not covered by his insurance.

As a result of the investigation, EWON found that the water provider appeared to have given the customer the impression that it would rectify the damage, and the customer had not provided substantiation of his claim for damages. EWON also found that a wastewater rebate Mr Abramovic was entitled to had not been applied. In response to EWON identifying this, the water provider applied the \$75 wastewater rebate to Mr Abramovic’s account and apologised for this oversight.

EWON then negotiated an outcome between the water provider and Mr Abramovic with respect to the property damage. As a result, the water provider offered a \$2,000 goodwill credit that Mr Abramovic accepted to resolve his complaint.

Issue  
**Land > property damage/ restoration**

Outcome  
**Investigation – negotiated resolution**

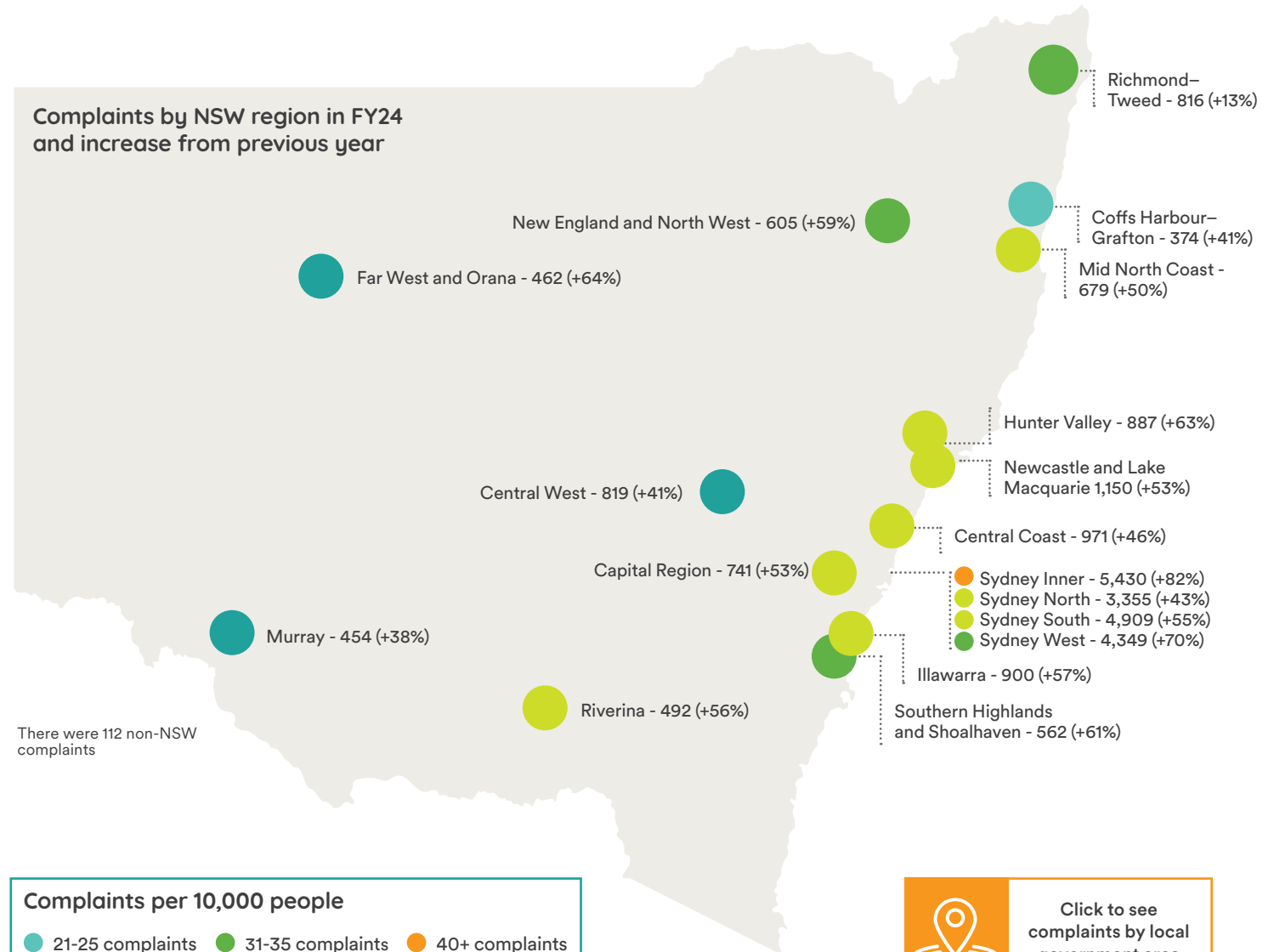
# Complaints by area

The majority (76%) of our complaints came from customers in metropolitan areas, with 18% coming from inner regional locations, and the remaining 5% coming from outer regional, rural or remote NSW communities.

When taking population into account, inner Sydney had the highest number of complaints, with 58 complaints per 10,000 people. The next highest regions were Far West and Orana with 39, Central West with 38 and Murray with 36 complaints per 10,000 people.

Complaints from customers in outer regional and remote regions increased 62%, from 925 to 1,498. This increase was, in part, driven by EWON's outreach and promotion activities across remote NSW, which generated widespread media coverage and increased awareness of EWON. This engagement is always critical, and is even more important during a cost-of-living crisis and the additional impacts of increased costs on regional, rural and remote customers.

Complaints by NSW region in FY24 and increase from previous year





# Efficiency in dispute resolution

Efficiency is one of the Australian Government's Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution. The benchmarks provide standards and encourage best practice in industry-based dispute resolution services throughout the country.

Ongoing improvement of the efficiency of our dispute resolution systems and processes helps us meet both customer and member expectations with respect to complaint resolution timeframes, a critical part of service excellence. This year, we undertook a range of projects to further enhance our efficiency.

## Case level review form

In October 2023, our Dispute Resolution team developed and implemented a case-level review form. This form allows members to more efficiently request a review of how the case has been categorised by enabling timely responses to member requests, and targeted training and feedback for our staff and member staff.

## Complaint issue categorisation

In November 2023, we conducted a comprehensive review of how we categorise complaint issues. We especially focused on complaints about energy and water provider customer service so that we could provide greater insight to our members about the elements of their service that cause customer dissatisfaction.

## New phone system

In March 2024, we launched a new omnichannel system, modernising our telephony infrastructure. An omnichannel delivers integrated communication channels to allow for a smooth experience for customers reaching EWON across a range of channels, starting with our phone system. This new software also allows EWON to make updates to our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) to ensure prompt connection between customers to the most relevant EWON staff member.

Our new system enables call recording, allowing us to better support our staff by collating a library of recorded interactions for staff training. Live reporting features provide clear insights into call volumes and staffing levels, enabling greater flexibility in workforce management. In FY25, we will further expand its capability by introducing automated caller sentiment identification and data analytics.

## SMS capability

We introduced SMS automation to streamline and enhance customer communication. For example, 30 days after a customer is referred to their provider at a higher level through the RHL process, customers now automatically receive a message to remind them they can return to EWON if their complaint remains unresolved.

## Factsheet and template review

Communicating effectively is critically important – but it's not always easy, especially in the complex energy and water sectors. We've reviewed the language and format of our email and letter templates, factsheets and other collateral to ensure our messaging is consistent, clear and accessible.



# Complaint issues



92% increase in disputed high bill complaints

Accurately categorising the key driver of each complaint, as well as associated complaint issues, provides energy and water members with the opportunity to improve their service and reduce complaints. Our 11 overarching complaint categories are broken down into the multiple sub issues that customers present when contacting us for complaint resolution:

## Billing

Problems with managing bills and contracts, including high and estimated bills, backbills, tariffs and fees.

## Credit

Payment difficulties and the actions providers take to address unpaid bills including debt collection and disconnection.

## Digital meter exchange

Delays, faults and other problems with smart meter installations or follow-on issues including tariffs or billing.

## Transfer

Problems associated with switching to a new energy provider.

## General

Complaints that are not related to energy or water, or are not covered by other specified issues.

## Provision

Problems with new or existing connections to energy and water networks.

## Supply

The delivery and quality of energy and water, including outages and protection for customers on life support equipment.

## Land

The impact of the provider’s assets, maintenance and activity on a customer’s property or environment.

## Customer service

Problems with contacting providers such as long on-hold times, lack of readily available contact information, misinformation and failure to return calls.

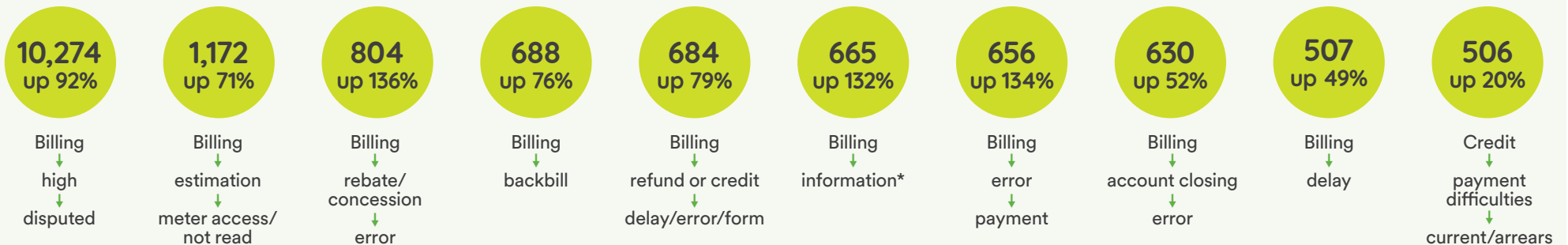
## Marketing

Marketing and sales conduct via door to door, online, phone or other channels.

## Privacy

Collection and use of a customer’s personal details including issues relating to the Consumer Data Right.

### Top 10 reasons people complained to EWON



586 general enquiries about energy/water were also raised. \*Billing other was renamed to billing information in FY24.

Complaint issues (continued)

**Billing**

Issue	No. complaints
High	10,274
Estimation	1,521
Error	1,356
Rebate/concession	1,141
Contract terms	936
Tariff	745
Account closing	722
Backbill	688
Refund or credit	684
Information	665
Delay	507
Account opening	471
Affordability	404
Fees and charges	355
Period	233
Format	121
Debt transfer	32

**Credit**

Issue	No. complaints
Disconnection/restriction	934
Payment difficulties	737
Collection	442

**Digital meter exchange**

Issue	No. complaints
Fault	436
Delay	286
Billing	177
Opt in/opt out	147
Incorrect advice/information	58
Not installed	56
Terms and conditions	52
Failure to notify	45
Damage to property/appliances	43
Failure to respond	11

**Transfer**

Issue	No. complaints
In error	343
Site ownership	244
Without consent	151
Delay	85
Cooling off rights	60
Error correction	42
Rejected	30

**General**

Issue	No. complaints
Energy/water	586
Non energy/non water	103

**Provision**

Issue	No. complaints
Existing connection	336
New connection	187
Disconnection/restriction	13

**Supply**

Issue	No. complaints
Off supply (unplanned)	163
Off supply (planned)	140
Sewer overflow/blockage	41
Quality	26
Water licensing	18
Variation	16
Life support protections	12

**Land**

Issue	No. complaints
Network/transmission assets	179
Property damage/restoration	151
Vegetation management	22
Street lighting	19
Easement	16

**Customer service**

Issue	No. complaints
Online/application	76
Failure to respond	58
Accessibility	48
Incorrect advice/information	47
B2B/third parties	39
Failure to consult/inform	20
Phone	20
Poor service	19
Unprofessional attitude	17

**Marketing**

Issue	No. complaints
Misleading	134
Information	85
Pressure	23
Non account holder	18
Method	14

**Privacy**

Issue	No. complaints
Details obtained without consent	42
Other	35
Details requested by provider	34
Details correction refused	27
Details released	23
Disclosure refused by provider	11

Complaint issues (continued)

Deep dive – billing

Billing continues to be our biggest issue, with 74% of all complaints involving a billing issue as the main reason for a complaint. We received 20,855 complaints about billing, a 74% rise from 11,972 last year.

The higher cost of energy coupled with other cost-of-living impacts including interest rates, rent and supermarket price increases, are the driving force behind the increase from 5,359 disputed high bill complaints in FY23 to 10,274 in FY24. Estimated bill complaints where meter readers could not access meter boxes or read the meter, were the second highest reason customers complained, increasing 71% from 684 to 1,172 complaints.

Customers complaining about errors with rebates and concessions increased from 341 in FY23 to 804 this year coupled with 337 complaints from customers requesting information about rebates or concessions. This increase occurred in response to the announcement of the Commonwealth Government energy bill relief payment, and increased customer scrutiny of bills due to experiencing energy affordability challenges.

Compared to FY23, complaints about billing errors with payments have increased from 280 to 656 in FY24, and complaints about account details have increased from 112 to 329 this year. These increases indicate customers are paying closer attention to their bills because of the higher cost of living.

Two year comparison of secondary billing issues

Secondary issue	FY23	FY24	% change
High	5,359	10,274	92%
Estimation	1,011	1,521	50%
Error	966	1,356	40%
Rebate/concession	439	1,141	160%
Contract terms	938	936	0%
Tariff	568	745	31%
Account closing	489	722	48%
Backbill	391	688	76%
Refund or credit	383	684	79%
Information*	287	665	132%
Delay	341	507	49%
Account opening	339	471	39%
Affordability**	–	404	–
Fees and charges	290	355	22%
Period	138	233	69%
Format	24	121	404%
Debt transfer	9	32	256%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,972</b>	<b>20,855</b>	<b>74%</b>

\*Billing other renamed billing information in FY24  
 \*\*Issue introduced in FY24



1,141 complaints about rebates or concessions, up from 439 last year.

NEGOTIATED RESOLUTION

# Billing case study

## High bill leads to faulty meter investigation



After Mr Hamilton received a high electricity bill for \$1,800 in January 2023, he asked an electrician to check his meter. His electrician said his meter was faulty, so he contacted his provider. His provider told him that someone would attend his property, however no one arrived on the scheduled dates. After the meter was eventually replaced in May 2023, Mr Hamilton received another high bill. He contacted his provider and was told to disregard the disputed amount on his bill, but it was still showing on his account as payable.

