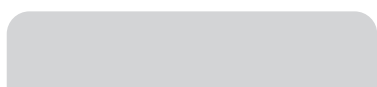


2000-2020

ANNUAL
REPORT
2019-2020



ENERGY & WATER
OMBUDSMAN SA



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Mission Statement

Our mission is to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints and disputes between consumers of electricity, gas and water services and Members of the Scheme by providing a free, independent, accessible, fair and informal service to consumers.

About the Energy & Water Ombudsman SA

Who we are

The Scheme

Energy and water services are important to all stakeholders because they are essential community services; they are not considered optional. That is why independent ombudsman schemes exist across Australia to deal with issues that arise between service providers and customers.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman SA is the approved independent scheme in South Australia.

Role

Our role is to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints and disputes between the consumers of energy, water and sewerage services and the providers of those services (our Members) by providing a free, independent, accessible, fair and informal service to consumers. We are also recognised as an external dispute resolution scheme (EDR) to handle privacy-related complaints under the Privacy Act 1988.

Principles

The principles that guide our activities are:

- dealing with complaints in a fair, just, informal and expeditious manner
- acting independently, while maintaining good working relationships with Members and other stakeholders
- being accessible to energy and water consumers in South Australia and ensuring there are no barriers to access, such as geographic location, language, physical or mental capability or financial status
- providing a free service to consumers
- making effective use of technology to assist in quality complaint handling, referral and reporting
- working together with Members, other complaint-handling bodies, government agencies and consumer and community organisations.

Energy and water services are important to all stakeholders because they are essential community services; they are not considered optional.

Origins

The Energy and Water Ombudsman SA originated from the privatisation of the South Australian electricity industry in 1999.

It became a licence condition for all entities providing electricity services that they participate in an independent dispute resolution scheme to ensure fair practice and effective dispute resolution between the electricity providers and their customers. The Scheme was subsequently expanded to include consumers of gas and water services. In 2012, we also became an external dispute resolution scheme (EDR) to handle privacy related complaints.

The industry

Our Members are the licensed or authorised electricity and gas distribution, transmission and retail entities, and water and sewerage service providers. They now include exempt embedded networks, exempt network service providers and exempted energy sellers. A list of current Members can be found under Our Organisation.

How we work

In any consumer setting things can go wrong. That is why it is important that consumers have access to the Energy and Water Ombudsman SA.

What we do

We are an independent service that can investigate and resolve disputes between electricity, gas and water retailers and distributors and their customers. Customers can contact us about a range of issues including:

- connection, supply and sale of energy or water services by a Member
- disconnection or restriction of supply
- billing disputes
- administration of credit and payment services
- security deposits

- the impact on land or other property of actions by a Member
- the conduct of Members' employees, servants, officers, contractors or agents
- complaints about acts or practices of Members that may interfere with the privacy of an individual under the Privacy Act 1988
- any other matters referred by a Member by agreement with the Ombudsman and the persons affected.

Our full range of services and complaint resolution processes are explained in this report, together with the way we have provided the services in the past financial year.

What we don't do

Our functions do not extend across all areas. We cannot deal with:

- the setting of prices and tariffs
- commercial activities outside the scope of a Member's authorisation or licence
- the content of government policies, legislation, licences and codes
- matters before a court, tribunal or arbitrator
- customer contributions to the cost of capital works
- disputes between Members.

Our approach

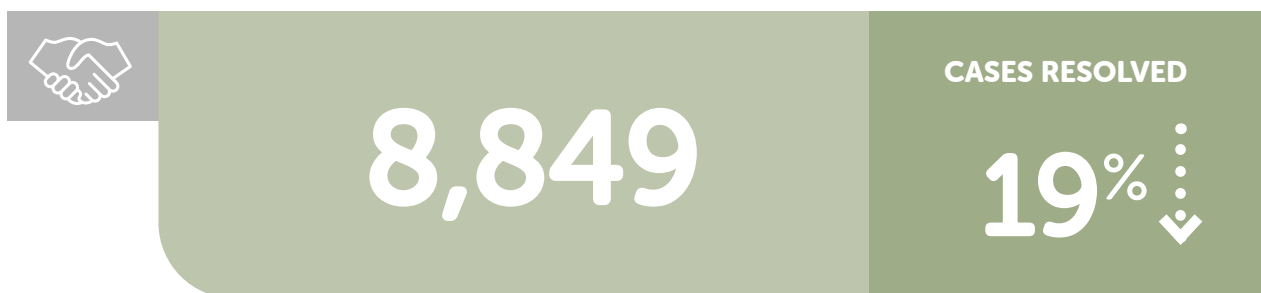
We are an independent and fair service that can investigate and resolve disputes between energy and water retailers and distributors and their customers.

We are not an advocacy service for either party in a dispute, nor can we provide legal advice.

We are not a government department.

We put our emphasis on working with our Members and their customers to help them solve problems. We want to find solutions that not only deal with a single problem, but also minimise future complaints and help Members build more responsive and robust complaint-handling systems.

At a glance:



80% = 6,934

ELECTRICITY CASES



14% = 1,197

GAS CASES



5% = 469

WATER CASES



108 SCHEME MEMBERS

NEW SCHEME MEMBERS

17% ↑

Board of Directors



Peter Bicknell
Chair



Geoff Barton
Industry Director



Jessie Byrne
Consumer Director



Margaret Cross
Consumer Director



Kay Matthias
Consumer Director



Patrick Makinson
Industry Director



John Hill
Consumer Director



Anne Westley
Industry Director



Anthony Sinclair
Industry Director

Chair's Report

On behalf of the Board I am pleased to provide this introduction to the 2019 - 20 Annual Report of the Energy and Water Ombudsman SA.

As has been the case with boards across Australia, our Board's primary focus for this financial year has been to ensure that the Scheme is in the best possible position to respond appropriately to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While its impact has been significant this year, the main impact is likely to be in the forthcoming financial year.

The Board's Strategic Plan, renewed in February 2020, has been fundamentally refocused. In the Strategic Plan 2020-21, we introduced a new priority focus area: "Responding to the Impact of COVID-19". The objective of this focus area is:

"To ensure business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic the Scheme will focus on managing customer complaints, member relationships and staff health, safety and well-being in a flexible and responsive manner whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Scheme and continued accessibility to dispute resolution services. The Scheme will respond to government and regulator directives and guidelines and do our part to assist our Members and their customers and our staff to get through this pandemic and to recover."

The key strategies of this focus area include:

- Manage a dispersed workforce... support the physical and mental well-being of our staff.
- Manage the budget with flexibility to adapt to the rapidly changing environment thereby ensuring Scheme sustainability.
- Prioritise case management to ensure the most urgent cases involving financial hardship and the health and safety of vulnerable residents and small business customers are given immediate attention.
- Work with Scheme Members and regulators to identify likely pressure points and concerns for customers in the immediate and longer terms.
- Prepare for recovery, return to the office environment and re-establish business as usual.



The Board continues to work with ombudsman schemes from other states and New Zealand to anticipate emerging challenges.

While we added the COVID-19 focus area to the Strategic Plan 2020-21, the focus areas within the Strategic Plan 2016-19 also were maintained.

Consistent with the Strategic Plan and in response to the urgency of the situation, the first action was to ensure the safety of our staff and the continuity of our services by moving staff to work from their homes, introducing appropriate health, safety and well-being procedures and providing the needed technological support. Due to the planning and cooperation of management and staff, together with our contracted IT and telephony services, this move has been well received by our staff whilst maintaining service continuity to the highest standards.

Based on careful assessment of the future implications of the pandemic, the Board has adopted a budget which will allow for significant flexibility to respond to the anticipated variations in complaint levels across the next 12 months. Indeed, complaint levels for the last 12 months of this financial year have been low, most likely due to emergency support both financially and regulatory. However, it is anticipated that there may be a sharp rise in activity for the Scheme as a range of amelioration supports are lifted later in this calendar year. The Board is closely monitoring the impact of the pandemic on the Scheme's finances and taking action as necessary to ensure it remains in a strong position to provide quality services to all stakeholders.

To maximise flexibility within the 2020-21 financial year, the budget delayed the indexation of Board remuneration payments by six months and postponed certain "one-off" expenditure.

The year 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the commencement of the South Australian Electricity Ombudsman Scheme, since expanded to include gas and water services. The Scheme has grown significantly and proven to be an important part of the regulatory framework for energy and water consumers, ensuring prompt resolution of complaints and disputes between consumers and Members of the Scheme when it is needed.

Unfortunately, the planned 20th Anniversary celebrations had to be cancelled at very short notice due to the social distancing imperatives. While we have been unable to host a celebration event, this report provides a special 20th year focus.

As mentioned in last year's report, the Board continues to work with ombudsman schemes from other states and New Zealand to anticipate emerging challenges including those presented by new

technology, changing consumer expectations and market choices. We want to ensure that our schemes are 'fit for purpose' into the future.

I am pleased to report that the Board has, once again, functioned well throughout the year. Its composition provides an appropriate balance of skills and experience relevant to its role and functions. The consistency of Membership has assisted our ability to make the required decisions expeditiously while coping with the processes involved in Zoom meetings.

As can be seen in our Strategic Plan 2020-21, the Board is particularly concerned about the impact of Australia's economic crisis on many energy and water consumers. However, it is also aware that additional expectations of regulators and consumer capacity to pay may impact on the industry. The Board appreciates the constructive way our Members have responded to these early challenges and commits our Scheme to work with Members and their customers to meet the testing times ahead.

The Scheme is particularly indebted to our staff who have responded to these unexpected challenges with adaptability and good grace. As mentioned above, their cooperation in moving their workstations to home, while maintaining a very high level of competency and teamwork, continues to be appreciated by the Board and is consistent with feedback from Members and customers.

The management team, led by the Ombudsman/CEO Sandy Canale, deserves special acknowledgement for its leadership and ability to maintain a 'business as usual' culture and a high level of performance within the team despite the unprecedented challenges.

Peter Bicknell AM
Chair

**The Board
appreciates the
constructive way
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the testing times
ahead.**

Ombudsman's Report

I would like to present the following report, which highlights the significant events, challenges and opportunities for the Scheme during the 2019-20 financial year and our 20th year of operation.



The story of the year was clearly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In South Australia, unemployment rates increased and those people who spent more time at home are likely to experience above-average energy use.

In response to the pandemic, strong regulator and business action ensured additional support options for those who needed it. This advanced action appears to have resulted in reduced numbers of complaints to our Scheme.

It is important that we and all agencies, state and national, continue to take a position that emphasises collaboration, connection and information sharing to help suppliers and consumers successfully navigate the challenges that lie ahead.

The trend for the year, in terms of case numbers, was a steady decline. Suppliers generally became more proactive in early resolution of complaints and also provided additional support.

Affordability and hardship

The impact of the pandemic on South Australians came on top of the devastating bushfires over Summer. Throughout this time, the Scheme continued to work on robust processes, alongside energy and water industries and community organisations, to deliver households and businesses with their energy and water needs. It is pleasing to see that there has been widespread recognition of the hardship and affordability issues some customers are facing.

Several changes to improve affordability and the management of hardship customers have been implemented this year. Energy retailers were required to introduce new hardship policies by September 1, incorporating standardised statements which the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) outlined in its Hardship Guideline.

The Australian Energy Market Commission made several rule changes to help consumers better manage affordability issues. This included requiring retailers to provide their customers with advance notice of price changes as well as protecting consumers

from large penalties when they miss pay-on-time conditions. Commencing on July 1, 2019, the ACCC Electricity Retail Code aims to allow customers to compare market offers more easily. It also places further restrictions on how discounts are advertised by energy retailers.

The Australian Energy Regulator and the Essential Services Commission (of South Australia) released guidance to businesses about provision of support to customers in response to COVID-19. Service providers were encouraged to consider additional support options during this time.

The Scheme received very low numbers of credit management complaints since March.

20 in 20

2020 delivered a milestone. As the Scheme marks 20 years as the State's free and independent dispute resolution service, more than 100,000 South Australian customers have been helped by the Energy and Water Ombudsman SA.

Established on January 4, 2000 as a condition of the privatisation of the South Australian electricity industry, the Scheme was later expanded to investigate and resolve disputes between customers of water and gas providers and has assisted over 111,000 customers and received and resolved over 170,000 cases over that time.

The Scheme currently has 108 members and resolved 8,849 complaints this financial year. This compares with the original three-member Scheme, called the Electricity Industry Ombudsman (SA), which handled 124 complaints in its first year under the guidance of inaugural Ombudsman Nick Hakof.

We are proud of our role as an independent service that can investigate and resolve disputes between electricity, gas and water retailers and distributors and their customers in South Australia. One of our fundamental and guiding principles is that of fairness to all parties, maximising the opportunity for a just, economical, informal and speedy resolution within an environment of privacy and confidentiality.

Importantly, our Scheme is available at no cost to consumers and is readily accessible regardless of ethnicity, language skills, physical or mental abilities or geographic location within the State.

2020 delivered a milestone. As the Scheme marks 20 years as the State's free and independent dispute resolution service, more than 100,000 South Australian customers have been helped by the Energy and Water Ombudsman SA.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all of our workforce moved off-site in late March. We continued to deal with unresolved complaints while helping to protect our staff and others in the community who are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19.

Transforming energy market

This year, the energy market has continued to undergo significant transformation as new and emerging technologies, such as advanced meters, solar panels and battery storage are increasingly adopted by households and invested in by businesses.

Most energy consumers have access to an ombudsman scheme in the circumstances where they cannot resolve a dispute with their providers who are members of a scheme. However, it is apparent that the new technologies enable more consumers to move away from traditional energy supply arrangements and become customers of providers with new business models. This could mean that some consumers no longer have access to current energy-specific legislative protections and may become more reliant on Australian Consumer Law to resolve disputes.

During this year, the Scheme has contributed to discussions about consumer protections for these new energy products and services. We joined with our Australia and New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman's Network to commission research on how the consumer protection framework could evolve. This research is a helpful starting point for a wider discussion on the operating environment and where the Scheme might be placed in the future in terms of jurisdiction and scope.

Continuous improvement

During 2019-20, we commissioned Bee Squared to undertake an independent review of our operational and dispute resolution processes. The aim of this project is faster resolution of cases with fewer lengthy delays for all stakeholders. Bee Squared delivered several structural, principles and process recommendations that have been implemented this year. While we are still in an early stage, indications are that the project is well on track and delivering positive results.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all our workforce moved off-site in late March. We continued to deal with unresolved complaints received from residential customers and small businesses, while helping to protect our staff and others in the community who are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. Working off-site was a major change for our organisation but I am very pleased with the way our staff and operational support responded to this challenge.

Growth through relationships

I thank our Members for the enthusiasm and proactive mindset they generally brought to interactions with the Scheme throughout the year.

Our stakeholder relationships have well and truly moved to another level of added value to the community as we find ourselves working across boundaries and notional barriers.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge my fellow Ombudsmen who form part of the Australia and New Zealand Energy and Water Network for their ongoing advice and support as we navigate through the changing energy and water landscape and ensure that consumers continue to have access to quality dispute resolution.

The media, and all those involved in making our service visible and accessible to the community, also must be acknowledged for their invaluable assistance.

