

Annual Report 2016–17

For the year ending 31 March



**UTILITIES
DISPUTES** LTD
TAUTOHETOHE WHAIPAINGA

INDEPENDENT

FAIR

FREE

0800 22 33 40

Utilities Disputes

provides a free and independent complaint resolution service for electricity and gas complaints.

We consulted Te Reo Māori experts about translating Utilities Disputes.
We learned that Te Reo Māori reverses the order of the English words.

Tautohetohe is a verb meaning to contend with each other.
Whaipaiinga is a noun that means utility.



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Independent · Accountable · Effective · Fair · Efficient · Accessible



Many of the changes planned over the past several years came to fruition in 2016–17. The Board endorsed a name change and a shift to a new governance structure to ensure the Scheme remains fit for purpose well into the future.

The Chair's report

Based on extensive consultation and by direction of the Board, on 1 November 2016, the Office of the Electricity and Gas Commissioner changed its name to Utilities Disputes Ltd.

Utilities Disputes is now able to provide dispute resolution in a wide range of scenarios that may include “one big bill” – with electricity and gas – land access, and multiple connectivity.

Utilities Disputes continues to resolve complaints in the electricity and gas industries with its tradition of quality, independence and fairness. My thanks go to the Board members, the Member Committee, the Advisory Committee and all who participated in the consultation process, which resulted in these changes.

The Board decided on a new structure, creating a transition board of five. This consists of an independent Chair, two independent directors, one director representing consumers and another for industry. The transition board will remain in place until 31 October 2018.

Work continued on our strategic initiatives with success. The four initiatives are: being known and valued, excelling in handling complaints, developing and supporting our people, and creating a comprehensive Scheme.

Although the Accident Compensation Corporation withdrew its accreditation process, we continue our commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace. In 2016, for the sixth year in a row, Utilities Disputes was a finalist in the IBM Kenexa Best Small Workplace awards for 2016. The Board congratulates the staff on this achievement.

The Electricity Industry Act 2010 requires the Board to do a five-year review of the Scheme in 2016-2017. This review is now underway. Two areas – the levy Scheme and land complaint exclusions – were referred by the Board to be included in the Terms of Reference for the five-year review.

I would like to thank the Commissioner and her staff for using this time of change as an opportunity to continually improve and build upon their strong performance.

Heather Roy | Independent Chair



The Board

oversees the Utilities Disputes office. The five member Board is made up of an independent chair, two independent directors, one industry director, and one for consumers.



Dr Brian McCulloch

Independent Director

Brian has several consultant roles, and is an independent member of the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal. He held a wide variety of leadership roles in Treasury for over 25 years, including as a member of the senior leadership team.



Nicky Darlow

Independent Director

Nicky has a background in community development, consultation and dispute resolution. She has been a lay member and consumer representative on a variety of boards and panels. Nicky is a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit.



Heather Roy

Independent Chair

Heather has served on the Board since 2014. She was a Member of Parliament from 2002 to 2011. As Minister of Consumer Affairs (2008–10) she was involved in consumer law reform and the approval of EGCC as the regulated scheme for the electricity and gas sectors.



Greg Skelton

Director (Industry)

Greg has been the CE of Wellington Electricity since 2009. He was the CE of Alpine Energy and has held senior roles in the electricity industry. Greg has 30 years' experience in production and electrical engineering and business management.



Mjr Campbell Roberts

Director (Consumer)

Campbell is the Founding National Director of Social Policy for The Salvation Army NZ. He has been on government task forces, boards, working parties, and local government forums on a range of social issues. He was nominated New Zealander of the Year in 2017.



Of the milestones we achieved last year, 1 November 2016, the day we became Utilities Disputes, stands out as a watershed moment in the evolution of the Scheme.

The Commissioner's report

Becoming Utilities Disputes was more than a name change. It was a rebranding, a new direction, and a commitment to remain relevant and valuable to consumers and providers.

The new name was an opportunity to review and refresh our materials, website, and communications. We approached everything with fresh eyes, while retaining our core values – high quality dispute resolution, fairness and independence.

We continue to focus on adding value. We continue to train providers in dispute resolution skills and have added similar courses for providers' contractors. We've started a monthly, video webinar programme where we engage with providers on topics of interest. We've upgraded our bi-monthly Provider Updates to present more content, and we added a Provider Bulletin for timely news and systemic issues.

We add value to consumers in a number of ways. We're publishing a new quarterly newsletter, Switched On. We speak to community organisations, such as Citizens Advice Bureaux and Women's Refuges, to let their volunteers know how we can help. We've started an accessibility project to ensure all New Zealanders can access our service.

Early resolution of complaints benefits consumers and providers. When people contact us, we listen to the complaint, clarify the possible resolution and get the complaint to the right place in the provider's company. This behind-the-scenes work saves time for both consumers and providers.

During the last year, we put in place a new information technology platform. This allows us to scale our services and provide accurate statistical analyses of industry trends and developments.