Mr Hamilton contacted EWON to investigate the complaint and find out why the disputed high bill was still appearing on his account, given he was told to disregard it.

When EWON initially contacted the provider, it said the disputed amount related to a bill from October 2022, for \$1,749 and that the usage on that bill related to previous bills being underestimated. The provider also said that when the customer first contacted it to discuss the issue in January 2023, the outstanding balance on the account had already increased to \$1,898. The provider offered a \$150 good will credit to resolve the complaint, which was not accepted by Mr Hamilton.

EWON undertook an investigation and found that several meter investigation requests were raised but were not completed. A meter test was then completed in March 2023 and showed it had failed an accuracy test. As a result, a meter replacement request was raised the following day and completed later that month.

EWONs analysis of energy consumption data showed that the average fortnightly consumption on the removed meter was 516.85kWh, and on the new meter was 506.847kWh. The provider did not consider the meter fault to have substantially affected the customer’s usage and subsequently, Mr Hamilton was default listed in April 2023, for \$1,864 in arrears on the account. The provider maintained that their initial offer of \$150 was reasonable.

EWON contacted the distributor, seeking revised meter data so the retailer could rebill the account. Mr Hamilton’s account was rebilled for the whole period from the account opening to the date the meter was exchange, reducing the outstanding balance from \$4,922 to \$2,628. Given this outcome, EWON requested that the provider update the relevant credit reporting body with the correct amount. EWON also identified that Mr Hamilton

had been inappropriately charged fees for over-the-counter payments made at the Post Office.

In addition to the adjustment to the bill, the provider also applied a \$150 goodwill credit to his account in acknowledgement of the delays experienced in having the meter exchanged and for failing to respond to the customer appropriately. Mr Hamilton accepted the outcome and was referred to the provider to discuss an affordable payment plan for the remaining balance on his account.

Issue  
**Billing > high > disputed**  
 Outcome  
**Investigation – negotiated resolution**

Complaint issues (continued)

Deep dive – credit

Credit complaints relating to disconnection, payment difficulties and debt collection increased 23% from 1,712 in FY23 to 2,113 complaints this year.

The increase in credit complaints is smaller than the overall increase in complaints because only a limited number of energy retailers have recommenced credit collection activities following the extra protections in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.


Positively, we have seen a number of energy retailers taking a new approach and engaging with their customers about energy debt rather than disconnecting. Additionally, EnergyAustralia, CovaU, Essential Energy and Endeavour Energy are involved with The Energy Charter’s Knock to Stay Connected program, meaning many of their customers can avoid disconnection and instead are provided with affordability program support.


Energy affordability and increased costs of living are key policy items for EWON. For more details about our work in this area, see page 52 of this report.

Two year comparison of secondary credit issues

Secondary issue	FY23	FY24	% change
Disconnection/ restriction	713	934	31%
Payment difficulties	617	737	19%
Collection	382	442	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,712</b>	<b>2,113</b>	<b>23%</b>

Disconnection

 **469**  
actual disconnection complaints (+20%)

 **465**  
impending disconnection complaints (+44%)

INVESTIGATED

Credit case study

Account established without customer's knowledge

Mr Aziz, a business owner, was surprised when his details were sent to a debt collection agency by Retailer X, for a debt of \$2,224. He had never signed up for an electricity account with Retailer X, or given explicit informed consent to open an account with them. He thought he already had an account with his preferred provider, Retailer Y.

Mr Aziz contacted EWON to dispute the debt from a retailer he wasn’t aware of, and wanted his details to be removed from the debt collection agency. He also wanted us to investigate whether opening the account and transferring the debt in his name without consent was legal.

EWON’s investigation found that Retailer X was already supplying the address with power before Mr Aziz’s business moved in. It established the account using Mr Aziz’s details, which it obtained from a business card found on the front counter of his premises. Mr Aziz was asked to submit his lease agreement as proof of when his business had occupied the premises, and Retailer X said it could offer a 20% reduction of the outstanding balance for settlement.

EWON found that the customer was signed up under a deemed account as electricity was being consumed at the premises, which meant explicit informed consent was not required. However, the retailer was required to notify the occupant of the premises that they are required to contact them to open an account. EWON found that establishing an account from a business card without any identification verification or (credit/ ID) checks is unreasonable at least, and also a potential breach of Rule 54 of the National Energy Retail Rules. This issue was raised as a systemic issue with Retailer X who agreed and, as a result, it recalled the debt from the collection agency and waived the balance.

Issue  
Credit > collection > debt collector  
Outcome  
Investigated – negotiated outcome

INVESTIGATED

# Credit case study

Customer disconnected three times



Ms Kelly rents a unit in an embedded network and was about to be disconnected by her electricity retailer for the third time. Her retailer required a payment of \$1,500 to prevent the third disconnection. Ms Kelly explained that she could not afford that amount and offered to pay \$200 instead. This was not accepted by the retailer and Ms Kelly’s electricity was again disconnected.

Ms Kelly requested EWON to investigate her complaint, seeking her electricity supply be restored as she was a single parent and also pregnant. She also needed an affordable payment plan to be established and explained that she previously agreed to a payment plan, but could not afford it.

When EWON contacted the retailer, it explained that Ms Kelly had multiple previous broken payment plans that were cancelled after two missed payments and that she owed over \$6,000. The retailer also said Ms Kelly had not taken any steps to reduce her electricity consumption and maintained that it required an upfront payment of \$1,500 to reconnect the supply.

EWON highlighted the particular vulnerabilities that Ms Kelly was experiencing and that although previous payment plans had not been met, she had been making some payments and had contacted the retailer to set up a payment plan, demonstrating that she is willing and trying to pay the debt.

Ms Kelly agreed to attend a conference EWON organised with the retailer to negotiate the reconnection. The retailer initially requested a payment plan of \$300 per fortnight and an upfront payment of \$125; however, EWON confirmed this was not affordable.

EWON negotiated a payment plan for \$180 per fortnight and upfront payment of \$60, which was accepted by both the retailer and Ms Kelly. Reconnection of Ms Kelly’s energy supply was arranged the same day. EWON raised with the retailer the opportunity to further support Ms Kelly with advice about reducing her energy consumption. The retailer agreed to EWON’s request and transferred Ms Kelly to the best available plan.

EWON provided additional information to Ms Kelly about the Low-Income Household Rebate and National Energy Bill Relief payment, and advised her on further family rebates available to her, such as Family Tax benefit. Ms Kelly was also encouraged to speak to a Financial Counsellor for free and independent advice.

Issue  
**Credit > disconnection / restriction > complete**

Outcome  
**Investigation – conciliated outcome**

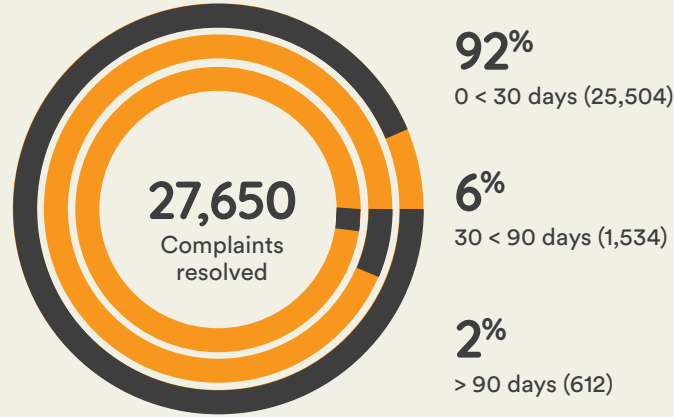
# Complaint resolutions

We resolved 27,650 complaints, up from 17,844 complaints last year, an increase in line with the increase in complaints received. As well as the significant increase in the number of complaints, higher energy prices and cost-of-living impacts have also led to an increase in the complexity of complaints. Despite the increased complexity and higher number of complaints, we only received 417 more complaints than we resolved.

Overall, we resolved 92% of complaints in less than 30 days, 6% in 30–90 days and just 2% of complaints over 90 days. Almost all non-investigated complaints were resolved in less than 30 days. For investigated complaints:

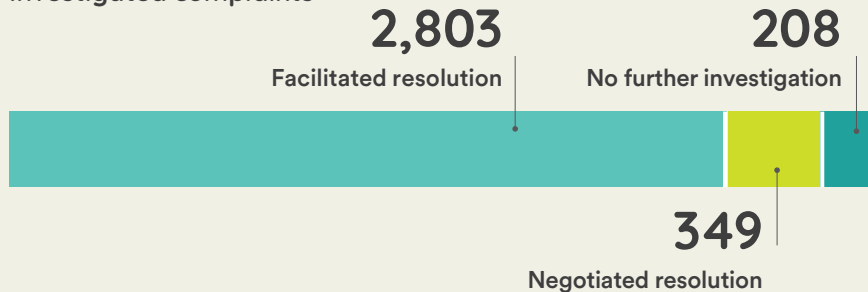
- 37% were resolved in less than 30 days
- 45% were resolved in 30–90 days
- 18% were resolved in over 90 days.

## Time taken to resolve complaints



**4,636**  
referrals to provider contact centres or affordability teams

## Investigated complaints



**3,360**  
investigated complaints (up 20%)



**92%** of complaints closed within 30 days



**66%** of calls answered within 30 seconds



**\$1.31 million**  
in financial outcomes



goodwill gestures



billing adjustments



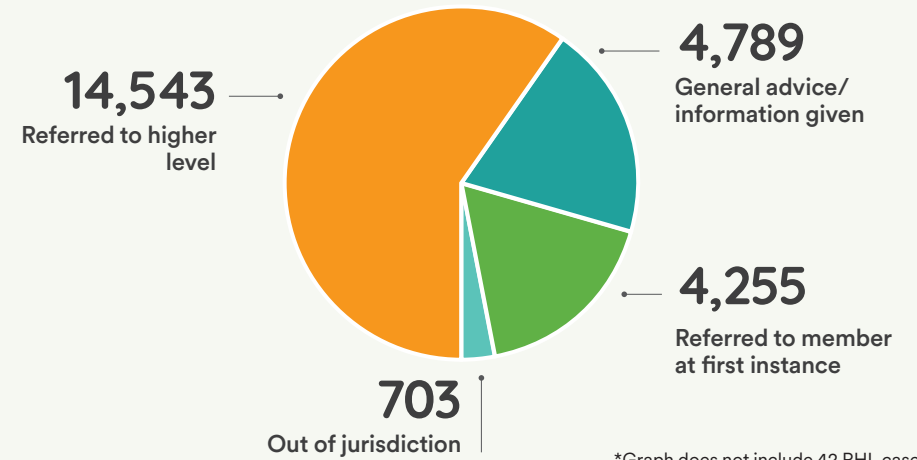
resolution offers



### Referrals provided by EWON

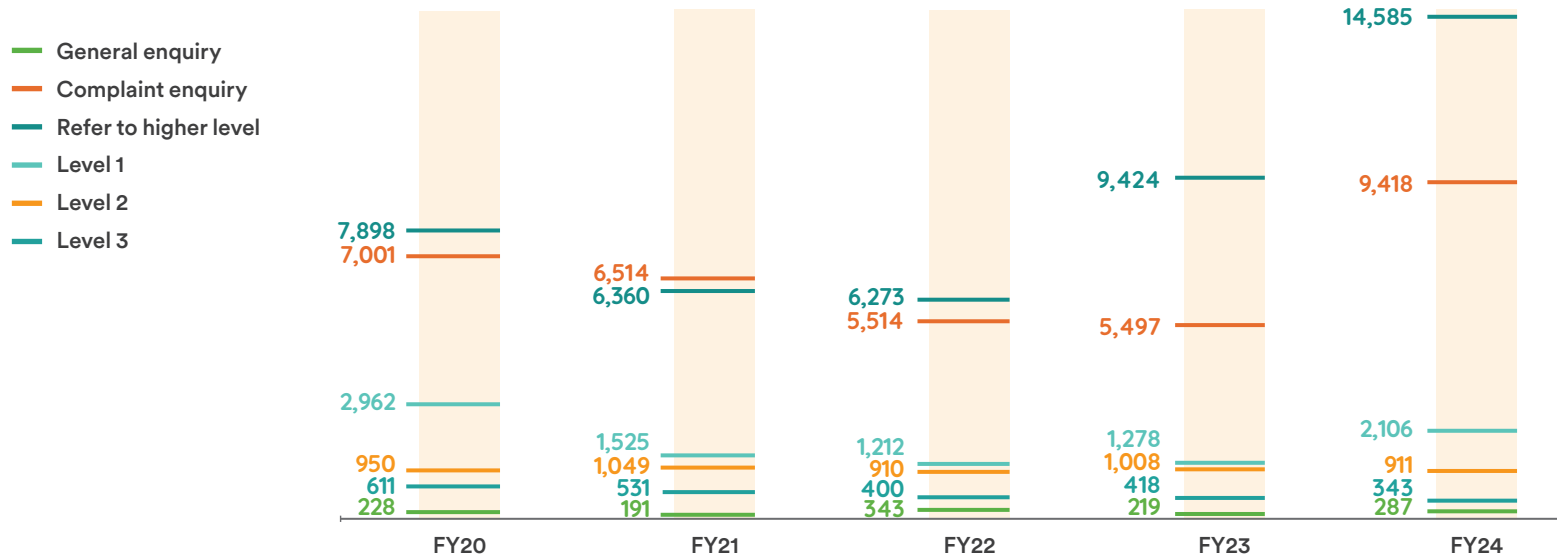
No wrong door referrals	No. complaints
EAPA/PAS/community agency	681
AER/Energy Made Easy	476
Fair Trading/NCAT	429
Other government agency	344
Another ombudsman	308
Financial counsellor	200
Member affordability team	195
Private contractor	185
Legal/tenancy advisor	181
IPART	24
Department/Minister	4

### Primary results for closed non-investigated complaints 24,290 in total\*



\*Graph does not include 42 RHL cases that are out of jurisdiction.

