

Dispute Resolution for Electricity Customers

Electricity customers who have a dispute with their electricity supplier (i.e. their retailer or distributor) should first seek to resolve the dispute directly with the supplier. However, if a customer is unable to resolve a dispute directly with their supplier, there are a number of external parties who may be able to assist.

In addition to the wide range of community, not-for-profit and commercial mediation and arbitration bodies operating in Queensland, Queensland's energy legislation provides electricity customers with access to certain dispute resolution arrangements in the energy sector. These arrangements are different for **small** and **large** customers¹.

Dispute Resolution for Small Customers

The Queensland Government established the Energy Ombudsman Queensland to assist small electricity customers who are unable to resolve a complaint or dispute with their energy supplier.

The Energy Ombudsman Queensland delivers complaint investigation and dispute resolution services to Queensland's domestic and small business energy consumers about issues including, but not limited to:

- problems with payment
- account errors/disputes
- disconnections
- damages & loss
- market conduct
- contract issues
- vegetation management
- supply quality & reliability
- extensions to supply
- connection of supply
- general customer service issues
- Guaranteed Service Level rebates
- equipment issues

If a matter cannot be resolved via negotiation or informal mediation, the Energy Ombudsman may decide to make a determination (binding decision) against an energy supplier to resolve the matter.

The Energy Ombudsman can order energy suppliers to:

- pay compensation to the consumer (generally, an amount up to \$20,000 can be ordered, or if all parties have agreed, an amount up to \$50,000)
- provide a non-monetary solution to remedy the dispute
- end a negotiated contract with a consumer
- amend a stated charge under the *Energy Ombudsman Act 2006*, and/or
- carry out corrective work.

The Energy Ombudsman can be contacted as follows:

Phone: 1800 662 837 (freecall)

Internet: www.eoq.com.au

Email: info@eoq.com.au

Post: PO Box 3640
South Brisbane
QLD 4101

In person: Brisbane:
Level 9, 179 North Quay
Brisbane

Cairns:
Level 1, 15 Lake St
Cairns

Rockhampton:
Level 2, 212 Quay St
Rockhampton

¹ Small customers are those that consume up to 100 megawatt hours of electricity per annum. Large customers are those that consume more than 100 megawatt hours per annum. For more information about the classification of customers refer to the *Classification of Customers* fact sheet.

Dispute Resolution for Large Customers

Large customers who have a dispute with their electricity supplier are not entitled to access the services of the Energy Ombudsman.

In some cases, a large customer may be able to apply to the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) to resolve a dispute with their energy supplier. The QCA has the authority to decide disputes about:

- Whether the terms and conditions of a connection contract or retail contract are fair and reasonable
- Whether the amount of any capital contribution required by a distribution business is fair and reasonable
- The correct application of a distribution entity's capital contributions policy

A customer may also apply to the QCA for the review of:

- A decision by a distributor not to provide connection services to the customer
- A decision by a retailer not to provide retail services to the customer
- Any other decision listed in Schedule 5 of the *Electricity Regulation 2006*

Queensland Competition Authority can be contacted on (07) 3222 0555.

Large customers who are experiencing difficulty in resolving an issue with their electricity supplier may also seek assistance from the Client Service unit of the Department of Mines and Energy. The Department does not have formal jurisdiction to resolve disputes between customers and energy suppliers, and cannot make binding decisions or orders that affect either party to a dispute. However, the Department may be able to provide advice, information and liaison services to assist in the resolution of disputes.

The Department of Mines and Energy can be contacted on (07) 3898 0375 or info@energy.qld.gov.au.

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