Our workload for electricity and gas complaints has fallen. Providers are resolving more complaints internally. However, based on a recent Mystery Shopper exercise, too many consumers are not informed of our role, as required by the Scheme. We are now working with providers to amend this.

The number of providers participating in the Utilities Disputes Scheme continues to grow. We are seeing many new-entrant retailers who have never dealt with the industry before.

Our team has to be constantly alert to maintain its balance on the tightrope of independence. I sincerely thank our staff for their openness to innovation and commitment to our core values of high quality dispute resolution, fairness and independence.

Nanette Moreau | Commissioner



Annual review

Significant change for the organisation in 2016-17 has impacted some of the key performance measures. The Board is satisfied strategies are in place to address these for 2017-18.

Performance

The Commissioner met one out of the three timeliness standards for closing complaints. Included in the closed deadlock complaints for 2016-17 were 28 cases resulting from one extraordinary event. These cases involved complex technical issues and legal arguments. Careful consideration resulted in delays. If these cases were separated from the statistics, all timeliness standards would have been met (see table, opposite). Particular focus was placed on closing older cases and preventing the problem of aged cases recurring. Out of 462 complaints that reached deadlock, 237 were resolved before acceptance for consideration.

Satisfaction, awareness and compliance

Provider satisfaction exceeded its performance measure while complainant satisfaction did not. The Board acknowledges the end of year surveys and poor response rates affect the reliability of the results. More timely gathering of satisfaction data is being implemented, meaning results will be more reliable for 2017-18.

Awareness of the Scheme dropped significantly. UMR Research measured unprompted awareness at 4%, well below the performance measure of 20%. Prompted awareness was not much better at 7%.

The Board supports a focus on using traditional and social media to raise awareness of Utilities Disputes.







Provider compliance was carried out using a new online survey platform. The platform provided a simplified process, essential given the diversity of providers. To complement the self reviews, the Commissioner's office conducted a Mystery Shopper exercise to assess provider compliance with providing information about the complaints process and Utilities Disputes. Analysis of the data is incomplete but initial results show there are significant issues, with many providers not meeting requirements.

Systemic issues

This year, the Commissioner identified a systemic issue around an electricity retailer's communication with customers about problems accessing the customer's meter. In response to the issue the Commissioner published a practice statement on the Utilities Disputes website and sent copies to electricity retailers. The purpose of the statement was to alert retailers to the issue and encourage them to review processes for notifying consumers of any difficulty accessing meters.

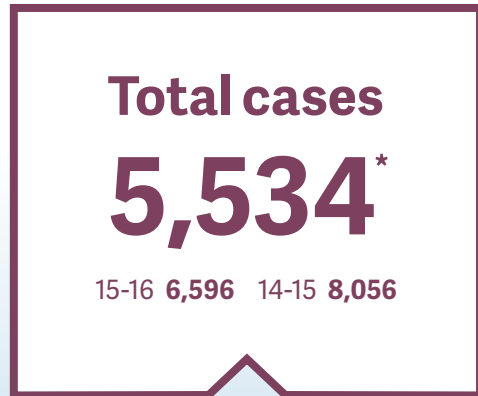


Annual review

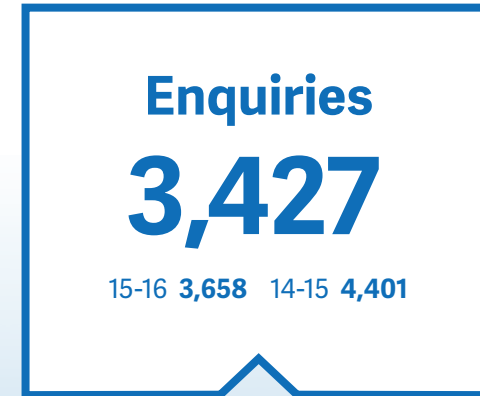
Scheme requirement	Performance standard	Performance
 Time to close	More than 45% of deadlocked cases closed in 30 working days More than 75% of deadlocked cases closed in 90 working days Scheme complaints closed in 60 working days	Not met – 42.1% (45.6%)* Not met – 72% (77.6%)* Met – 2 complaints not substantiated
 Provider satisfaction	75% of providers were satisfied with the overall complaint handling process	Met – 89% Retail providers – 95.6% Network providers – 66.7%
 Complainant satisfaction	75% of complainants were satisfied or more with the complaint handling process	Not met – 63.6%
 Awareness and accessibility	20% unprompted recognition in general awareness survey – to be measured in 2016-17	Not met – UMR survey results completed – 4% unprompted awareness of EGCC and 2% for Utilities Disputes
 Compliance reporting	Compliance reporting complete, accurate and on time	Likely to be met – Board will receive full compliance report at June Board meeting
 External review of cases	Part of five-year independent review of the Scheme	Work began in 2016-17. Final report due 31 May 2017

