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## Project update

During 2019-2020 we undertook a number of key projects to improve our business processes and customer service delivery to ensure we continue to deliver a timely, effective, independent and fair dispute resolution service to the people of Queensland.

### Our key projects:

- Case management
- Telephony
- Website
- Member portal
- Intranet
- EDRMS
- Independent review
- Customer satisfaction research



### Case management

An upgrade to our case management system Resolve improved its usability and has allowed for further streamlining of our processes for compliments and complaints, Right to Information and Information Privacy (RTI & IP) and for integration with our new telephony system and member portal.

#### Project progress

- Resolve upgrade complete
- Integration of SMS complete
- Complaints and compliments process implemented
- RTI & IP process ready to be implemented in July 2020
- Integration to telephony system and member portal.

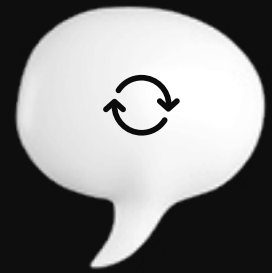
### Telephony

We are implementing a new cloud-based telephony solution to enhance our customer experience and provide omnichannel functionality to contact us. This will deliver:

- improved interactions with customers, regardless of whether they contact us by phone, live chat, online complaint form, email or Facebook Messenger
- seamless call recording with a cloud-based service
- additional functionality to help improve how we work from home
- advanced system reporting.

#### Project progress

- Team workshop and high-level design complete
- Genesys Cloud configuration complete
- Interactive voice response improvements ready to be implemented in July 2020
- Web chat and email processing in progress
- Resolve integration to come.



## New website

Our website redevelopment focused on making it easier for customers and members to find the information and services they need quickly and to submit a complaint online. Developed on the Squiz Matrix platform, the new website takes a mobile-first and customer-centred approach.

### Project progress

- Phase 1 of the new website was launched on 30 June, incorporating a responsive complaints form to guide customers in the right direction for their complaint
- Continuous improvements are planned to improve functionality and customer experience, including incorporating web chat and a member portal.

## Member portal

A member portal will provide scheme participants a secure area of our website to update their contact details and receive reports.

### Project progress

- Member portal is under construction with expected delivery in the first quarter of next financial year.

## Intranet and EDRMS

Records 365, integrated with SharePoint, was chosen for our cloud-based electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) to provide timely management of information, collaboration and compliance with government legislation.

The SharePoint environment also provided a new Intranet with improved search functionality and interactivity through the use of Yammer feeds.

The delivery of both the Intranet and the EDRMS proved particularly useful to help team members stay connected and improve collaboration while working from home.

### Project progress

- The new intranet and EDRMS were both launched in March 2020.

## Independent review

We engaged Cameron Ralph Khoury to conduct an independent review of our scheme to help us understand how well we're performing against the Benchmarks for industry-based customer dispute resolution.

### The review included:

- broader stakeholder consultation
- in-depth analysis of our processes, procedures, data and management oversight mechanisms
- a review of a representative sample of recent disputes.

### Project progress

- Draft report delivered in June 2020 with findings to be used to continue improving our service into the next financial year.

## Customer satisfaction research

Our customer satisfaction research measures how well we're meeting our core goal of providing a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service.

### Project progress

- Schottler Consulting conducted our latest customer research survey between December 2019 and January 2020
- Following this, we now send monthly Voice of the Customer surveys to help us continue to improve our processes, systems and training for team members.

Read highlights from our customer satisfaction survey on page 19.

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## Dispute resolution process



Our approach is informal and based on the principles of alternative dispute resolution. We seek to establish the facts and issues to help our customers and their supplier better understand the problem at hand, and each other's point of view.

The outcome may be achieved by agreement between the customer and the supplier, or through conciliation based on what we deem a fair and reasonable outcome.

### Our jurisdiction

Our office was established to assist customers who use less than 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year or one terajoule of gas per year. In South East Queensland, we also help residential water customers and small businesses who consume less than 100 kilolitres of water a year.

We can investigate unresolved disputes about:

- problems with payment
- account errors and disputes
- disconnections and restrictions
- damages and loss
- energy marketing
- energy contract issues
- vegetation management
- supply quality and reliability
- extensions to supply
- connection of supply
- customer service issues
- guaranteed service levels
- equipment issues
- burst pipes, leaks, blockages and spills.

For disputes outside our jurisdiction, we have Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the following agencies to ensure timely exchange of information and referral of cases, where relevant:

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Australian Energy Market Commission
- Australian Energy Regulator
- Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
- Office of Fair Trading
- Queensland Competition Authority
- Queensland Ombudsman.



### How we handle disputes

All contacts with EWOQ are called cases and managed in one of the following ways:

- as a **general enquiry** about electricity, gas, water or other issue that is not a complaint which relates to a scheme participant
- **referred back** to the energy or water supplier because the customer has not attempted to resolve the issue with them before coming to us
- **referred to another organisation** with whom we have an MoU because the complaint is outside our jurisdiction
- registered as a **complaint** and assigned to a dedicated Investigation and Conciliation Officer.

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## Dispute resolution complaint stages

### STEP 1 Referral to higher level or investigation

Once a case has been assigned to an Investigation and Conciliation Officer, the officer discusses the resolution options with the customer. The customer may choose to have us refer their complaint to a higher level within the energy or water supplier or begin an investigation.

