



Charter of Service

1. Introduction

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) is a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for people who are unable to resolve a complaint with their electricity, gas or water supplier.

This charter sets out the standards of service that residential and small business energy and water customers, and energy and water entities¹, can expect if their dispute is referred to us for investigation and resolution.

2. Our role

We aim to provide the people of Queensland with a timely, effective, independent and just way of resolving disputes with their energy and water suppliers (scheme participants).

EWOQ can only assist small energy customers across Queensland or small water customers in south east Queensland.

For energy disputes, small customers are those whose electricity consumption is less than 100 megawatt hours per annum and gas consumption less than one terajoule. For water disputes, small customers are either a residential customer or a non-residential customer who uses no more than 100 kilolitres of drinking water and/or reticulated recycled water per annum.

We can assist with unresolved complaints about:

- billing
- credit
- customer service
- land
- marketing
- provision
- supply
- disconnection of energy supply
- restriction of water supply, or
- transfer.

3. Our goals

We are committed to excellence in dispute management services and adherence to the principles of industry-based Ombudsman schemes of:

¹ Our jurisdiction to resolve water related disputes extends only to water retailer/suppliers in south east Queensland



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- Accessibility
- Independence
- Fairness
- Accountability
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness

4. What you can expect from us

Our customers and scheme participants can expect the following from EWOQ:

- confidentiality
- honesty
- responsiveness and accountability
- respect for all opinions and people
- employees who are polite, willing to listen and courteous
- employees who are sensitive to cultural diversity
- reasonable access to our services for all people regardless of background and circumstances
- professional, fair and independent advice.

5. Dealing with a complaint

- Every complaint will be properly considered
- We will explain what we will and will not investigate
- If another agency or authority is responsible for dealing with the complaint we will explain why, and assist the customer in making a complaint to them
- If we investigate the complaint we will do so as quickly as possible
- We will adhere to the principles of procedural fairness when undertaking investigations
- We will provide regular updates on the progress of our consideration/investigation of the complaint, and
- We will provide a clear explanation of our final decision.

6. Investigations

The Energy and Water Ombudsman can regulate the procedure for an investigation in a way he or she considers appropriate. However, if practicable, the procedure must be one that uses mediation or negotiation to attempt to resolve the dispute.

7. Accessibility

We will assist our stakeholders in learning about what we do through information and publications found on our web portal www.energywatercomplaints.com.au and our website www.ewoq.com.au

We will provide a range of ways to lodge a complaint:



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- on-line through our web portal and website
- by telephone Monday to Friday between 8:30am and 5pm (free call 1800 662 837)
- email (complaints@ewoq.com.au), fax ((07) 3087 9477), or letter (PO Box 3640 South Brisbane BC Qld 4101).

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 working days.

- In person
Brisbane: Level 16, 53 Albert Street (8:30am-5pm)
Cairns: Level 1, Cairns Corporate Tower, 15 Lake Street (8:30am-5pm)
Rockhampton: Level 2, 209 Bolsover Street (8:30am-5pm)

8. Helping all customers

We aim to provide our services to all Queenslanders including people from non-English speaking backgrounds and those with a disability.

Customers who need the help of an interpreter should contact 131 450 or visit <http://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

We have also developed a brochure that provides, with the aid of pictures, an overview of Ombudsmen and EWOQ. Go to [Brochures & fact sheets](#) and view the brochure under [Culturally and Linguistically Diverse](#) . Our office will also provide a copy on request.

Customers who have difficulty communicating their complaint because of a speech or hearing impairment can use the National Relay Service. To use this service people should contact 133 677 or visit <http://relayservice.gov.au/>

With the customer's written permission, someone can act on their behalf. For more details see section 9 below 'Authority to Act'.

9. Authority to Act

If EWOQ is contacted by a person acting on behalf of a customer we will require an [authority](#) from the customer, either verbally or in writing, for the representative to act on their behalf.

Where it appears a representative is charging a fee in respect of the matter referred to EWOQ, we will contact the customer directly and advise them that our service is free. If a customer chooses to have



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someone act on their behalf, any fee charged by the person acting for them is not recoverable through the EWOQ scheme.

If the customer chooses to continue to be represented by their agent for a fee, the customer's wishes will be respected and EWOQ will deal directly with their agent.

If the customer advises that they wish to deal directly with EWOQ, we will confirm that in writing and deal directly with them regarding their complaint. It is the customer's responsibility to advise the agent of their decision to deal directly with EWOQ.

By appointing a person to act on their behalf, EWOQ may:

- seek information from that person
- provide information to that person
- deal with that person as though they were dealing with the customer.

The authority to represent the customer will remain valid during EWOQ's investigation, unless revoked by the customer or their authorised representative. A customer can change or cancel the authority at any time by contacting EWOQ.

10. How customers can help us

Before making a complaint about their energy or water supplier, customers must try to resolve the problem with them first. Customers should also give their supplier a reasonable opportunity to resolve their complaint before contacting us for assistance.

Our [tips for handling a complaint with your supplier](#) may be useful. If a customer is still not satisfied after contacting their supplier, a complaint can be lodged with us. It is also a good idea to check if we can assist with their [type of complaint](#). Our web portal also provides information on the majority of issues we can deal with www.energywatercomplaints.com.au

When making a complaint, customers should provide:

- their contact details (including address and daytime phone number)
- the name of their energy or water supplier
- their account number, and
- an outline of their complaint (a factual and concise description of the details of the complaint in the order they happened).

EWOQ expects our staff to be respectful, willing to listen and courteous, and asks that customers do the same in their dealings with us.



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11. How scheme participants can help us

Scheme participants can help to resolve their customer’s complaints by:

- responding to our requests for information in a timely, thorough and responsive way
- being polite, willing to listen and courteous in their dealings with EWOQ staff
- admitting error or fault, apologising to the customer where appropriate, and looking for other remedies to address the impact of their error
- addressing systemic issues exposed by the complaint
- advising EWOQ of issues which may give rise to a complaint
- recording and analysing complaint information to improve customer service.

12. Brickbats and bouquets

EWOQ takes all complaints concerning its decisions and the actions and conduct of employees seriously and:

- actively encourages feedback about how we carry out our core complaints function
- takes a client focused approach to how we deal with complaints about our services
- accepts complaints about our services orally or in writing
- uses complaints about our service to drive improvements to our business processes.

If you would like to thank one of our staff who you believe has done an outstanding job, we will make sure your message is passed on and our officers are recognised for their good work.

We also want to hear from any customer or scheme participant who has a complaint about our service or the conduct of our staff.

Just email your compliment or complaint to info@ewoq.com.au or contact us by telephone or mail at the addresses found in section 7 above.

Our *Community Complaints Policy and Procedures* sets out in detail EWOQ’s policy for dealing with complaints from our customers and scheme participants concerning our conduct and/or service. This document can be found at <http://www.ewoq.com.au/>

13. Document History and Approval

VERSION	DETAIL
1	September 2013



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This version (1) approved by the Energy and Water Ombudsman and is effective from the date signed.

Forbes Smith
Energy and Water Ombudsman
Date ... / ... / 2013