### Complaint closures by complaint level from FY20 to FY24



# Quality of our work



**1,061 monthly exception report checks**

Our Quality Assurance Framework provides a solid foundation for assessing the quality of our complaints management. Working at arm's length from the Dispute Resolution team, the Quality team conducts assurance activities to ensure our complaint handling processes are fair, efficient and responsive to the evolving environment.

To ensure we can provide guidance about service improvement to the energy and water sectors, our dispute resolution work is subject to analytical data checking. This underpins the integrity of our data recording and enables timely feedback about the quality of our complaint handling, which is critical given the expansion of our dispute resolution team to include new staff. Insights are shared between our quality assurance and dispute resolution staff in line with our focus on continuous improvement.

## Data integrity checks

In FY24, we completed the following data integrity audits:

- **1,061 monthly exception report checks**
- **8,488 data integrity checks of resolved complaints.**

These two figures represent over 35% of closed complaints.

## Complaints management

Each month we review a random sample of resolved complaints against our complaints management policies and procedures, and to ensure that resolution outcomes are fair and reasonable.

This year we also undertook a focused review of the No Further Investigation policy and procedure on request of the Dispute Resolution team. This opportunity saw us review investigations that were closed on a 'no further investigation' basis to see whether they were warranted, and to also see whether the investigation could have taken a different path that may have led to a negotiated or agreed outcome. We approached this by firstly ensuring that complaint issues had been correctly identified and addressed reasonably and fairly by the investigation, through vigorous review of information from the parties to the complaint.

Our review found the policy was comprehensive and sound in demonstrating procedural fairness. It also found that a sample of closed investigations over an 18-month period showed a clear commitment to procedural fairness and focus on achieving fair and reasonable outcomes. It also found that where a customer did not agree with the outcome of the complaint, the customer was clearly advised of their right to ask for an internal review of the investigation.

Through the internal review process, we then identified opportunities where we could have taken a different approach to the investigation or communicating outcomes that may have resulted in a negotiated or agreed outcome.

## Internal reviews

A customer can request an internal review of the outcome of an investigation if they believe EWON – during the investigation – was biased, made an error or if the customer was now positioned to provide relevant new information that was not available during the investigation. There are three outcomes from an internal review:

1. Review ground/s are investigated and found to be unsubstantiated. The customer is advised that no further action will be taken.
2. Review ground/s are investigated and found to be substantiated and the impact on the outcome of the complaint is tested and found to be sound. The customer is advised about the outcome of the review including why the investigation outcomes remain unchanged.
3. Review ground/s are investigated and found to be substantiated and that they impacted the outcome of the investigation. The customer is advised that the decision to finalise the investigation is set aside and the investigation is reopened.

continued over

Quality of our work (continued)



**8,488 data integrity checks of resolved complaints.**

This year we received 17 formal requests for an internal review from 3,360 completed investigations. The review of each case found the investigation decisions were not affected as the grounds on which the requests were made were not upheld.

This result reflects the comprehensiveness of the investigations reviewed. However, learning opportunities were identified. These included defining and confirming with the customer the investigation scope early in the investigation, and explaining information in different ways to help a customer understand the issues and reasons for the investigation outcome.

**Complaints about EWON**

Complaints about our service provide an opportunity to improve our work.

The Ombudsman is informed when a customer expresses their dissatisfaction with EWON’s service, and asks in writing to escalate their complaint to the Ombudsman.

In FY24, we received nine complaints about EWON. All complaints were investigated and responded to in writing. Four customers utilised the internal review process and, dissatisfied with the review outcome, raised a complaint about EWON. Two customers had not requested an internal review of EWON’s investigation decisions.

The Ombudsman wrote to four customers regarding their complaints.

**INTERNAL REVIEW**

**Case study**

**Compensation denied for power outage caused by lightning**

Mr Duncan experienced a power outage that damaged some of his major home appliances. He called his energy provider and was referred to the distributor who denied his claim for \$25,000, explaining they were not liable for damages caused by lightning.

Mr Duncan contacted EWON to dispute this issue and determine who was liable for the claim for damages.

EWON’s investigation found that distributor records showed that Mr Duncan had called the Emergency Hazard line to report an issue after a storm and hearing a loud bang. We also confirmed lightning activity was recorded in the area around the time Mr Duncan heard the loud noise. An onsite inspection by the Emergency Services Officer reported that the network’s equipment was working correctly and there were no other reports of supply interruption or claims from his neighbours. A further report by an independent technical consultant supported the finding that there was no damage to the three electricity meters confirming the surge did not come from the network.

EWON found there was no evidence to hold the distributor liable for the claim for damages. Instead, we advised Mr Duncan to make a home and contents insurance claim, if he had taken out insurance.

Mr Duncan disagreed with the outcome of the investigation and asked for a review of the decision

citing bias and errors in EWON’s investigation findings. He advised that the distributor’s written denial of his claim noted that EWON often found in distributors’ favour when assessing unplanned outages caused by weather events.

EWON agreed that this statement from the provider undermined EWON’s independence. The distributor’s comments were referred to EWON’s Policy & Systemic Issue team for investigation. That review resulted in the network removing this information from its website and templated letters.

The internal review of the investigation was conducted and assessed that Mr Duncan’s views and information were heard, analysed and tested against the regulations in accordance with procedural fairness. The review found there was no basis to further investigate Mr Duncan’s complaint.

Issue  
**Supply > off supply (unplanned) > damage / loss**  
 Outcome  
**Internal review**

# Independent customer survey

*Incredible service! Very quick and easy to speak with a live person. No endless automated chatbots like with the energy providers.*

*I felt like I was listened to, EWON explained things very clearly, contacted the energy provider ASAP and in a matter of a few hours resolved a not-at-fault issue.*

Survey respondents' comments

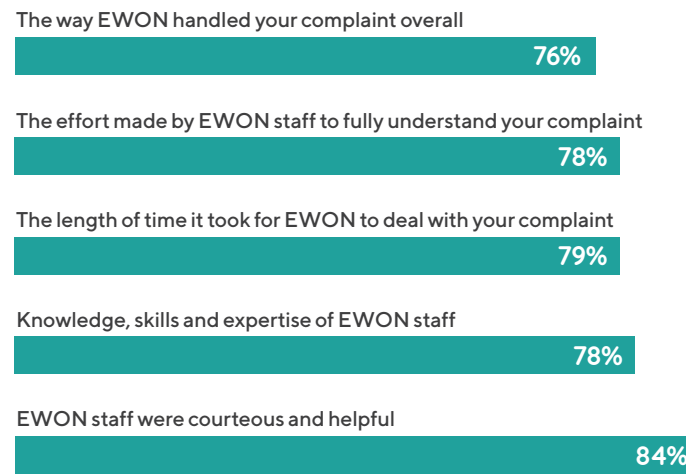
Every five years, we engage an external consultant to undertake an independent customer survey. The survey was launched in March 2024, and assessed EWON's customer service and dispute resolution performance by:

- evaluating the effectiveness of EWON's services
- identifying opportunities for improvement.

This year Schottler Consulting was engaged to carry out this work and they invited customers with RHL, conciliated or investigated complaints that were finalised in 2023 to participate. Of the 11,097 customers approached, Schottler received a 14% response rate overall, including 1,516 online surveys and 33 telephone interviews – a response rate that it described as being a reasonably good overall response rate.

The overall findings from the survey highlighted that EWON has performed very well. Overall, customers are very happy with EWON staff, the ease of contacting them and their knowledge and skills. See the following table for key satisfaction measures.

## Independent customer survey – FY24 positive results



## Results

Survey respondents were also asked whether they were referred to EWON by their provider, or if they had to find out about EWON independently. Only 7% of respondents indicated that their provider referred them to EWON. This is surprisingly low and may indicate that providers are not explicitly informing customers that they have a right to take a complaint to EWON for independent review at the time the customer lodges their complaint, and at the time the provider advises their customer of how it has resolved the complaint.

Schottler, for the first time, sought advice about how EWON supports customers with additional needs. Eighteen per cent of customers identified having some type of additional need. Common additional needs reported in the survey were:

- limited computer skills and needing help with online forms (52%)
- hearing, vision or sensory issue (17%)
- psychological condition that affects their ability to communicate (17%).

When asked if EWON was considerate of their additional needs, 78% of customers said EWON was

continued over

Customer satisfaction (continued)

accommodating of their needs. Respondents suggested other ways that EWON could provide additional support, including:

- more regular updates to help reduce stress or anxiety (20%)
- a written outcome summary to assist with understanding and memory (15%)
- support to help compile paperwork (13%)
- organise agreed specific times to call (13%).

**Top three positive and negative customer comments**

Customers were asked to say something positive or negative about EWON, and 72% opted to comment on something EWON is doing well, while 28% commented on an area in which EWON could improve.

**✓ What EWON did well**

1. Providing good service, being customer-focused, supportive and helpful
2. Quick response to complaints
3. Helping customers achieve a good resolution with their provider and/or effectively communicating with providers

**✗ What EWON could improve**

1. Takes too long to respond and resolve complaints, and long wait times when calling
2. Were unable to help or didn't help
3. 'Toothless tiger' – needs more power to enforce decisions and legislation, impose penalties on providers for unjust practices and educate consumers



**COMPLAINT ENQUIRY**

# Case study

## Customer worried about being overcharged by his energy retailer

Mr Karki was referred to EWON by his local Member of Parliament after he contacted them about his most recent electricity bill. Mr Karki stated that the \$549 bill was for a three-month period between March and June, and he believed it was higher than usual. Mr Karki was concerned his energy provider was charging him increased rates that were due to start after 1 July, and he wanted EWON to confirm if his energy provider could do this.

We explained that energy providers can increase prices, but by law are required to give a minimum of five business days' notice to their customers. We further assisted Mr Karki by explaining the details of his electricity bill, to help him compare his bills. EWON also identified his latest bill was for 98 days, which was longer than normal contributing to the higher bill.

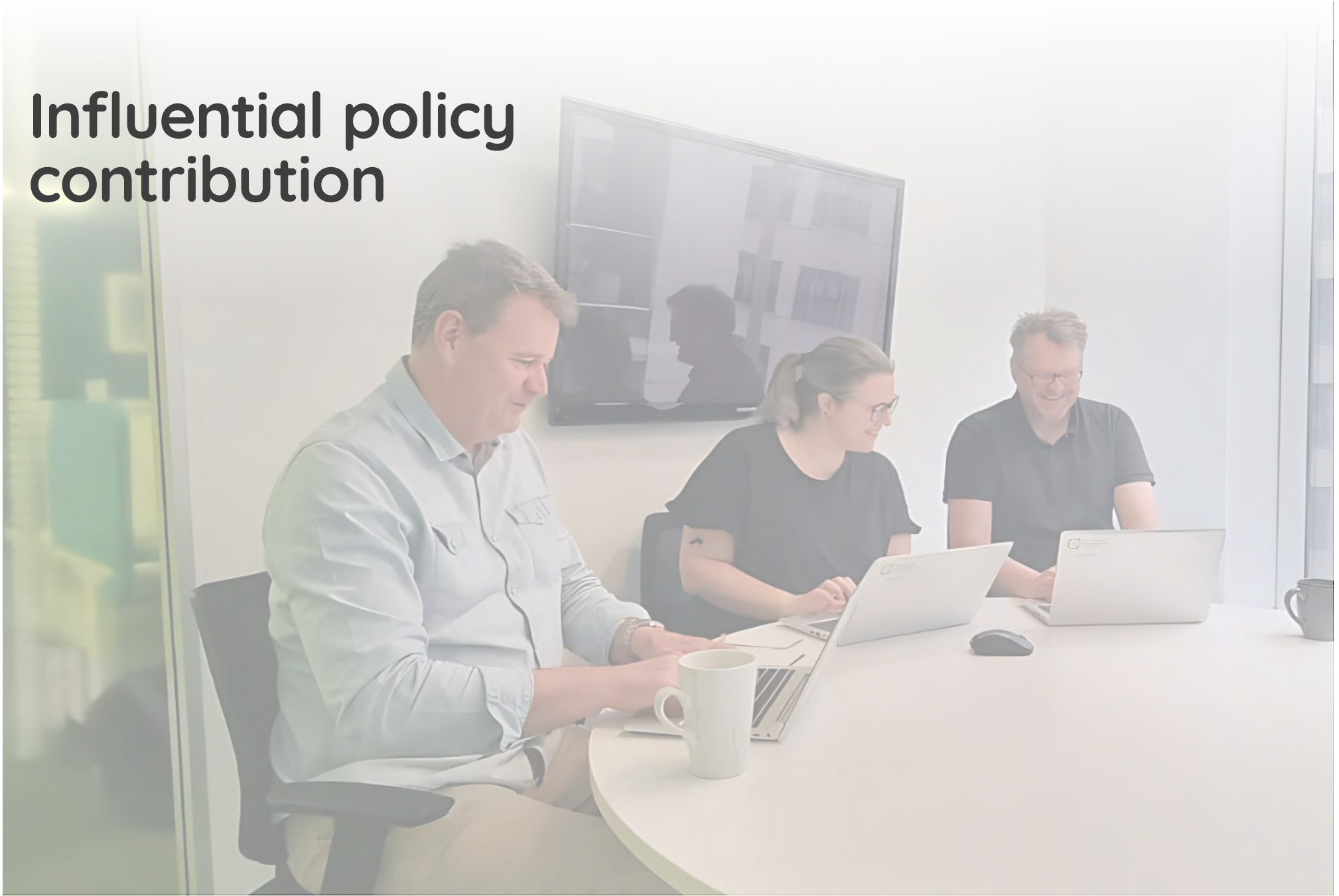
We suggested Mr Karki call his energy provider if he had any further questions about the accuracy of the bill, and that he could return to EWON if his matter was not resolved.

