



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW
Free, fair and independent

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 5 September 2017

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW and Hunter Water help Cessnock residents with energy and water issues

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) and Hunter Water will hold a free community expo and Bring Your Bills day in Cessnock on Thursday 14 September 2017 to assist people who may need advice or support with their energy and water bills.

Complaints to EWON from the Hunter region increased by 46% between April and June 2016/2017 and the same period in 2015/2016 (up from 424 to 619). Most of the complaints were about high energy bills, while other affordability issues such as payment difficulties, disconnection and credit were directly present in 19% of complaints.

“Our Bring Your Bills days act as a one stop shop for people who are experiencing affordability issues. Our Investigations Officers listen to customers’ concerns, review their energy bills, making sure they are receiving eligible rebates and liaise with energy providers to resolve issues - there and then if possible. We also refer people to government agencies and community organisations at the event so that they can get support with other issues,” the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young, said.

As co-sponsor of the event, Hunter Water’s Account Assistance team will be able to review water bills, offer affordable payment plans based on a customer’s individual circumstances and provide further assistance directly to its customers.

“We understand that customers who might be struggling with their energy bills may also need assistance with their water bills,” Hunter Water Managing Director Jim Bentley said. “This is why Hunter Water has taken this great opportunity to partner with EWON and assist our customers facing difficulties in managing their water services.”

“We encourage community members to bring their water bills along to take advantage of the assistance and support we can provide to customers in need.”

Other support services available on the day include Ability Links, Carries Place, Cessnock City Council, Department of Human Services - Centrelink, FACS - Housing NSW, Hunter Community Legal Service, Hunter Valley Financial Counselling, Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, NSW Fair Trading, Revenue NSW, Samaritans Financial Counselling and Samaritans Information & Neighbourhood Centre.

“People in regional and rural communities face extra challenges trying to stay connected to electricity. These include high food and petrol costs, extreme weather conditions and aging housing stock often fitted with poor quality appliances. The last two factors contribute to excessive energy bills,” Ms Young explained.

Where: Samaritans, CPAC Program Room, 198 Vincent Street, Cessnock

When: Thursday 14 September 2017, 9.00 am to 3.00 pm



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RSVP: Customers can drop in on the day or book a time with any one of the services attending.
Phone 4993 3400 to book.

To arrange an interview with the Ombudsman, contact: Mia Lauzé, Manager Communications - 0408 602 503 / mial@ewon.com.au. To arrange an interview with Hunter Water, contact: Nick Kaiser - 0411 485 204 / nick.kaiser@hunterwater.com.au.