I am proud of the way our people responded to the impact of the challenges our community has faced over 2019-20. Their optimism and resilience are continually appreciated, both professionally and personally.

I would like to thank the Board, and in particular Chair Peter Bicknell, for their support, advice and commitment throughout the year. Their keen oversight and leadership have provided a clear path for continuing to secure positive outcomes.

Sandy Canale
Energy & Water Ombudsman SA

**I would also like
to thank and
acknowledge my
fellow Ombudsmen
who form part of the
Australia and New
Zealand Energy and
Water Network for
their ongoing advice
and support.**

Case management

The difference between Enquiries and Complaints

A **CASE** is a contact with us, registered and classified as either an 'enquiry' or a 'complaint'.

An **ENQUIRY** is a request for information or assistance, where we do our best to provide the most appropriate response. On occasions, we refer an enquiry to another body, such as a regulator or a government department.

A **COMPLAINT** is an expression of dissatisfaction with a Member (an energy or water service supplier) regarding a policy, practice or customer service performance. We endeavour to provide a response or resolution to the complaint using various means, such as conciliation or direct intervention through an Ombudsman's determination.

We use the following categories within our complaint-handling process.

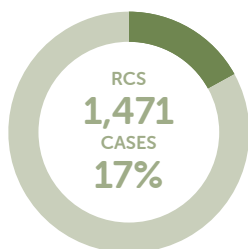
- Refer to Customer Service (RCS)
- Refer to Higher Level (RHL)
- Explanation of Resolution
- Consultation
- Conciliation
- Investigation
- Determination.



Enquiries

The provision of timely and accurate information is an important component of our role. Typically, one of our staff will provide information on industry codes and regulations that may apply to a customer's issue or will explain details shown on a bill to customers. Staff may advise on how to raise an issue with the customer's supplier.

If the issue is outside the jurisdiction of the Scheme, we refer the customer to the appropriate organisation.



Complaints

Refer to Customer Service (RCS)

Under our Charter, an energy or water service supplier must have the opportunity to consider a complaint before we do. If they have not, the contact with us is recorded as a Refer to Customer Service (RCS) complaint and the customer is asked to contact the supplier's customer service section to try to resolve the issue. Before doing this, we provide the customer with an overview of their rights and responsibilities.

Refer to Higher Level (RHL)

If a customer has been unable to resolve an issue with an energy or water service supplier, we accept the issue as a complaint.

If the customer has contacted the Member, we will refer the complaint to the Member's higher-level dispute resolution section under our Refer to Higher Level (RHL) procedure. This type of referral provides the Member with an opportunity to resolve the customer's complaint at a more senior level.

Exceptions include complaints about disconnections that are imminent or have already taken place, which are fast-tracked.

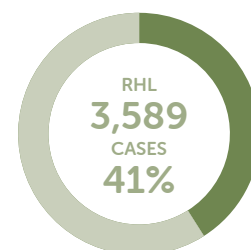
We tell customers that if they are not satisfied with the resolution or the time taken to resolve their complaints, they should contact us again.

We do not close RHL cases until advised by the Member that the complaint has been resolved. This way, we maintain a 'watching brief' over the resolution. If the customer tells us they are not satisfied with the outcome, or the case is not resolved within the specified timeframe, it may be upgraded to a Conciliation or an Investigation and is not recorded in our statistics as a new complaint.

Our Scheme currently allows 28 days for an outcome before case closure or upgrade to Conciliation or Investigation. Other industry ombudsman schemes close RHLs on the same day. In theory, the cases that are upgraded to Conciliation or Investigation because of being overdue without closure at RHL, would result in an additional case at other schemes but remain the same case at our Scheme. Below is a table for consideration of closed cases with a comparative total, to enable comparison with other industry ombudsman schemes.

	2018-19	2019-20
Total cases resolved	10,964	8,849
Upgrades due to overdue RHL	979	570
*Comparative total cases resolved	11,943	9,419

ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN SA CLOSED CASES





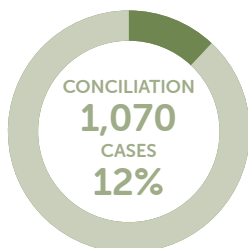
Explanation of Resolution

A case is classified as Explanation of Resolution where the customer is not satisfied with the resolution provided by the Member, even though we consider it to be fair and reasonable. In this instance, we provide an explanation and any relevant information to the customer about why the resolution is considered to be fair and reasonable.



Consultation

A Consultation occurs when a customer is without energy or water supply. This includes customer disconnections or restrictions to water supply for non- payment of accounts.



Conciliation

Prior to investigating a case, we may facilitate a resolution between the customers and the energy or water service supplier for straightforward matters. The customer is provided with written details of the outcome of a conciliated case.

Investigation

When a case has been accepted for Investigation, the Member is asked to provide information on the case. This may include details about the customer's billing history, previous contacts between the Member and the customer relevant to the complaint, the cause of any outage, or whether informed consent was given to a market contract. If the customer has supporting information, we ask that they also provide that.

Where appropriate, we may also get independent technical or legal advice or seek the opinion of a regulatory body such as the Australian Energy Regulator, the Essential Services Commission (of South Australia) or the Office of the Technical Regulator.

Investigations will normally also include reviews of whether the requirements and provisions of the relevant energy and water codes and regulations have been met.

Our aim is to establish an objective and independent view of the issues and to negotiate a fair and reasonable outcome.



Ombudsman Determination

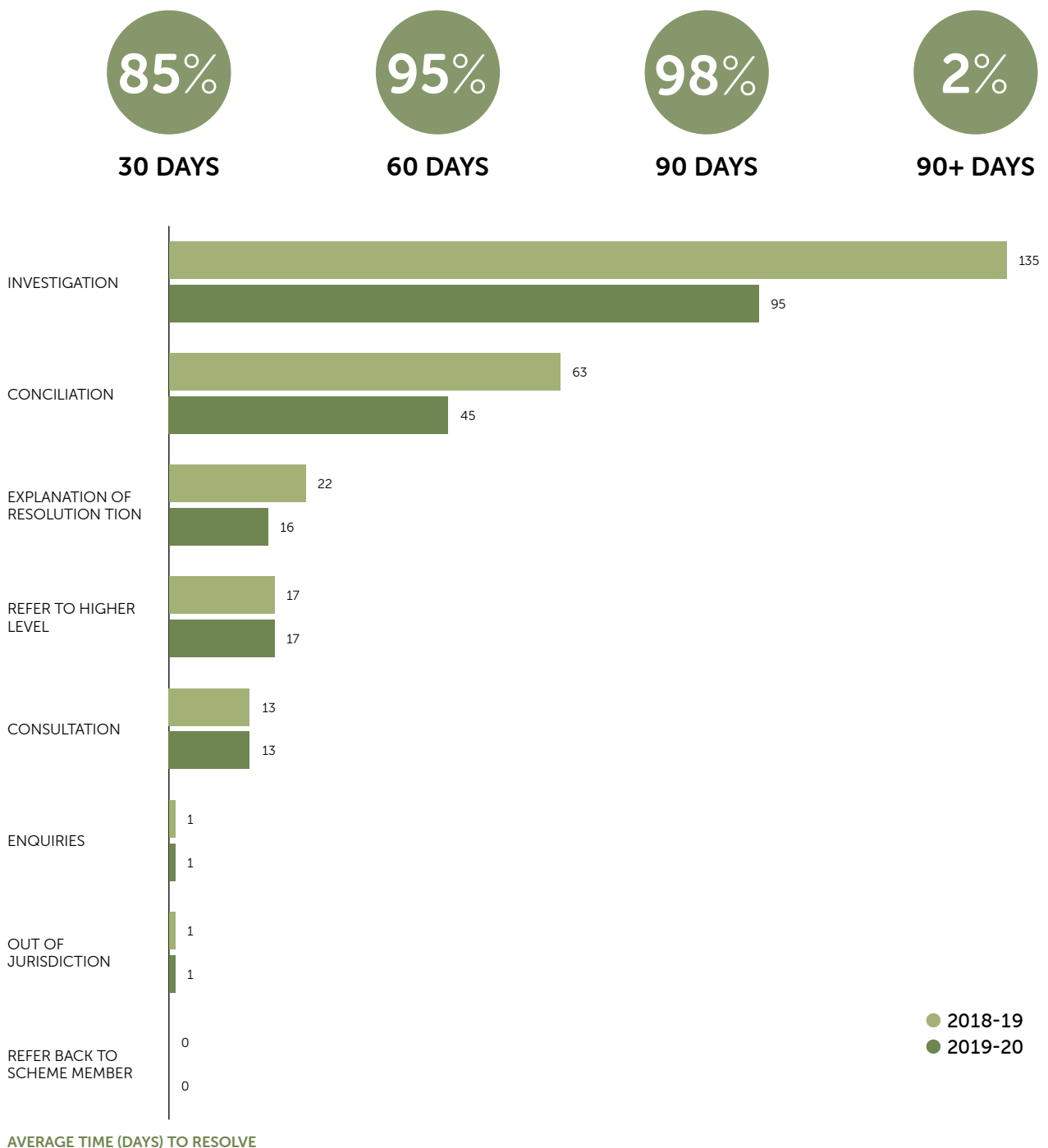
At the completion of an Investigation, and in the absence of a conciliated settlement of a complaint, the Ombudsman can make a Determination to resolve the complaint.



All matters closed by the Scheme were resolved at the lower levels during 2019-20, negating the need for any Determinations.

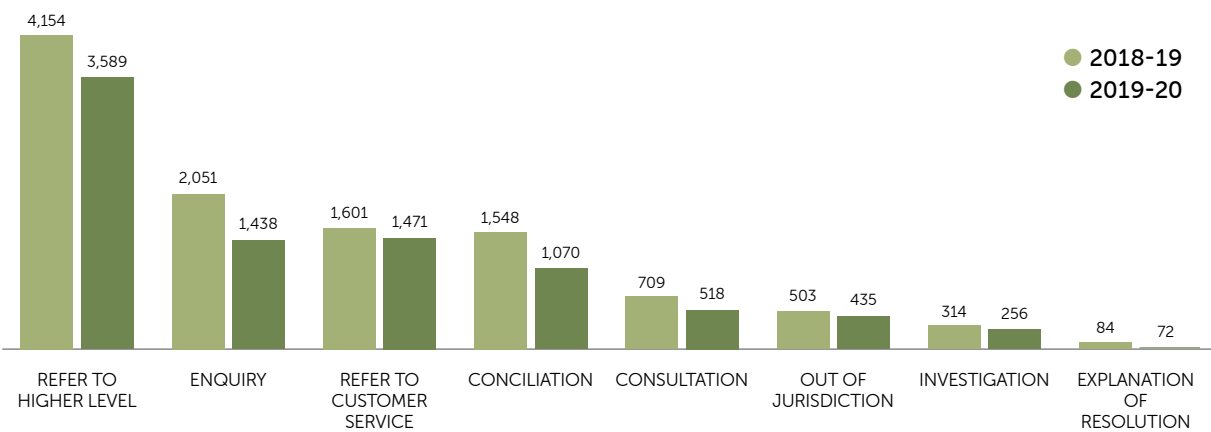
Resolution of cases within timeframes

The figures below show our performance for this financial year in relation to the amount of time taken to resolve cases. Performance has significantly improved since last financial year, driven by a major project undertaken this year to achieve faster resolution of cases and fewer long-term delays as well as improved resolution by Members.

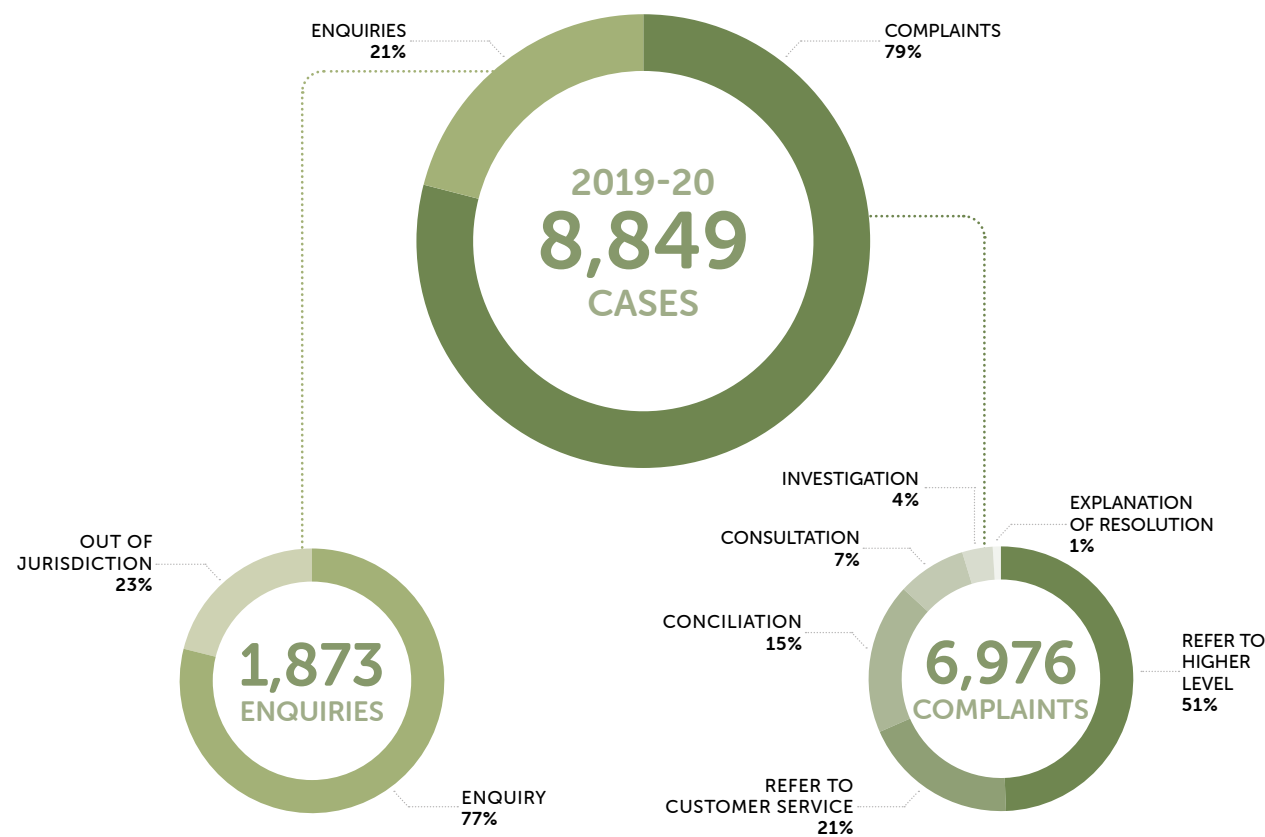


Cases resolved

The following charts show cases resolved during 2019-20, compared with the previous year.