*28 cases resulting from one extraordinary event removed

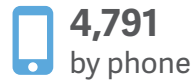
The year in numbers



*Includes four indemnity disputes



How people contacted us



15-16 **5,685**
14-15 **6,898**



15-16 **434**
14-15 **550**



15-16 **380**
14-15 **500**



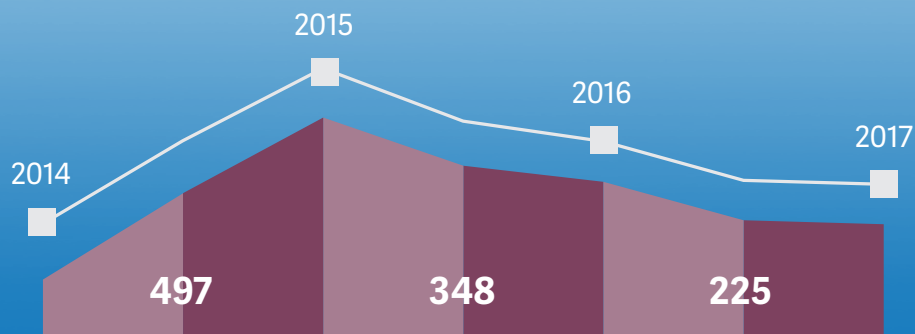
15-16 **27**
14-15 **54**



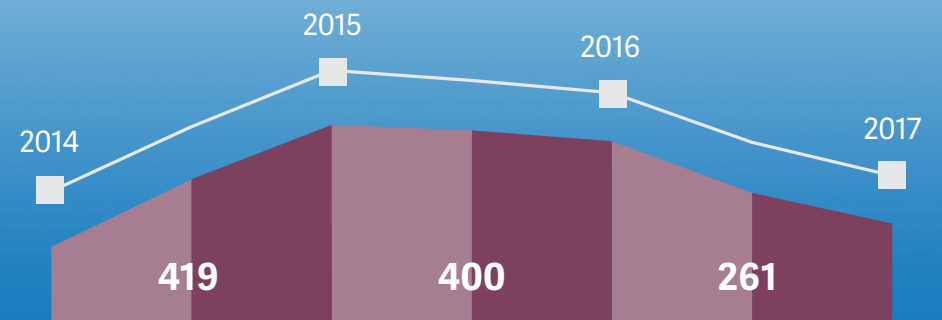
15-16 **5**
14-15 **10**



15-16 **65**
14-15 **44**



Deadlocked cases accepted for consideration



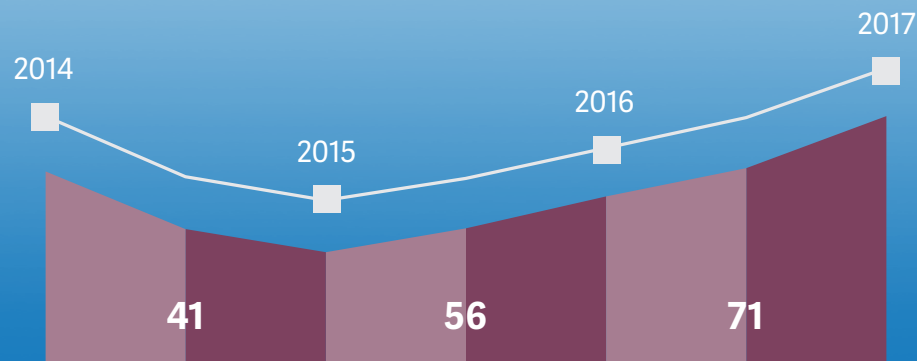
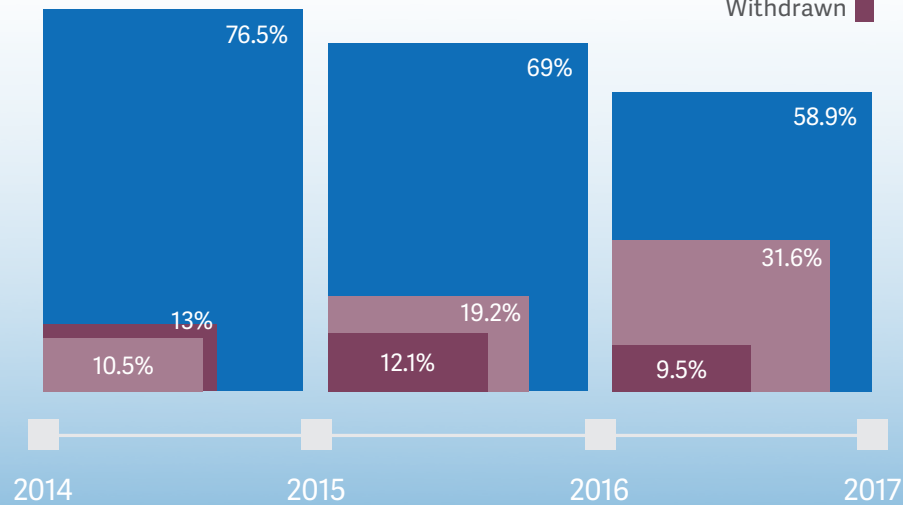
Deadlocked cases closed



