



Australian
Competition &
Consumer
Commission



AUSTRALIAN
ENERGY
REGULATOR

What can I do if I have a complaint?

If you have a problem with your electricity or gas service, there are a number of steps you can take to resolve it. Energy retailers and distributors must have complaints handling and dispute resolution processes in place. This includes a process for escalating your complaint to a senior officer or manager if the problem is not resolved when you first speak to them.

Who do I contact?

Retailers sell electricity and gas to you and bill you for the service. Distributors own and maintain the distribution networks, including electricity powerlines and power poles, and gas pipelines, which carry electricity and gas to houses and businesses.

You should contact your retailer if you have a problem with:

- your energy bill (including high bills and disputed accounts or arrears)
- getting connected to the network
- arranging for electricity or gas to be supplied to your home or business
- how the service was sold or marketed to you
- your rights in relation to cancelling a contract
- a new contract that was entered without your consent.

You should contact your distributor if you have a problem with:

- your electricity and gas meters
- the powerlines and gas pipelines which connect your premises to the network in your street
- power outages and interruptions to your gas supply
- supply quality, such as low frequency (for example, when your lights dim) or low gas pressure.

Step 1: Contact your retailer or distributor

It is important to contact your retailer or distributor as quickly as possible to explain the problem and the outcome you want.

In many cases a phone call can fix your problem. Be clear, persistent, calm and polite. It's a good idea to keep a note of the phone call, including the date and name of the person you spoke to.

If the person you spoke to can't help you, go to Step 2.

Step 2: Ask to speak to a supervisor or senior manager

If the problem or complaint has not been resolved, you should ask to speak with a senior officer or manager. You should discuss what options are available. Write down the name of the person you spoke to and what you discussed and agreed.

You may consider putting your complaint in writing at this point if it remains unresolved.

Putting your complaint in writing

- Address your letter to the manager or the company's head office.
- Outline your complaint and the outcome you want.
- Ask for a response from the retailer within a specified time.
- Include copies of any relevant supporting information (such as your energy bill) and keep the original and a copy of any letters or emails you send.

Step 3: Contact the Ombudsman

If you have been unable to resolve your complaint using steps 1 and 2, you should contact the energy ombudsman scheme in your state or territory.



Ombudsman schemes

Energy ombudsman schemes are a free and independent dispute resolution service for electricity and gas customers who have been unable to resolve a complaint with their energy retailer or distributor directly.

Ombudsman schemes can investigate a wide range of complaints, including:

- disputed accounts and high bills
- debts and arrears
- disconnection of supply
- reliability and quality of supply
- connection or transfer issues
- poor customer service.

Ombudsman schemes will try to negotiate a resolution between you and your retailer or distributor. Ombudsman schemes do not deal with disputes about setting of prices, government policies or legislation.

The role of the AER

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) is Australia's national energy market regulator and an independent statutory authority. The AER is responsible for monitoring retailer and distributor compliance with the National Energy Retail Law and Rules. The AER receives reports on complaints and disputes from energy businesses and the ombudsman schemes. The AER uses this information to carry out its compliance monitoring role.

Contacts

Queensland

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland
1800 662 837 www.ewoq.com.au

New South Wales

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
1800 246 545 www.ewon.com.au

Australian Capital Territory

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal
02 6207 1740 www.acat.act.gov.au

Victoria

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV)
1800 500 509 www.ewov.com.au

South Australia

Energy Industry Ombudsman SA
1800 665 565 www.ewosa.com.au

Tasmania

Energy Ombudsman Tasmania
1800 001 170 www.energyombudsman.tas.gov.au

More information

Australian Energy Regulator

AER Infoline 1300 585 165

AER website www.aer.gov.au

Energy Made Easy www.energymadeeasy.gov.au

Other contacts

Indigenous Infoline 1300 303 143

For information in languages other than English call 13 1450 and ask for 1300 585 165

Speak and Listen users phone 1300 555 727 and ask for 1300 585 165

TTY users phone 13 3677 and ask for 1300 585 165

Internet relay users connect to the National Relay Service (www.relayservice.com.au) and ask for 1300 585 165

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
23 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2601
©Commonwealth of Australia 2013

Important notice

The information in this publication is for general guidance only. It does not constitute legal advice or other professional advice, and should not be relied on as a statement of the law in any jurisdiction. Because it is intended only as a general guide, it may contain generalisations. You should obtain professional advice if you have any specific concern.

The ACCC has made every reasonable effort to provide current and accurate information, but it does not make any guarantees regarding the accuracy, currency or completeness of that information.

ISBN 978 1 921973 14 7

ACCC 01/13_47972_578