CASES RESOLVED, BY CASE TYPE



CASES RESOLVED, BY LEVEL

Cases received: yearly and monthly trends

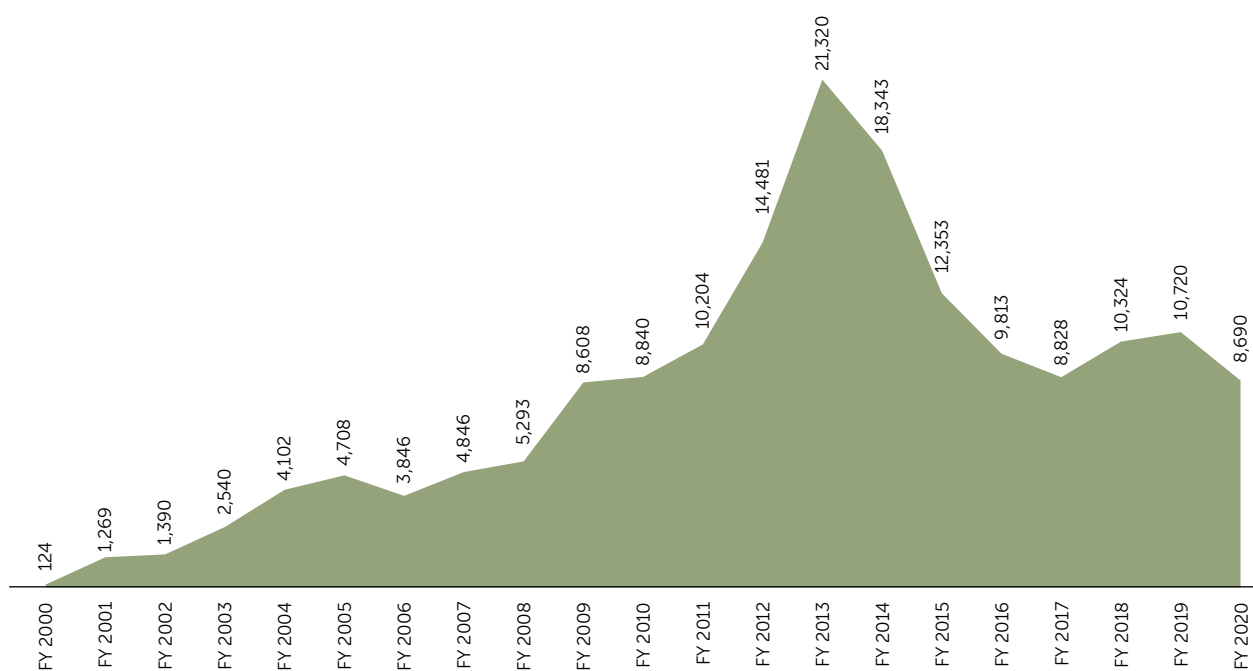
The volume of cases received by the Scheme increased progressively from the Scheme's inception to peak at 21,130 cases in 2012-13. The large rise in 2012-13 was due to complaints arising from billing system conversions. The volume then decreased steadily for four years with a trough of 8,828 cases in 2016-17. The increase over the next two years was largely caused by an influx of cases about metering competition.

As described in the Chair's report, case volumes decreased significantly this year, most markedly during the period where financial and regulatory emergency support was provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019-20, there were a total of 8,690 cases received, which is the lowest volume of cases for 11 years (since FY 2009).

We receive a number of "General Enquiries" annually which are included in the chart below. These enquiries relate to requests for general information, general advice or clarification of a customer's rights while deciding whether to lodge a complaint, provision of feedback without wishing to lodge a complaint, suggestions or issues outside our jurisdiction.

Since the inception of the Scheme, the definitions of case types and the way they are recorded have evolved. The pre-2013 figures provided below are indicative, as cases were recorded differently before 2013 compared to the more recent recordings.

During last year's reporting period, we reviewed the way that we categorise and group cases to enhance communication with customers. For example, we substituted "metering competition" for "metering contestability". Similarly, "Solar PV Approval" is more widely understood by people installing solar systems than our previous category, "SEG Approval". We are always open to feedback from customers who would like to see further changes in the language we use.



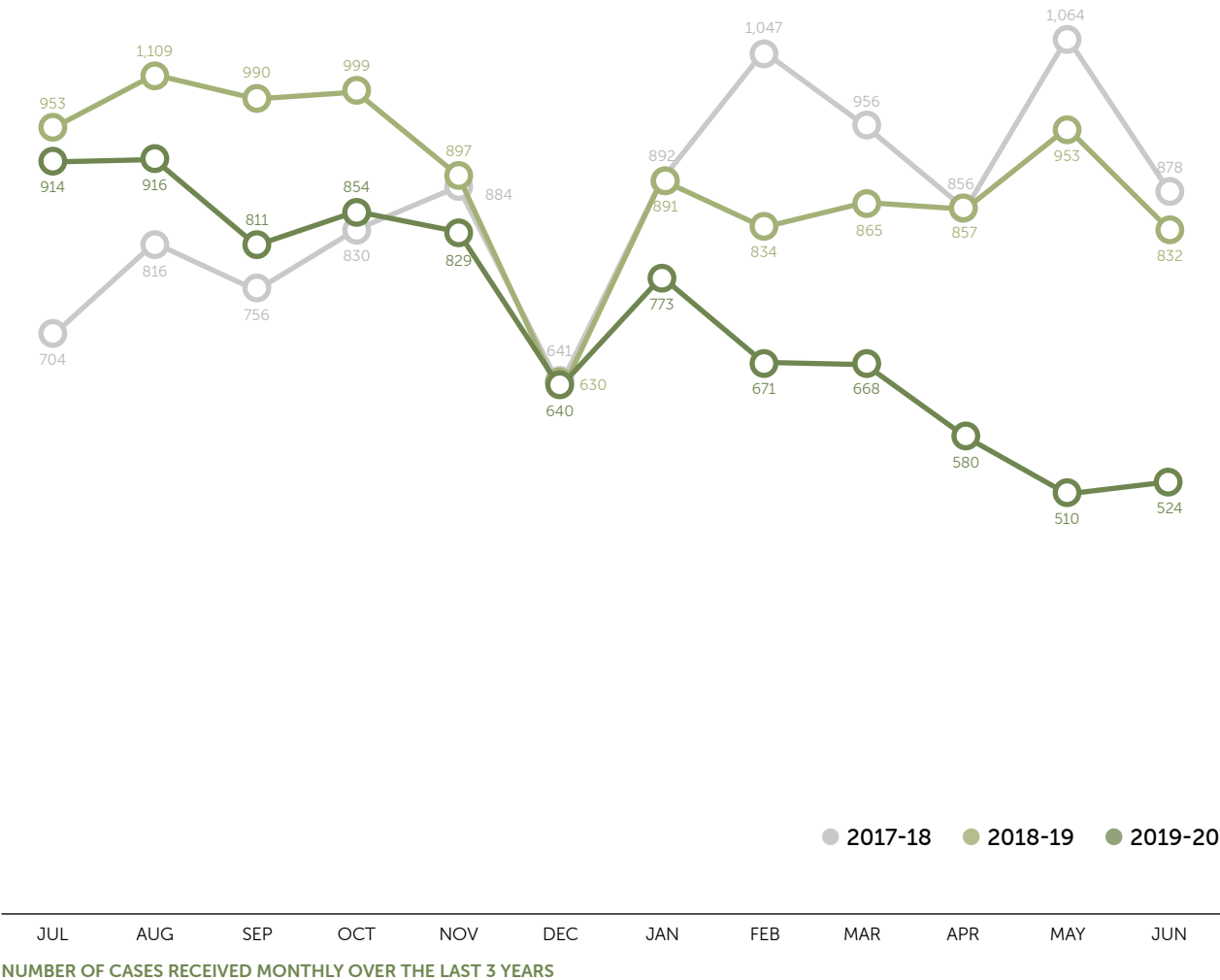
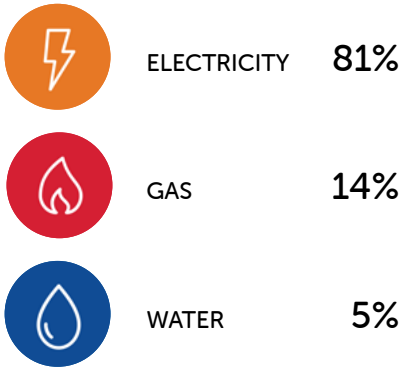
NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY YEAR OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS

When reporting on the realigned categories of cases, we have regrouped the 2017-18 figures in the charts and tables, so readers can quickly compare previous and current figures.

The chart below shows cases received monthly for 2019-20 and the two previous years.

The lowest number of cases received each year are normally recorded in the month of December. However, this year there was a significant decline from March onwards which aligned with the economic disruption caused by COVID-19.

CASES BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

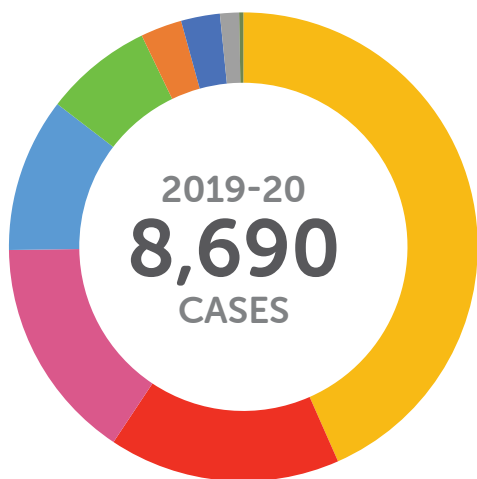


Reasons for Contact



Method of Contact

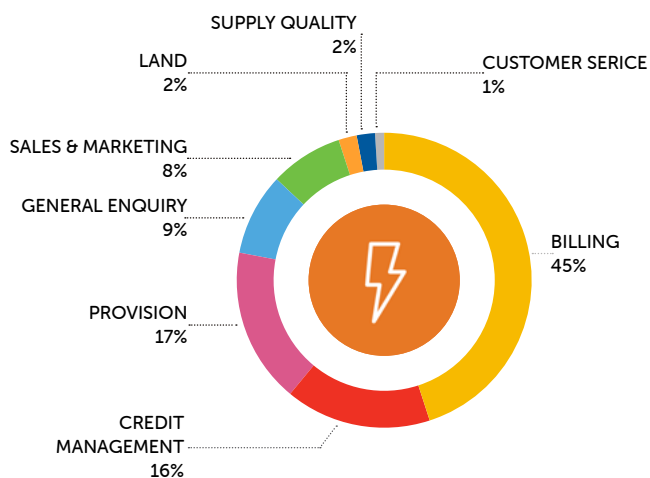




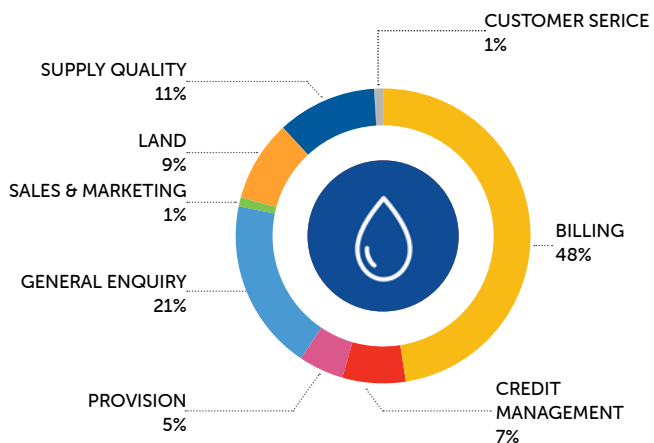
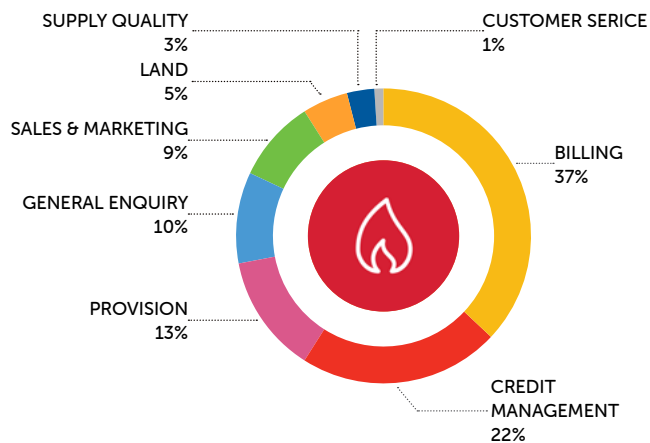
Cases received by type

BILLING	3,770	43%
CREDIT MANAGEMENT	1,387	16%
PROVISION	1,342	15%
GENERAL ENQUIRY	924	11%
SALES AND MARKETING	647	7%
LAND	248	3%
SUPPLY QUALITY	233	3%
CUSTOMER SERVICE	114	1%
OTHER	25	0%

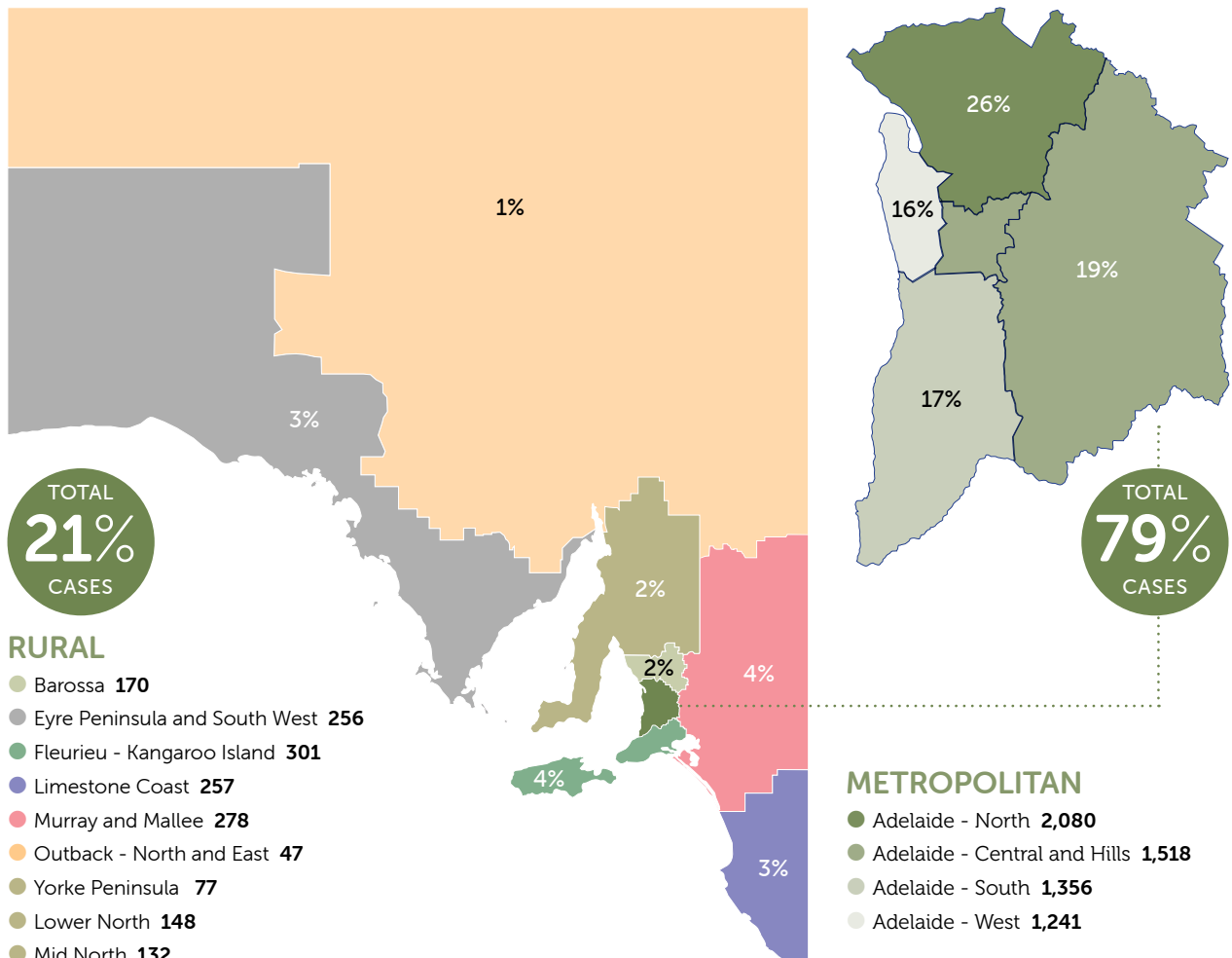
Cases received by industry



- BILLING
- CREDIT MANAGEMENT
- PROVISION
- GENERAL ENQUIRY
- SALES & MARKETING
- LAND
- SUPPLY QUALITY
- CUSTOMER SERVICE
- OTHER