The year in numbers

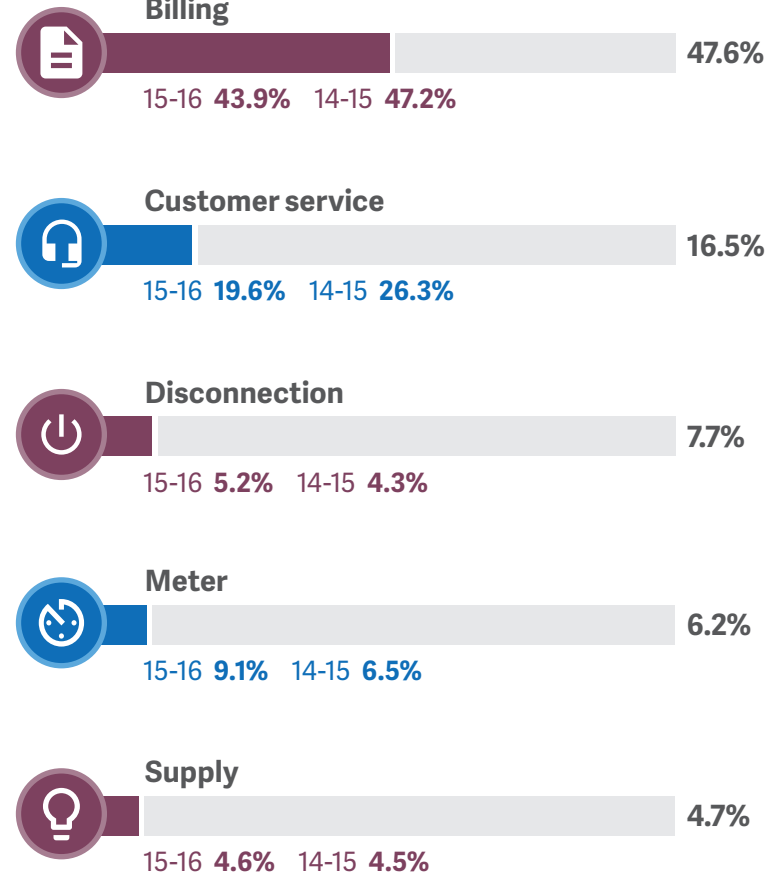
Deadlocked complaint outcomes

Settled before decision ■
 Decisions ■
 Withdrawn ■



Average working days to close deadlocked cases

Issues in complaints



We add value to providers through education, timely dialogue, mediation, and a suite of support materials. This is accomplished through a number of services.

We support 234 providers in the following areas:

A full list of providers is available on our website.



Electricity



Gas



LPG
Cylinders



EV Charging
Stations



Solar



Secondary
Networks

Monthly provider webinars

In early 2017, we launched a monthly video webinar series to provide more transparency into our processes as well as share helpful information on current topics and issues. The webinars are recorded and posted on the provider website.

We began with a look at Utilities Disputes' transition from EGCC and continued with a review of levies and the levy process. Topics planned for the remainder of 2017 include an analysis of the impact of the Consumer Guarantees Act and negligence, disconnection guidelines and examples, dispute resolution essentials, and a deep dive into the how and why of recent decisions.

"I found this to be very informative. Easy to follow and content from speakers very clear"

"A nice simple and effective method of getting your message out"

Utilities Disputes conciliators during our recent webinar on disconnections.



Provider education

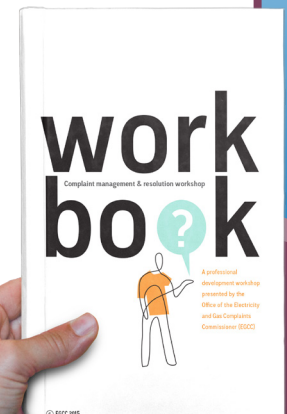
We offer workshops to providers to assist them in best practices in complaint management. These workshops are designed and led by our manager of continuous improvement.

In the past year, we ran seven complaint management workshops attended by over 70 people. The workshops covered three broad areas of dispute resolution:

- Recognising a complaint
- Understanding the impact of complaints
- Learning and practicing dispute resolution skills

"The book for participants is brilliant"

"Brilliant workshop, it was funny and engaging while providing what I needed to know about complaint handling"



© EGCC 2017



We add value to providers

Distributor/consumer mediation service

In September 2016, as an independent body, Utilities Disputes facilitated community focus groups in Turangi, Taumarunui, and Te Kuiti with community groups and The Lines Company (TLC).

Fifteen to 25 members of each community attended the sessions. We facilitated the sessions with structured questions, small-group discussions, and feedback. Utilities Disputes collated and provided notes from discussion and feedback to TLC. The Lines Company asked us to facilitate additional sessions later in 2017.

We will offer our expertise in mediation to other distributors in New Zealand to add value to consumers and distributors.

