



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW
Free, fair and independent

What happens when a customer contacts EWON?



Customers can contact EWON for free and independent advice

EWON offers free and independent advice to energy and water consumers. Many of the enquiries we receive are dealt with by providing the customer with information, or referring them to their provider or another service.

We ask customers to use your organisation's internal complaints process before we investigate a complaint

Under most circumstances, EWON will not begin investigating a complaint until the provider has had a reasonable opportunity to resolve the complaint through its internal dispute resolution processes.

We ensure procedural fairness is provided to all parties

In handling complaints, we ensure our procedures and decision making processes are not only fair and reasonable, but are also procedurally fair. To do this we have regard to the information provided by all parties, relevant industry codes and laws and good industry practice.

Our processes are established to provide the customer and the provider with a reasonable opportunity to put their views to EWON, and we take these views into account when making any decisions about a complaint. Independence forms the foundation of everything we do.

We may decide to refer a complaint directly back to your organisation before we start an investigation

Even when a customer has already made a complaint to their provider, EWON will often ask the customer to give their provider another opportunity to resolve the complaint. If the customer agrees to this, a senior staff member of the provider must contact the customer within three days. We call this process 'refer to higher level'. This gives the provider another opportunity to resolve a customer's issue without EWON's involvement. The provider is charged a fee for this service.

To undertake an investigation we need to obtain all relevant information. This includes the provider's response to the complaint and copies of any records. We may ask for information over the phone or in writing. When we formally request information we ask that it be provided within 14 days.

We also ask customers to actively participate in our process. We encourage, but cannot compel, customers to provide information relevant to their complaint. Where information is not provided after a number of requests or without a reasonable excuse, we may decide to close the case and take no further action.



We strive to ensure that all of our policies, procedures and decisions are, and are seen to be, objective and independent.



How are complaints resolved by EWON?

EWON may resolve a complaint by educating the customer about their own responsibilities or simply talking to them about their energy use.

If a customer contacts EWON requesting information or assistance, we treat this as an enquiry rather than a complaint. Enquiries may be about providers or parties outside EWON's jurisdiction, such as plumbers, electricians, LPG suppliers or water providers that are not members of EWON.

When customers make an enquiry, we usually try to assist by providing them with independent advice and information.

EWON can negotiate an informal outcome with customers and providers, or the Ombudsman can make a binding decision.

We decide what method and process will be used to resolve a complaint. This can include negotiation, conciliation or deciding that the complaint does not warrant further investigation. The Ombudsman may also make a Binding Decision about the complaint.

A decision by the Ombudsman made in accordance with the EWON Charter is binding on both the customer and the provider if the customer accepts the decision in full and final settlement of the complaint.

There are many possible outcomes to a customer's complaint to EWON

EWON may suggest your organisation resolve the customer's complaint through actions such as:

- providing the customer with a detailed explanation
- correcting an error in billing and providing a refund for any amounts overpaid
- providing an apology
- paying compensation to the customer
- providing the customer with a goodwill credit on their account, for example:
 - › where the customer has incurred significant inconvenience or frustration, or
 - › where your organisation has provided incorrect advice to the customer which caused them to take unnecessary action or incur unnecessary costs
- a change to your policy or process
- taking steps to rectify any problems with the provision of energy services.
- requesting staff be given feedback or training.

What are systemic issues?

A systemic issue can be broadly described as a policy, practice or process of a provider that has, or has the potential, to affect a number of customers.

EWON has a responsibility to identify systemic issues, whether systemic to a particular provider, or systemic to a group or type of providers. EWON investigates these where appropriate. If we identify a possible systemic issue relating to your organisation, we will report this issue to your senior management, seeking advice about how it will be addressed and how consumer impacts will be redressed. This is a key part of our role in reducing future complaints.

What else does EWON do?

While we receive, investigate and resolve customer complaints and disputes, our other responsibilities under the EWON Charter are to provide a whole of organisation approach to consumer issues and complaint reduction.

These include:

 **Complaints Management**

 **Policy & Influence**

 **Systemic Issues**

 **Stakeholder Management**

 **Promotion & Awareness**



Further information

Register to become a member or enquire about membership by visiting our website or email our Member Liaison Team.

 members@ewon.com.au

 ewon.com.au/members

If you are a member you can access information through our member portal **EWONlink**