#### Referral to higher level (RHL)

This process gives the customer an option to escalate their complaint to a higher level within the energy or water supplier. When this option is chosen, we prepare an RHL notice that provides a summary of the customer's issue and requires the supplier to contact the customer within five business days. If contact is not made, or the problem remains unresolved, customers can request us to investigate.

### STEP 2 Investigation

Once an investigation commences, we prepare a notice of investigation which details the customer's issue. The supplier is required to respond back to us within 10 business days. The investigation and conciliation officer will liaise between the customer and supplier to achieve a fair and reasonable resolution.

Where our investigations determine the supplier's actions were appropriate, the complaint will be closed and the parties advised of the decision and our reasons. Where an error is found, we will try to negotiate a suitable outcome, for example:

- a payment plan for an overdue account
- reconnection of energy supply
- compensation for damage to equipment.

### STEP 3 Final order

If we cannot achieve informal resolution of the complaint, the matter may be finalised in a number of ways.

Firstly, a decision can be made under section 22 of the Act to not investigate or to discontinue the investigation. There were 37 cases finalised this way in 2019-2020.

Secondly, if a matter cannot be resolved by negotiation or conciliation, the Energy and Water Ombudsman may decide to make a final order requiring an energy or water supplier to take certain action.

Among other things, the Ombudsman can order energy and water suppliers to:

- pay compensation
- provide a non-monetary solution to remedy the dispute
- amend a stated charge under the Act
- cancel a negotiated contract
- perform corrective work.

No final orders were issued in 2019-2020.

#### Notice of withdrawal

A customer can withdraw a case during its investigation. There were 17 notice of withdrawals during 2019-2020.

## Quality assurance



We conducted regular quality assurance assessment cycles throughout 2019-2020 with more than 450 cases assessed during the period to ensure our practices are accurate, efficient, consistent and of a high standard.

From July to November 2019, we conducted six-weekly quality assurance assessment cycles, these included a self-assessment followed by a review by team leaders and regional managers. Feedback and improvements identified during these assessments were provided in the final week of the cycle. During this process, 257 cases were reviewed.

From January to May 2020, we trialled a four-week quality assurance cycle, with team leaders undertaking the case assessment and providing feedback and suggested improvements during the last week of each month. In this process, we reviewed 200 cases.

We will continue to streamline our case review process during 2020-2021 as the quality assurance process is integrated into our new telephony system. We plan to increase the number of cases to be reviewed and frequency of reviews, as well as improving our quality assurance reports.

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## Customer locations



### Top 10 locations of our customers



For cases where an incident address was provided, 80 per cent were from South East Queensland, which includes Brisbane, Logan, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Ipswich, the Redlands, Moreton Bay, Somerset, Lockyer Valley and Scenic Rim local government areas.

Location figures are based on the incident address and exclude non-residential cases, and residential cases where the customer did not disclose a Queensland suburb or postcode or was from interstate or overseas.

Approximately 83 per cent of our cases came from the following Top 10 locations.

#### Top 10 locations of our customers

##### Brisbane City Council

**26.0%** (1657 cases)

##### City of Gold Coast

**15.1%** (963)

##### Moreton Bay Regional Council

**11.3%** (721)

##### Logan City Council

**7.7%** (492)

##### Sunshine Coast Regional Council

**6.7%** (426)

##### Ipswich City Council

**6.6%** (422)

##### Redland City Council

**3.7%** (234)

##### Cairns Regional Council

**2.2%** (139)

##### City of Townsville

**2.0%** (125)

##### Toowoomba Regional Council

**1.9%** (119)

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## Systemic issues

There were 82 potential systemic issues recorded in 2019-2020. Billing remains the most common type of systemic issue registered, accounting for 37.7% of potential systemic issues.

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systemic issue notices

A systemic issue is a problem that a customer has with an energy or water company that affects, or could affect, more than one customer. Under the *Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006*, we identify any systemic issues that arise from complaints to us.

### Causes of systemic issues

Many factors can cause a systemic issue, including human error, failed systems and lack of policies or procedures.

### Identifying and measuring systemic issues

We identify potential systemic issues in several ways:

- our investigation team monitors complaints and identifies potential systemic issues through our case management system
- we stay informed about current and emerging systemic issues through advice from the Advisory Council and our relationships with scheme participants and government and ombudsmen agencies
- scheme participants may tell us about a systemic issue.

### Resolving systemic issues

In 2019-2020, 24 systemic issue notices were issued to scheme participants. When we identify a systemic issue, we tell the scheme participant, and advise how the issue could be resolved and how to stop it re-occurring.

We also tell the relevant regulatory agency if a systemic issue could breach or violate a legislative code or licence. Depending on the concern, our identification of systemic issues may lead a scheme participant to:

- redesign products and services
- change organisational practices and procedures
- retrain staff on product and service delivery
- reassess consumer information (e.g. labelling)
- reassess the performance of after-sales service
- receive an early warning about potential product and service defects.

### Potential systemic issues

Table 1

Issue	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Billing	34	35	41	27	29
Customer service	14	13	35	13	27
Marketing	2	2	12	9	9
Provision	2	2	17	12	4
Transfer	1	1	11	6	3
Metering	0	2	3	1	0
Credit	1	1	0	0	0
Supply	1	1	0	0	0
Water	1	0	0	0	0
Other	3	5	1	8*	10*
Total	59	62	120	76	82

\*includes disconnection, hardship and network assets.