"They used a very good process to help me engage with community leaders. In meetings they adapted this process on the fly to better fit in with particular community needs. They came across as professional and open. Because of their background in electricity, they were much better able to work in an area fraught with complexity. I'd definitely use them again"

Roger Sutton
Independent Industry Consultant

Annual induction and forum

We hold an annual Induction day for new participants in the Scheme. Thirty-five people in 2016 attended and learned about our processes as well as basic complaint handling.

The theme for the 2016 forum for existing Scheme participants was "Learning from each other". Speakers from four providers presented topics ranging from issues caused by a new database rollout to a journey to customer centricity.

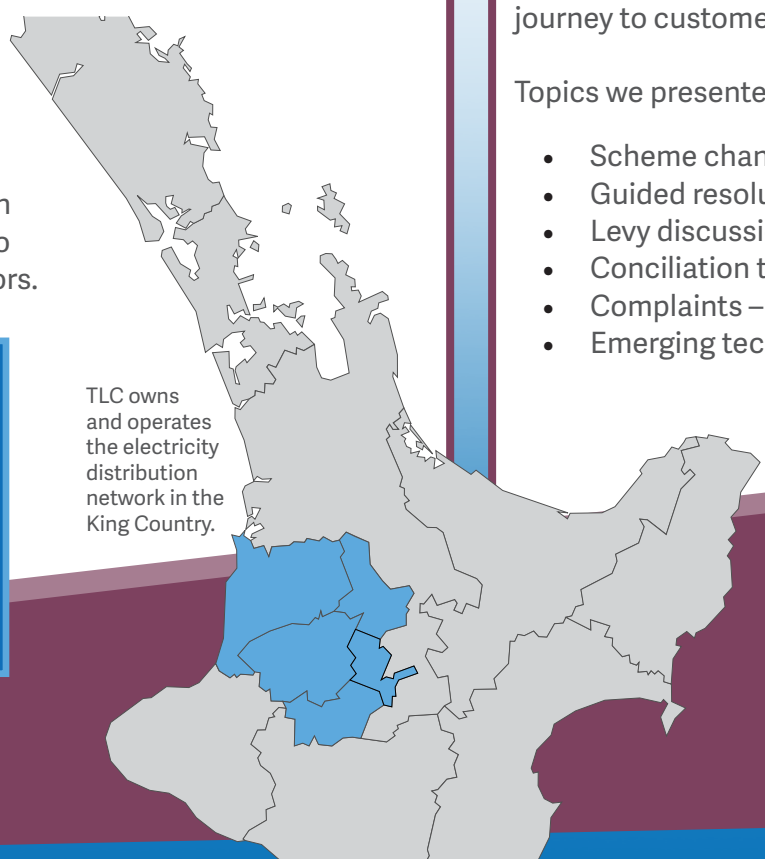
Topics we presented included:

- Scheme changes
- Guided resolution – online dispute resolution tool
- Levy discussion
- Conciliation teleconferences and face to face meetings
- Complaints – trends and resolution strategies
- Emerging technologies and issues

"My team (who were all first time attendees) found the induction session and forum very beneficial, and were keen to share their experiences and learnings with their colleagues"

"It was great to meet the staff who attended. Getting to know them made me feel more comfortable about using the office"

TLC owns and operates the electricity distribution network in the King Country.



We add value to consumers by engaging with community groups, increasing awareness of and accessibility to our service, and providing support throughout the life cycle of a complaint.

Consumer Rights Day

Conciliators from Utilities Disputes enjoy speaking at Consumer Rights Day, a twice-yearly event hosted by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment at different locations around New Zealand. The event brings together speakers from government, complaints schemes and other socially helpful organisations to talk about solutions to issues faced by consumers.

The audience is made up of consumer advocates and representatives from refugee, migrant and deaf communities. These groups come to learn how the speakers' organisations can help their many clients.

At the March 2017 Consumer Rights Day, a senior conciliator from Utilities Disputes spoke about the recently updated Consumer Guarantees Act 1993. She described a complaint where a tree fell on some power lines, causing a surge through the network. She asked the audience who they thought was responsible for damages. After some discussion, the audience was surprised to learn in this case the retailer, as the supplier of electricity, was responsible.

Another of our conciliators discussed a complaint where a consumer and distributor could not agree on the best way to connect a new property to the electricity network. In this case, Utilities Disputes arranged for the parties to meet face to face. After walking around the property, the parties reached an agreement that reduced costs

for the consumer, and meant less potential maintenance and a possible increase in revenue for the distributor.

We reminded the audience no problem is too small for us. Rather than waiting for complex complaints, it is better to refer any complaint about electricity or gas to us – even when providers have 20 working days to resolve a complaint.

Speaking at Consumer Rights Day gives Utilities Disputes the opportunity to learn how other organisations resolve disputes. It also allows consumers to meet our team and ask questions.

Utilities Disputes conciliators speak at the March 2017 Consumer Rights Day



We add value to consumers

The accessibility project

Work began on a project to understand the people, groups and communities accessing Utilities Disputes.