Where cases came from



CASES RECEIVED BY RURAL AND METROPOLITAN AREAS



SOURCE OF CONTACT (BUSINESS OR RESIDENTIAL)

	REGIONS	2018-19	% OF TOTAL	2019-20	% OF TOTAL
METRO	Adelaide - Central and Hills	1,673	18%	1,518	19%
	Adelaide - North	2,346	25%	2,080	26%
	Adelaide - South	1,749	19%	1,356	17%
	Adelaide - West	1,462	16%	1,241	16%
RURAL	Barossa	213	2%	170	2%
	Eyre Peninsula and South West	281	3%	256	3%
	Fleurieu - Kangaroo Island	363	4%	301	4%
	Limestone Coast	339	4%	257	3%
	Lower North	159	2%	148	2%
	Mid North	173	2%	132	2%
	Murray and Mallee	406	4%	278	4%
	Outback - North and East	74	1%	47	1%
	Yorke Peninsula	142	2%	77	2%
	GRAND TOTAL	9,380	100%	7,681	100%

CASE LOCATION BY RURAL AND METROPOLITAN AREAS

Note for table: Cases which did not have a recorded address or were interstate are not represented in this table, hence the totals indicated above are less than the total number of cases received.

	YEAR OF RECEIVED DATE	METROPOLITAN				RURAL
		ADELAIDE - NORTH	ADELAIDE - CENTRAL AND HILLS	ADELAIDE - WEST	ADELAIDE - SOUTH	RURAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Billing	2018-19	43.6%	41.8%	42.1%	44.8%	44.2%
	2019-20	45.0%	45.3%	42.9%	45.4%	46.9%
Provision	2018-19	18.3%	23.1%	20.3%	18.1%	25.5%
	2019-20	15.4%	17.6%	13.9%	13.2%	19.1%
Credit Management	2018-19	18.2%	10.9%	13.5%	15.0%	13.1%
	2019-20	21.6%	12.8%	19.6%	16.7%	13.0%
Sales and Marketing	2018-19	9.5%	9.4%	11.5%	10.3%	6.3%
	2019-20	7.9%	8.0%	6.2%	9.5%	6.6%
General Enquiry	2018-19	5.2%	5.9%	5.1%	5.5%	5.1%
	2019-20	5.5%	8.8%	7.3%	6.7%	7.4%
Supply Quality	2018-19	1.7%	3.0%	3.1%	2.3%	2.9%
	2019-20	1.6%	2.6%	3.4%	2.9%	4.0%
Land	2018-19	1.7%	2.9%	2.1%	2.1%	1.0%
	2019-20	2.0%	3.8%	4.8%	3.8%	1.9%
Customer Service	2018-19	1.9%	2.9%	2.3%	1.8%	1.7%
	2019-20	0.9%	1.1%	2.1%	1.8%	1.0%
Other	2018-19		0.1%		0.1%	0.1%
	2019-20	0.1%	0.1%			0.1%

CASES BY ISSUE AND CASE LOCATION FOR RURAL AND METROPOLITAN AREAS

Major issues

TOP 3 CASE ISSUES
2019-20



The Scheme received 8,690 cases during 2019-20. We categorise issues in the following way:

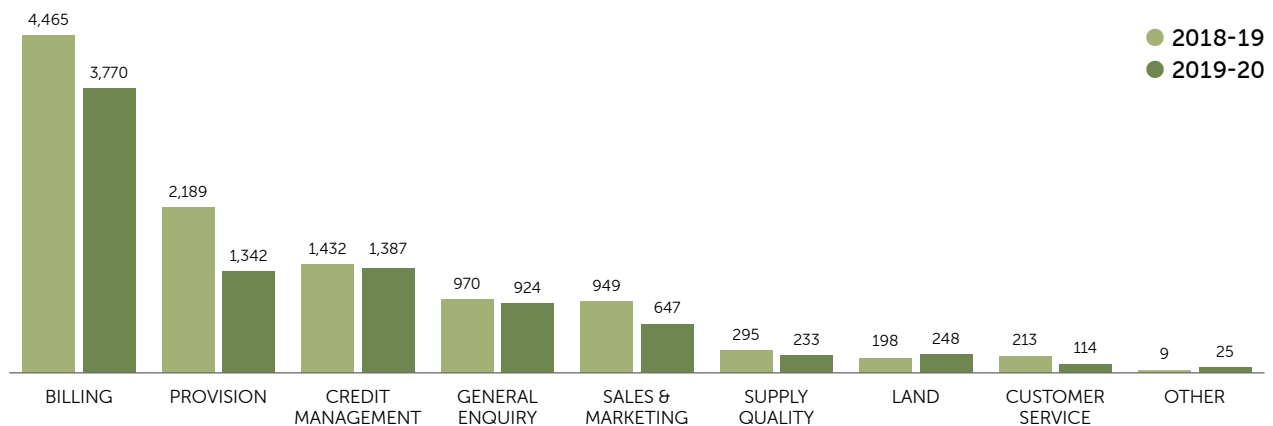
Case type	Description
Billing	Cases about tariff costs, conditions, timing, charges applied and other billing matters
Provision	Provision of service: connection, disconnection, street lighting, meter reading and other meter complaints
Credit Management	Financial hardship, disconnection (imminent and actual), liability and problems with credit references
Sales and Marketing	Market and retailer conduct, contract issues and transfers of the customer's account
Supply Quality	Electricity or gas outages, variations in voltage or flow, and water quality

While a case can have more than one issue recorded against it, this report provides information on cases by primary issue.

The three top case issues for 2019-20 were Billing, Credit Management and Provision.

The chart below shows the number of cases by issue, comparing 2018-19 and 2019-20.

The issues can be further subdivided into sub-issues. The following sections provide information on these sub-issues. This year, we can observe a trend of decreases in sub-issue cases. Of 23 sub-issues in 2019-20, 18 had fewer cases compared with the previous year.



CASES RECEIVED BY ISSUE TYPE

Billing

Similar to other ombudsman schemes, Billing continues to be associated with the highest number of cases. Billing case numbers decreased by 16% in 2019-20, compared to the previous year.

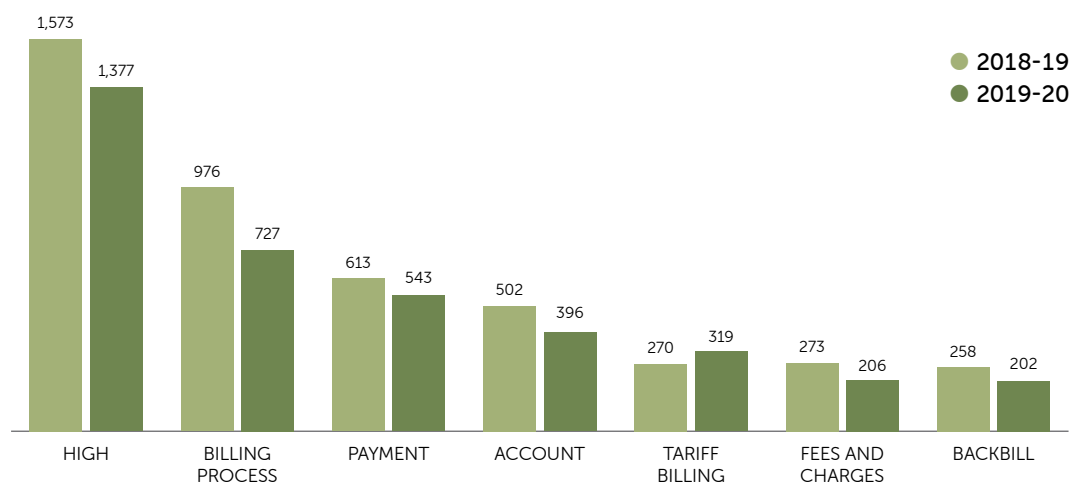
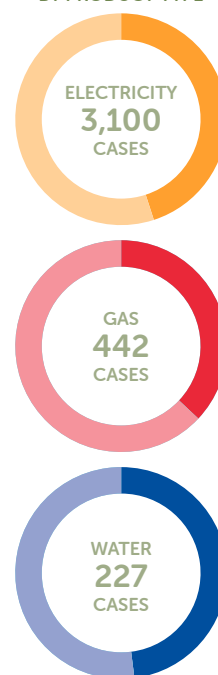
All Billing sub-issues decreased this year when compared to the previous year, except for Tariff billing which increased (18%).

The decreases by sub-issues were:

- High bill (13%)
- Billing Process (26%)
- Payment (12%)
- Account Error (21%)
- Fees and Charges (25%)
- Backbill (22%)

The most significant decline in Billing issues occurred from March which coincided with a reduction in credit collection and disconnection activity from Members in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to March, the volume of Billing cases received each month was closer to the average in recent years.

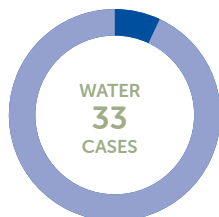
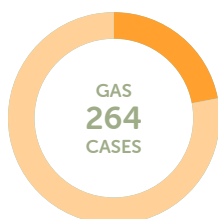
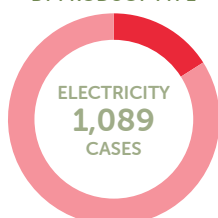
BILLING ISSUES
BY PRODUCT TYPE



BILLING CASES BY TYPE

Credit Management and Financial Hardship

CREDIT MANAGEMENT ISSUES
BY PRODUCT TYPE

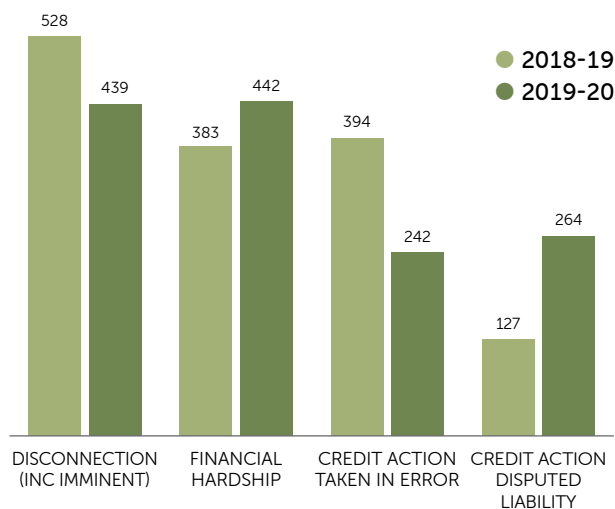


Credit Management case numbers decreased by 3% in 2019-20, compared to the previous year, making it the second most significant issue.

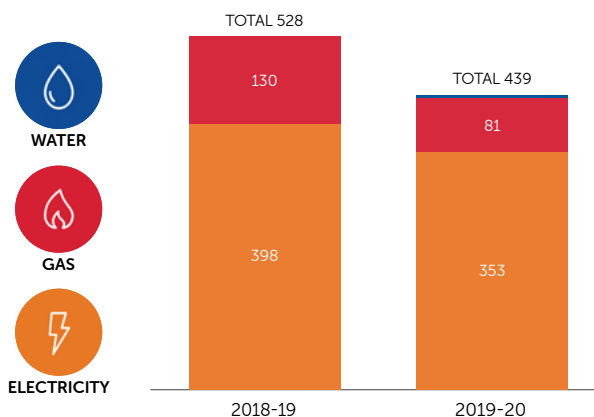
The following sub-issues have seen significant movement since the previous year:

- Credit Action Taken in Error (39% decrease)
- Disputed Liability (208% increase).

The Financial Hardship sub-issue increased by 15% and Disconnection decreased by 17%. The increases in Disputed Liability and Financial Hardship are notable given the trend of decreases for the majority of other sub-issues. The Scheme continues to work closely with the regulator to identify and address any systemic issues associated with credit management complaints.



CREDIT MANAGEMENT CASES BY TYPE



DISCONNECTION CASES BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

Disconnection cases represented 32% of all Credit Management cases.

Case Study

SUBJECT:	Financial hardship
ISSUES:	Credit Management – Financial Hardship – Difficulty Meeting Payment Plan
UTILITY:	Gas
CUSTOMER TYPE:	Residential
CASE TYPE:	Conciliation

THE ISSUE:

Ms B had a \$15 per month payment plan in place with her supplier under a financial hardship arrangement. She told us she called her supplier in November 2019 to defer that month's payment and the supplier agreed that payment was not required. The supplier then cancelled the payment plan under the hardship arrangement when the payment was not received and requested payment of the account in full.

OUR REVIEW:

We found that there were several interactions between Ms B and her supplier in November and December 2019, but the records were unclear and did not confirm what had been discussed.

Ms B's supplier was also unable to provide a recording of the November 2019 call to confirm what was discussed.

RESOLUTION:

Ms B's supplier agreed to credit her gas account \$15 for the missed November 2019 instalment and to re-establish her payment plan.



Our Journey... 2000-2020

The **Electricity Act 1996** required the electricity industry to be **members** of an 'approved scheme'.

The **inaugural Chair** was **John Barton** (ETSA Power), with **Craig Cock** (ETSA Utilities) and **Vicki Brown** (ElectraNet) the **first industry directors**, all appointed on October 22, 1999.

Nick Hakof took up the appointment as the inaugural Electricity Industry **Ombudsman** on January 4, 2000.

Emeritus Professor Keith Hancock AO was appointed as the first independent **Chair** of the Company on March 27, 2000.



Nick Hakof
OMBUDSMAN
2000 - 2007

GAS providers join the scheme.



Prof Keith Hancock
CHAIR 2000 - 2009

First Scheme Review was finalised.



Bill Cossey
CHAIR 2009 - 2015



Peter Bicknell
CHAIR 2015 - present

New funding model based on a 'user pays' business model was adopted, aiming to focus on energy providers resolving complaints direct with their customers with minimal Scheme involvement.

