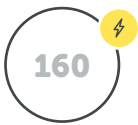


⬇️ Dispute resolution process

OUR JURISDICTION
we can assist
customers who use:

Less than



megawatt hours
of electricity per year

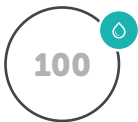
Less than



terajoule
of gas per year



Less than



kilolitres
of water per year
and are in SEQ

Our approach is informal and based on the principles of alternative dispute resolution. We seek to establish the facts and issues to help our customers and their supplier better understand the problem at hand, and each other's point of view. The outcome may be achieved by agreement between the customer and the supplier, or through conciliation based on what we deem a fair and reasonable outcome.

Our jurisdiction

Our office was established to assist customers who use less than 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year or one terajoule of gas per year. In South East Queensland, we also help residential water customers and small business with water consumption under 100 kilolitres a year.

We can investigate unresolved disputes about:

- problems with payment
- account errors and disputes
- disconnections and restrictions
- damages and loss
- energy marketing
- energy contract issues
- vegetation management
- supply quality and reliability
- extensions to supply
- connection of supply
- customer service issues
- guaranteed service levels
- equipment issues
- burst pipes, leaks, blockages and spills.

For disputes outside our jurisdiction, we have Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the following agencies to ensure timely exchange of information and referral of cases, where relevant:

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Australian Energy Regulator
- Australian Energy Market Commission
- Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
- Office of Fair Trading
- Queensland Competition Authority
- Queensland Ombudsman.

How we handle disputes

All contacts with EWOQ are called cases and managed in one of the following ways:

- as a **general enquiry** about electricity, water, gas or other issue that is not a complaint which relates to a scheme participant
- **referred back** to the energy or water supplier because the customer has not attempted to resolve the issue with them before coming to us
- **referred to another organisation** with whom we have a MoU because the complaint is outside our jurisdiction
- registered as a **complaint** and assigned to a dedicated Investigation and Conciliation Officer.

⬇ Dispute resolution complaint stages

STEP 1

Referral to higher level or investigation

Once a case has been assigned to an Investigation and Conciliation Officer, the officer discusses the resolution options with the customer. The customer may choose to have us refer their complaint to a higher level within the energy or water supplier, or begin an investigation.

Referral to higher level (RHL)

This process gives the customer an option to escalate their complaint to a higher level within the energy or water supplier. When this option is chosen, we prepare an RHL notice that provides a summary of the customer's issue and requires the supplier to contact the customer within five business days. If contact is not made, or the problem remains unresolved, customers can request us to investigate.

STEP 2

Investigation

Once an investigation commences, we prepare a notice of investigation which details the customer's issue. The supplier is required to respond back to us within 10 business days. The investigation officer will liaise between the customer and supplier to achieve a fair and reasonable resolution.

Where our investigations determine the supplier's actions were appropriate, the complaint will be closed and the parties advised of the decision and our reasons.

Where an error is found, we will try to negotiate a suitable outcome, for example:

- a payment plan for an overdue account
- reconnection of energy supply
- compensation for damage to equipment or property.

STEP 3

Final order

If we cannot achieve informal resolution of the complaint, the matter may be finalised in a number of ways.

Firstly, a decision can be made under section 22 of the Act to not investigate or to discontinue the investigation. There were 10 cases finalised this way in 2018-19.

Secondly, if a matter cannot be resolved by negotiation or conciliation, the Energy and Water Ombudsman may decide to make a final order requiring an energy or water supplier to take certain action.

Among other things, the Ombudsman can order energy and water suppliers to:

- pay compensation
- provide a non-monetary solution to remedy the dispute
- amend a stated charge under the Act
- cancel a negotiated contract
- perform corrective work.

No final orders were issued in 2018-19.

Notice of withdrawal

A customer can withdraw a case during its investigation. There were 24 notice of withdrawals during 2018-19.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION complaint stages



Referral



Investigation



Final order

⬇ Quality assurance



OUR QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

We conducted six quality assurance assessment cycles in 2018-19, with more than 500 cases assessed to ensure our practices are accurate, efficient, consistent and of a high standard.

Each cycle is undertaken over a six-week period and includes a self-assessment followed by selective assessment reviews by team leaders and regional managers. Feedback and improvements identified from the assessments are provided and implemented in the final week of each cycle.

At the completion of each cycle, a report on the findings and proposed improvements are provided to the Energy and Water Ombudsman and General Manager of Assessment, Investigation and Resolution.