

# Media release



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## Ombudsman resolves energy and water complaints

More than 7900 Queenslanders reached out to the Energy and Water Ombudsman last financial year seeking help to resolve issues with their electricity, gas and water providers.

According to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland's (EWOQ) 2016-17 annual report, which was released last Friday, high bills, billing errors, debt collection and disconnections due to non-payment continue to be the major sources of complaints from consumers.

Queensland's Energy and Water Ombudsman Jane Pires said of the cases closed in 2016-17, there were 6636 complaints about electricity providers, 552 about gas suppliers and 540 about water retailers, while the remaining 133 cases were general enquiries or referrals not related to these issues.

"Over the past 12 months, we've helped a customer who was wrongly disconnected while transferring their supply to another energy provider, and resolved a billing dispute for another customer that resulted in the energy provider recalling the debt and default listing, and waiving outstanding charges," she said.

"We also negotiated a payment plan and reconnection fee waiver for a gas customer, resolved a case where a gas account was set up in error, and settled a dispute over a sewerage connection charge where the sewerage infrastructure was not compliant for the customer to have access."

Ms Pires said as the cost of electricity, gas and water rises, billing and credit-related issues continue to affect Queenslanders and remain the main source of complaints received by EWOQ.

"We know energy affordability is a major issue across the state and problems with providers can be incredibly stressful for consumers so our office works hard to resolve cases within 28 days, a target we achieved with more than 90 per cent of issues brought to our attention last financial year," she said.

"During 2016-17, we closed a total of 7861 cases and achieved almost \$770,000 worth of outcomes for customers, including 401 goodwill gestures, 223 billing adjustments, 200 payment plans or extensions offered, 80 debt waivers and 14 transfers of credit.

"While this is a great outcome, it's important for those who are having difficulty paying their bills to contact their energy or water provider as soon as possible to discuss payment options."

EWOQ is a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for small energy customers across Queensland and small water customers in South East Queensland who have unresolved issues with their electricity, gas and water suppliers.

Call us on 1800 OMBUDS (1800 662 837) or go to [www.energywatercomplaints.com.au](http://www.energywatercomplaints.com.au) to submit a complaint online.

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**EWOQ media contact (not for publication):** (07) 3087 9456 or [marketing@ewoq.com.au](mailto:marketing@ewoq.com.au). Go to [www.ewoq.com.au/annual-reports](http://www.ewoq.com.au/annual-reports) to download the annual report. Ms Pires is available for interviews.