■ 1996

■ 1999

■ 2000

• 124 •
COMPLAINTS

■ 2001

■ 2002

■ 2003

■ 2004

■ 2005

■ 2006

■ 2007

■ 2008

• 5,293 •
CASES

■ 2009

• 8,608 •

■ 2010

The South Australian Independent Industry Regulator, now Essential Services Commission (of South Australia) ("the Commission"), approved the Electricity Industry Ombudsman (SA) Limited as the approved scheme. The Scheme was set up by the Founding Members, ETSA Power (now AGL South Australia), ETSA Utilities (now SA Power Networks) and ElectraNet in October 1999.

The **first consumer directors**, Marilyn Lennon, Fij Miller and Barry McClure, were appointed on February 28, 2000.

9

MEMBERS

The Company name was changed to **Energy Industry Ombudsman (SA) Limited** in December 2003, following an amendment to the **Gas Act 1997 (SA)** to **require gas** industry to become **members** of an 'approved scheme'.

Sandy Canale
OMBUDSMAN
2007 - present



Sandy Canale appointed as the Energy Industry Ombudsman SA.

23

MEMBERS

Emeritus Professor Keith Hancock AO retired as the independent **Chair** and **Bill Cossey AM** was appointed. The **Board** developed its own **Strategic Plan** that was released during the year to mark the ten years operation of the Scheme.



Second Scheme Review was conducted with consistent recognition of effectiveness in handling complaints. Commissioning of Brand to reflect the new era.

The Company name was changed to Energy and Water Ombudsman (SA) Limited in anticipation of the Water Industry Act 2012 amendment and SA Water having voluntarily joined the Scheme.

2011
10,204
2012

2013
21,320

The Commission further approved the Scheme under the Water Industry Act 2012 as the approved ombudsman scheme for the purposes of that Act.

2014
18,343

Following the water industry joining the Scheme, the membership grew to 33.

The Scheme experienced a 33% reduction in cases received compared to the previous year while the membership grew to 37.

2015
12,353

Bill Cossey retired as the independent Chair of the Board and Peter Bicknell AM was appointed.

The Privacy Act 1988 was amended in 2012 giving the Australian Information Commissioner the power to recognise external dispute resolution schemes ("EDRs") to handle privacy related complaints. The Scheme applied for and was granted recognition as an EDR on November 27, 2015.

2016
9,813

Third Scheme Review was conducted with uniformly positive responses from all stakeholders.

2017

Complaint numbers increased for the first time (since 2012-13) in many years, 17% compared to previous year. Metering contestability started from December 2017, moving the installation, maintenance and replacement of energy meters from the distributor to the retailer. The change had a significant impact on customers and the Scheme.

Brand refreshed



2018

Changes were introduced by the Australian Energy Regulator in March 2018 requiring embedded networks and exempt sellers to become Members of the Scheme from January 1, 2019. Ten embedded network providers joined the Scheme during 2018.

2019
10,720

A total of 40 new Members joined the Scheme during the year, 35 of them being embedded networks; caravan parks, apartment buildings and retirement villages. In November we accepted our 100th Member.

2020
8,690

On March 12, 2020 the COVID-19 outbreak was declared as pandemic. The Board conducted its strategic planning electronically during March 2020 and updated its Strategic Plan to make its priority objective "To respond to the COVID -19 pandemic" during 2020-21

Significant transformation brought on by new energy products and services were changing consumer expectations and presenting new challenges to energy and water ombudsman schemes. The Scheme co-operated with other schemes across Australia and New Zealand to undertake a significant review to identify what changes, if any, were required to ensure our schemes remain 'fit for purpose' for the next five to 10 years.

33
MEMBERS

43
MEMBERS

43
MEMBERS

108
MEMBERS

Credit Management and Financial Hardship

Rural and Metropolitan Areas

The number of financial hardship cases this year increased by 15%, compared to the previous year.

The table below provides a detailed breakdown by region of the financial hardship data for 2019-20 and the previous year.

REGION	2018-19			2019-20			CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CASES	
	NUMBER OF CASES	% OF TOTAL HARDSHIP CASES	CASES PER 10,000 PEOPLE	NUMBER OF CASES	% OF TOTAL HARDSHIP CASES	CASES PER 10,000 PEOPLE		
ADELAIDE - NORTH	125	33%	2.9	158	36%	3.6	33	26%
ADELAIDE - SOUTH	77	20%	2.1	65	15%	1.8	-12	-16%
ADELAIDE - WEST	40	10%	1.7	80	18%	3.3	40	100%
ADELAIDE - CENTRAL AND HILLS	53	14%	1.8	51	12%	1.7	-2	-4%
RURAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA	77	20%	2.0	58	13%	1.5	-19	-25%
UNKNOWN ADDRESS	11	3%		30	7%		19	173%
TOTAL	383	100%		442	100%		59	15%

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP DATA BY RURAL AND METROPOLITAN AREAS

Note for table: The 2019-20 Annual Report has used a different method for region grouping compared to the previous year, in order to align Scheme and ABS data.

Case Study

SUBJECT:	Water restriction
ISSUES:	Credit Management – Disconnection – Actual Disconnection
UTILITY:	Water
CUSTOMER TYPE:	Residential
CASE TYPE:	Conciliation

THE ISSUE:

Ms A contacted us after her water supply had been restricted. She explained she had not made a payment towards the account for a couple of years, that her husband had recently lost his job, and that her family was in financial hardship.

Ms A said she contacted her supplier after the water restriction to set up a payment plan, but her supplier rejected this and requested payment of the full account balance, which she could not afford.

OUR REVIEW:

We referred the matter to a higher level within the supplier. We advised the supplier that Ms A wanted the water restriction removed and an affordable payment plan to resolve the matter.

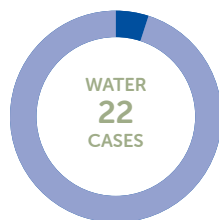
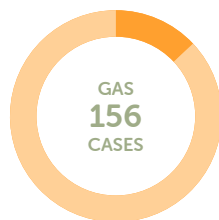
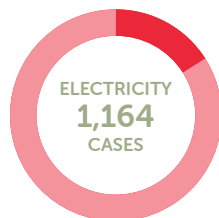
RESOLUTION:

Ms A's supplier restored full water supply on the same day it received our referral at no cost to Ms A. The supplier accepted Ms A onto its financial hardship program and established a payment plan in line with Ms A's capacity to pay.



Service Provision

SERVICE PROVISION ISSUES
BY PRODUCT TYPE

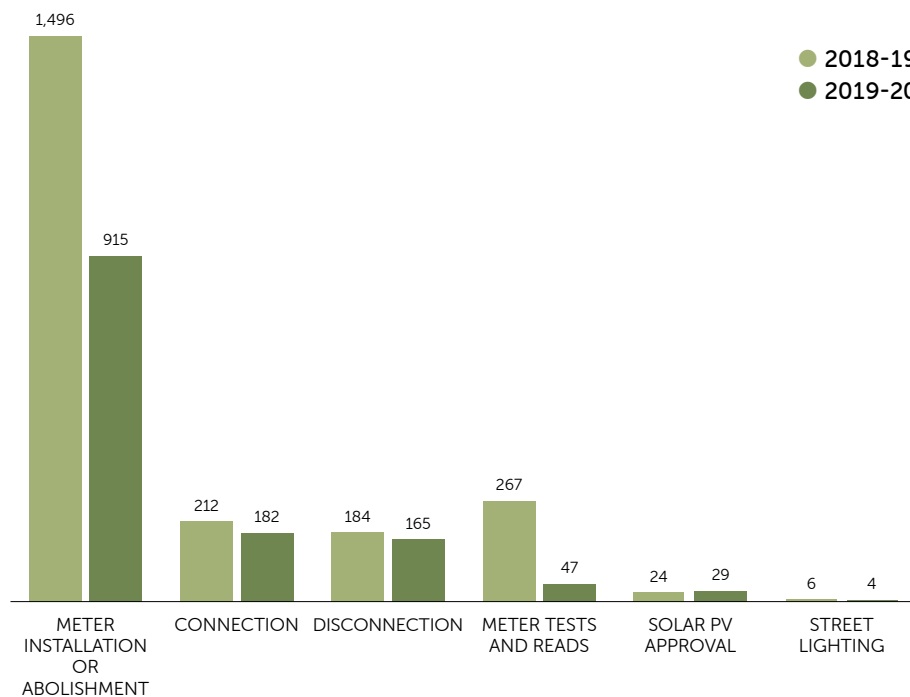


Service Provision case numbers decreased by 39% in 2019-20, compared to the previous year. Service Provision was the third most significant issue for the Scheme this year.

There were significant decreases in the following sub-issues in 2019-20, compared to the previous year:

- Meter Installation and/or Removal (39%)
- Meter Tests and Reads (82%)

The other decreases were Connection (14%), Disconnection (11%) and Street Lighting (33%). Note that we have not classified street lighting as a significant decrease as it is a small sample. Solar PV Approval increased by 21%.

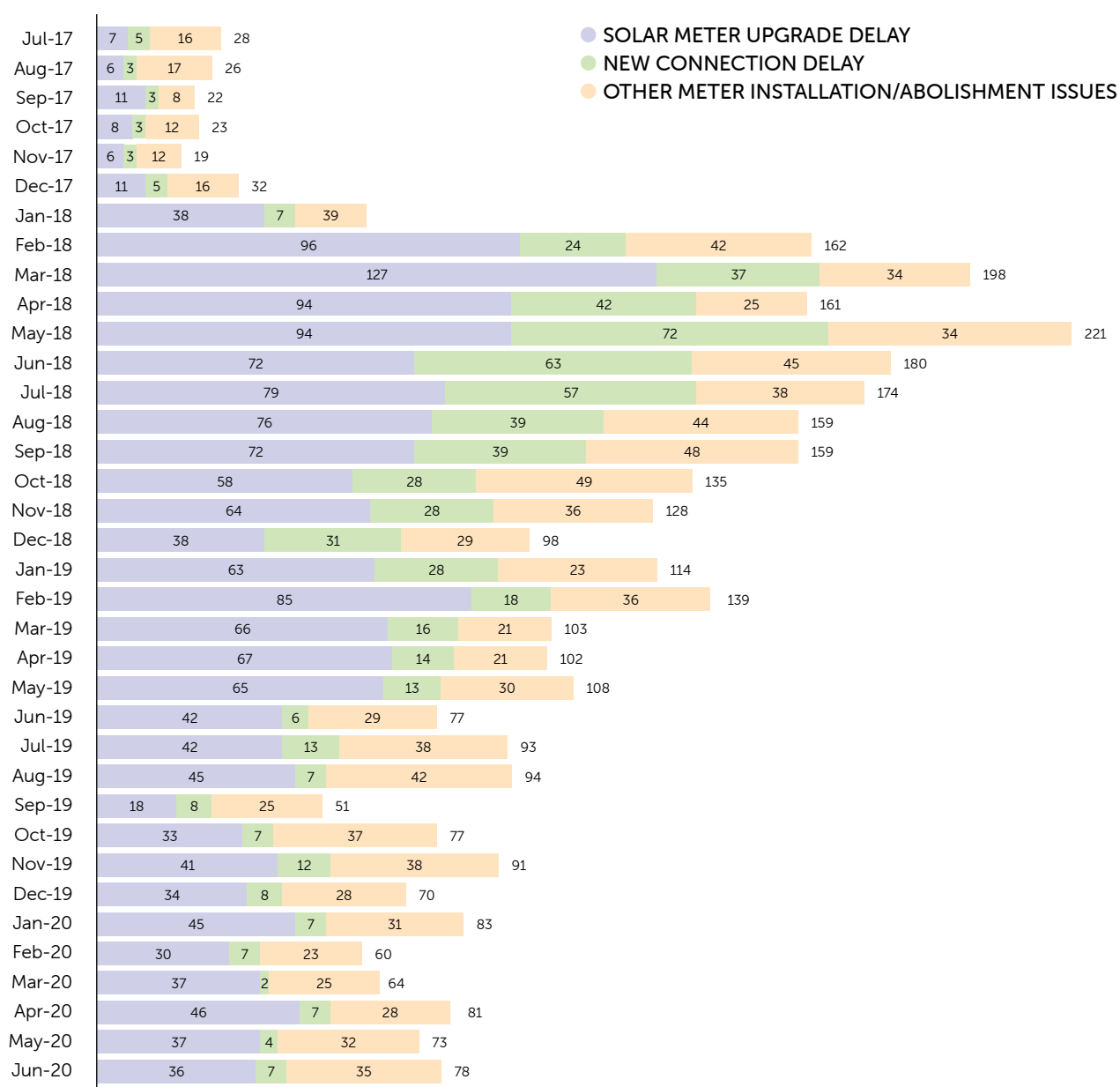


SERVICE PROVISION CASES BY TYPE

Service Provision - Metering Competition

There was a large volume of cases relating to electricity metering competition from late 2017 as the new regime which introduced metering competition commenced. There has been a gradual decline in these cases since March 2018. Solar meter case levels have remained steady throughout this year, in contrast to the trend of decreases for the majority of other sub-issue cases. Solar meter upgrade delay cases were still higher in June 2020 compared to June 2017 before metering competition was introduced.

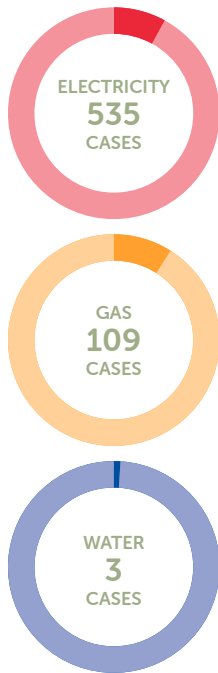
The chart below shows the electricity metering competition cases received by sub-issue.



METERING COMPETITION CASES BY SUB-ISSUE

Sales and Marketing

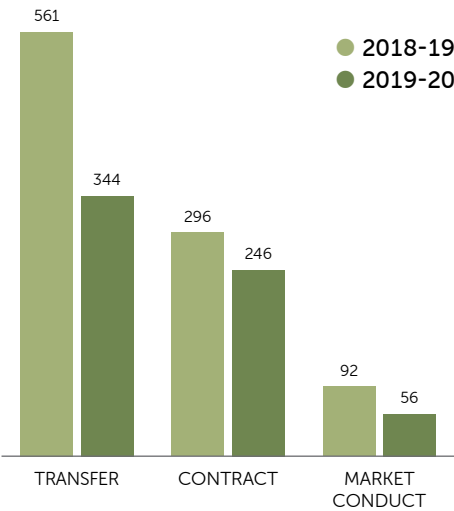
SALES AND MARKETING ISSUES
BY PRODUCT TYPE



Sales and Marketing case numbers decreased by 32%, compared to the previous year.

The Transfer sub-issue significantly decreased by 39%, compared to the previous year.

Other Sales and Marketing sub-issue decreases were Contract (17%) and Market Conduct (39%).



SALES AND MARKETING CASES

Case Study

SUBJECT:	Metering issues
ISSUES:	Provision – Meter Installation/Abolishment – Other Metering Installation Complaints
UTILITY:	Electricity
CUSTOMER TYPE:	Residential
CASE TYPE:	Investigation

THE ISSUE:

Mr H's solar system installation had been delayed because of his retailer's administrative errors.

There were several meters at Mr H's property and one was removed in 2018 as part of a supply alteration. Mr H later arranged to install a solar system but told us he was unable to obtain approval from the distributor to connect a solar system.

