

August 2022 | Utilities Disputes | Tautohetohe Whaipanga consumer contacts on the increase

Utilities Disputes' | Tautohetohe Whaipanga (UDL) [latest annual report](#) shows that consumer demand for UDL's services continues to increase.

UDL is a free and independent dispute resolution service resolving consumer complaints about electricity, gas, water, and broadband installation on shared property.

UDL heard more from consumers in 2021/2022, being contacted 17,409 times, up from 11,161 the year before, and a significant increase of 56%. This figure includes consumers who contacted UDL to request guidance or information about their electricity, gas or water company, or a broadband installation on shared property, as well as those with complaints.

The increased contacts can in part be attributed to increasing efforts by the sector to inform consumers there is a free and independent service available to them if a matter cannot be resolved with their company.

Complaints about electricity and gas make up 93% of all the complaints UDL receives. The most common complaints are about billing, customer service, meters, disconnections, and supply.

"The 56% increase in consumer contact is not unexpected, given the work UDL is doing to increase its awareness and the current environment which is impacting all sectors," said Mary Ollivier, UDL Commissioner. "Our staff continue to step up to manage the increase and work hard to support consumers to resolve their issues as soon as they are raised. In addition, energy companies are always looking for ways to improve their customer service and our work accompanies this. We are making a positive difference."

One of the important services UDL provides for consumers is a complaint summary which is a concise, written version of a consumer's complaint. UDL staff identify the key issues of the complaint including the consumer's view on what would resolve the issues. This is then sent to the company, improving the ability for the consumer and their utility company to resolve the complaint quickly and effectively. It is also an excellent way to assist consumers who are unsure or less confident of how to effectively raise an issue with their utility company.

Board Chair, Hon Heather Roy, says; "Our continuing focus on increasing the visibility of UDL is gaining traction. We listen to consumers so know what is important to them. This allows us to provide quality services that meet the needs of New Zealanders and the companies who provide utility services. We aim to stay connected to consumers so we can continue to help and resolve their issues and have a positive impact on their lives."

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