



Monday 27 June 2011

More complaints to Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner

Over 1200 people made complaints about their electricity or gas companies in the 2010-11 financial year, an 85 per cent increase on the previous year.

The Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme (the Scheme) is a service for complaints that haven't been resolved by the companies themselves. The service is free to complainants and aims to get the complaint settled between the parties. If this doesn't happen, the Commissioner makes a recommendation that is binding on the company.

Commissioner Judi Jones said the increase in complaints reported in the Annual Report is a result of increased awareness of the Scheme's existence. Enquiries to the Scheme increased by 177 per cent, to 3258, in 2010-11.

Ms Jones expects the Electricity Authority's promotion encouraging people to switch companies to get the best deal for power may lead to more enquiries to her office as people pay more attention to their bills.

"The Scheme became the approved Scheme for the industry on 1 April 2010. That means all electricity and gas companies have to join, and they all have to provide information about the Scheme to their customers," Ms Jones said.

Seven companies joined the Scheme in the year. As at 31 March 2010 there were 19 retail company member and 37 lines company members. Six more companies have joined since April 2011. Member companies must provide information about the Scheme on customer information, including invoices and websites. The Scheme is funded by member companies.

The Scheme itself has a duty to be known in the community.

"We do that by working with community organisations, such as Citizens Advice Bureau," Ms Jones said. "I speak at events like the nationwide Consumers Rights Days organised by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, and the Scheme shared a stand with other dispute resolution schemes at the National Agricultural Fielddays last week."

Quick facts for 2010-11

3,258 enquiries

1,210 complaints

40% of complaints about billing

19% of complaints about customer service

95% of complaints about electricity

More than 98% of complaints settled by agreement between the parties
12 final recommendations: 9 upheld, 3 not upheld

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