

section 3

Our performance

Time taken to resolve complaints

This year there has been a noticeable change in the type of complaints we received, with an increase in the number of investigations, while refer backs and general enquiries have fallen. This shift in the complaint mix indicates a trend towards more complex complaints, which has affected the overall time taken to resolve complaints.

While there was an 11 per cent decrease in the total number of cases closed from the previous year, level 1 investigations increased by 16 per cent, Level 2 by 12 per cent and Level 3 by 25 per cent. Refer backs and general enquiries experienced the greatest reduction from 2018-2019, with general enquiries decreasing by 26 per cent and refer backs dropping by 25 per cent.

During 2019-2020, we continued to keep our Referral to Higher Level (RHL) cases open longer to ensure actions were completed by the energy or water provider to the satisfaction of the customer.

Performance against service standards

Performance targets – time taken to close cases

Table 2

	Target	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20	
Less than 28 days	80%	8,201	92%	7,209	92%	8,469	83%	7,340	86%	6,020	79%
Less than 60 days	90%	8,681	98%	7,722	98%	9,897	97%	8,350	98%	7,342	96%
Less than 90 days	95%	8,808	99%	7,811	99%	10,117	99%	8,514	99%	7,553	99%
More than 90 days	< 5%	87	1%	50	1%	94	1%	45	1%	68	1%



Referral to other organisations

During 2019-2020, 12 per cent of the total cases we closed fell within the jurisdiction of other government authorities. We have Memoranda of Understanding with seven organisations to facilitate the timely exchange of information and referral of such cases, including:

- the fixing of prices or tariffs
- a customer contribution to the cost of capital works
- products such as air conditioners, hot water systems, solar panels and home electrician services offered by electricity retailers
- on-selling of energy or water to tenants in caravan parks, retirement villages and other multi-tenanted dwellings (embedded networks)
- bottled LPG (liquefied petroleum gas)
- electricity consumption of more than 160 megawatt hours a year

- gas consumption of more than one terajoule a year
- water consumption of more than 100 kilolitres a year for small business
- metered standpipes, raw water supplies, tradewaste, stormwater harvesting or stand-alone recycled water.

More than half (60 per cent) of the cases we referred to other government authorities in 2019-2020 were to the Office of Fair Trading, including complaints about bulk hot water, bottled gas and solar installation.

Referrals to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) remained steady while referrals to the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy continued to decline. There was a small increase in the number of cases we referred to the Queensland Ombudsman.

Cases referred to other organisations

Table 3

Issue	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Office of Fair Trading	594	606	757	617	540
Australian Energy Regulator*	188	54	181	241	217
Queensland Ombudsman	60	67	78	65	70
Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy*	603	235	203	115	66
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	6	13	4	15	6
Queensland Competition Authority	17	9	5	4	3
Total	1,468	984	1,228	1,057	902

*From 1 July 2015, regulation for energy retailers moved from the Queensland Energy and Water Regulator to the Australian Energy Regulator.