We also referred him to the Australian Energy Regulator's independent energy price comparator [energymadeeasy.com.au](http://energymadeeasy.com.au), to compare rates and deals with different energy providers. Mr Karki was satisfied his concerns were addressed and we finalised the complaint on that basis.

Issue  
**Billing > affordability > price increases**

Outcome  
**Complaint enquiry**

# Influential policy contribution



# The energy transition

The expansion of renewable energy infrastructure and uptake of Consumer Energy Resources (CER), and other new technologies, have emerged as critical steps in achieving a sustainable energy future. This transition is crucial if we are to move towards net zero targets, but it also presents challenges to communities and consumer protections. How the energy sector will adapt its energy frameworks to meet customer needs has become a central focus of EWON's policy work.

## Renewable energy transmission and infrastructure projects

The NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap has driven the development of renewable energy infrastructure across NSW. It brings a new set of consumer and community concerns regarding land impact, visual aesthetics, environmental issues and creating a need for effective and regular community consultation. In FY24, the following key developments focused on these consumer concerns:

- The Legislative Council Inquiry into the feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects.
- A Select Committee Inquiry assessing the costs, benefits and risks of underground structures compared to overhead lines.
- The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's (AEIC) Draft Rule Determination – Community Engagement Review, for enhancing community engagement in renewable energy infrastructure. With our interstate ombudsman peers [our submission](#) highlighted the need for meaningful, genuine and ongoing community engagement underpinned by access to independent external dispute resolution.

- The Australian Energy Market Commission's (AEMC) [Draft Rule Determination on Enhancing Community Engagement in Transmission Building](#), in conjunction with our interstate ombudsman peers.

Both the Legislative Council Inquiry and AEIC review identified the need to establish a renewable energy infrastructure ombudsman to address complaints about renewable energy and transmission infrastructure issues. See page 13 for more information on EWON's future take up of this role.

## Electrification

With the drive towards renewable energy, there is a push for consumers to move away from gas to electricity. We contributed to a joint submission into the Senate Standing Committees on Economics' [Inquiry into Residential Electrification](#).

We highlighted the increasing level of consumer detriment we're seeing regarding CER uptake, which is likely to increase as electrification progresses. We emphasised the need to ensure ombudsman schemes are expanded in line with electrification.

## Consumer Energy Resources

As the adoption of CER increases, consumer disputes have grown more complex. Traditionally, the National Energy Consumer Framework, Australian Consumer Law and NSW home building legislation have operated as separate consumer safeguards. However, it is now common for a single energy complaint to be dealt with under all, or any, of these options. This creates confusion and can lead to a negative consumer experience.

External dispute resolution (EDR) plays a critical role in providing a consistent consumer experience.

We contributed our knowledge and understanding of CER customer issues and the need for EDR in our submission to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEE) consultation on its [Consumer Energy Strategy: Households](#).

We continue our work with our state peers, Energy & Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ), Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV), and Energy & Water Ombudsman SA (EWOSA) including on the following submissions to:

- The AEMC's consultation on [Unlocking CER Benefits Through Flexible Trading Rule Change](#). Our initial submission to the directions paper in September 2023, highlighted incorrect classification of small business customers due to the complexity of business classification in the energy market. In April 2024, our comments on its [draft determination](#) noted potential issues with secondary settlement points at residential properties (additional settlement points at a premises that sit behind the existing connection and settlement point, which has a National Metering Identifier attached to them).
- The Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) [Draft Interim Export Guidance Note](#) where we drew attention to access to dispute resolution, including the operation of export limits and highlighted consumer protection gaps where complaints involve third parties that are not members of an ombudsman scheme.

# Energy issues for renters

Renters' rights including affordability, environmental sustainability and social equity have gained significant attention in recent years.

Policy-makers, landlords, tenants and energy providers acknowledge they must work together to ensure renters can access safe, affordable and sustainable housing.

Regulating energy has traditionally been approached as a standalone problem. However, the consumer framework for energy can no longer be designed in isolation. With the uptake of CER, the regulation for energy consumers is intertwined with housing regulation. An energy strategy that is not directly supported by all relevant housing acts will result in a widening gap between those who can and cannot benefit from CER.

The NSW Government and the Australian Government have been exploring policy initiatives to improve energy efficiency, expand access to renewable energy and enhance consumer protections for renters. EWON has made submissions to address consumer protection gaps for renters, many of whom live in embedded networks.

## Energy affordability and access to renewable energy

While homeowners can invest in energy efficient appliances or solar panels to reduce their bills, renters have limited control over these decisions and often live in homes with inefficient heating, cooling and lighting systems. EWON drew attention to this in our submission to DCCEE's consultation on its [Consumer Energy Strategy – households](#). We also highlighted the potential impacts to tenants if secondary settlement points are installed at homes, in our submission to the AEMC's draft determination on [Unlocking CER Benefits Through Flexible Trading Rule Change](#).

## Energy efficiency standards

Many rental properties in Australia do not meet modern energy efficiency standards, potentially leading to higher bills for tenants. There have been calls for tighter regulations to improve the energy performance of rental housing stock, including incentives for landlords to electrify homes. In our submission to [NSW Government Improving NSW Rental Laws Consultation Paper](#), we highlighted the need for more information to be provided to renters before committing to a rental agreement including on tariffs, fees and charges.



## Energy and water rights for renters

Renters' rights regarding energy and water usage, and billing can vary depending on their lease agreements. Issues can include sub-metering, where tenants are individually billed for their energy use and disputes over responsibility for energy-related repairs or upgrades. Advocates are pushing for clearer guidelines and protections to ensure fair treatment of renters in energy matters. In our October to December 2023 [EWON Insights](#), we highlighted that renters are not eligible to receive the same water concessions as homeowners. We also supported water consumers to receive additional protections by extending provisions in Sydney Water's Customer Contract. These were in two submissions to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) 2023–24 Review of the Sydney Water Operating Licence.



## INVESTIGATED

# Credit case study

## Resident disputes EV charging station and community battery installation



When Mrs Grovers heard the network distributor had planned to install a community battery and a 24-hour electrical vehicle (EV) charging station across the road from her home, she contacted them to discuss her concerns. They said they had contacted residents and that consultations remained open. Dissatisfied with the response, she contacted EWON explaining that she believed there were more appropriate locations and wanted to ensure the network was undertaking reasonable community consultation.

EWON commenced its investigation, seeking information about its consultation process for evaluation. The network provided an overview of its planning process that included consideration of factors including safety, accessibility, environmental considerations and network

constraints. They initially had another location in mind, which was close to a T-junction. Following the planning and community consultation stage, it was decided the current location was more suitable as it would increase safety, motor vehicle visibility and accessibility, and also avoid traffic disruption caused by a need to excavate 25 metres of kerb and guttering.

The network posted on its website and in its online newsletters that it was looking for alternative locations for the EV charging station. While there is no clear rule that requires a network to notify adjoining land holders of a change in location, the notification provided for the change of location did not appear to meet community engagement expectations in accordance with the National Electricity Rules. The network subsequently notified

adjoining landowners by letter and provided time for landowner responses and submissions.

We wrote to Mrs Grovers outlining that the network had complied with its consultation and notification requirements regarding the placement of the community battery, its proposal for an alternate location for the charging station and that it would work with the community and consider any submissions. We also advised that the EV charging station, which is to be pole-mounted, is considered an exempt development in accordance with the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) Act 2021* (NSW), meaning the network could determine where it would be located, without consent from other parties.

We provided our review to Mrs Grovers and requested she advise whether she had further information to support her position regarding her objection to the location of the community battery. EWON finalised the investigation having received no further contact from Mrs Grovers.

### Issue

Land > network/transmission assets > placement

### Outcome

Investigation with no further investigation

# Embedded networks

Since 2018, there have been multiple reviews into embedded network regulation. However, the issue of granting embedded network customers access to retail competition and consumer protections remains.

This has been compounded by the integration of CER and small-scale energy generation into embedded networks. Developers can enter long-term contracts on behalf of strata corporations that prevent customers from accessing the benefits of CER into the future.

In 2023, EWON provided case studies and complaint statistics to IPART for its review on the future of embedded networks in NSW.

We made a submission to IPART's [Industry Consultation Paper – Energy Prices in Embedded Networks](#), noting the increase of CER products popular in land lease and over 55s residential communities.

In our submissions to IPART's [Embedded Networks – Draft Report](#) and the consultation paper on NSW's [Consumer Energy Strategy: households](#), we noted our support for most of the draft recommendations.

IPART's final report supported EWON's position, put forward from 2021 onwards, that embedded network sellers should charge customers for hot water consumption in energy units rather than water units. The final report also proposed measures to increase transparency in customer outcomes, such as requiring sellers to publish prices on their websites and disclose efficiency information on central air-conditioning systems. EWON strongly supports these recommendations as transparency measures are crucial in mitigating complaints and minimising consumer harm.

The final report also made several recommendations about EWON's complaint functions and membership.

Our submission to the NSW Government's call for views on the final IPART report focused on the recommendations listed above. We look forward to consulting further with the NSW Government.

In November 2023, while IPART was reviewing embedded networks in NSW, the AER commenced a review of the exempt framework for embedded networks across the National Energy Market. EWON attended the AER public forum in December, and collaborated with EWOSA, EWQ and EWOV to make a submission to the issues paper. [The submission](#) highlighted the state ombudsman schemes' previous submissions that detailed the detriment experienced by residents of embedded networks, evidencing the scale and extent of harm to customers. These submissions have been instrumental in prompting additional reviews and inquiries at a state level.

EWON continued to support other strands of work to improve pricing protections in all types of embedded networks, including the following policy inputs.

- We consulted with the NSW Government on the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Amendment Bill 2024. We were pleased to see its introduction to the Legislative Assembly on 14 May 2024, and that it passed on 24 June 2024.



- In relation to the [AER 2024–2029 Network Regulatory Proposal](#) draft decisions, we commented on the proposed introduction of embedded network tariffs and the possible price implications. This included the lack of retail competition and the disparity of consumer protections for customers living in embedded networks compared to on-market customers.
- In NSW DCCEE's consultation on its [Consumer Energy Strategy: households](#), we highlighted the need for equitable access to CER to allow residents living in embedded networks to benefit.
- In our submission to the AEMC on its draft determination 'Unlocking CER benefits through flexible trading rule change,' which identified the need for the energy sector to consider housing policy settings including embedded networks when making changes to energy market rules.

# Family violence

EWON has a critical role in assisting victims of family violence when it is revealed through our complaints.

Utility debt can be a key contributor to financial insecurity for people experiencing family violence.

To further EWON's agenda with members, regulators and government in relation to increased protections for customers experiencing family violence, in FY24 we undertook the following work:

- Raised the importance of family violence protections in our submissions to the AER review of the exemptions framework for embedded networks and the AER Network Pricing determinations.
- Recommended increased family violence protections in our submissions to [IPART's review](#) of Sydney Water and in relation to Water NSW's Operating licence in [October 2023](#) and [March 2024](#).
- Developed a [customer factsheet](#) that explains the energy and water rules and assistance available to customers impacted by family violence. We promoted this to our members and industry stakeholders to increase awareness among customers and EWON members of the help available.
- Monitored complaints raising family violence issues and reported on the impact of the AEMC's rule change addressing family violence issues and vulnerabilities in the energy sector. Our reporting is delivered to key stakeholders including the AEMC. We also delivered compliance breaches to the AER, raised potential systemic issues with our members and have engaged directly with them to ensure best practice.
- Undertook the first comprehensive review of our [family violence position statement](#), originally launched in 2019, to ensure consistency with the energy sector.



# Energy affordability

In FY24, we provided feedback to the [AER’s 2024–29 Network Regulatory Proposals for NSW distributors](#), which included price increases from network costs, the introduction of embedded network tariffs and changes to the classification process for small business customers.

We provided insights during NSW DCCEEW consultations on the Draft Social Programs for Energy Code Version 8 and the [Energy Payment Assistance Scheme \(EAPA\) consultation paper](#). We also continued to monitor complaints about rebates and the NSW Energy Bill Relief Payment and look forward to continuing our engagement with DCCEEW, regarding EAPA and additional changes to the code.

This year, the AER continued its focus on vulnerability by commencing a review of the payment difficulty protections in the National Energy Consumer Framework. EWON led a submission with EWOQ and EWOSA that addressed the scope of the review, recommending they reconsider excluding small business protections and embedded networks. We also addressed the characteristics of an effective payment difficulty framework and rethinking disconnection.

## Other policy contributions

After contributing to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment’s consultation on the Water Industry Competition (General) Regulation 2022 in FY23, we were pleased to see the new regulation commenced on 1 March 2024.

We continued to engage with the AEMC on its rule change, aimed at accelerating the rollout of smart meters. In our joint submission to the [draft determination](#), we raised concerns about consumer protections, the issues around retailer notification of smart meter installation, and the lack of notification about changes to tariff structures after a smart meter is installed.



REFERRED TO HIGHER LEVEL

## Case study

Incorrect postcode causes customer to miss out on rebate

Ms Bennett has both her electricity and gas accounts with the same energy provider. Recently, she discovered she was not receiving the Low-Income Household Rebate despite receiving the Gas Rebate for her gas account. Her energy provider explained she was missing the rebate because the postcode on the address on her bill was incorrect. She was asked to provide a copy of her council rates to fix the problem, but she was unable to supply this as she lived in a public housing complex.

Ms Bennett’s energy provider later contacted EWON to confirm it had applied a credit of \$200 to her account representing eight months of missed rebate from when her concession was approved.

Issue  
Billing > rebate > concession > error

Outcome  
Referred to higher level

# Influence and collaboration



# 426

privacy-related complaints received in FY24

## Regulators, government and statutory bodies

EWON meets quarterly with regulators and statutory bodies including the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), AER, AEMC, IPART and the Clean Energy Regulator.

