

Six monthly report on energy complaints

This report about the Energy Complaints Scheme operated by Utilities Disputes¹ gives statistics for the six months from 1 April to 30 September 2019. We include an overview of the issues in complaints received in the period, and list providers' share of complaints that reached deadlock. The term 'deadlocked' refers to a complaint that is unresolved after a period of time, or if the Commissioner is satisfied certain criteria have been met.

Operations workload

The operations workload for the Energy Complaints Scheme is measured, amongst other factors, by the number of enquiries and complaints. We recorded 2,534 enquiries, up 25.4% on the previous six-month period. Complaints increased by 1.8% with 1,022 recorded complaints.

Complaints reaching deadlock, increased by 10.2% against the same six-month period in 2018. Complaints reaching deadlock, accepted for the Commissioner's consideration in the six-months from 1 April to 30 September 2019 were 116, up from 85.

Issues in complaints

Billing issues of various types continue to be the most common issue in complaints, followed by customer service, meter, disconnection, and supply. Many complaints have more than one issue, therefore these figures are calculated by looking at the frequency of the issues in all complaints. The table below shows the top five complaint issues for the six-month period compared to the same six-month period in 2018, and the previous 12 months.

Issue	% of complaints in period 1 April to 30 September 2019	% of complaints in period 1 April to 30 September 2018	% of complaints in 12 months to 31 March 2019
Billing	69%	65%	69%
Customer Service	56%	45%	55%
Meter	13%	11%	12%
Disconnection	9%	11%	9%
Supply	8%	9%	7%

¹ Utilities Disputes is a not-for-profit organisation that provides dispute resolution and related services in the utilities sector. The Energy Complaints scheme (formerly the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme) is the approved scheme that all energy retailer and distributors must join, unless exempt.

Provider share of complaints reaching deadlock

Since October 2012 we have published the number of complaints reaching deadlock per provider, accepted for consideration. This information is presented separately for retail and distribution providers and shows the share of such complaints and market share for the category.

Most providers, 318 out of 352, did not have any complaints reaching deadlock, accepted for consideration. The fact a complaint reaches deadlock, or reaches deadlock and is accepted for consideration, does not necessarily mean the company is at fault. It simply means that a complaint has reached the stage where it may be accepted into Utilities Disputes' resolution process.

One reason a provider may have more complaints than another provider could be due to better compliance with their obligations to make consumers aware of Utilities Disputes.

Retailer	Number of complaints	Share of complaints	Market Share of ICPs (or equivalent)	Total ICPs (or equivalent)
Contact*	10	11.9%	18.3%	478,525
Douglas Alexander Weily	1	1.2%	0.0%	Joined scheme post 1 March 2019
Ecotricity	5	6.0%	0.2%	5,640
Energy Online	1	1.2%	4.1%	106,576
Flick Electric Co	5	6.0%	0.8%	20,702
Genesis Energy	6	7.1%	21.6%	566,276
GLOBUG	1	1.2%	1.0%	25,668
Grey Power Electricity	1	1.2%	0.0%	231
KiwiGas	1	1.2%	0.0%	517
Mercury	5	6.0%	15.3%	400,838
Meridian Energy	8	9.5%	8.7%	229,053
Naki Host	1	1.2%	0.0%	-
NextGen Energy	1	1.2%	0.0%	841
Nova Energy	5	6.0%	4.3%	112,122
Pioneer Energy	1	1.2%	0.1%	2,849
Powershop	4	4.8%	2.7%	71,974
Prime Energy	1	1.2%	0.1%	1,920
Pulse Energy	2	2.4%	3.1%	80,222
Rockgas Ltd	1	1.2%	0.0%	Joined scheme post 1 March 2019
Slingshot Power	2	2.4%	0.0%	-
Supercharged Energy	6	7.1%	0.0%	185
Tiny Mighty Power	2	2.4%	0.0%	-
Trustpower	9	10.7%	11.7%	307,928
Vocus Communications	5	6.0%	0.1%	1,324
TOTAL	84	100%	100%	2,620,680[†]

*Only includes retail ICPs (or equivalent)

[†]Overall total of ICPs

Distributor	Number of complaints	Share of complaints	Market Share of ICPs (or equivalent)	Total ICPs (or equivalent)
Aurora Energy	2	6.3%	3.7%	90,262
Counties Power	1	3.1%	1.8%	42,799
Electra	1	3.1%	1.8%	44,908
Horizon Energy	1	3.1%	1.0%	24,672
Orion	1	3.1%	8.2%	200,684
Powerco	4	12.5%	17.9%	436,652
The Power Company	1	3.1%	1.5%	36,060
The Lines Company (TLC)	4	12.5%	1.0%	23,551
Top Energy	2	6.3%	1.3%	32,330
Waipa Networks	1	3.1%	1.1%	26,814
Unison	1	3.1%	4.6%	111,577
Vector	13	40.6%	27.8%	675,857
TOTAL	32	100%	100%	2,434,488[†]

[†]Overall total of ICPs

NB: The ICP and equivalent total is calculated as at 28 February 2019 from ICPs on the electricity and gas registries, and customer numbers obtained from providers.

The Board acknowledges providers' role in ensuring consumers know they can access Utilities Disputes. Providers who comply with this obligation promote trust in the industry through improving consumer access to external, independent complaint resolution.

Complaints reach deadlock for several reasons, including:

- a problem with a provider's systems, customer service, or complaint handling processes
- a provider's belief they are not liable and the dispute about this remains unresolved
- a provider may extend the Commissioner's jurisdiction to consider a particular complaint
- the complaint involves complex and unusual events that present unexplored issues.

Utilities Disputes is the approved resolution scheme for complaints about energy providers. All energy retailers and distributors must join Utilities Disputes and tell customers they are providers. Utilities Disputes can consider complaints up to \$50,000, or up to \$100,000 with agreement from the provider.

Media contact:

Zoe Priestley

z.priestley@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz

+64 4 914 4525