

Telling customers about External Dispute Resolution

As an Energy and Water Ombudsman member you need to make sure your customers are aware of us and their rights.

IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICE AND MORE

- Discuss with your EWOs how best to implement the advice.
- Let customers know of the existence of EWO resources including fact sheets and web pages.
- Develop opportunities during customer service interactions to advise about access to EWOs.
- Promote your membership of the EWO through social media and advertising as a way of telling your customers that you are engaged and proactive in managing disputes.
- Ensure you are consistent in your reference to complaints and referral to EWOs across your communication channels.
- Refer to the Australian Standard AS 10002:2022 *Guidelines for complaint management in organizations* to support your implementation.
- Access additional resources from your EWO including logo use and wording suggestions.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROMOTE EDR?

External Dispute Resolution (EDR) gives customers a free, fair and independent option for their complaint.

Promotion of EDR is necessary to build confidence and trust in the sector. Raising consumer awareness of Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWO) will result in empowered customers and demonstrates your commitment to consumer protections.

WHAT MUST PROVIDERS DO? MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

You must include information about how customers (residential and small business) can access EWOs in communications about complaints and when disconnecting or restricting a customer's service.

You must provide information about how customers can access EWOs in your:

- Complaint policies and procedures
- Written and verbal communication in response to a complaint and disconnection / restriction notices
- Website content, as required.

You are responsible for ensuring your staff meet these obligations.

WHAT SHOULD PROVIDERS DO? BEST PRACTICE

To achieve good outcomes, you should include information about how customers can access EWOs in all verbal and written communications such as bills, payment plans, customer hardship, and debt recovery and on all digital platforms, including website, chats, social media and apps.

References to EWOs should include an explanation of:

- The EWOs role
- EWO contact details and a link to the EWO website
- How the EWO may be able to assist
- Confirmation that EWOs are free and independent.

Your complaint handling policy, information about how to lodge a complaint and all complaint communication, verbal and written, is clear and accessible to all customers.

Your website and other digital platforms are easy to understand and navigate to find reference to dispute resolution information, including:

- A section for complaints and dispute resolution, placed in an easy-to-find location, ideally within 2-3 clicks from your home page
- A search function that directs customers to the correct area when typing the words 'complaint', 'dispute' or 'ombudsman'.