These quarterly meetings provide an opportunity to share insights on industry trends and highlight issues identified through our complaint handling, outreach and stakeholder engagement activities. In FY24, we:

- Submitted quarterly compliance and complaints reports to the AER, highlighting systemic issues, issues trends or potential breaches of regulations identified by EWON.
- Provided responses to the ACCC, AER and IPART on topics they were investigating, or about which they requested information.
- Developed a joint submission with our state counterparts to the ACCC on [Draft Legislation for a Designated Complaints Function](#).
- Continued discussions with NSW Fair Trading about customers in residential parks, CER complaints, complaint referrals between our organisations and opportunities for collaboration with outreach events.

- Made a submission to the Building Commission NSW paper on [Consumer Protections For Home Building Work](#), where we raised the complexities of dispute resolution that cross between building and energy disputes.
- Met quarterly with DCCEEW in its Energy Consumer Reference Group and Energy Retailer Working Group Meetings. We also consulted with the department on issues around CER and the transition to renewable energy.
- Provided feedback in two consultations from the AER on [Performance Reporting Procedures and Guidelines Issues Paper](#) and in the draft guidelines [Compliance Procedures and Guidelines Review](#). We welcomed proposed new reporting requirements relating to family violence presentation of standing offer prices and energisation, as well as retailer and distributor re-energisation obligations.

## Targeted consultations

EWON is often approached by industry regulators and stakeholders to provide input into their work. We consider this to be a benchmark of our policy influence across the sector. We assisted the following organisations:

- **ACCC:** Informed the commission about embedded networks, including processes around customers exercising their freedom of choice. We also provided insights into complaints about tariff changes and customers experiencing long wait times to speak with retailers.
- **AEMC:** Collaborated with our peers to provide a response to the consultation about National Meter Identifier creations and maintenance at a secondary settlement, which was part of Unlocking CER benefits.
- **AER:** Provided feedback and case studies on the AER's review of consumer protection, which provided advice to Energy Ministers and early input into the AER's review of the payment difficulty framework.
- **NSW Government:**
  - Provided input to the NSW Department of Customer Service Better Regulation Division on the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Amendment Bill 2024.
  - Provided input during consultations to DCCEEW – Energy Social Programs, including commenting on the Draft Social Programs for Energy Code Version 8, and monitoring complaints relating to rebates and the NSW Energy Bill Relief Payment.

**Influence and collaboration** (continued)

- **IPART:** Provided information on embedded networks, including case studies.
- **Justice and Equity Centre:** Contributed to their disconnection and debt research.
- **EDR schemes:** Liaised with our colleagues in New Zealand and provided insight into our experience with solar customer complaints.
- **The Energy Charter:** Had discussions with community stakeholders and the Charter on a proposed rule change that would impact customers registered for life support.

**Privacy, the Consumer Data Right and credit reporting**

EWON is an approved EDR scheme under section 35A of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). Our role in dealing with privacy complaints provides valuable insight into systemic and policy issues within the privacy framework.

**Consumer Data Right (CDR)**

We provided a joint submission (with EWOQ and EWOSA) to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) on their draft revised guidelines for recognising external dispute resolution schemes. The submission supported streamlining the guidelines to include arrangements for CDR complaint handling, referrals and reporting. We also supported EWOV’s suggestions aimed at clarifying internal and external dispute resolution requirements to ensure consistency

with the Competition and Consumer (Consumer Data Right) Rules 2020 (CDR Rules) and Regulatory Guide 271 Internal dispute resolution. Finally, we provided feedback on the draft revised Information Sharing Agreement, which sets the foundations of engagement with the OAIC.

We continued to enhance our knowledge by attending the OAIC training session for EDR schemes on CDR privacy safeguards in August 2023.

**Credit reporting**

Since the implementation of the Privacy (Credit Reporting) Code 2014, EWON has identified several consumer gaps including the need to increase the minimum threshold for credit default listing to avoid harm to consumers who are default listed for small debts. We made a joint submission (with EWOQ, EWOSA and EWOV) to the Attorney-General’s Review of Australia’s Credit Reporting Framework, highlighting the issues that arise for energy customers.

We have also been consulting closely with Australian Retail Credit Association (ARCA) in its capacity as code developer. We made two submissions to ARCA’s Consultation on the Privacy (Credit Reporting) Code 2014 potential variations in July 2023, and Consultation on the Privacy (Credit Reporting) Code 2014 potential variations in November 2023.

EWON reports to the OAIC on complaints relating to privacy and credit reporting. In FY24, EWON received 426 privacy-related complaints:

- **260 complaints concerning customers’ issues with credit reporting**
- **177 instances of other privacy-related complaints.**

EWON commenced bi-annual reporting on complaints relating to CDR, but to date we have not received any complaints.

# Systemic issues



EWON’s Charter requires us to identify and address systemic concerns affecting consumers in the energy and water sectors.

Our complaints handling function provides real-time insights allowing us to pinpoint systemic issues.

**In FY24 EWON:**

- **Opened 12 systemic issue investigations**
- **Closed 12 systemic issue investigations**
- **Had 7 systemic issues investigations still under investigation at the end of the year.**

Whether stemming from provider actions, processes, or policies, systemic issues can adversely affect individual customers or have broader implications impacting multiple consumers. We thoroughly investigate and engage with our members to address them.

Here are two examples of systemic issues we addressed.

## Customer charged for over the counter payments

A customer came to EWON about an unresolved high bill and metering discrepancy. Our investigation showed that the customer had been charged fees for making payments at a post office. Charging fees for payments is not permitted in NSW, and EWON reached out to the retailer to advise them of this and determine if other customers had been charged for over-the-counter payments.

The retailer advised that an internal investigation revealed 3,117 customers had been charged fees totalling over \$29,000 for over-the-counter payments. The retailer took action to correct the problem including initiating system changes, issuing full credits to affected customers and, where the credit exceeded \$50, notifying customers of the credit (as required by the National Energy Retail Rules). The retailer also self-reported the issue to the AER.



## Misleading correspondence sent to customer

A customer experienced a power abnormality, which caused damage to his appliances. He contacted his electricity network provider to claim for damages, but the provider denied his claim and wrote in an email to him that he should contact EWON if he wanted his claim further reviewed implying that EWON would most likely find in favour of the network. The customer contacted us wanting us to both review the claim and also provide advice about the network’s referral to EWON. Our review found that the claim denial was reasonable. The customer disagreed with our findings and called into question EWON’s independence – including because of the wording in the email sent to him by the provider.

In our contact with the networks about the wording of their reference to EWON in their email, we stated that it compromised our independence and was not in line with our Constitution

or Charter. We also asked whether this advice was sent to other customers.

The network confirmed that the email was a standard template used for all denied claims. The provider undertook a comprehensive review of its communication templates and website text relating to complaints and claims. It also sought input from EWON on the appropriateness of the language it used and best practices for promoting external dispute resolution, and then updated all correspondence and website content.

With respect to the customer’s investigation, our Quality team undertook an internal review – finding that the investigation outcome was appropriate and with additional substantiation, this was advised to the customer.

Systemic issues (continued)

Spotlight On

EWON’s Spotlight On reports focus on systemic issues across the sector, offering valuable insights from data and customer experiences.

# Spotlight on

Systemic issues report

Natural disasters  
- the long-term  
customer  
experience

## Natural disasters – the long-term customer experience

In November 2023, we published [Natural disasters – the long-term customer experience](#). This report analysed the complaints EWON received after bushfires and floods, highlighting the challenges faced by customers for months and years after their homes or businesses were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Even after regaining the capacity and access to technology to seek help, customers faced ongoing issues related to billing, supply and affordability. Compounded by diminishing support and understanding from energy providers, these long-term challenges amplify the already daunting task of recovery.

We urged the energy industry to proactively enhance support for customers beyond the initial phase of

safety and access issues following natural disasters, through:

- long-term support plans informed by customer experience
- addressing stress and lack of trust in the industry caused by complaint fatigue
- engaging with us to improve their response to natural disasters.

The report has seen an increasing number of stakeholders recognising the need to address the issue, and asking EWON to present on the topic at meetings. This included presenting to the Energy Charter Community of Practice on Resilience, and to the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association Systemic Issues & Policy Influence interest group.





# Valued membership







# Our membership

NSW electricity and gas networks and retailers, as well as exempt sellers and networks that supply residential customers in embedded networks, must be members of EWON. Water providers including Sydney Water, Hunter Water, Water NSW and licensees under the *Water Industry Competition Act 2006* (NSW) are required to join EWON. Councils that provide water to their residents can join voluntarily, for example Shoalhaven Water.

We work closely with our members to provide insights about how they could approach improving their customer service and complaints management and, as a result, reducing complaints to EWON. We also provide information and advice about key industry issues, common customer problems and effective complaints management aimed at reducing complaints to EWON.

## Member funding model implemented


From 1 July 2024, we successfully introduced a new funding model that had been developed in consultation with members across FY22 and FY23. The new funding model is based on the principles of:

 <b>Equity and fairness</b>	 <b>Transparency and efficiency</b>
 <b>Consistency and predictability</b>	 <b>Simplicity and affordability</b>


The model’s implementation was underpinned by member engagement and the development of tools to enable members to reconcile invoices with their complaints data, which is published on our member portal EWONLink.

We were pleased to receive positive feedback from members throughout the year about the effectiveness of invoicing variable fees in arrears based on resolved complaints each quarter. The fact that this means there is no end-of-year ‘true up’ of forecast and actual fees, has also been welcomed by members together with a cost-reflective fee schedule of complaint-based fees established at the start of each financial year.

Member engagement via EWONLink, our member portal, also increased in response to quarterly invoicing of variable fees measured by a 314% increase in members accessing complaints data, outreach and engagement information, and other member resources and information throughout the year.



Click here for a list of EWON’s current members



Click here for more information on the funding model

# Promoting dispute resolution

This year, we continued our joint initiative with Energy & Water Ombudsman Queensland, Energy & Water Ombudsman SA, and Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria working with members to ensure customers are aware of their right to access external dispute resolution.

We increased our engagement with members to improve the promotion of ombudsman services across their communication channels, especially when customers are lodging complaints with their providers and, in turn, when providers are advising their customers about complaint outcomes.

The Deputy Ombudsman presented to the Australian Energy Council’s Retail Working Group and signatories to The Energy Charter to raise awareness of this project, emphasising that promoting provider complaints processes and ombudsman offices are key drivers of increased consumer trust.

We are currently embedding an annual process to audit the promotion of EWON by members, and we will report on the outcomes to our members and stakeholders.



Telling customers about  
**External Dispute Resolution**

As an Energy and Water Ombudsman member you need to make sure your customers are aware of us and their rights.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROMOTE ED?!**

External Dispute Resolution (EDR) gives customers a free, fair and independent option for their complaint.

Promotion of EDR is necessary to build confidence and trust in the sector, raising consumer awareness of Energy and Water Ombudsmen (EWOs) and resulting in empowered customers and demonstrating your commitment to customer protection.

**WHAT MUST PROVIDERS DO? MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS**

You must make information about how customers’ feedback and small business can access EDR in communications about complaints and when discussing or receiving a customer’s service.

You must provide information about how customers can access EDRs in your:

- Complaint policies and procedures
- Written and verbal communication in response to a complaint and discussion/ resolution notices
- Website content, as required

You are responsible for ensuring your staff meet these obligations.

**WHAT SHOULD PROVIDERS DO? BEST PRACTICE**

To achieve good outcomes, you should include information about how customers can access EDRs in all verbal and written communications such as the following: price, customer hardship, and debt recovery and on all digital platforms, including website, chat, social media and apps.

References to EDRs should include an explanation of:

- The EDRs role
- EDR contact details and a link to the EDR website
- How the EDR may be able to assist
- Confirmation that EDRs are free and independent

Your complaint handling policy information about how to lodge a complaint and all complaint communication, verbal and written, is clear and accessible to all customers.

Your website and other digital platforms are easy to understand and responsive to the relevant EDR dispute resolution information, including:

- A function for complaints and dispute resolution, placed in an easy-to-find location (ideally within 2-3 clicks from your home page)
- A search function that directs customers to the correct area when using the words ‘complaint’, ‘dispute’ or ‘ombudsman’.

**IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICE AND MORE**

- Discuss with your EDRs how best to implement the advice
- Get customer feedback on the relevance of EDR resources including our guides and web pages
- Develop opportunities during customer service interactions to advise about access to EDRs
- Promote your membership of the EDR through social media and advertising as a way of telling your customers that you are engaged and proactive in managing disputes
- Ensure you are consistent in your reference to complaints and external EDRs across your communication channels
- Refer to the Australian Standard AS 2002:2022 Customer for complaint management in organisations to support your implementation
- Access additional resources from your EDR including top-up and wording suggestions.

# Member involvement in outreach

We value the participation of many of our members at our Bring Your Bills Days.

Energy and water providers who join EWON at outreach events benefit from the mutual advantages it offers both them and their customers. Customers welcome the opportunity to resolve issues with their provider on the spot, knowing that EWON can help if they are not satisfied with the outcome. Equally, those members share with us the value of the face-to-face conversations they have with their customers. Member staff learn more about the challenges customers face and the impacts of their processes, and can address issues so they don't escalate further.

Thank you to the following members for participating in our community engagement program in FY24:

- **Essential Energy** joined EWON for our Community Assist Day in Forbes in July 2023.
- **Alinta Energy, AGL, Sydney Water and Origin Energy** joined us for our First Nations Community Assist Day in Redfern in July 2023.
- **Red Energy, Essential Energy, Origin Energy and AGL** travelled to Dubbo, Wellington, Narromine and Trangie for our Cost of Living days in partnership with Financial Counselling Australia in February 2024.
- **Origin Energy and Essential Energy** attended our Bring Your Bills Days in Coffs Harbour, Macksville and Grafton in April 2024.
- **Essential Energy** joined us in Broken Hill, Menindee and Wilcannia for our Community Engagement Days in collaboration with Murdi Paaki's Tenant Support Education Program in April 2024.