Initially we audited Utilities Disputes' accessibility to disability communities and people with low literacy. We chose these groups because they are among the most vulnerable members of our society.

The project has since focused on changes needed for Utilities Disputes to become more accessible to these communities. These include tweaking the complaints process, updating our website, and creating an engagement plan for target communities.

Over the next year, the project will roll out these changes across the organisation. The next focus will be improving Utilities Disputes' accessibility to other groups and communities that face difficulties or disadvantage accessing our services.

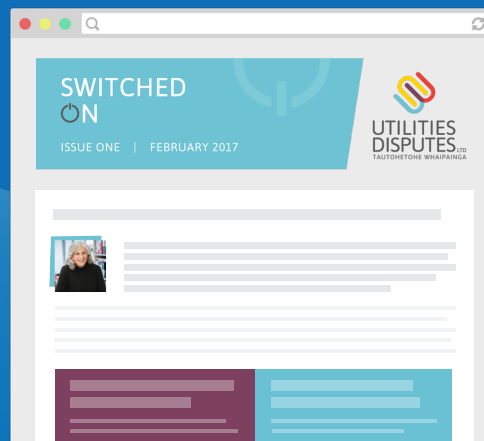
Taking our service to citizens

When speaking to Citizens Advice Bureaux volunteers, we find people who are deeply engaged in helping others find the best solutions for electricity and gas problems. We enjoy sharing information they may not be able to get anywhere else.

People are sometimes surprised to learn we will help even at the start of a problem. Our conciliators guide consumers through the entire complaints process.

We are always asked who the best provider is. We say Utilities Disputes is independent, fair, and neutral, so we can't recommend a provider. But we can point out things to look for, such as suitable pricing plans, fair contracts, and good customer service. We ask people what they want from a provider. Know that first, we tell them, and then shop around.

At Utilities Disputes, we are all experienced mediators. We help complainants deal with their providers, and vice versa. It feels great to share knowledge with volunteers who are already so committed to helping others.



We publish a quarterly newsletter, *Switched On*, to inform people of what we do and how we can help.

Utilities Disputes manager of stakeholder engagement speaks to CAB volunteers



How can we help

The story line of a decision

When the Commissioner makes a decision, conciliators use a story line to help draft it. This graphic shows the logic that supports the writing of the decision for the case on the facing page.

1 Context

The provider and Ms L both thought the provider was supplying her electricity. Both parties mistook the complainant's installation control point, or ICP. The common mistake resulted in the provider sending Ms L a high back bill.

2 Trigger

The provider and Ms L could not agree on a resolution, and asked the Commissioner to make a decision.

3 Question

What should the Commissioner recommend?

4 Answer

The Commissioner recommends the provider discount Ms L's back bill by 50%

Neither party was responsible for mistaking the ICP

Both parties were responsible for the delay leading to the back bill, but the provider more so

Ms L told the provider about unusually low bills in her first call

After Ms L's first call, the provider should have done something

The provider should have sent someone to Ms L's place

The provider gave Ms L poor customer service in her first call

The provider thought Ms L would call back as it did not get info from her landlord

Ms L did not get any info from her landlord, and did not follow up with the provider

The provider should charge correctly. Ms L told the provider it wasn't charging correctly

If the provider had sent someone to Ms L's place, the problem would have been fixed

Ms L's first call meets the definition of a complaint. The provider did not recognise it

The provider did not listen when Ms L said the landlord was useless



Case note

Ms L complained the provider billed her for the wrong ICP for more than a year after she told the provider her bills were unusually low, and then sent her a back bill for \$24,000. The Commissioner recommended the provider discount Ms L's back bill by 50%.

The complaint

Ms L moved her company to a new property and asked the provider to supply electricity. After several months Ms L called the provider, saying her bills were unusually low and asking the provider to confirm it was charging her correctly. The provider told Ms L she needed to check with her property manager. Ms L told the provider her property manager was useless and probably would not know.

More than a year later the provider sent Ms L a back bill for about \$24,000. Ms L complained it was unfair for the provider to send her such a high back bill when she had told the provider her bills were too low.

The parties were unable to resolve the complaint and asked the Commissioner to recommend a settlement.

The outcome

The Commissioner upheld the complaint. She recommended the provider discount Ms L's back bill by 50%, and Ms L and the provider make a reasonable payment arrangement.

The Commissioner based her recommendation on these conclusions:

- the provider is entitled to bill Ms L for electricity she used but did not pay for
- the provider should discount the back bill by 50% to reflect its contribution to the situation

The Commissioner found the provider was entitled to bill Ms L for electricity she used but did not pay for. This is because:

- the provider's contract with Ms L said Ms L must pay her bills in full unless she disputes the amount
- Ms L did not dispute the amount of electricity she used

The Commissioner recommended the provider discount the back bill by 50% to reflect its contribution to the situation. This is because:

- when Ms L first called, the provider did not take any action to confirm it was billing Ms L correctly
- the provider did not use the information Ms L gave it to manage its risk around inaccurate billing
- the situation could have continued if a third party did not get involved
- the provider caused Ms L unnecessary inconvenience

The Commissioner found it was fair and reasonable for the provider to discount Ms L's back bill by 50%.