OUR REVIEW:

After the supply alteration was carried out in 2018, Mr H's supplier incorrectly advised the distributor in May 2019 that the house meter was removed.

Mr H applied for approval to connect a solar system to his house in January 2020, but the distributor rejected his request because the house meter was shown to have been removed.

We reviewed Mr H's bills and found his supplier had undercharged because it had not billed the consumption recorded on the house meter from May 2019.

RESOLUTION:

The distributor created a new connection for the house meter in its systems so Mr H could re-apply for approval to connect a solar system.

Mr H's supplier established a new account for the newly created connection and waived its right to recover the unbilled consumption recorded on the house meter from May 2019 to March 2020. The supplier also applied a \$300 credit to Mr H's account as a gesture of goodwill.

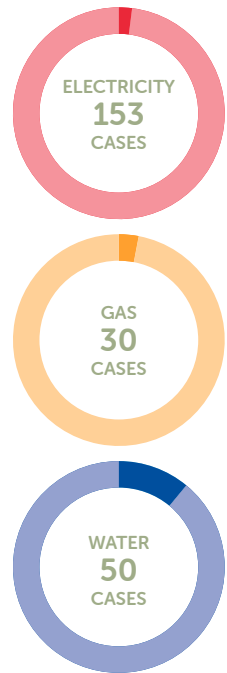
We were satisfied that the recoverable undercharge was more than the estimated missed solar benefits because Mr H was unable to install a solar system sooner.

Mr H chose to transfer to another supplier to have the solar meter installed.



Supply Quality

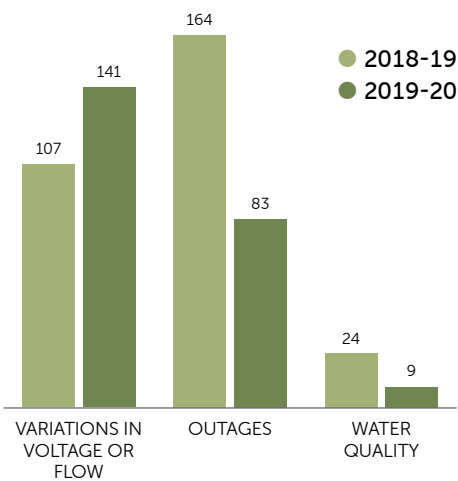
SUPPLY QUALITY ISSUES
BY INDUSTRY



Supply Quality case numbers decreased by 21% in 2019-20, compared to the previous year.

The Outages sub-issue decreased significantly by 49%, compared to the previous year.

The Variations in Voltage or Flow sub-issue increased by 32% while Water Quality sub-issue decreased by 63%.



SUPPLY QUALITY CASES

Case Study

SUBJECT:	Water meter relocation costs
ISSUES:	Provision – Meter Installation/Abolishment – Other Metering Installation Complaints
UTILITY:	Water
CUSTOMER TYPE:	Residential
CASE TYPE:	Conciliation

THE ISSUE:

Mrs J lives in a regional community that is supplied with reticulated non-drinking water. She queried the fairness in paying future water supply charges when the water supplied is not of a drinkable quality.

Mrs J's water is also supplied via a meter that is not located on her property. She resolved a prior complaint with her supplier regarding a water leak under a road outside her property but remained concerned that the location of the meter exposes her to increased risk of future water leaks that she is responsible for.

She queried the option to relocate the meter inside her property with her supplier but disputed the estimated cost of relocation and that she should bear this cost.

OUR REVIEW:

Mrs J had an 'indirect' supply that was connected several decades before Mrs J purchased the property. Like a standard metropolitan connection, Mrs J's supplier is responsible for the maintenance of all pipework up to the meter and Mrs J is responsible for the maintenance of all pipework after the meter, even if part of this pipework is not on her property.

We found that relocating the meter to within Mrs J's property would require a mains extension at her cost. We also found that water supply charges are still payable even though the water supplied was not of drinking quality.

RESOLUTION:

The supplier undertook to continue to assist Mrs J in managing her water supply, including assessing any leakage applications and discussing options to relocate the meter or disconnect the supply to avoid future charges given the low water use.



Member Performance

Member Cases - 5 years (FY)

AGL



ORIGIN ENERGY



ENERGYAUSTRALIA



SIMPLY ENERGY



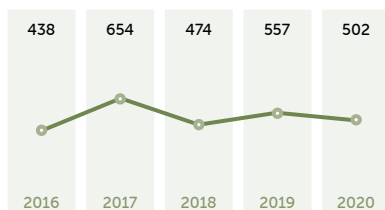
ALINTA ENERGY



SA WATER



SA POWER NETWORKS



LUMO ENERGY



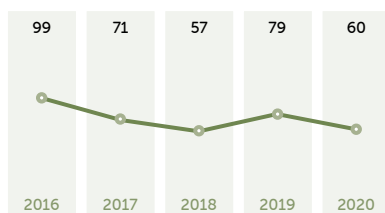
POWERDIRECT



AUSTRALIAN GAS NETWORKS



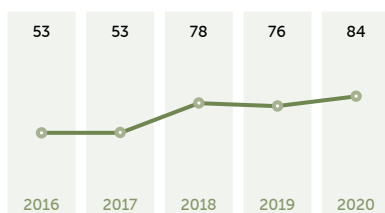
MOMENTUM ENERGY



AMAYSIM



M2 ENERGY



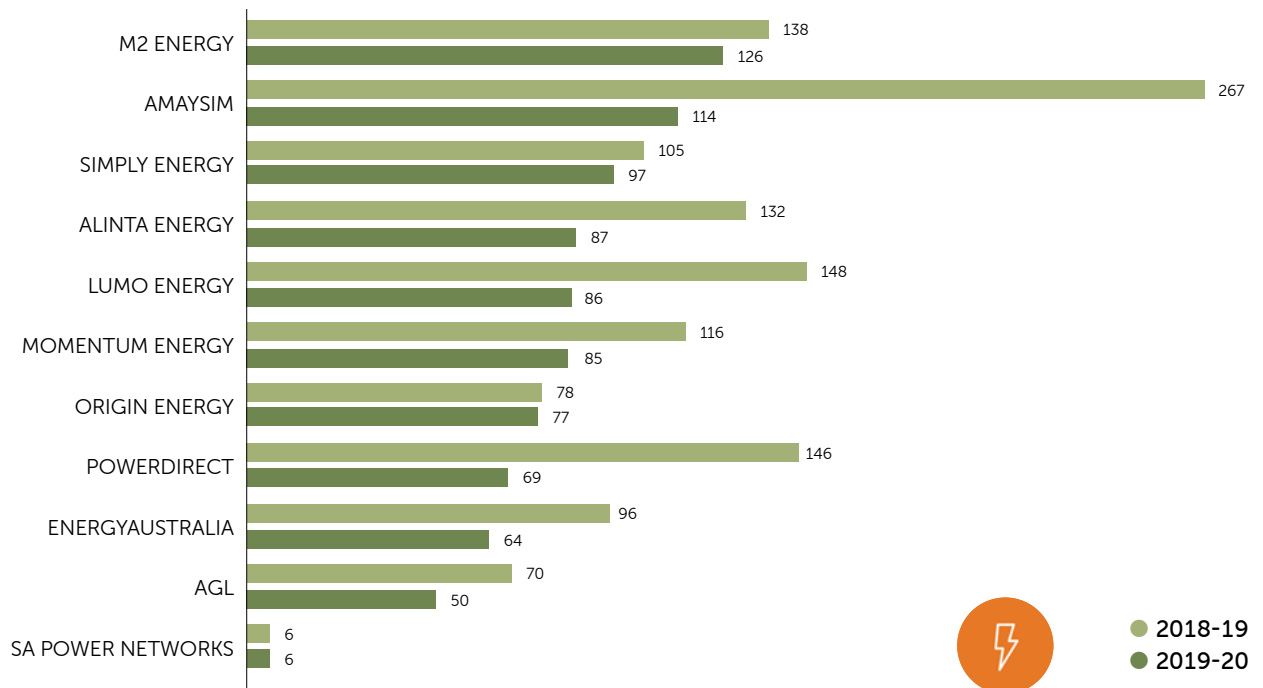
OTHERS



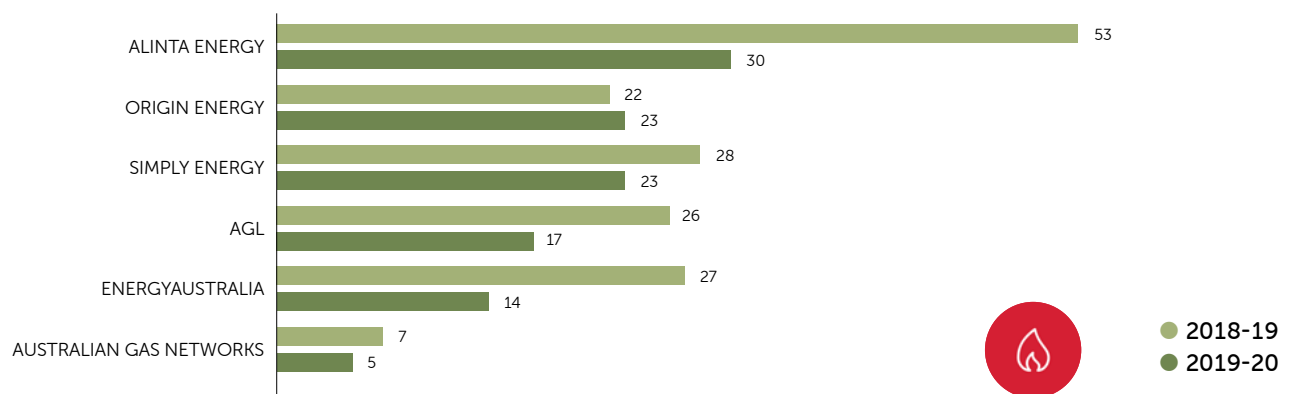
RED ENERGY



Cases received by Members and per 10,000 customers



ELECTRICITY: CASES RECEIVED, PER 10,000 CUSTOMERS



GAS: CASES RECEIVED, PER 10,000 CUSTOMERS



WATER: CASES RECEIVED, PER 10,000 CUSTOMERS

Systemic issues

A systemic issue is one that has the potential to affect a number of customers.

How we define a systemic issue

A systemic issue is one that has the potential to affect a number of customers. It may arise from an energy or water supplier's policies or practices, or their application, and may be caused by a range of matters in isolation or together. These include, but are not limited to, a system change, a policy or procedure change, lack of regulatory compliance or the conduct of an energy or water supplier's employee, agent or contractor.

Our role

We have a responsibility to identify and record systemic issues and potential compliance issues and, as appropriate, notify the relevant provider and regulatory body or responsible authority.

Once we have identified potential systemic issues, we may, where appropriate, investigate the issues. Where the Ombudsman finds that an issue is systemic, it is referred to the relevant Member's senior management for remedial action. The Ombudsman will continue to monitor the issue until a resolution is achieved that he considers a reasonable outcome for the customers affected.

The Ombudsman may also refer to a Member's senior management any opportunities identified to improve the Member's policies or practices in the interests of reducing complaints. The Ombudsman may report systemic or other important issues to the relevant government minister or to regulatory bodies.

Where there has been a breach or violation of a legislative code or licence, it is the responsibility of the regulatory body or responsible authority to take any action against the provider. The Ombudsman does not possess any punitive powers.

We identified and resolved thirteen systemic issues during the year:

- Failure to meet hardship obligations
- Incorrectly charging customers
- Basing bills on actual usage while stating estimate
- Not installing meters within regulatory timeline
- Billing system delaying bill render for business accounts with smart meters and on demand tariff
- Billing customers for undercharged amounts
- Not updating system (MSATS) after installing meter
- Printing and posting duplicate bills to customers
- Incorrectly registering business customers for e-billing
- Failure by designated retailer to make offer to customer
- No/low supply
- Bills not including all of the required information
- Failure by retailers to comply with the AER Statement of Expectations for COVID-19 response.

Case Study

SUBJECT:	High bill dispute
ISSUES:	Billing – High – Unexplained Usage
UTILITY:	Electricity
CUSTOMER TYPE:	Residential
CASE TYPE:	Investigation

THE ISSUE:

Mr B installed a solar system in August 2018. He disputed higher than expected Autumn and Winter 2019 bills because they were higher than the bills for the same period in 2018 when his solar system was not yet installed.

OUR REVIEW:

We reviewed Mr B's bills and found that the disputed 2019 bills were correct but his supplier undercharged 1614 kilowatt hours between June and August 2018, which led Mr B to believe he had been overcharged in 2019.

The supplier did not and could no longer recover the 2018 undercharge.

RESOLUTION:

The supplier applied a \$250 credit to Mr B's account as a gesture of goodwill for the inconvenience caused and offered a payment arrangement for the reduced balance.



Our Organisation

20 in 20

Our Scheme has grown significantly since its early days. The Scheme was set up by the Founding Members, ETSA Power (now AGL South Australia), ETSA Utilities (now SA Power Networks) and ElectraNet. Established in October 1999 as the Electricity Industry Ombudsman (SA) Limited, it was created to be the independent dispute resolution scheme. The Electricity Act 1996 required the electricity industry to be members of an 'approved scheme', and the The South Australian Independent Industry Regulator, now Essential Services Commission (of South Australia) ("the Commission"), approved the Company as such a scheme.

The inaugural Chair was John Barton (ETSA Power) who was appointed on October 22, 1999. Nick Hakof took up the appointment as the inaugural Electricity Industry Ombudsman on January 4, 2000. Emeritus Professor Keith Hancock AO was appointed as the first independent Chair of the Company on March 27, 2000.

The Commission confirmed in September 2003 that it approved amendments to the Company's Constitution and Charter, enabling the Scheme to change from an electricity industry scheme to an energy industry scheme. This followed an amendment to the Gas Act 1997 (SA) which required the gas industry to become members of an 'approved scheme'.

Sandy Canale was appointed as the Energy Industry Ombudsman SA in 2007. In 2009, Emeritus Professor Keith Hancock AO retired as the independent Chair and Bill Cossey AM was appointed.

The Company name was changed to Energy and Water Ombudsman (SA) Limited in December 2011 in anticipation of the Water Industry Act 2012 amendment and SA Water having voluntarily joined the Scheme. In July 2013, the Commission further approved the Scheme under the Water Industry Act 2012 as the approved ombudsman scheme for the purposes of that Act.

Billing system conversions in 2012-13 resulted in the standing record of highest level of complaints to the Scheme.

In 2015, Bill Cossey retired as the independent Chair of the Board and Peter Bicknell AM was appointed.

Key Developments in 2019-20

Dispute resolution process

This year, we completed an external review of our case-handling processes to improve case resolution timeframes and reporting. Several initiatives were identified and implemented including:

- introducing a new organisational structure that places greater emphasis on prompt resolution of cases, supported by a robust quality assurance review framework and ongoing professional development for our staff members
- streamlining our case conference and escalation process
- updating our suite of reports and controls to better manage our workflows.