*[Our staff] were able to not only provide face-to-face support and energy education to so many customers, but also completed account health check reviews to ensure all entitlements and concessions were loaded and customers had the best plan. Thank you to the EWON team and Financial Counselling Australia for creating such an important and value add community event.*

**AGL feedback from Dubbo, Wellington, Narromine and Trangie events**

Top: Members and service providers at EWON's Community Assist Day in Forbes  
Left: Origin Energy staff at EWON's Community Assist Day in Redfern

If your organisation is interested in partnering with us for outreach, email [community@ewon.com.au](mailto:community@ewon.com.au)

# Our members

## Current members (30 June 2024)

Provider type	Total
<b>Authorised/licensed: 78</b>	
Authorised energy retailers	55
Licensed energy networks	10
Licensed water providers	4
WICA entities	9
<b>Exempt entities: 306</b>	
Residential complex	80
Retirement village	50
Residential park	176
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>

Some members operate across different provider types. This table categorises members by their primary provider type.



[Click here for a list of EWON's current members](#)

## New members

Provider type	Total
<b>Authorised retailers: 1</b>	
<b>Exempt entities: 23</b>	
Residential complex	1
Retirement village	4
Residential park	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

## Terminated memberships

Provider type	Provider	Reason for termination
Authorised	Brighte Energy	Ceased operations in NSW
	Powerdirect	Surrendered authorisation and ceased operations in the energy market
Exempt	Albury Central Tourist Park - John Stapleton Family Trust	Ownership transfer
	Avena Communities Pty Ltd	Ownership transfer
	Bulahdelah Residential Village Pty Ltd	Ownership transfer
	Craig Stewart Family Trust P/L trading as Boomerang Way Tourist Park	Ownership transfer
	Ladehai Pty Ltd ATF Kessells Road Unit Trust (t/a North Star Holiday Resort)	Ownership transfer
	Land Lease SPV ATF HVV Neath Unit Trust	Ownership transfer
	Strata Plan 95906	Cancelled registered exemptions and appointed an authorised energy retailer
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	

# Member complaints

Top three issues by provider. Authorised and licensed providers only

Provider	First issue	%	Second issue	%	Third issue	%
1st Energy	Billing > high > disputed	30%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	6%	Credit > disconnection/restriction > impending	5%
ActewAGL Retail	Billing > high > disputed	26%	Billing > contract terms > variation in price/terms	5%	Billing > rebate/concession > error	5%
AGL	Billing > high > disputed	26%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	6%	Customer service > poor service	4%
Alinta Energy	Billing > high > disputed	30%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	9%	Customer service > poor service	4%
Altogether	Billing > high > disputed	16%	Customer service > incorrect advice/information	13%	Billing > fees & charges > service availability	9%
Amber Electric	Billing > high > disputed	23%	Customer service > failure to respond	13%	Billing > tariff > feed-in	5%
Arc Energy	Billing > high > disputed	24%	Customer service > failure to respond	8%	Credit > disconnection/restriction > complete	5%
Ausgrid	Supply > off supply (unplanned) > damage/loss	9%	Supply > off supply (planned) > damage/loss	9%	Land > network/transmission assets > maintenance	6%
Australian Gas Networks (NSW)	Land > property damage/restoration	33%	Provision > existing connection > meter exchange	33%	Provision > disconnection/restriction > safety/defect	33%
BlueNRG	Billing > high > disputed	23%	Billing > backbill	10%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	8%
Clean Peak Energy	Billing > delay	33%	Billing > affordability	33%	Credit > payment difficulties > high bill	33%
CovaU	Billing > high > disputed	18%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	9%	Customer service > poor service	8%
Diamond Energy	Billing > high > disputed	29%	Billing > account opening > error	9%	Billing > contract terms > variation in price/terms	6%
Discover Energy	Billing > high > disputed	36%	Credit > collection > debt collector	14%	Billing > contract terms > price increases	7%
Endeavour Energy	Supply > off supply (unplanned) > damage/loss	14%	Land > property damage/restoration	13%	Supply > off supply (planned) > damage/loss	6%
Energy Locals (includes Energy Trade)	Billing > high > disputed	26%	Billing > backbill	5%	Billing > error > payment	5%
EnergyAustralia	Billing > high > disputed	28%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	6%	Customer service > poor service	4%
Engie (previously Simply Energy)	Billing > high > disputed	27%	Customer service > failure to respond	5%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	5%
Essential Energy	Land > network/transmission assets > maintenance	7%	Supply > off supply (unplanned) > damage/loss	7%	Land > property damage/restoration	6%
Energy	Billing > high > disputed	36%	Credit > payment difficulties > arrangement declined	12%	Billing > backbill	8%
Flow Power	Billing > account opening > error	25%	Billing > contract terms > variation in price/terms	25%	Marketing > misleading	25%
Future X Power	Credit > payment difficulties > current/arrears	100%	–	0%	–	0%
GEE Energy	Billing > high > disputed	25%	Provision > existing connection > meter fault	25%	Billing > estimation > meter fault	25%
GloBird Energy	Billing > high > disputed	27%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	14%	Customer service > incorrect advice/information	5%
Glow Power	General > energy/water	100%	–	0%	–	0%

Provider	First issue	%	Second issue	%	Third issue	%
Humenergy	Billing > high > disputed	9%	Customer service > unprofessional attitude	6%	Billing > tariff > feed-in	6%
Hunter Water	Billing > high > disputed	18%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	7%	Provision > existing connection > meter fault	6%
Jemena	Provision > new connection > delay	13%	Land > property damage/restoration	11%	Customer service > failure to respond	11%
Kyeema Wastewater	Billing > contract terms > price increases	40%	Customer service > unprofessional attitude	40%	Billing > affordability > price increases	20%
Locality Planning Energy	Billing > fees and charges > late fees/interest	25%	Credit > payment difficulties > current/arrears	25%	Billing > error > payment	25%
Lumo Energy	Privacy > details obtained without consent	75%	Billing > account closing > error	25%	–	0%
M2 Energy	Billing > high > disputed	26%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	6%	Customer service > failure to respond	5%
Microgrid Power	Billing > high > disputed	40%	Marketing > misleading	20%	Credit > payment difficulties > current/arrears	20%
Mojo Power (in administration)	Credit > collection > debt collector	25%	Billing > error > payment	22%	Billing > delay	11%
Momentum Energy	Billing > high > disputed	25%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	5%	Customer service > failure to respond	4%
Nectr	Billing > high > disputed	28%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	7%	Billing > backbill	6%
Next Business Energy	Billing > high > disputed	27%	Billing > period	8%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	8%
Origin Energy	Billing > high > disputed	28%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	6%	Billing > backbill	4%
OVO Energy	Billing > high > disputed	12%	Billing > refund or credit > delay/error/form	9%	Customer service > failure to respond	7%
Powershop (includes Kogan Energy)	Billing > high > disputed	23%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	7%	Billing > delay	3%
QEnergy (in administration)	Credit > collection > debt collector	27%	Credit > payment difficulties > current/arrears	20%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	13%
Real Utilities	Billing > rebate/concession > error	15%	Billing > format	15%	Billing > high > disputed	15%
ReAmped Energy	Billing > high > disputed	33%	Billing > error > payment	13%	Marketing > information	7%
Red Energy	Billing > high > disputed	22%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	6%	Customer service > failure to respond	5%
Savant Energy	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	100%	–	0%	–	0%
seene	Billing > high > disputed	35%	Credit > payment difficulties > arrangement declined	9%	Customer service > poor service	9%
Shell Energy	Billing > account opening > error	20%	Billing > tariff > rate	10%	Billing > high > disputed	10%
Shoalhaven Water	Billing > high > disputed	37%	Billing > fees and charges > late fees/interest	11%	Customer service > failure to respond > RHL	7%
Smart Energy	Billing > high > disputed	23%	Marketing > misleading	9%	Customer service > failure to respond	9%
Solo Water	Billing > high > disputed	40%	Billing > fees and charges > service availability	20%	Billing > affordability	20%
Sumo	Billing > high > disputed	28%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	8%	Customer service > poor service	5%
Sydney Water	Billing > high > disputed	19%	Customer service > failure to respond	6%	Land > property damage/restoration	6%
Tango Energy	Billing > high > disputed	29%	Billing > rebate/concession > error	8%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	7%
Telstra Energy	General > non energy/non water	95%	General > energy/water	5%	–	0%
TransGrid	Land > property damage/restoration	47%	Land > easement	13%	Customer service > failure to respond	7%
Water NSW	Supply > water licensing	28%	Customer service > failure to consult/inform	12%	Billing > fees and charges > service availability	7%
WINconnect	Billing > high > disputed	34%	Billing > estimation > meter access/not read	10%	Customer service > failure to respond	8%

# Electricity providers

Electricity customer numbers <sup>^</sup>	Electricity provider	Complaints received per 10,000 customers	Complaints received FY24	Complaints received FY23	Variance	General enquiry	Complaint enquiry	RHL	Investigation level		
									1	2	3
<b>Retailer</b>											
>1,000,000	Origin Energy	56	5,870	3,258	2,612	50	1,779	3,153	574	227	87
500,001–1,000,000	EnergyAustralia	53	4,760	2,836	1,924	64	1,548	2,530	390	169	59
	AGL	48	4,150	2,082	2,068	53	1,418	2,211	335	101	32
100,001–500,000	Red Energy	35	1,371	689	682	7	407	801	102	42	12
	Powershop (includes Kogan Energy)	25	316	177	139	2	102	163	37	10	2
	M2 Energy	67	695	444	251	4	193	375	73	46	4
10,001–100,000	Alinta Energy	90	854	691	163	3	234	462	112	30	13
	Engie (previously Simply Energy)	134	1,019	558	461	2	308	573	99	32	5
	Energy Locals (includes Energy Trade)	24	182	100	82	–	65	96	11	9	1
	ActewAGL Retail	33	124	78	46	–	42	52	16	13	1
	GloBird Energy	68	186	87	99	1	52	121	8	3	1
	Sumo	220	529	211	318	7	187	256	55	21	3
	Momentum Energy	71	165	102	63	1	52	92	12	8	–
	Nectr	83	113	56	57	1	36	61	8	6	1
	Arc Energy	94	105	82	23	2	42	35	17	8	1
	WINconnect	103	109	55	54	1	48	48	9	2	1
3,001–10,000	OVO Energy	186	173	34	139	–	33	113	19	6	2
	Tango Energy	145	135	98	37	1	40	79	6	6	3
	Amber Electric	151	139	19	120	–	34	87	15	3	–
	CovaU	89	77	152	-75	–	27	38	7	5	–
	1st Energy	198	159	74	85	3	63	66	19	7	1
<b>Distributor</b>											
>1,000,000	Augrid	2	269	253	16	1	144	80	27	11	6
	Endeavour Energy	2	200	226	-26	–	113	65	16	3	3
500,001–1,000,000	Essential Energy	2	222	254	-32	–	91	89	21	11	10

## Electricity providers with no complaints

- Ampol Energy
- Electricity in a Box
- iGENO
- Localvolts
- OC Energy
- Powow
- Radian Energy
- Macarthur Energy Retail
- Power Club (former member)

## Electricity providers with fewer than 50 complaints

- Altogether
- BlueNRG
- Diamond Energy
- Discover Energy
- Energy
- Flow Power
- Future X Power
- GEE Energy
- Glow Power
- Humenergy
- Locality Planning Energy
- Lumo Energy
- Microgrid Power
- Next Business Energy
- Real Utilities
- ReAmped Energy
- Savant Energy
- seene
- Shell Energy
- Smart Energy
- Telstra Energy
- Clean Peak Energy

Transgrid\*

\*Network

<sup>^</sup>Only providers with more than 50 complaints have been included in this table. Energy retailer customer number data reported by the AER as at 31 December 2023. Energy distributor customer number data provided by the AER as at 30 June 2023.



## Gas providers

Gas customer numbers <sup>^</sup>	Gas provider	Complaints received per 10,000 customers	Complaints received FY24	Complaints received FY23	Variance	General enquiry	Complaint enquiry	RHL	Investigation level		
									1	2	3
<b>Retailer</b>											
500,001–1,000,000	AGL	22	1,307	797	510	7	370	769	125	28	8
100,001–500,000	EnergyAustralia	25	955	732	223	2	241	566	108	29	9
	Origin Energy	23	727	582	145	6	213	397	82	24	5
	Red Energy	16	171	119	52	–	49	101	14	5	2
10,001–100,000	M2 Energy	31	144	81	63	–	37	82	21	4	–
	Alinta Energy	40	171	178	-7	–	33	105	25	8	–
	Engie (previously Simply Energy)	69	228	148	80	1	52	135	26	13	1
	GloBird Energy	27	61	23	38	–	16	41	1	2	1
	Sumo	58	61	29	32	–	19	36	4	1	1
<b>Distributor</b>											
>1,000,000	Jemena	1	183	173	10	–	80	85	14	2	2

<sup>^</sup>Only providers with more than 50 complaints have been included in this table. Energy retailer customer number data reported by the AER as at 31 December 2023. Energy distributor customer number data provided by the AER as at 30 June 2023.

### Gas providers with no complaints

Humenergy  
iGENO  
Momentum Energy  
ReAmped Energy  
Savant Energy  
Shell Energy  
Tango Energy  
Telstra Energy

Allgas Energy\*  
Australian Gas Networks (Albury)\*  
Central Ranges Pipeline\*  
Evoenergy\*

### Gas providers with fewer than 50 complaints

ActewAGL Retail  
CovaU  
Discover Energy  
Energy Locals (includes Energy Trade)  
Lumo Energy  
OVO Energy  
Powershop (includes Kogan Energy)  
Real Utilities  
WINconnect

Australian Gas Networks (NSW)\*

\*Network

## Water providers

Water customer numbers <sup>^</sup>	Water provider	Complaints received per 10,000 customers	Complaints received FY24	Complaints received FY23	Variance	General enquiry	Complaint enquiry	RHL	Investigation level		
									1	2	3
<b>Network/Retailer</b>											
>2,000,000	Sydney Water	2	643	528	115	1	252	319	46	22	3
100,001–500,000	Hunter Water	2	80	64	16	–	30	35	8	6	1

<sup>^</sup>Only providers with more than 50 complaints have been included in this table. Water licensed and WICA provider customer number data provided by IPART as at 30 June 2023.