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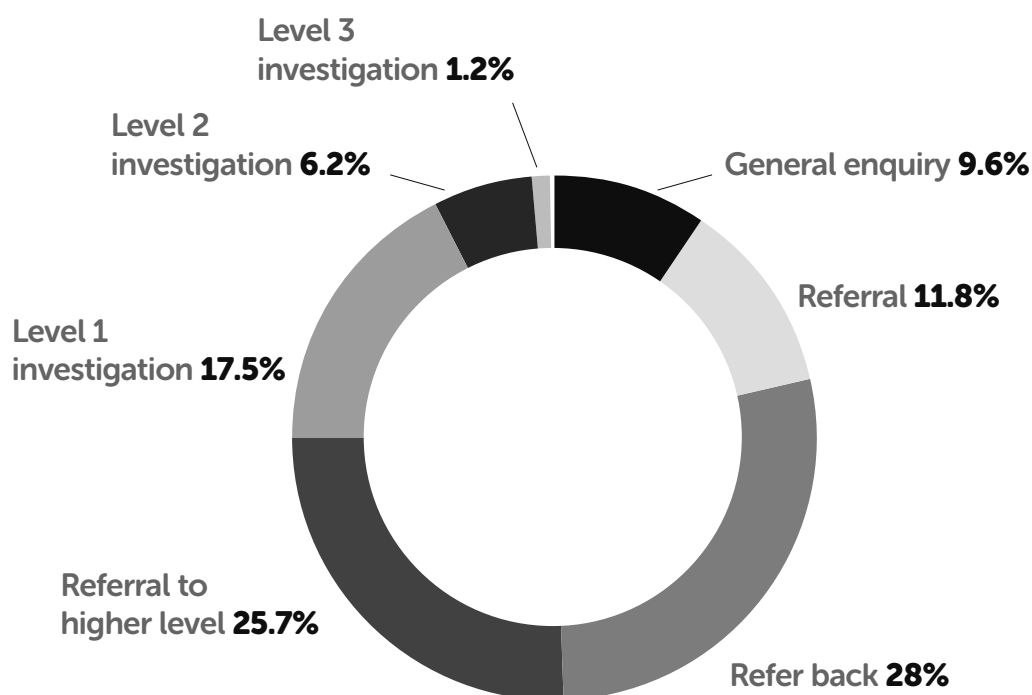
Case types

When a customer contacts us, we listen to their issue and classify it as a general enquiry, refer them to another organisation or back to their energy or water provider, refer the case to a higher level with their provider, or investigate the matter.



In 2019-2020, 28 per cent of the cases we closed were referred back to the energy or water provider (because the customer had not contacted them about the issue before contacting us). This is down from 33 per cent last year.

2019-20 case types



Investigations



Final orders

No final orders were issued during 2019-2020. Final orders may be issued by the Ombudsman if a matter cannot be resolved via negotiation or conciliation.

Please note: figures do not add to 100 per cent due to rounding. See Appendix 1 for figures.

section 3

Customer satisfaction survey

We conducted a customer research survey between December 2019 and January 2020. The survey was based on the Australian Government's Benchmarks for industry-based customer dispute resolution.

These benchmarks focus on the six key attributes of effective dispute resolution services: accessibility, independence, fairness, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

Key findings

87% of surveyed customers indicated they would recommend EWOQ to others

86.4% of customers reported being very satisfied with how courteous, friendly and helpful EWOQ team members were

79.1% of customers reported being very satisfied with the ease of finding an ombudsman to complain about an electricity, gas or water retailer

72.5% of customers were very satisfied with the time we took to investigate and resolve their complaint

Read the full report online at www.ewoq.com.au/customer-satisfaction-research

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Testimonial

“Thank you so much for your patience and understanding and for assisting me through this matter. It is extremely hard to have a voice when no one wants to listen, and it was nice to finally have my voice heard after all this time.”

Since January 2020, we have undertaken Voice of the Customer surveying each month with customers who have had a complaint either:

- referred to a higher level within their electricity, gas or water supplier
- independently reviewed by EWOQ.

These surveys provide regular feedback to help us improve our services to customers, including how we handle complaints, the information we give our customers about our complaints process and our skills in talking with customers about their complaints.

Contact method

How customers contacted EWOQ in 2019-2020



Phone



Website



Email

Other (includes letter, in-person, Facebook and Twitter) = **83 customers or 1%**

See Appendix 1 for figures.

Our performance against the strategic plan

A four-year strategic plan is prepared annually and describes our vision, objectives, strategies and performance indicators. The strategic plan informs our business plan, which details the activities we need to undertake to achieve our strategic objectives. Our 2019-2023 strategic plan focused on our service, our customers, our connections and our people.

Our service

Commitment: Our service

We provide a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service, which is evolving with the changing landscape of our sector.

- We strive to be agile and evolve with the changing landscape of our sector.
- We embrace change and adapt to the emerging technologies and needs of our sector.
- Our business is robust, accountable, efficient and effective.