Both parties accepted the recommendation.

Case note

Mr F complained an electricity outage caused damage to his property and wanted the provider to compensate him. The Commissioner recommended the electricity outage did not cause damage to Mr F's property.

The complaint

Mr F complained the electricity outage caused:

- damage to a modem
- a pool pump to stop working, which meant an electrician had to inspect it
- electric gates to stop working, which meant he had to open the gates forcibly, causing further damage

The parties were unable to resolve the complaint and asked the Commissioner to recommend a settlement.

The outcome

With the advice of an independent expert, the Commissioner proposed recommending none of the damage was caused by the outage. This is because:

- it was unlikely the outage caused damage to the modem, unless there was a voltage fluctuation. There was no evidence of a fluctuation at Mr F's property
- there was no damage to the pool pump and there was no need for an electrician to inspect it

- the electricity outage did not cause damage to the gate, rather Mr F, forcing the gate open, damaged it

The Commissioner proposed recommending there was no remedy available to Mr F under the Consumer Guarantee's Act 1993 (the Act). This is because under the Act's guarantee of acceptable quality of supply, there was no loss or damage reasonably foreseeable as a result of the electricity outage.

Both the provider and distributor accepted the Commissioner's proposed recommendation.

Mr H rejected it and made a submission.

The Commissioner responded to Mr H's submission and issued a final recommendation, confirming neither the retailer nor the distributor was responsible for the damage to Mr H's property.

As the final recommendation did not uphold the complaint, the complaint file was closed.



Case note

Mr A complained the distributor calculated his charges incorrectly. The Commissioner found the distributor sent Mr A conflicting data and recommended the distributor recalculate Mr A's bill. The distributor offered to credit Mr A's account, but Mr A refused.

The complaint

Mr A complained the distributor calculated his charges incorrectly. He said his distributor should not have used some of the data it collected to calculate two parts of his bill. Mr A wanted the distributor to set these two parts at zero for the following billing period.

The distributor said it was entitled to use the data it collected to calculate Mr A's bill.

The parties were unable to resolve the complaint and asked the Commissioner to recommend a settlement.

The outcome

The Commissioner found the distributor sent Mr A conflicting information about its data collection. For this reason the information had to be interpreted in Mr A's favour. In her proposed recommendation, the Commissioner suggested the distributor recalculate Mr A's bill using different data.

The distributor disagreed, saying it could not definitively say whether any data it collected was different from the data it used to calculate Mr A's bill.

Instead, the distributor offered to credit \$550 to Mr A's account.

Mr A declined the offer and asked the Commissioner to make a recommendation.

The Commissioner found the distributor's offer put Mr A in a better position than recalculating his bills would have done. The recommendation also confirmed the findings of the proposed recommendation.

Mr A accepted the recommendation. The distributor rejected it, but confirmed it would credit \$550 to Mr A's account. Because the distributor did not agree with the recommendation, the Commissioner issued a binding decision.

The outcomes of these and other decisions are based on the circumstances unique to each complaint.

Adding value to staff

Dispute resolution is a challenging profession. We have a programme of continuous improvement for everyone at Utilities Disputes. Training expanded markedly this year, including learning from external trainers and sharing experience.

Professional mediators

Accreditation means a lot to Utilities Disputes as an organisation, as well as to staff members as individuals. The organisation benefits from the proficiency of competent and professional mediators on our team. Staff also develop their own skill sets that will reverberate through their own careers and, in turn, reflect well on Utilities Disputes.

In 2016 nine members of the operations team were accredited as mediators by Resolution Institute, and two new staff members started their training. Conciliators initially attend a five-day mediation course at Resolution Institute. After experience on the phones and a program of in-house training led by our manager of continuous improvement, conciliators are assessed.

This year we focused on making conciliation teleconferences an integral part of every complaint. This is because getting all parties to a complaint on the phone often leads to earlier resolution.

The staff of
Utilities Disputes



Drop-in training

Utilities Disputes staff have such a wide range of skills we decided to create an opportunity to share them. Once a week we have a session presented by a staff member. Topics included using the wisdom of crowds, dispute resolution techniques, and the impact of decisions.

Plain English

Complaints are complex and reflecting that complexity is always a challenge, especially when the law is involved. Getting our language right is a big deal. We have an external trainer to keep us in line, as well as an in-house team that reviews all our material with a writing standard.

Health and safety

In response to the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 2016, we front-footed workplace safety issues. An external provider, All Safe, taught us how to be aware of potential risk in the workplace and what to do about it.

This year was our first with new sit-to-stand desks. They've been a hit with most staff, some saying their back problems are much relieved.



Deadlocked complaints by provider

Most of the complaints we receive are settled before reaching deadlock. These tables refer to providers' deadlocked complaints accepted for consideration. The number of deadlocked complaints does not necessarily reflect the quality of a provider's complaint handling service.