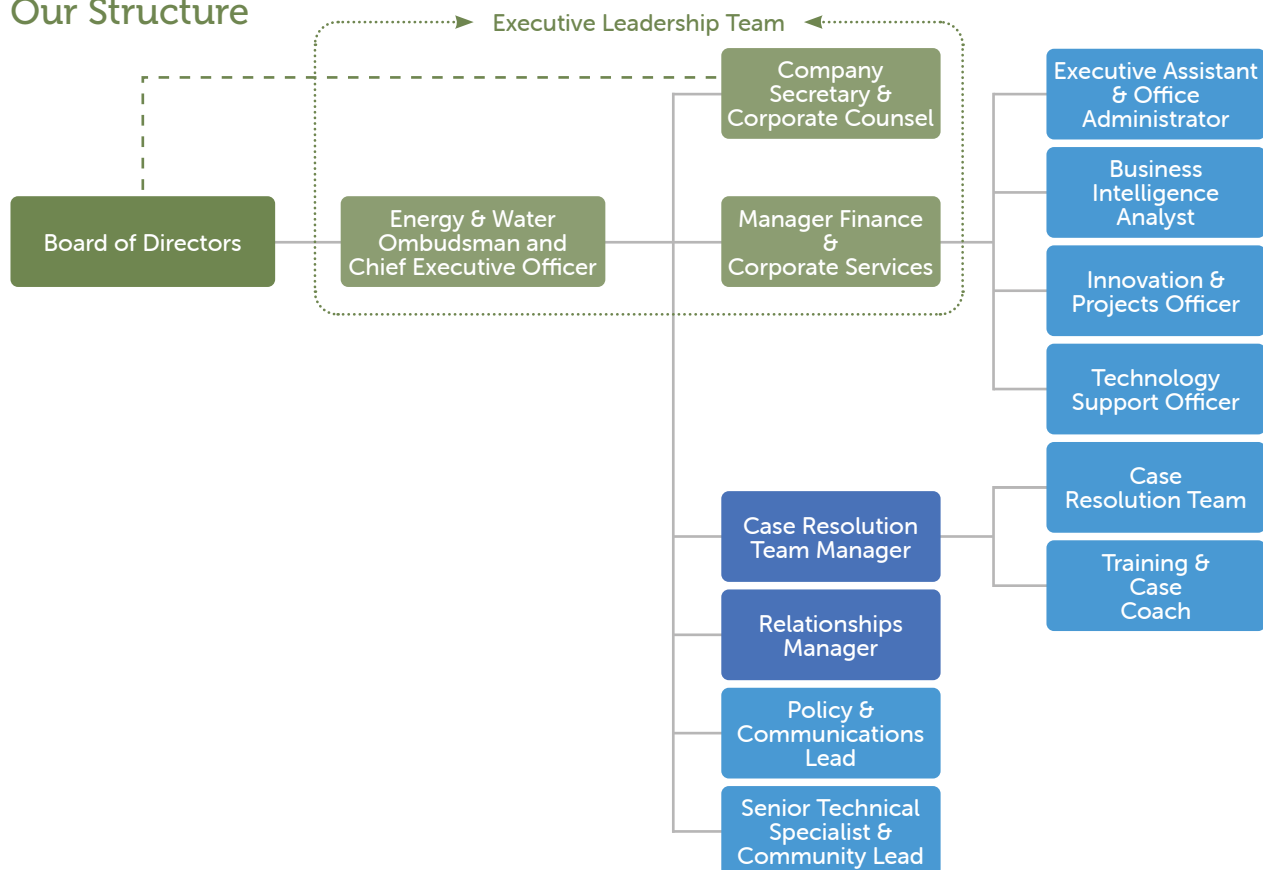
During this year, we also conducted feedback sessions with Members to improve relationships and customer experience, including a Member survey.

We refreshed our issues and objectives/case categorisation for enhanced reporting and issue identification and visibility.

We updated our process for identifying and reporting actual or potential systemic issues, including through collaboration with the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) to develop a consistent reporting framework across the jurisdictions.

We introduced weekly reporting to the AER on credit management issues to support compliance with the AER Statement of Expectations for COVID-19 response.

Our Structure



People and culture

We pay special attention to the wellbeing of our people. Our work can be highly stressful at times, so it is important that we provide appropriate conditions, support and systems to enable our staff to excel at their tasks.

Company policies and directives that support individual wellbeing include:

- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Flexible Working Arrangements Directive and Guidelines
- Grievance Policy
- Group Salary Continuance Directive
- Personal and Physical Security Directive
- Drug and Alcohol Use Directive
- No Smoking Directive

We completed several initiatives during the year to continuously develop our staff and enhance the benefits available to them, including:

- providing up/cross skilling to all case management staff to enhance overall competency and expertise
- reviewing our Company Values to align with our ongoing commitment to customers and Members of the Scheme
- providing flexibility and support during the COVID-19 pandemic to enable all employees to work from home
- delivering training sessions to all staff members on workplace productivity, resilience and time management.

We also appointed a new Training and Case Coach who provides ongoing support in training and developing our staff members.

Stakeholders

Our stakeholders are important to us and enable us to deliver high quality services. Stakeholder engagement this year has included:

- introducing Member workshops, to provide industry updates, engage Member companies on recent initiatives and gain feedback for the Scheme
- maintaining strong Member relationships, evidenced through the results of the survey of Members
- improving reporting to Members about performance and trends
- enhancing collaboration with regulators and the Office of the Technical Regulator
- introducing a Mid-Year Report to supplement the Annual Report
- launching our online newsletter, which is published quarterly on our website and provides stakeholders with information on emerging consumer trends, topical issues and policy matters
- continuous engagement, including with those in embedded networks, with a focus on regional and consumer intermediaries
- presenting to culturally and linguistically diverse communities including on Italian radio.

Technology

Technology plays a crucial part in ensuring our services are delivered efficiently, effectively and with minimal disruption. There were a number of significant initiatives during the year, including:

- initiating an ICT Strategy Project to ensure our business is maximising opportunities afforded by continued ICT developments and enabling greater efficiencies
- rolling out a new cloud-based contact centre system which enables our staff members to manage all customer interactions within a single unified platform and have greater flexibility for working remotely, as well as provides greater system security and stability
- migrating our disaster recovery site to a cloud-based platform, which provides greater resilience, security and stability and improved recovery timeframes
- completing an external review of our IT security and remediating the areas for improvement which were identified during the review
- using modern technological solutions such as Office 365, remote desktop access and online teleconferencing solutions to enable our staff to work remotely during COVID-19
- introducing SMS and webchat services for our customers, enabling them to have access to additional channels for communication with us
- creating a Member Portal to improve access to data for our Members
- launching a Board Portal to enhance access to Board papers and other information for our Board of Directors
- conducting business continuity testing of our telephony and network infrastructure to ensure reliability
- enabling video conference capability through installation of an interactive whiteboard with camera and audio functionality
- refreshing our fleet of personal computers and issuing portable laptop computers to all staff.

Work Health and Safety

We are strongly committed to the health and safety of our staff and strive to maintain a workplace free from injuries. We encourage personal wellbeing and promote the protection of the environment.

Work health and safety is a standing agenda item at each regular team meeting. Additionally, ergonomic assessments and voluntary health checks are conducted annually and we encourage staff participation in various health and wellbeing activities. Free flu vaccinations and health checks are arranged annually.

Workplace safety inspections are conducted quarterly. The first aid kit, which includes a defibrillator, is restocked quarterly or as necessary and all electrical equipment is tested and tagged annually.

An Employee Assistance Program provides staff and their immediate family members with support and free counselling for work and personal matters.

There were no injuries reported during the year.

Managing the Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to our Scheme, which had potential internal and external impacts. In order to ensure high quality continuity of service while supporting our staff and those most vulnerable in the community, our response included:

Internal

- all our staff working work from home since late March. They have experienced minimal (to no) disruption in accessing our systems or managing customer and member requests. Service levels have been maintained and all customer complaints are being managed as normal
- instigating a daily morning scrum across all staff via Zoom to check in on everyone's wellbeing and also discuss key matters and issues for the day. This has been well received by staff members and we will continue this practice for the foreseeable future
- using the same online tools to continue to productively collaborate with internal staff members during the pandemic
- reminding our staff to use our free and confidential Employee Assistance Program should they feel the need to do so, particularly during times of isolation
- having our managers more regularly check in individually with staff members on their wellbeing.

External

- creating a page on our website which outlines support mechanisms available to consumers during COVID-19. See <https://ewosa.com.au/news/covid-19-support>
- Australia and New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman's Network writing to key Members seeking information and meetings to understand the supports and processes they will be adopting to deal with hardship and other customer issues as we recover from the pandemic. The aim was to help the schemes prepare for any influx in complaints and manage customer expectations as we move into the recovery phase
- maintaining weekly liaison with regulatory bodies to discuss any emerging issues or trends with members.

Our move to work from home also coincided with the launch of our trial SMS service which went live during the last week of March. This, along with our Live Chat service, has further expanded the number of channels available to consumers during the pandemic and beyond.

Quality Assurance

We expanded and are continuously improving our Quality Assurance Program. This year, we built reporting functions into a new software system to increase the speed, presentation and analytical abilities of quality assurance reviews. Significant progress was made in developing staff consistency in case handling. We are satisfied that our critical work processes ensure delivery of fair and reasonable outcomes in the most efficient way possible.

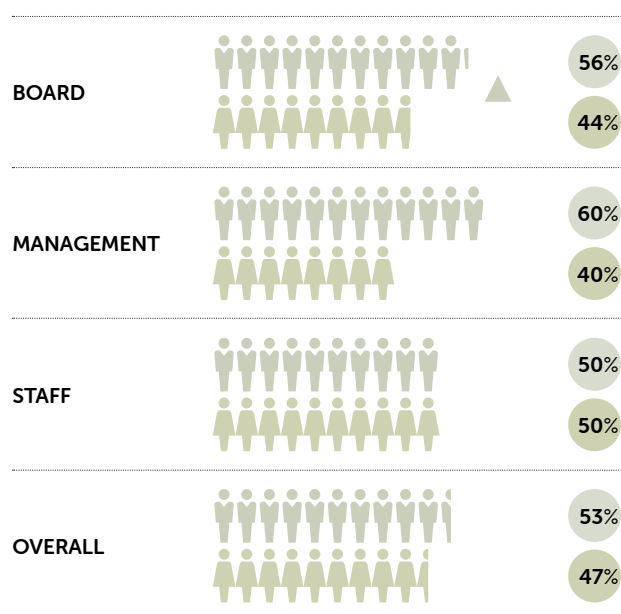
Internal Audit

Our internal auditors executed the internal audit program for the first time this year under the oversight of the Board and the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee. This year's internal audit focused on the financial aspects of the business. There were no significant deficiencies found during the audit.

Gender diversity

We have a strong commitment to gender diversity, as demonstrated by high female participation at all levels of the organisation.

As at June 30, 2020, the division of male and female members on the Board of Directors, the management team and staff is represented in the figure below:



Board of Directors

The Board of Directors comprises four Industry Directors elected by Scheme Members, four Consumer Directors nominated by the Essential Services Commission (of South Australia) and an Independent Chair.

Chair

Peter Bicknell AM, BA, M Soc Admin, JP – appointed March 22, 2015

Directors

The Directors of the Company as at June 30, 2020 were:

- Peter Bicknell, Independent Chair
- Geoff Barton, Gas Industry Director (Australian Gas Networks)
- Jessie Byrne, Consumer Director
- Margaret Cross, Consumer Director
- John Hill, Consumer Director
- Patrick Makinson, Electricity Industry Director (SA Power Networks)
- Kay Matthias, Consumer Director
- Anthony Sinclair, Electricity Industry Director (AGL).
- Anne Westley, Water Industry Director (SA Water)

Secretary

Pia Bentick, Company Secretary & Corporate Counsel

Leadership Team



LEADERSHIP TEAM: BRIAN HUMBLE RELATIONSHIPS MANAGER, PIA BENTICK COMPANY SECRETARY & CORPORATE COUNSEL, SANDY CANALE OMBUDSMAN & CEO, RE OUANO MANAGER FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES, CINDY CHEWTER CASE RESOLUTION TEAM MANAGER.

Case Study

SUBJECT:	Disputed default listing
ISSUES:	Credit Management – Credit Action Taken in Error – Default Listed in Error
UTILITY:	Gas
CUSTOMER TYPE:	Residential
CASE TYPE:	Conciliation

THE ISSUE:

Mr W complained about a credit default on his file for a gas account at a previous address which he believed had been finalised on an estimated read. He disputed the charges and the default.

Mr W was dissatisfied when his supplier advised him the charges and default were both valid.

OUR REVIEW:

We found that Mr W's gas account was finalised in October 2019 based on an actual read from the meter, not an estimated read, and that he was correctly billed.

We reviewed the process the supplier undertook before listing the default and found no error or grounds to remove the default.

RESOLUTION:

The supplier offered a lengthy payment arrangement for the closed account debt.



Members



Electricity Members

- 1st Energy Pty Ltd
- AGL Sales (Queensland Electricity) Pty Ltd
- AGL Sales Pty Ltd
- AGL South Australia Pty Ltd
- Across Australia Parks and Resorts Pty Ltd (t/a Victor Harbor Holiday and Cabin Park)
- AKM Syndicate Pty Ltd (t/a Cobdogla Station Caravan Park)
- Alinta Energy Retail Sales Pty Ltd
- amaysim Energy Pty Ltd
- Ardrossan Progress Association Inc
- Ashbrook Apartments RV Pty Ltd
- Australian Tourist Park Management Pty Ltd (t/a Victor Harbor Beachfront Holiday Park)
- B A Calvert & G G Calvert (t/a Kingston-on-Murray Caravan Park)
- Befficient by GSI Pty Ltd
- Blue NRG Pty Ltd
- Boandik Lodge Inc
- Burton Lifestyle Villages Pty Ltd
- Caravan Park Op Co Pty Ltd (t/a Windsor Gardens Caravan Park)
- CleanPeak Energy Retail Pty Ltd (formerly ReNu Energy Retail)
- Coastal Parks Port Willunga Pty Ltd
- Community Corporation 26052 Inc
- Community Corporation 40515 Inc (Vue Apartments)
- Community Corporation 41210 Inc (Bohem Apartments)
- Community Corporation 41346 Inc (Prow Drive)
- Coober Pedy Council
- Cowell Electric Supply Pty Ltd
- Delta Logo Pty Ltd ATF The Gray Howard Family Trust (t/a Goolwa Camping and Tourist Park)
- Diamond Energy Pty Ltd
- Discover Energy Pty Ltd
- Discovery Holiday Parks Pty Ltd
- Edithburgh Progress Association Inc
- Edwards Hotels Pty Ltd
- ElectraNet Pty Ltd
- Electricity in a Box
- Elysian Energy Pty Ltd
- Energy Locals Pty Ltd
- EnergyAustralia
- Enwave Mascot Pty Ltd
- Enwave Tonsley Pty Ltd
- ERM Power Retail Pty Ltd
- GCP (SA) Pty Ltd ATF The Mullaby Family Trust (t/a Gawler Caravan Park)
- Gawler South Tourist Park Pty Ltd
- ATF The Trustee for Faast Family Trust
- Glenbrook Apartments Pty Ltd
- GloBird Energy Pty Ltd
- Highway 1 Caravan & Tourist Park
- James Brown Memorial Trust (t/a The Heights Retirement Village)
- K. Browney & R.W. Browney (t/a Kadina Caravan Park)
- Leabrook Place Pty Ltd
- Levi Park Caravan Park
- Lumo Energy (SA) Pty Ltd
- M2 Energy Pty Ltd
- McLaren Vale Pty Ltd
- Mojo Power Pty Ltd
- Momentum Energy Pty Ltd
- Murraylink Transmission Partnership
- Next Business Energy Pty Ltd
- Nuriootpa Centennial Park Authority (t/a BIG4 Barossa Tourist Park)
- Online Power and Gas Pty Ltd
- Origin Energy Electricity Ltd
- OVO Energy Pty Ltd
- Pandora Lifestyle Villages
- People Energy Pty Ltd
- Pine Country Caravan Park
- Port Clinton Progress Association Inc
- Power Club Limited
- Powerdirect Pty Ltd
- Powershop Australia Pty Ltd
- Qenergy Limited
- ReAmped Energy Pty Ltd
- Red Energy Pty Ltd
- Riverglen Services Pty Ltd
- SA Power Networks
- Sanctuary Energy Pty Ltd
- Savant Energy Power Networks Pty Ltd
- Sheryl Pietsch (t/a Stockport Caravan & Tourist Park)
- Simply Energy
- Strata Plan No 12753 Inc
- Sustainable Savings Pty Ltd
- Tango Energy Pty Ltd
- The Trustee for Hahndorf Caravan Park Trust
- The Trustee for The Sturt River Park Trust
- Vosey Holdings Pty Ltd (t/a Highview Holiday Village)
- WINconnect Pty Ltd
- Woodcroft Park Pty Ltd