Table 4

Measure of success	Achievements 2019-2020
Monitor the number and nature of the complaints we receive to ensure our service evolves with changing technologies and consumer needs, while looking out for issues that may affect our business or customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discharged statutory responsibility, with operational delegations under the <i>Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006</i> maintained • 7,621 cases closed, with 79% closed within 28 days
Continue to be financially and environmentally sustainable by improving our systems and processes, and ensuring they remain fair, fit for purpose and adaptable for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided financial reports to executive management group every month • monitored our compliance with dispute resolution framework, policies and procedures • maintained an Audit and Risk Management Committee, with four meetings held in 2019-2020 • implemented an updated risk management framework • upgraded to Microsoft 365 enabling the team to work remotely in response to COVID-19
Develop solutions to enable connecting with our customers, communities, teams and others through a variety of digital means.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduced SMS updates for case updates • launched a new mobile-optimised website • designed a member portal to be launched in early 2020-2021 • cloud-based telephony system to be rolled out in early 2020-2021, including live chat on the website
Deliver our services within the required agreed response targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • website available 99.8% of the time • 35 change requests implemented in Resolve case management system in 2019-2020
EWOQ 2023 and Digital Project completed on time and within agreed budget.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMS successfully rolled out • case management system upgraded • electronic document and records management system implemented • website and intranet redeveloped • cloud-based telephony system ready to be rolled out in early 2020-2021 • commissioned an independent review • completed customer satisfaction survey and implemented monthly Voice of the Customer surveying • future state project scoped to continue to enhance customer experience



Our customers

Commitment: Our customers

We resolve complaints efficiently and effectively, communicating meaningfully and building trust with our customers. If we can't help, we explain why and suggest who can.

- We deliver fair outcomes for consumers and businesses, providing answers and solutions which are fair for all parties.
- We listen and respect our customers to build and maintain their trust.
- We will ensure our teams have the skills and capacity to resolve a wide range of problems for our customers.

Table 4 cont.

Measure of success	Achievements 2019-2020
Resolve complaints quickly and efficiently – closing 80% within 28 days and 90% within 60 days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79% cases closed in less than 28 days • 96% cases closed in less than 60 days
Continue to focus on quality and customer service to ensure a sense of confidence in our service so our customers and members feel our answers are fair and reasonable irrespective of the outcome for them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more than 450 cases assessed through quality assurance assessment cycles • regular reviews of performance-related case data considered and discussed within each region and team meetings • feedback from customers and scheme participants considered and responded to, as required • section 22 reviews conducted as required, with 37 section 22 letters sent to customers advising that no further investigation will be undertaken • appeal reviews conducted as required, with 3 appeal reviews undertaken to section 22 decisions (all appeal reviews confirmed)
Engage with our customers, members and other stakeholders to understand their problems, needs and expectations and deliver solutions that respond to these.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • received 13 customer complaints about our service, with 5 complaints resulting in further action and 8 complaints resulting in no further action • referred 902 cases to other organisations (with whom we have memoranda of understanding) where matters fell within the jurisdiction of other government authorities • total of 1983 monetary outcomes (worth \$878,849) negotiated for customers, including 401 billing adjustments (\$352,205) and 963 goodwill gestures obtained (\$243,462) • 6 new scheme participants approved and welcomed as members • completed compliance audit to ensure scheme participants include our contact details on their websites and disconnection notices
Deliver a high standard of service to all our customers irrespective of their location or how they chose to engage with us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completed a customer satisfaction survey, with 87% of surveyed customers stating that they would recommend EWOQ to others • introduced monthly Voice of the Customer surveying • received 59 compliments from customers about the service provided by our team members • feedback from scheme participants considered and service improvements implemented, as required • no allegations of failure to afford procedural fairness were made by scheme participants

Our performance against the strategic plan

Our connections

Commitment: Our connections

We create impact through our connections, raising awareness of our service among communities who may need us and providing value to our members and industry.

- We want everyone who needs our help to know we are here and how to contact us.
- We educate consumers about how we can help with energy and water issues.
- We collaborate with community groups who support our current and future customers.
- We connect and influence our stakeholders to improve outcomes for the sector.