### Water providers with no complaints

Aquacell  
 AquaNet  
 Narara Ecovillage  
 Rosehill Network  
 Sydney Desalination Plant  
 Veolia Water Solutions & Technologies  
 CPE Barangaroo Recycled Water

### Water providers with fewer than 50 complaints

Water NSW  
 Shoalhaven Water  
 Altogether  
 Essential Energy  
 Solo Water  
 Kyeema Wastewater

# Expanded awareness



# Engaging across NSW

EWON’s community engagement program is designed to promote our services and raise awareness of our external dispute resolution process. It also promotes the internal dispute resolution processes of energy and water providers and aims to educate consumers, small business and community workers about energy and water issues. We promote the availability of financial affordability programs and initiatives provided by our members, as well as the NSW Government. This community engagement work reduces the volume of complaints both to members and to EWON because consumers and small business operators are better informed about options for assistance ahead of running into serious difficulties.

Community engagement also provides a vital opportunity for EWON to learn about issues affecting consumers across New South Wales. Engaging first-hand means we become aware of issues as they emerge in communities, sometimes before they are identified through our complaint handling work. When this happens, our Community Engagement team notifies our Policy & Systemic Issues team or Dispute Resolution team to ensure these matters are considered in our complaints, policy work, member liaison and stakeholder engagement activities.

continued over



**33**

local government areas reached



**70**

community engagement activities



**25**

community worker events



**16**

regional events



Click the photo at right to see our explanatory video in Arabic



**14 activities with multicultural customers**



**25**

activities with First Nations communities



**4,111**

direct customer engagements



**15 online presentations**



**4 small business events**



**12 seniors events**



**26**

Bring Your Bills events

Engaging across NSW (continued)

We ensure we reach out to the diverse range of people across New South Wales, all of whom experience unique circumstances and require tailored engagement and support. We have a particular focus on raising awareness of our services among consumers experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability. This includes a diverse range of consumers including:

- First Nations communities
- community housing tenants
- people from multicultural backgrounds, including new arrivals and refugees
- people living on fixed and low incomes
- people living in regional, rural and remote areas
- seniors
- people with disabilities and their supporters
- LGBTQIA+
- youth
- small businesses.

**Working with other organisations**

We partner with a range of community, government and industry organisations to deliver engagement activities each year. Together, they help increase awareness of EWON events and offer complementary services and support. Partner organisations in FY24 include:

Anti-Discrimination NSW	Homes NSW	NSW Department of Communities and Justice	Revenue NSW
Community and multicultural agencies	Hume Housing	NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Energy Social Programs	Salvation Army
Community Legal Centres and Community Hubs	Legal Aid NSW	NSW Trustee and Guardian	Service NSW
Carers NSW	Lifeline	Other Ombudsman offices including staff from the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, Australian Financial Complaints Authority and NSW Ombudsman	Services Australia
Catholic Care	Local councils		TAFE NSW
Fair Trading NSW	Multicultural NSW		Tenants Union NSW
Financial Counselling Australia	Murdi Paaki Services – Tenant Support and Education Program		
Good Shepherd	National Recovery and Resilience Agency		
Home in Place	NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission		



Engaging across NSW (continued)

### Bring Your Bills Days

EWON’s Bring Your Bills Days provide services and support to customers with energy and water-related issues, as well as recognising that energy affordability challenges are generally also associated with legal, housing or other financial challenges.

We organise Bring Your Bills Days in key locations based on complaints data and demographic information, as well as significant local events such as natural disasters.

We invite energy and water providers, government and not-for-profit organisations to offer support to residents. Each organisation has an information stall, can speak with customers face-to-face and can network with other organisations.

EWON staff review customers’ bills and try to resolve issues on the spot by liaising with providers and referring customers to other organisations at the event. Providers and customers benefit from the constructive engagement and the quick issues resolution.

This year we organised and collaborated with other organisations at Bring Your Bills Days in 12 locations:

- Forbes
- Redfern
- Dubbo
- Narromine
- Trangie
- Wellington
- Broken Hill
- Wilcannia
- Menindee
- Coffs Harbour
- Macksville
- Grafton



### Building community resilience during the cost-of-living crisis

In June 2024, more than 60 community workers from South West Sydney attended our annual Community Workers Forum in Liverpool.

Our headline speakers were Trina Jones, the NSW Rental Commissioner, who spoke about improving the rental market for NSW consumers and Brendan French, CEO of Energy Consumers Australia, who presented on the impact of the energy transition. In the final session Carolyn Campbell-McLean from Muscular Dystrophy NSW shared her lived experience of being reliant on home-based life support equipment.

*“Understanding the full picture of how the cost of living is impacting marginalised and vulnerable communities and what we can do to make energy bills more affordable.”*

*“I really enjoyed the forum. Every presentation was engaging and relevant. Keep up the good work!”*

*“Guest speakers showed great passion and were extremely knowledgeable in their field.”*

Attendee feedback

Top: Attendees at EWON’s Community Worker Forum  
Right: EWON staff helping customers at our Community Assist Day in Forbes

Engaging across NSW (continued)

**Working with First Nations Communities**

EWON has worked closely with First Nations communities, their leaders and the agencies and services that have worked with them for nearly 20 years. The privilege of being invited into First Nations communities is never underestimated by EWON and, therefore, we ensure we are culturally sensitive and effective in providing targeted services in each community.

Understanding and addressing the issues and complaints First Nations customers experience in their communities cannot be replicated via phone or internet. Highlights of our First Nations engagement from FY24 include:

**Law Week – Gamilaraay land**

In August 2023, EWON joined Legal Aid NSW and Murdi Paaki Service’s Tenant Support and Education Project’s Law Week activities in Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Collarenebri and Goodooga.

Consumers were able to speak to us about their concerns and lodge complaints on the spot. They also accessed resources to help manage their accounts, including information about rebates and tips for reducing energy and water consumption.

**Koori Knockout – Darkinjung land**

EWON attended two days of the annual NSW Koori Rugby League Knockout Carnival in September and October 2023. The carnival is one of the biggest First Nations community gatherings in the state, attracting over 40,000 people. It was a great opportunity to broadly raise awareness of our service.

**Yabun Festival – Gadigal land**

Sydney’s annual Yabun Festival in January is a highlight of our First Nations engagement program. Over 40,000 people attended this year and EWON staff spoke with, or provided, information to over 100 customers.

**Murdi Paaki Tenancy Support and Education Project partnership – Wiljali and Barkindji land**

In April 2024, we teamed up again with Murdi Paaki’s Tenant Support and Education Project. Our relationship was initially established in 2016 but was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We attended Community Information Days in Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Menindee. Many customers in the area struggle to manage energy debt and we helped them access affordability programs, payment plans and rebates.

**Good Service Mob – Yuin-Monaro land**

EWON continues to support the Good Service Mob, a collaboration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff from complaint handling agencies that help First Nations consumers across NSW. The Good Service Mob aims to ensure all First Nations communities are aware of their rights as consumers, and the free services available to assist them.

In June, EWON took part in the Good Service Mob community information days in Wallaga Lake, Batemans Bay and Bega.



EWON staff at Yabun Festival

Engaging across NSW (continued)

**Bring Your Bills Days – Wiradjuri land**

In February 2024, over 300 residents and small businesses from Dubbo, Wellington, Trangie and Narromine attended our four Bring your Bills Days in partnership with Financial Counselling Australia.

We were joined by over 20 participating community, government and industry organisations. Origin Energy, AGL, Red Energy and Essential Energy attended to resolve issues on the spot. Customers were offered affordable payment plans, had rebates applied to their account, received Energy Account Payment Assistance and in some circumstances had part of their debt waived.

EWON’s outreach team has built relationships in Dubbo and the surrounding region over a number of years. This year, we partnered with 2023 NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Lynda Edwards and her colleagues from Financial Counselling Australia. They were key to the success of each day. Lynda’s local knowledge, connections and help with local promotion ensured strong customer attendance.

**Narromine Little Athletics Club sponsorship**

During the trip, the Ombudsman announced EWON’s sponsorship of the Narromine Little Athletics Club. Our small contribution helped the Club purchase uniforms, minimising the expense for families enrolling their children and ensuring they keep active and connected to community.

The sponsorship will help raise awareness of EWON in regional NSW with factsheets and other information available at the Club for parents and the addition of EWON’s logo on uniforms.



Dr June Smith, Deputy Ombudsman AFCA (left); Janine Young, EWON (middle); and Lynda Edwards, FCA (center right) and other EWON staff at the National Debt Helpline in Dubbo.



# Raising awareness across NSW

## Media in focus

This year we provided expert commentary in response to enquiries from state and national media seeking information, data and insights about complaints trends.

In FY24, the Ombudsman completed 22 interviews for print, radio and TV, up from 16 last year. EWON received 323 media mentions, a significant increase from the 46 received in FY23. This can be attributed to the increase in regional awareness-raising and our work promoting EWON's publications. The Ombudsman was interviewed on a range of topics including high energy prices, estimated bills, bill accessibility for vision-impaired customers, digital meters and time-of-use tariffs, and small business complaints.



**32%**

increase in LinkedIn followers (+390)



**94%**

increase in Facebook followers since FY23



**28%**

of customers heard about us through EWON promotion



**240,933**

website visits



**202,902**

regional customers reached through social media ads



**22**

Ombudsman media interviews (+38%)



Click the photo above to see the Ombudsman speaking about complaint increases



**323**

media mentions (+651%)



57 hours of video viewed on EWON's Facebook

Raising awareness across NSW (continued)

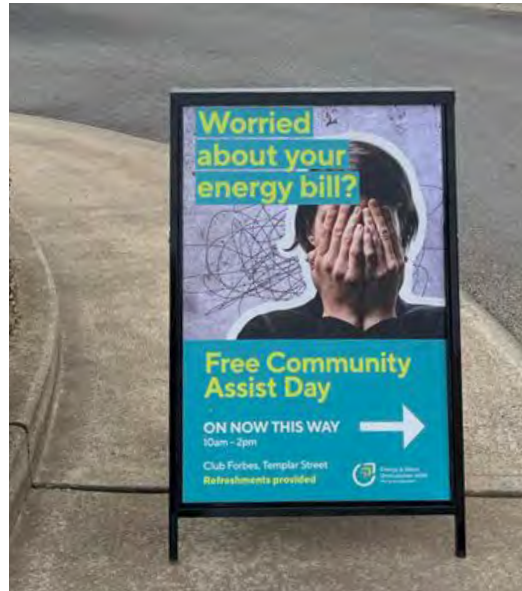
Accessibility in focus

This year, we utilised new methods to strengthen our communications platforms and activities to ensure all NSW consumers are aware of and can access our service.

Google ads

As a not-for-profit organisation, it is difficult to compete in the crowded and costly space of social media and digital advertising. In FY24, we applied for and received a Google Ad Grant providing us with up to \$13,000 per month in search ads on google.com.

This increased visibility has helped us better target our audience, raise awareness of our services and expand our reach. The ads are receiving a 10% click through rate to our website, which is a great result compared to the 4% industry standard. Google ads are one of the key drivers for increased EWON website visits in FY24.

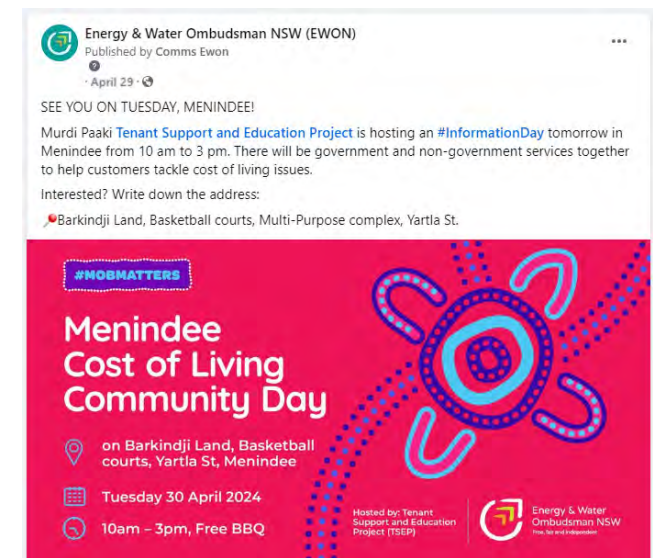


New approach to promoting EWON's events

In July 2023, we trialed a new awareness campaign in the Forbes and Redfern areas.

For Forbes, flyers were distributed to libraries, council, local clubs, community notice boards and community organisations. We also used A-frame posters and flags in the street, listed outreach events on the websites of Forbes Council and Club Forbes, and included the events in partner organisation newsletters. We ran ads in two local newspapers, both in print and online. The print newspapers had a total readership of 8,000 people and the online newspaper ads achieved 10,000 impressions, which is the number of times our ads appeared on a person's screen. Our targeted social media campaign reached 32,618 people, with 500 consumer engagements including likes, comments and shares. We combined this with radio ads on two local stations, and the Ombudsman was interviewed by ABC Central West and WIN news.

The Redfern event was promoted through digital street billboards and posters, as well as on Koori Radio, Koori Mail and a social media campaign reaching 70,000 people.



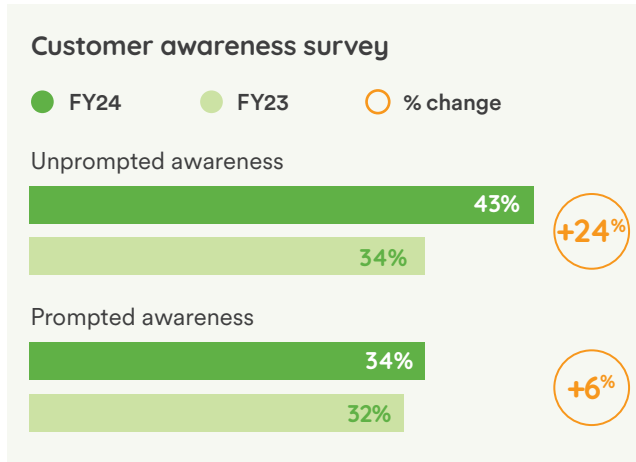
Raising awareness across NSW (continued)

Measuring awareness

Energy Consumers Australia’s (ECA) Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey tracks consumer awareness of ombudsman offices across the National Energy Market. In FY24, the survey included responses from 556 NSW energy consumers.

