

Independent / fair / free



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## Welcome from the Commissioner, Nanette Moreau



Seasons greetings to you all.

On 1 November, we celebrated our first anniversary as Utilities Disputes Ltd. A year before, we had changed our name, from the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme, and our future direction. A big focus now is to widen our reach, and improve access to our free and independent service.

We want to hear from anyone having issues with their electricity or gas provider, or broadband shared property access. We help people understand the issue and their options. With high bills, for example, we investigate the accuracy and suitability of the bill and the plan.

People have a right to complain, and we want it be as easy as possible.

Utilities Disputes was named the winner of the [2017 Plain English Supreme Award](#) last month, which is a big leap towards improved access. I'm proud of the team and of our Plain English journey.

We hope you enjoy and share our new video, fact sheets, and the last issue of Switched On for 2017.

Have a safe festive season and a happy new year.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Nanette Moreau".

Nanette Moreau  
Commissioner

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## One year old already...let's celebrate!



Heather Roy, Board Chair



Nanette Moreau, Commissioner

On 1 November 2017, we celebrated one year of Utilities Disputes. We would like to thank you all for your support over this last year of change, and we look forward to continuous improvement and growth over the next year.

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## Board member Major Campbell Roberts in the press



Utilities Disputes Board member, Major Campbell Roberts' fascinating journey of community support was recently celebrated as a Dominion Post National Portrait.

The Salvation Army Major's mission to build a better society is a legacy to his background. Roberts' parents were both supported by the Salvation Army - when his father, Alf Roberts, was a baby, he was found bundled in newspaper on the Salvation Army doorstep.

We're fortunate to have Major Roberts represent consumers on the Utilities Disputes board. See his [story](#).

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## Victory!



Hannah Morgan-Stone - Senior Conciliator, Jerome Chapman - Deputy Commissioner, William Meldrum - Conciliator, and Pamela Todd - Plain English Coach



Writemark NZ Plain English Award 2017:  
Plain English Champion - Best Organisation: Utilities Disputes

We were ecstatic to win the supreme award: Best Organisation, at the Plain English Awards on 23 November. We're focused on making our message easy to understand, and we are delighted to be recognised for that journey.

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## Check out our new stuff - please share!

### Video - About Us

We have created a video to tell people about us. Check this out on the home page of our [website](#) and let us know what you think - enjoy :)

[Please also view the video here on YouTube.](#)

### New fact sheets



We encourage you to share our new **fact sheets** widely. [All our fact sheets are available on our website](#) or give us a call and we can send you some. Contact us if you have any questions **0800 22 33 40**:

#### Electricity and gas:

- Looking into your complaint
- Resolving your complaint with a provider
- Your electricity pricing plan
- Understanding your electricity bill
- Back bills or catch-up bills
- High power bills
- Disconnections
- Claiming compensation
- Electricity and gas when you're renting
- Smart meters
- Trees and power lines

#### Broadband shared property access:

- Looking into your dispute
- The statutory right of access

#### General:

- Service Charter
- Complaints about our service

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**Case notes** (examples of complaints we have dealt with about energy)



**Case number:** 71352

**Issues:** Supply - outage - inconvenience - customer service

**Outcome:** Recommendation - not upheld

**Complaint:**

Mr D complained about a planned outage at his property. After receiving notification of the outage, Mr D contacted his network company and asked to negotiate alternative outage times. The network company said it would not negotiate an alternative time. Mr D then asked the network company to cover costs he incurred to maintain supply during the outage. The network company said it would not cover these costs.

Mr D claimed the network company gave him poor customer service because it would not negotiate with him or cover his costs.

The network company said it has to schedule outages to undertake maintenance on its network. It said it schedules outages at a time which minimises the impact in the area the outage is to take place. The network company said it does not consult with all affected parties as this would not be cost effective. It explained to Mr D the scheduled timing of an outage also takes into consideration the safety of its workers.



**Case number:** 70568

**Issues:** Billing - pricing plan - customer service - failure to respond - disconnection

**Outcome:** Recommendation - upheld

**Complaint:**

On behalf of ABC Ltd, Mr Z complained the electricity retailer:

- Billed ABC Ltd on the incorrect tariff since May 2016 and this meant the bills were higher than they should be
- Did not recognise Mr Z's complaints in 2016, or his complaint on 27 January 2017
- Disconnected the electricity at ABC Ltd on 13 March 2017.

Mr Z said he believed the rate was wrong because:

- His bills were more expensive than the previous owner's bills, and he gave a copy of the previous owner's bill to prove this
- Another retailer and Mr Z's electrician told Mr Z that ABC Ltd should be on a different pricing plan
- Mr Z said the retailer told him ABC Ltd was paying the same amount as the previous owner of the business.

The retailer said it was billing ABC Ltd on the correct rate, and had told

[Read more](#)



Mr Z how he could change to a cheaper rate by getting the capacity of the electricity supply downgraded. The retailer said it billed the previous owner differently under its contract with the previous owner, but did bill the previous owner on the same network pricing.

