



# Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee

**Hearing date: 13/02/2026**

**Question taken on notice**

**Directed to:** Catherine Wolthuizen, Energy and Water Ombudsman

**Received date:** [office use only]

## 1. P.55 Gaelle Broad

**Question:** From your perspective, having looked at energy complaints, from a heat map perspective, are regional areas over-represented as far as complaints about outages or issues with energy go?

**Catherine WOLTHUIZEN:** Obviously we see outage issues, and most recently with storm activity we have seen that again. I would need to take that on notice just to make sure we are precise about what we see. I mean, obviously, where storms happen is where we will see more of that related activity. In terms of voltage variation, I am happy to take that on notice and come back to you.

### **Response:**

For the period 1 July 2025 – 28 February 2026 (FYTD), EWOV received 215 complaints about unplanned electricity outages. 51 cases (24%) were brought by consumers living in a regional Victorian LGA, based on available data. These complaints involved issues such as the frequency of unplanned outages, consumers seeking redress for damage of appliances or equipment or lost/spoiled food and medical supplies, concerns with operation of life support equipment and communication about the duration of the outage and timing for restoration.

For the same period, EWOV received 61 complaints about electricity voltage variations. 17 cases (28%) were brought by consumers living in a regional Victorian LGA, based on available data. These complaints involved issues such as the frequency of voltage variation events, disputes between the consumer and the distribution company about whether a voltage variation event occurred, damage to equipment and appliances and subsequent financial loss and disputes about compensation claims.

## 2. P.56 Katherine Copsey

**Question:** So with complaints, have you received some complaints in relation to those services, or are they more around the household connection?

**Catherine WOLTHUIZEN:** -I can certainly take that on notice and check those complaints.

**Response:** EWOV reviewed data from the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years to analyse the volume of consumer energy resources (CER) complaints and common CER complaint themes. This analysis and underlying methodology are provided at Attachment 1.

#### Data related to electric vehicles

EWOV can handle a complaint about certain CER issues where the complaint is about a provider that is already required to be a member of EWOV. Our jurisdiction, as it currently stands, incorporates issues such as electricity accounts, including billing, as well as connection issues and metering.

The biggest drivers of EV cases that were classified as being in jurisdiction, were consumers expressing dissatisfaction about electric vehicle related plans. These cases included consumers raising concerns relating to:

- Rates and tariffs for electric vehicle related plans increasing.
- Being placed on different plans than they signed up for.
- Rates and tariffs being incorrectly applied.

In some cases within EWOV's jurisdiction, consumers raised other problems such as supply upgrade delays and products not working as intended. For example, a consumer reported to EWOV that they were experiencing problems with their solar inverter consistently being turned off remotely. The consumer said that the electrician had to return to their property multiple times to try and fix the issue. The consumer said that the issue had a significant impact on them because amongst other things, it impeded their ability to charge their electric vehicle.

But many EV-related issues fall outside our jurisdiction. Complaints about the sale, installation or use of new energy products and services, including many EV charging services, are not currently in scope.

The main driver of EV cases that were classified as being out of jurisdiction was from consumers experiencing problems with electric vehicle charging services. Consumers provided limited information in their cases but some issues that were identified were:

- Difficulties accessing an electric vehicle charging subscription service.

- Providers not responding to requests and queries.
- Problems setting up an EV charger in an apartment complex.

### 3. P.59 Tom McIntosh

**Question:** - over the decades, I think we have seen, hopefully, the improvement of banks, telcos, energy retailers and toll road operators in the way they treat customers and hardship, and all these sorts of things, and the service they provide. From the feedback you get and your engagement with DNSPs, how would you rate their behaviour and response to complaints comparatively to other industries or sectors?

**Catherine WOLTHUIZEN:** Look, I think there is wide variation across both the energy retail market, water and distribution. So I would be reluctant to make a sweeping statement –

**Tom McINTOSH:** Happy for you to take that on notice if you want.

**Catherine WOLTHUIZEN:** Yes, happy to take it on notice.

**Response:** Complaints about DNSPs comprise a relatively small number of EWOV's overall caseload. For the FYTD, EWOV received 1,292 cases involving the 5 Victorian DNSPs, compared with 6,002 cases received involving electricity retailers.

This reflects the nature of the customer-retailer relationship, where consumers have more regular interactions with retailers via their bills, which give rise to issues involving higher than expected bills, plan and contract changes and support for payment difficulty and debt management.

Consumers will generally have fewer interactions with their DNSP, given their role in supplying energy to the premises and maintaining the electricity network and assets. The most common drivers of electricity distribution complaints involve:

- Issues and delays with upgrading existing electricity supply.
- Issues, delays and costs of establishing new electricity supply.
- Issues with outages and voltage variations.
- Issues with maintaining network assets, including electricity assets and surrounding land assets (eg vegetation).

EWOV has observed an increasing number of complaints about delays and other issues with upgrading electricity supply to integrate CER products and services. Many cases we receive indicate that consumers may not fully understand the technical aspects of their CER assets, with complaints

commonly arising when their CER asset does not operate as they expected, and consumers become dissatisfied and frustrated with both the operational issues, as well as engagement about these issues with their DNSPs, and other parties involved such as the installer and the retailer.

The table below outlines the number of cases for each electricity distribution company and the number of cases per 10,000 customers for the 2024/25 FY.

Company	Cases received	Reported customer numbers	Cases/10,000 customers
AusNet Services	853	741,836	11.50
Jemena	341	390,697	8.73
United Energy	253	733,701	3.45
Powercor	241	956,382	2.52
Citipower	99	351,347	2.82

Other company data, including for other sectors, for the 2024/25 FY is provided on [EWOV's website](#).

EWOV's welcomes the Committee considering introducing fit for purpose consumer protections for EVs, and specifically changes needed to improve interactions between consumers and the range of parties involved with the CER market. This could include new engagement requirements for CER providers to give appropriate, clear, comprehensible and concise information to consumers and a pathway to independent complaint handling.