One question measures unprompted awareness of energy ombudsman services by asking: ‘If you had a complaint about your electricity or gas services, which you could not resolve by talking to your retailer or network company, who would you contact?’ The percentage of respondents who gave an ombudsman-related answer had risen to 43.2% from 34.2% in FY23.

The second question measures prompted awareness by asking: ‘How familiar are you with an organisation called the energy ombudsman in NSW, which assists with complaints about energy?’ This figure increased to 33.6% in FY24, up from 31.7% in FY23.



We also measure awareness via our 2024 Independent Customer Survey, (details on page 44), which included a question about any difficulty customers experienced in finding out about EWON. Positively, the majority of respondents reported no difficulty (78%), but 22% of respondents reported at least ‘a little’ or ‘a lot of difficulty’ finding EWON. We will continue to focus on increasing access to EWON for consumers when they need us by:

- providing thought leadership, complaints data and analysis in response to media enquiries
- developing consumer resources and awareness campaigns
- improving our website and social media channels.

INVESTIGATED

# Credit case study

## Customer seeks compensation for track repairs



Mr Ronson’s property has an easement for transmission lines on it. The network operator contacted him wanting to access the property for vegetation and bushfire maintenance. Mr Ronson told the operator that heavy rain had caused damage to the access track leading to the easement. He said he had started some repairs to the access track at his own expense and would like compensation for his work.

The network operator offered to pay Mr Ronson \$15,000 to cover the completed work, on the condition that he would be responsible for maintenance of the access track moving forward.

Mr Ronson declined the offer and contacted EWON. He was seeking an extra \$6,000, on top of the \$15,000 already

offered by the network, to compensate him for assuming responsibility for the maintenance of the access track moving forward.

As part of the investigation, the network operator conducted a site visit to Mr Ronson's property to see if his work met operational requirements. If the standards were met, it would agree to pay Mr Ronson for works completed, otherwise it would complete rectification works itself. The network operator also said that it used the track less than once every three years, so if Mr Ronson was the main user, then he should be responsible for the ongoing maintenance. It added that a suitable legal agreement would need to be put in place to cover any ongoing liabilities.

Once the site visit had taken place, the network operator advised that the repair work undertaken by Mr Ronson was not up to the network’s required standards; however, it maintained its offer to pay him \$15,000 for the work he had undertaken to date.

During EWON’s further review of this complaint, EWON sought advice from the network about the standard of track required given the network’s view that it currently was not up to its standard. The network reconsidered its position noting that the track was on the customer’s land and not on the network’s easement therefore meaning that the customer was responsible for its (past) and ongoing maintenance. If the customer agreed to

sign a deed of release on this basis, the network would still honour its offer to make an \$15,000 ex-gratia payment.

Having further reviewed and independently confirmed this position, EWON provided this advice to the customer for his consideration.

At that time, Mr Ronson advised he would seek his own legal advice and withdrew his complaint with EWON to pursue the network operator via legal channels.

Issue  
**Land > easement**  
 Outcome  
**Investigation – no further investigation outcome**

# Our people



# Workforce profile



**80**  
EWON staff  
68% full time  
20% part time  
12% maximum-term contract



**6**  
internal promotions  
or secondments  
36 positions filled



**30%**  
of staff have been at  
EWON for 10+ years  
Average staff tenure is six years  
19.8% permanent voluntary staff  
turnover, down from 21%



**55%**  
female Board members  
45% male Board members

**61%**  
Leadership roles held  
by women  
75% executive team female  
and 25% male

# EWON initiatives

EWON is committed to ensuring our staff feel valued, supported and engaged. To achieve this, we introduced several new initiatives this year.



## First Nations cultural awareness training

We partnered with cultural education provider Mirri Mirri to deliver EWON-wide cultural awareness training. Delivered as small, interactive workshops, the training increased our understanding and recognition of First Nations communities. Staff now have the knowledge to identify bias, create meaningful connections to culture, and recognise the historical context of actions, behaviour and language.



## Tribal Warrior cultural trip

Staff joined a Tribal Warrior cruise on Sydney Harbour to learn more about local First Nations culture and history, in line with our Reconciliation Action Plan. We also had the opportunity to access sacred land on Me-Mel Island for a traditional dance performance and local knowledge sharing.

*“Being an Indian born in London and then migrating to Australia, the loss of culture is very evident to me, but learning about the culture and people of the land that you migrate to is also important and yesterday I got to do that.”*

**EWON staff member**

## Wellbeing program

EWON’s wellbeing program includes flu shots, opportunities to donate blood, financial wellbeing seminars, massages and healthy breakfasts.



# 1,372

total hours of staff training.  
Average 17 hours of training per employee.

## Leadership Accelerator Program

Eight of EWON’s emerging leaders completed the eight-month program, which developed their skills and knowledge as aspiring leaders. Modules included personal effectiveness, coaching performance, creating a high-performance culture, achieving results, effective communication and building trust.

## Salary benchmarking

We engaged a remuneration consultancy to evaluate our roles and recommend an appropriate job-leveilling framework to ensure parity across the various job types at EWON. All roles were benchmarked against the general market and a remuneration framework will be developed to ensure a consistent and competitive approach to remuneration.



## Protecting our staff and their families

We introduced two insurance benefits for EWON staff. Life insurance to ensure financial protection for our employees’ families in the event of death, terminal illness or total permanent disability. Salary continuity insurance to provide a steady income during illness or disability, which will allow staff to focus on recovery without financial worries.

## Psychosocial safety risk assessment

We partnered with our employee assistance provider to conduct a psychosocial safety risk assessment and provide recommendations on how best to manage and mitigate psychosocial risk. The employee survey covered 14 psychosocial hazards and had a 67% response rate. Most of the hazard areas were assessed as low risk, due to the current controls in place, and one area was evaluated as a moderate risk requiring further consideration. Our current control measures and mitigation actions were also evaluated and recommendations have been incorporated into our Work Health and Safety approach.

## Our values

We focus on building a strong values-based culture that underpins all we do, including how we work together and how managers lead their teams.

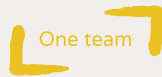
Our organisational values are fundamental to unifying and motivating our workforce.



We are impartial; we approach our work transparently and openly.



We are open and honest; we stand by our actions.



We work together; we are flexible, helpful and take personal responsibility.



We are courteous; we build trust by listening, and following through on our commitments.



We are proactive; we are committed to delivering high-quality services to our customers and stakeholders.



We are accessible and fair; we take a holistic approach to addressing customer circumstances.

## EWON employee engagement

For many years EWON has had a strategic focus on establishing a strong and vibrant culture that recognises the important role our people play in delivering on our purpose. Each year we measure employee engagement, giving our people an opportunity to give feedback about what's working well and what could be improved.

After a drop in employment engagement in FY23 to 70%, we were pleased to see engagement levels return in FY24, to the previous high levels of 80%. The key areas of strength reported by staff include the following:

- They believe in EWON's values, purpose and objectives and are proud to work for EWON.
- They have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and they cooperate to get the work done.

- They are treated with fairness and respect, and have trusting relationships.
- Health and safety are taken seriously.
- They feel safe to take social risks.
- EWON takes action to be socially responsible.

Staff also reported they were looking for change with respect to:

- providing open and honest communication
- fairer remuneration
- increased opportunities for learning and development, and career progression
- increased recognition of strong performance.



80%

employee engagement in FY24, up from 70% in FY23



# Financials

Statement of Profit or Loss for the year ended 30 June 2024	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Revenue</b>		
Revenue from contracts with customers	17,507,229	13,810,299
Other income	249,715	122,955
<b>Total income</b>	<b>17,756,944</b>	<b>13,933,254</b>
<b>Operating expenditure</b>		
Employee benefits expenses	(10,095,185)	(8,571,299)
Other employee-related costs	(419,699)	(316,496)
Occupancy and other related costs	(253,612)	(247,281)
Communications expenses	(60,629)	(93,213)
Information technology costs	(1,764,747)	(1,429,469)
General and administration expenses	(971,561)	(921,026)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(1,199,426)	(1,226,323)
Finance costs	(57,808)	(84,011)
<b>Total operating expenditure</b>	<b>(14,822,667)</b>	<b>(12,889,118)</b>
<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>2,934,277</b>	<b>1,044,136</b>

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	6,759,005	7,337,908
Trade and other receivables	6,260,600	1,569,499
Other current deposits	50,000	50,000
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>13,069,605</b>	<b>8,957,407</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	204,154	127,772
Right of use assets	1,207,099	2,031,785
Intangible assets	166,092	394,021
Other non-current deposits	641,335	641,335
WIP - software development	–	76,274
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>2,218,680</b>	<b>3,271,187</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>15,288,285</b>	<b>12,228,594</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	4,855,087	3,991,606
Lease liabilities	933,205	869,789
Employee benefits	1,104,255	926,564
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>6,892,547</b>	<b>5,787,959</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>		
Lease liabilities	419,783	1,324,230
Employee benefits	79,606	154,333
Provisions	480,539	480,539
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>979,928</b>	<b>1,959,102</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>7,872,475</b>	<b>7,747,061</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>7,415,810</b>	<b>4,481,533</b>
<b>Accumulated funds</b>	<b>7,415,810</b>	<b>4,481,533</b>

## Financials (continued)

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2024	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash flows used in operating activities		
Fees from Members	15,952,680	15,534,267
Payments to suppliers and employees	(15,644,706)	(13,879,213)
Net cash flows from operating activities	307,974	1,655,054
Cash flows from investing activities		
Interest received	240,511	98,955
Payments for property, plant, equipment and intangibles	(204,642)	(76,275)
Net cash flows from investing activities	35,869	22,680
Cash flows used in financing activities		
Interest paid on lease liabilities	(57,808)	(84,011)
Principal paid on lease liabilities	(864,938)	(930,456)
Net cash flows used in financing activities	(922,746)	(1,014,467)
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents held	(578,903)	663,267
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	7,337,908	6,674,641
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	6,759,005	7,337,908

# Glossary

## **Affordability program**

EWON's terminology for energy and water retailers 'hardship' programs which provide support for customers having trouble paying their energy and water bills.

## **Backbill**

A bill issued either after a delay or when a customer has been undercharged.

## **Consumer Energy Resources (CER)**

Energy producing technologies used in homes including rooftop solar systems, battery storage systems and electric vehicles.

## **Complaint**

Any contact a customer has with EWON, including an enquiry, referred to a higher level or investigation.

## **Customer**

NSW energy or water consumers who access EWON's service.

## **Distributor**

The entity that supplies the electricity, gas or water across the network, to the customer's property, reads their meter and provides metering data to the retailer. Electricity distributors are often referred to as operating 'the poles and wires'.

## **Embedded network**

When the energy or water infrastructure enables the owner of a site to sell energy or water to the occupants. Typically found

in apartment blocks, retirement villages, caravan parks and shopping centres.

## **Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA)**

Vouchers to help people experiencing difficulty paying their electricity or gas bill. The vouchers are issued by participating community organisations.

## **Energy transition**

The move towards using renewable energy to power the NSW electricity network.

## **Estimated meter read**

A meter reading calculated when your meter has not been accessed or read, which may be based on your previous actual meter reads. The bill may give a reason for an estimated bill.

## **Exempt retailer**

A seller of energy that is exempt from the requirement to hold a retailer authorisation with the Australian Energy Regulator. Under the National Energy Retail Law, any party that sells energy must either be authorised as a retailer or exempt from authorisation.

## **National Energy Customer Framework (NECF)**

The structure for the national regulation of retailing electricity and gas. It includes the National Energy Retail Law, the National Energy Retail Law Regulations and the National Energy Retail Rules.

## **National Energy Retail Rules (NERR)**

Part of the National Energy Customer Framework (NECF). The rules include consumer protections for the sale of energy to small retail customers.

## **National Energy Retail Law (NERL)**

Part of the National Energy Customer Framework (NECF). The act regulates the retail sale of energy to customers and makes provisions for the relationship between the distributors and consumers of energy.

## **National Meter Identifier (NMI)**

The unique numerical identifier that is attached to each electricity supply address. The NMI is listed on your electricity bill.

## **Member**

NSW electricity and gas networks and retailers, as well as exempt sellers and networks, that supply residential customers in embedded networks, must join EWON. Similarly, water providers such as Sydney Water, Hunter Water, Water NSW and licensees under the Water Industry Competition Act 2006 are required to be EWON members. Membership is optional for councils that provide water to their residents.

## **Ombudsman**

The term originates from Sweden. The Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association describes an Ombudsman as 'A free, informal and cost effective alternative to court action. Well known for independent and impartial review and investigation.

Commonly describes both the person who holds the position of ombudsman and the office they head up. It is a gender neutral term.'

## **Payment plan**

An arrangement between a customer and the retailer whereby regular, more frequent, smaller payments are made towards a bill.

## **Provider**

General term to refer to an electricity, gas or water retailer or distributor that is a member of EWON.

## **Refer to higher level (RHL)**

A complaint referred to the provider's specialist dispute resolution team.

## **Retailer**

The provider that bills the customer for energy/water consumption.

## **Smart meter (digital meter)**

A type of meter fitted with a communication device that enables energy consumption data to be recorded at least every 30 minutes and transmitted remotely. It can also be used to disconnect and reconnect supply remotely.

## **Systemic issue**

Regulatory issues or providers' policies or practices that can negatively affect numerous customers and lead to complaints to EWON.



Energy & Water  
Ombudsman NSW

Free, fair and independent

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**Keep in touch**

