

complaints and service standards

There are two types of complaints or disputes that you may experience as an energy customer. If the matter is about the supply of energy it is considered an energy supply complaint. Otherwise, it is a general consumer complaint.

Examples of energy supply complaints	Examples of general consumer complaints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connections • disconnections • bills • interruptions • debt recovery • meters • energy marketing agents • safety in the supply of energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hot water systems • solar panels • heaters • air conditioners • quality of work by tradespeople • LPG gas bottles • appliances • safety of appliances

Licensed retailers and distributors

If the complaint or dispute is about a licensed retailer or distributor, contact the organisation directly in the first instance.

Each licensed retailer or distributor must have an internal complaints process that they must follow.

If the matter is not resolved with the licensed retailer or distributor, you can take the complaint to the Energy and Water Ombudsman.

If the licensed electricity retailer or electricity distributor does not respond to your written complaint within 20 business days you will be entitled to a service standard payment.

If you have a general consumer complaint, you should contact the business that you purchased the goods or services from in the first instance. If the dispute is not resolved, you can contact the Department of Commerce (Consumer Protection) Advice Line on 1300 304 054.

How you can resolve an energy supply complaint depends upon whether your supplier is licensed (e.g. Synergy, Horizon Power, Alinta Energy or Kleenheat Gas) or exempt (e.g. shopping centres and caravan parks).

The flow chart on the next page shows the best approach to take for energy supply complaints.



Exempt retailers and distributors

If the complaint or dispute is about an exempt retailer or distributor, you should first raise the issue directly with your exempt retailer or distributor. If the matter is not resolved after this stage, you may consider seeking legal advice.

Although the Public Utilities Office has no formal role in mediating between exempt retailers or distributors and their customers, you may contact it to discuss your concerns. If the Public Utilities Office receives complaints about an issue, it may take this into account in future policy development.

IMPORTANT!

Always contact your retailer or distributor first. If you do not first raise your complaint with your retailer or distributor, the Energy and Water Ombudsman will refer the matter back to your retailer or distributor before investigating further.



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The Energy and Water Ombudsman

The Energy and Water Ombudsman provides free, independent complaint resolution services for small use customers of licensed energy retailers and distributors.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman only deals with energy supply complaints (such as billing, disconnection or debt recovery). The Energy and Water Ombudsman cannot investigate general consumer complaints, or complaints about the price of energy.

At the end of an investigation, you and your retailer or distributor may agree on a resolution. However, if you cannot agree, the Energy and Water Ombudsman has the authority to make a binding decision up to a value of \$20,000, or up to \$50,000 with the agreement of your retailer or distributor.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman cannot deal with complaints that are being, or should be, dealt with by a court or tribunal.

TIP!

It is always a good idea to keep records of your contacts with your retailer or distributor.

Economic Regulation Authority

The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) does not investigate individual complaints by customers. However, it can investigate and deal with breaches by licensees (e.g. retailers and distributors) of the conditions of their licence.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman reports licence breaches by retailers and distributors to the ERA.

Who does this fact sheet apply to?

This fact sheet applies to small use customers. You are a small use customer if you use less than 160 MWh (about \$56,000) of electricity per year or up to 1TJ of gas per year (between \$28,500 and \$43,000, depending on where you live).

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Electricity service standard payments

There are service standards that retailers and distributors must meet when supplying energy. In some cases, you will be entitled to a payment if a standard has not been met.

Electricity customers are entitled to a service standard payment if the following service standards are breached.

Service standard	What happened?	Payment	Application
Failure to reconnect within required timeframe	Supply is not reconnected within the timeframes prescribed.	\$60 per day (up to \$300)	Apply to retailer within 3 months
Wrongful disconnection	Retailer or distributor fails to follow disconnection procedures.	\$100 for each day disconnected (no maximum applies)	Payment made automatically – do not have to apply for a payment
Failure to acknowledge a query or complaint	Retailer or distributor fails to acknowledge (10 business days) or respond (20 business days) to a query or complaint.	One-off payment of \$20	Apply to retailer or distributor within 3 months
Failure to provide notice of planned interruption*	Horizon Power or Western Power fails to provide at least 72 hours' notice of a planned interruption.	One-off payment of \$20	Apply to distributor within 60 days
Interruptions exceeding 12 hours*	Supply is interrupted for more than 12 hours.	One-off payment of \$80	Apply to distributor within 60 days

* only applies to a person who consumes no more than 50MWh of electricity per year.