Table 4 cont.

Measure of success	Achievements 2019-2020
Share our insights and experiences with industry, community groups and government, to collaboratively improve the sector for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engaged with government and regulators on policy issues and proposed legislation, with 8 submissions written and regular meetings with jurisdictional regulators • participated in national and international Ombudsman networks, including attendance by the Ombudsman at 4 ANZEWO meetings and 3 ANZOA members' meetings (page 25) • team members attended ANZOA interest group meetings every quarter • published the annual report • 8% increase in website sessions • 9 electronic newsletters published • published case studies on our website
Regularly provide information to help our stakeholders and members understand the nature of issues customers are experiencing, and help them address these issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintained networks with scheme participants to proactively identify potential systemic issues • 24 systemic issues notices issued (page 15) • systemic issues monitored monthly and reported to regulators • systemic issues reports produced • trend analysis of data and current and emerging issues conducted as required to identify potential systemic issues • provided case data and trend analysis to scheme participants
Provide 95% of reporting and data requests to industry, government and regulators within agreed timeframes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided scheme participants regular reporting on scheme outcomes and performance within agreed timeframes • annual report delivered within three months of the end of financial year • 4 briefings prepared for Advisory Council • complaint statistics updated monthly on website and Queensland Government open data portal • billing reports provided to scheme participants with reconciliations • reports delivered to regulators as required • acknowledged media inquiries within 24 hours of receipt and responded to 100% within required timeframes • environmental scanning completed weekly and provided to team members to ensure their awareness of sector updates
Meet with communities across the state, connecting with them through a variety of in-person and digital means.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team members attended 100 stakeholder events and 38 community outreach events • positive feedback received from stakeholders following meetings and presentations • expanded our social media presence on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter by 7%, with 953 total followers and a total reach of 129,743
Explore ways to increase the awareness of our scheme and eliminate perceived barriers of entry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed our complaints processes to ensure we comply with Queensland's new <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> • completed the actions and deliverables of the Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, including publishing our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan • launched mobile-optimised website written in simple language and with page translation functionality in more than 100 languages • 21 media mentions with publicity value of \$676,954

Our people

Commitment: Our people

We are committed problem solvers, working together to improve our service and ourselves. Our values guide our motivations and our outcomes.

- We attract, develop and retain committed professional people who are motivated by our values.
- We will foster an empowered, agile, high performing and resilient team.

Table 4 cont.

Measure of success	Achievements 2019-2020
Encourage and support our people to grow and develop by providing a safe, collaborative yet challenging environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • values and achievement-based performance development plans for all team members created and reviewed annually • monthly one-on-one meetings undertaken focussing on performance development and key learnings for each team member • delivered employee-led recognition and achievement program • implemented business continuity plans • transitioned 100% team members to work from home in response to COVID-19
Embrace equality, diversity and inclusion; we understand different perspectives are essential for a fair and balanced work environment and scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment practices supported equal employment opportunities • completed the actions of the Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, including reimagining our Indigenous artwork and updating privacy film and safety strips in our Brisbane office with elements of the artwork • published an Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan and monitored progress towards its deliverables • worked to foster an environment that supports and encourages learning and development • supported awareness-raising campaigns for equality, diversity and inclusion through internal communication channels • feedback provided through internal meetings and forums, and directly to the Ombudsman via a confidential email account
Invest in learning and development of our team while balancing output.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5% of salaries budget allocated for training and development • hosted our biennial team conference, focussing on risk, resilience and innovation • focussed on social and action learning to develop our team through project work, higher duties and networking opportunities • continued to develop and deliver training to meet identified needs as per performance and development plans • completed succession planning for all key roles • prioritised in-house online learning and onboarding throughout the year
Focus on our agreed values and behaviours knowing each team member has committed to these.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • values and behaviours agreed in annual performance development and achievement plans • developed unwritten ground rules for the leadership group • developed priority areas for action from our Working for Queensland survey results