Utilities Disputes facilitated a face-to-face meeting with the retailer and Mr Z. Acknowledging it should have sent another disconnection letter before the disconnection, the retailer offered:

- A payment of \$1,000, or
- ABC Ltd could switch away without paying the contract break fee (about \$3,000)

[Read more](#)

## Utilities Disputes welcomes new Advisory Committees

The Utilities Disputes Board is pleased to welcome members of the newly established Energy Complaints Scheme Advisory Committee and Broadband Shared Property Access Disputes Advisory Committee.

The committees will provide advice and make recommendations to the board on issues that affect both the industry and its customers.

Providing access to a fair, independent and free complaint resolution service benefits both consumers and the industry – its reputation, its service and customer relationships.

The advisory committees will enhance our connections, as committee members have extensive industry and community experience. We look forward to working with, and learning from, the committees.

### Energy Complaints Scheme Advisory Committee

The Energy Complaints Advisory Committee comprises three consumer and three industry representatives.

**Consumer representatives:**

- Sandra Greenslade
- Sam Huggard
- Ronji Tanielu

**Industry representatives:**

- Sean Horgan, CEO, The Lines Company
- Fiona Smith, GM, Customer Operations, Trustpower
- Jason Woolley, Regulatory Affairs Manager, Meridian

**Broadband Shared Property Access Disputes Advisory Committee**

The Broadband Shared Property Access Disputes Advisory Committee currently has three members. We expect the committee to grow when Scheme membership grows. At present, Chorus is the only Scheme member.

- Kadia Turner, Senior Consents & Acquisition Specialist, Chorus
- Dave Simpson, Senior Manager, Group Public Policy, Spark
- Craig Young, Chief Executive, Telecommunications Users Association of NZ

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## Recent case statistics




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## Who do you pay your energy bill to?

Who do you pay your energy bill to? If it is a property manager or building owner they may be required to join Utilities Disputes' Energy Complaints Scheme. This could also include apartments, offices, retirement villages, marinas and more...

The [Energy Innovation \(Electric Vehicles and Other Matters\) Amendment Act](#) came into force on 1 July 2017. This means "secondary networks" (small electricity networks like in apartment buildings, malls and retirement villages) must belong to the approved dispute resolution scheme, operated by Utilities Disputes. This is to ensure consumers on these networks have access to free, independent dispute

resolution when they have complaints about their energy providers.

There is estimated to be over 100,000 consumers who don't currently have access to the Energy Complaints Scheme. If your provider doesn't belong to the scheme, we can't investigate your complaint.

We are working to identify providers which need to join. So, who do you pay your energy bill to? If it's a landlord or property manager, let us know! **0800 22 33 40**

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## Have you checked out our Facebook page?

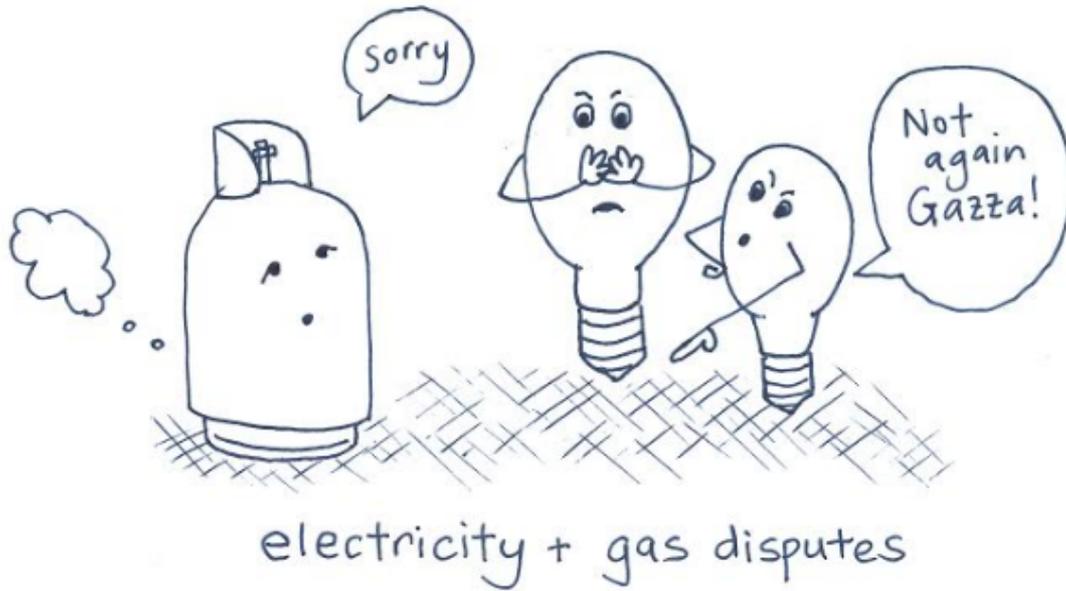
We frequently update our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/utilitiesdisputesltd/>

with news, industry information, updates about what we are doing, and who we are visiting. Please LIKE our page and SHARE anything useful with your audience :)

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Please feel free to pass along this newsletter to your colleagues. We welcome your feedback, suggestions and questions. You can contact us at the email below.

**That's all folks...have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.**



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**Our email address is:**

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Please call or email us to be added to (or removed from) our mailing list.