Gas Members

- AGL South Australia Pty Ltd
- Alinta Energy Retail Sales Pty Ltd
- Australian Gas Networks Limited
- Discover Energy Pty Ltd
- EnergyAustralia
- Enwave Tonsley Pty Ltd
- Lumo Energy SA Pty Ltd
- Origin Energy Retail Limited
- OVO Energy Pty Ltd
- Red Energy Pty Ltd
- Savant Energy Power Networks Pty Ltd
- Simply Energy
- Tas Gas Retail Pty Ltd
- WINconnect Pty Ltd



Water Members

- Alano Utilities Pty Ltd
- Alexandrina Council
- City of Charles Sturt
- Robusto Investments Pty Ltd (t/a Compass Springs)
- Coober Pedy Council
- District Council of Mount Barker
- Enwave Tonsley Pty Ltd
- FB Pipeline Pty Ltd
- Water Utilities Pty Ltd
- SA Water Corporation
- The Barossa Council

Corporate Governance Statement

This Corporate Governance Statement has been approved by the Board on 27 May 2020. It is reviewed annually and reflects the 4th edition of the ASX Corporate Council's Principles and Recommendations.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (SA) Limited is a public company limited by guarantee and incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*. The Board of Directors are committed to achieving and demonstrating the highest standards of corporate governance. The Company's corporate governance framework was developed in accordance with the Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations released by the ASX Corporate Governance Council, as far as they apply to the Company. The Board continuously reviews the framework and practices to ensure they meet the interests of the Members.

The Board's main responsibilities are the formal administration of the Company, policy matters, oversight of the Scheme's operation and maintaining the independence of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is responsible for the day to day operation of the Scheme and the resolution of individual complaints. These roles are complementary and, generally, the Ombudsman attends Board meetings as an observer and an advisor as appropriate.

The Company's main corporate governance practices are set out below.

1. The Board of Directors

The Company is governed by a Board whose principal source and rules of governance include:

- the Constitution and Charter
- the Board Charter
- Charters of the Board Committees, and
- Board Policy statements.

Board Composition

As required by the Company's Constitution, the Board consists of nine directors being:

- two directors elected by Electricity Members, one director elected by Gas Members and one director elected by Water Members ("Industry Directors")
- four persons nominated by the Essential Services Commission (of South Australia) ("the Commission") to represent customers of electricity, gas and water services or public interest groups relevant to such services ("Consumer Directors"), and
- an independent Chair.

The current directors of the Company are:

- Peter Bicknell, Independent Chair
- Geoff Barton, Gas Industry Director (Australian Gas Networks)
- Jessie Byrne, Consumer Director
- Margaret Cross, Consumer Director
- John Hill, Consumer Director
- Patrick Makinson, Electricity Industry Director (SA Power Networks)
- Kay Matthias, Consumer Director
- Anthony Sinclair, Electricity Industry Director (AGL)
- Anne Westley, Water Industry Director (SA Water)

Board Skills

As far as the structure of the Scheme allows, the appropriate mix and balance of skills available is considered and appropriate checks are undertaken before appointing a person a director.

New directors will be inducted to the Scheme and appropriate professional development opportunities are provided to develop and maintain the skills and knowledge needed to perform their role as directors effectively.

Gender Diversity

The Company is committed to gender diversity which is demonstrated by high female participation at all levels of the organisation.

Currently 44% of the Board of Directors are female, 40% of the leadership team are female, and the rest of the staff are eight male and eight female members. The overall percentage is 45% female and 55% male.

Independent Chair

The Directors appoint, with the Commission's approval, a person to be the independent Chair of the Board a three-year term. The Chair is eligible for reappointment for a subsequent term or terms of three years.

The Chair of any meeting has an ordinary vote but does not have a casting vote on any matter.

Peter Bicknell AM, BA, M Soc Admin, JP, was appointed the independent Chair on 22 March 2015 and he was reappointed for another term of three years from 22 March 2018.

Written Agreements

The Company has written agreements with each director setting out the terms of their appointment. These include Deeds of Access and Indemnity, which contain the arrangements which the Company and the Director have made concerning indemnities, insurance, Company records and confidentiality and letters of appointment setting out details of directors' fees and the committees on which they may serve.

Term of Office

The Company's Constitution specifies that the industry directors may not hold office for more than three years without submitting himself or herself for re-election.

The consumer directors can hold office for a term of up to three years and they are eligible to be nominated and re-appointed for a further term or terms. However, neither the consumer directors nor the independent Chair can serve more than nine consecutive years as a director.

Board Processes

The Board currently holds six formal meetings per year, with additional meetings called or resolutions in writing passed if necessary, to address any important or urgent business.

Conflict of Interest

Directors must continuously advise the Board of any personal interest that could potentially conflict with those of the Company. No director is perceived to have any personal conflicts of interest because they are employed by a Member of the Company.

The potential for conflict of interest is inherent in the structure of the Company and it is accepted that there may be circumstances where a director needs to abstain from voting on matters they may feel conflicted with.

A director is not counted in the quorum of a Board meeting considering any contract or proposed contract in which he or she has an interest and is not entitled to vote on the matter. The details are recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Chair and Ombudsman

The Chair is responsible for leading the Board, ensuring directors are properly briefed in all matters relevant to their role and responsibilities, facilitating discussions and managing the Board's relationship with the Company's management team.

The Ombudsman is responsible for the day to day operation of the Scheme, implementing company strategies and policies and the resolution of individual complaints.

Sandy Canale was first appointed the Ombudsman in December 2007 and re-appointed in 2012 and in 2017 for further terms of five years.

Company Secretary

The Board appoints a Company Secretary for such term and upon such terms and conditions as the Board thinks fit. The appointment of the

Company Secretary is formally resolved by the Board in accordance with section 204D of the Corporations Act.

The Company Secretary is accountable to, and reports directly to, the Board, through the Chair, on all matters to do with the proper functioning of the Board. All directors have direct access to and may seek information from the Company Secretary, to assist them in carrying out their duties as directors.

The Board appointed Pia Bentick, FCIS, FGIA, Barrister (*np*), CertEDC as the Company Secretary in March 2000. She is also the Corporate Counsel and a member of the senior management team.

Independent Professional Advice

Directors may obtain independent professional advice at the Company's expense, on matters relevant to the Company's affairs to assist them in carrying out their duties as directors, subject to providing prior notice to the Chair. Copy of any advice received by a director may be made available to other members of the Board.

Corporate Reporting

The Ombudsman, the Manager Finance and Corporate Services and the Company Secretary make a financial reporting certification to the Board for each financial year to confirm the integrity of the Company's financial statements, risk management and internal compliance.

Board Performance Assessment

The Board reviews its own and its Committees' performance regularly. An external Board Performance Assessment will be conducted every five years, consistent with the Scheme Review, unless the Chair/Board otherwise determines. The last external Board Review was completed in 2016.

2. Board Committees

The Company's Constitution provides for the Board to appoint, from time to time, a Designated Committee, comprising an equal number of industry directors (being directors nominated by the Members) and consumer directors/the independent Chair (being directors appointed from groups representing customers of electricity, gas and water services or representing public interest issues relevant to electricity, gas and water services or directors appointed otherwise than by Members). The Designated Committee will be responsible for formulating business plans and annual funding figures and making recommendations to the Board and may be charged with other responsibilities delegated by the Board.

In addition to the Designated Committee, the Board can establish other committees as appropriate. Members of Committees can be directors and officers of the Company and any other persons the Board may select. The Board may delegate any of its powers and/or functions (except powers conferred and duties imposed on the directors by law which are incapable of delegation) to a committee or an officer of the Company.

The Board has established committees as set out below and has approved a formal Charter for each Committee detailing their roles and responsibilities. Other committees may be established from time to time for specific purposes.

Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee is responsible for oversight of, and advice and recommendations to the Board of Directors on:

1. Financial Management - business plans, annual funding figure, budgets and target cash levels
2. Risk management – operational risks
3. Internal audit function.

The current Members of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee are:

- Patrick Makinson, Chair
- Margaret Cross
- John Hill
- Anne Westley

Peter Bicknell, the Independent Chair of the Board, attends as an observer.

Remuneration Committee

The Remuneration Committee reviews the Directors' fees and the Ombudsman's remuneration annually.

The current members of the Remuneration Committee are:

- Geoff Barton, Chair
- Kay Matthias
- Anthony Sinclair
- Jessie Byrne

Peter Bicknell, the Independent Chair of the Board, attends as an observer.

3. Conduct and Ethics

Code of Conduct

The Board has adopted a code of conduct that details the conduct and behaviour it expects from its workers in the performance of their duties. All workers are expected to perform their duties with professionalism, efficiency, fairness, impartiality, honesty and sensitivity.

4. Risk Management

Risk Management Plan

The Company has a Risk Management Plan to assist in achieving its risk management objectives – to ensure protection against financial loss, to ensure legal and regulatory obligations are satisfied and that business opportunities and risks are identified and properly managed and appropriately monitored by the Board. However, the Board recognises that no cost-effective internal control framework will preclude all errors and irregularities.

The Senior Management Team assists the Board and the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee in ensuring compliance with internal controls and risk management plans by regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the compliance and control systems and by regularly reporting to the Board and the Committee.

5. Communication with Members and the holding of General Meetings

The Board encourages full participation of members at general meetings to ensure high level of accountability and identification with the Company's strategy and goals. Important issues are presented to the members as single resolutions. Proxy forms are issued to all eligible members with the notice of general meetings.

Members are required to vote on the Annual Funding figure for the Company, the aggregate remuneration of directors and changes to the Company's Constitution. A copy of the Constitution is available to any member who requests it from the Company Secretary and on the Company's website www.ewosa.com.au.

Other means of communication with members include:

- the Annual Report, which is available to all members and on the Company's website
- the Financial Report which is posted to all members
- stakeholder meetings with the Ombudsman and regular meetings with the operational staff at the operational levels.

Feedback from members is also regularly sought through various surveys and informal feedback opportunities.

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Revenue from ordinary activities	3,366,919	3,725,611
Expenses from ordinary activities:		
Accounting and audit fee	47,964	55,916
Depreciation	265,725	128,064
Employee benefit	2,396,361	2,218,328
Rental	-	141,624
Total other expenses	860,825	888,843
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(203,956)	292,836
Total comprehensive income for the year	(203,956)	292,836

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,328,930	1,376,296
Trade and other receivables	188,521	281,819
Other current assets	124,208	303,735
Other financial assets	2,076,054	2,117,311
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	3,717,713	4,079,161
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	1,270,497	387,118
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS	1,270,497	387,118
TOTAL ASSETS	4,988,210	4,466,279
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	87,178	110,794
Financial liability payable	66,511	-
Employee benefits	268,190	222,133
Other current liabilities	30,834	37,919
Office fitout incentive	500	2,500
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	453,213	373,346
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Financial liability payable	762,416	-
Employee benefits	17,216	17,189
TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES	779,632	17,189
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,232,845	390,535
NET ASSETS	3,755,365	4,075,744
EQUITY		
Accumulated surplus	3,755,365	4,075,744
TOTAL EQUITY	3,755,365	4,075,744

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from members (inclusive of goods and services tax)		3,798,256	3,976,376
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods and services tax)		(3,601,872)	(3,754,904)
Interest received		-	-
Net cash inflow from operating activities		196,384	221,472
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		250	-
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(204,942)	(126,698)
Proceeds from other financial assets		3,020,559	2,666,524
Payments for other financial assets		(2,979,302)	(3,399,054)
Interest received		64,107	75,869
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(99,329)	(783,359)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Financing lease principal payments		(116,069)	-
Financing lease interest payments		(28,352)	-
Net cash outflow from financing activities		(144,421)	-
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents		(47,366)	(561,887)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of year		1,376,296	1,938,183
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF YEAR		1,328,930	1,376,296

Case Study

SUBJECT:	Delayed transfer
ISSUES:	Sales and Marketing – Transfer – Delay in Transfer
UTILITY:	Gas
CUSTOMER TYPE:	Business
CASE TYPE:	Investigation

THE ISSUE:

Mr D requested a new retailer transfer the gas supply for his business in July 2019, but the supply had still not transferred as of November 2019.

Mr D was concerned that the delayed transfer meant his business would continue to be charged at higher rates by his existing retailer until the transfer was completed.

OUR REVIEW:

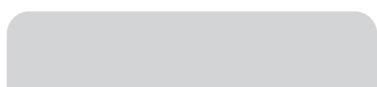
We obtained information from the new retailer, existing retailer and the distributor. We found that the new retailer delayed the transfer because it did not take, and should have taken, further steps with the customer and distributor to facilitate the transfer.

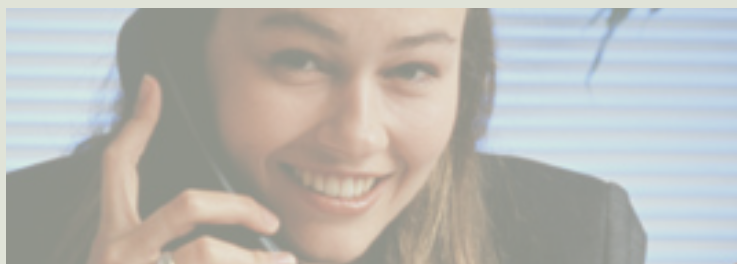
The new retailer transferred the supply in February 2020. We reviewed the difference in rates between Mr D's existing retailer and his new retailer and calculated a \$410 difference for the period of the delay.

RESOLUTION:

Mr D's new retailer agreed to apply an \$800 credit consisting of \$410 for the additional charges and \$390 as a gesture of goodwill.







Annual Report 2019-20

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