This is because some providers actively encourage complainants to go to Utilities Disputes for an independent review. Other providers may not do this. They seek to resolve everything in-house or do not recognise a complaint as a formal complaint, and so do not provide Utilities Disputes' contact details to the complainant.

In some cases, after reviewing the facts about the deadlocked complaint, the Commissioner may find the company has done nothing wrong.

Distributor	Number of complaints	Share of complaints	Market share of ICPs (or equivalent)	Total ICPs (or equivalent)
Aurora Energy	3	3.9%	3.71%	87,640
Counties Power	3	3.9%	1.75%	41,184
Horizon Energy Distribution	2	2.6%	1.04%	24,536
Northpower	2	2.6%	2.41%	56,988
Orion NZ	1	1.3%	8.23%	194,282
Powerco	11	14.29%	18.04%	425,721
Scanpower	1	1.3%	0.28%	6,682
The Lines Company	10	12.99%	0.99%	23,444
Top Energy	6	7.79%	1.33%	31,484
Unison Networks	5	6.49%	4.66%	110,054
Vector	31	40.26%	27.83%	656,817
Wellington Electricity Lines	2	2.6%	7.06%	166,555
Total	77	100%	77.35%	2,359,798[†]

Retail brand	Number of complaints	Share of complaints	Market share of ICPs (or equivalent)	Total ICPs (or equivalent)
Contact Energy*	23	15.54%	20.26%	518,348
Elgas	1	0.68%	0.97%	24,786
Energy Direct NZ	2	1.35%		No longer trading
Energy Online	1	0.68%	3.75%	95,866
Flick Electric Co.	1	0.68%	0.75%	19,162
Genesis Energy	14	9.46%	21.39%	547,256
GLOBUG	4	2.7%	1.14%	29,050
Just Energy	1	0.68%		ICPs under Pulse Energy
K Power	1	0.68%	0.01%	217
MegaENERGY	1	0.68%	0.16%	4,176
Mercury NZ	15	10.14%	15.09%	386,069
Meridian Energy	24	16.22%	8.6%	220,126
Nova Energy*	19	12.84%	5.68%	145,246
Powershop New Zealand	4	2.7%	2.34%	59,813
Prime Energy	1	0.68%	0.05%	1,235
Pulse Energy	1	0.68%	2.38%	60,838
Tiny Mighty Power	1	0.68%		ICPs under Mercury NZ
Trustpower*	32	21.62%	11.67%	298,519
Wise Pre-Pay Energy	2	1.35%	0.09%	2,207
Total	148	100%	94.31%	2,558,425[†]

*Only includes retail ICPs (or equivalent) [†]Overall total of ICPs

NB: The ICP and equivalent total is calculated as at 28 February 2017 from ICPs on the electricity and gas registries, and customer numbers obtained from providers.

Financial summary

Income and expenditure summary

For the year ended 31 March	14-15	15-16	16-17
Annual levy	\$2,554,000	\$3,239,616	\$3,640,801
Other income	\$107,685	\$98,896	\$54,330
Total income	\$2,661,685	\$3,338,512	\$3,695,131
Staff related costs	\$2,210,525	\$2,480,269	\$2,620,933
Other costs	\$761,894	\$888,280	\$965,169
Depreciation	\$61,622	\$63,669	\$107,766
Total expenditure	\$3,034,041	\$3,432,218	\$3,693,868
Operating surplus before tax	-\$372,356	-\$93,706	\$1,263
Total cases	8,056	6,596	5,534
Budget	\$3,187,348	\$3,381,016	\$3,722,389

2016-17

Total cases 5,534

Budget \$3,722,389

Audited financial statements are available on the resources page of our website from 29 June 2017.



Into the future

In the past twelve months, Utilities Disputes was established as a not-for-profit company that can provide a complaint handling scheme for utilities other than electricity and gas.

The sector is changing rapidly, with new solar power technologies leading to self-sufficiency, and a general convergence of product offerings across utilities. Utilities Disputes needs to respond to both the challenges and opportunities these many changes bring.

The challenges include vulnerability to structural and fiscal pressures demanding increased flexibility, along with the exploration of capital raising options and new income streams. In addition, we need to refine current processes, and introduce new technologies such as an online guided resolution tool.

The opportunities include an increased focus on growth, diversification and improved processes to increase efficiency and fiscal gains. The ability to attract and retain quality staff with a broad range of career opportunities will enable the provision of higher levels of service.

We plan to achieve broader accessibility to ensure we lift visibility of our complaint schemes to all New Zealanders.

We will continue to engage with providers to ensure we adapt to changes in the sector, while maintaining high quality service.

We will continue our strategy of building closer relationships with providers through regular visits. These visits allow us to better understand their business and the challenges they face, as well as share our dispute resolution processes. In addition, we'll take a more active role in assisting providers to develop the competence of their complaints teams.

We look forward to adding value to a wide range of utilities companies and consumers.





UTILITIES DISPUTES

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