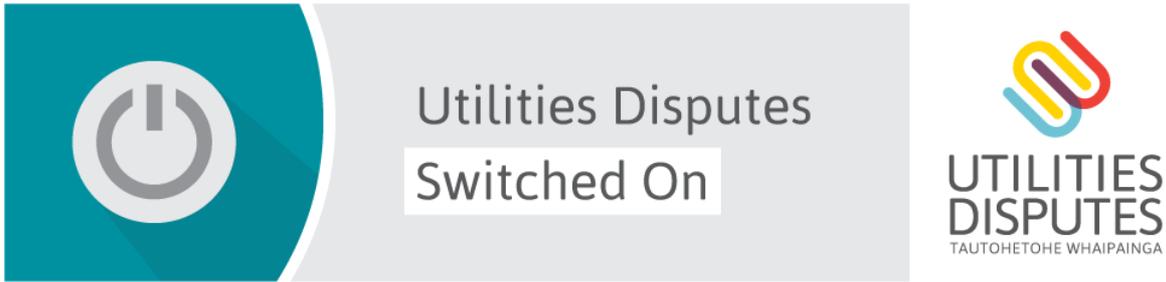


Independent / fair / free



March 2018

0800 22 33 40 | info@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz | www.utilitiesdisputes.co.nz

|MC:TOC|

Welcome from the Commissioner, Nanette Moreau



Greetings,

It's been a busy first quarter of 2018 at Utilities Disputes. We're especially delighted to have launched the Water Complaints Scheme, together with Auckland's Watercare.

We welcome enquiries and complaints from Watercare customers, and we will draw on 16 years' experience to provide a quality service, which is free to consumers, independent, and fair.

Congratulations to Watercare for leading the way, and we hope to welcome water providers from across New Zealand to join the Scheme.

It's a pleasure to officially welcome our Deputy Commissioner, Andrew Greig, who began in January 2018. Andrew comes to us from the Education Council, where he managed investigations, a legal team, and decision-making bodies. Andrew was previously a solicitor at Rainey Collins and a pilot, and officer for the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

We want to hear from anyone having issues with their electricity or gas provider, broadband property access, or Auckland water services. Please spread the word, and don't hesitate to contact us: 0800 22 33 40 or info@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz

Nanette Moreau
Commissioner

Interview with Elizabeth Tennet, CEO,



Community Law Centres o Aotearoa

Elizabeth Tennet has championed change and social justice throughout her career –as a trade unionist, a Labour Party MP, native sanctuary Board Chair, volunteer, regional economic development adviser and industry advocate. As Chief Executive of the national body of “New Zealand’s biggest law firm”, Community Law Centres o Aotearoa, Elizabeth advocates for 24 law centres, 140 outreach clinics, and 1500 volunteer lawyers across New Zealand.

[Read the full interview here](#)

Water Complaints Scheme established

Utilities Disputes can now take public enquiries and complaints about water in the Auckland region. The new Water Complaints Scheme will give all Watercare customers access to our free and independent service.

Water provision is an essential utility service for New Zealanders, and expanding our current services – from gas, electricity and broadband property access – to include water is a logical step.

The complaints process will be the same as for other utilities – if customers have a water complaint, the first step is to contact Watercare, who will try to resolve it.

Watercare Chief Executive, Raveen Jaduram says “Here at Watercare we work very hard to answer our customers’ queries and satisfy any complaints, but sometimes disputes aren’t easily resolved. This new service means customers have free access to an independent referee when all other avenues have been explored. The other benefit for us is that the Utilities Disputes team will then give us feedback to help us improve.”

Joining the Water Complaints Scheme is voluntary. Watercare has led the way, and we hope to welcome other water providers from across New Zealand in the near future.

New resources - Water fact sheets



Please share the following fact sheets with your networks:

- [Resolving your complaint with a provider](#)
 - [Looking into your complaint](#)
-



STUDENT ALERT: Stop, find your meter, take a pic!

During student flat season, we sent the message that opening and closing your energy accounts properly can save a lot of headaches.

Signing up with an electricity or gas provider is perhaps one of the least fun parts of setting up a student flat, but we urge all students to take a moment, find the meter and take a photo.

We've seen countless cases over the years of new tenants getting landed with sky-high power bills because previous tenants haven't properly closed their accounts.

One group of new tenants, who hadn't set up an account when they moved in, received a disconnection notice and a very high bill three months later. They contacted us, and we worked with the tenants and the company. In this particular case the bill was reduced, and a new account was set up.

We also hear from people who continue to receive power bills long after they've left a flat.

The person named as the account holder is responsible for all future bills, so communication is really important. It's a good idea for flatmates to agree in writing – a flat email, for example – how power bills will be paid. And the account-holder details must be kept up to date, especially when people move out.

Moving into a new flat? Follow these tips, from Utilities Disputes:

- 1. Take a photo of the meter display - make sure the numbers are clear**
- 2. Contact an energy or gas provider to set up your account**
- 3. Agree with your flatmates on how you will pay power bills**

4. Read your first bill carefully and contact your company if you have questions
5. When you move out of a flat, take a photo of the meter display and call your provider to close the account.

See the [article](#), published in Stuff and Fairfax.

See our [fact sheet](#).

For more information on renting see: www.tenancy.govt.nz

Five Year Independent Review

The report from the Independent Review of Utilities Disputes was released on 5 February 2018. This is available on our [website](#). We are now consulting with industry and consumer stakeholders on the proposed changes.

Case notes - energy (examples of what we do):



Case number: 69160

Issues: Billing - Pricing plan -
Incorrect pricing plan

Outcome: Recommendation -
upheld

Complaint:

Ms A complained her gas retailer charged her business an incorrect rate for the supply of gas. She also complained the retailer gave her poor customer service.

Ms A said a representative from the retailer visited her business. During the discussion, she said the



Case number: 72673

Issues: Billing period - Billing high

Outcome: Recommendation -
upheld

Complaint:

Ms T complained her electricity retailer sent her a high bill. She said the retailer did not bill her for three months over winter. Ms T said as a result, she lost the opportunity to adjust her power usage during this time.

Ms T said the retailer did not send her a bill after it mistakenly terminated her electricity account

representative also talked to her about her gas supply rates. Ms A said the representative told her the rate she was on was too high and she should have been on a lower rate for the last two years. Ms A said the representative told her he would 'see what he could do' and ask the regional manager to contact her. She said the manager did not call. When Ms A contacted the regional manager she said she was told the rate was for new customers only and could only offer her the rate going forward.

Ms A switched retailers prior to the end of her contract.

The retailer said the representative gave incorrect information and was not authorised to speak to her about her gas rates. It said it did not overcharge Ms A. The retailer confirmed it would offer the rate moving forward, but would not backdate the rate. It also offered Ms A \$500 as a goodwill payment.

The retailer confirmed it charged Ms A an early termination fee when she decided to break her contract early.

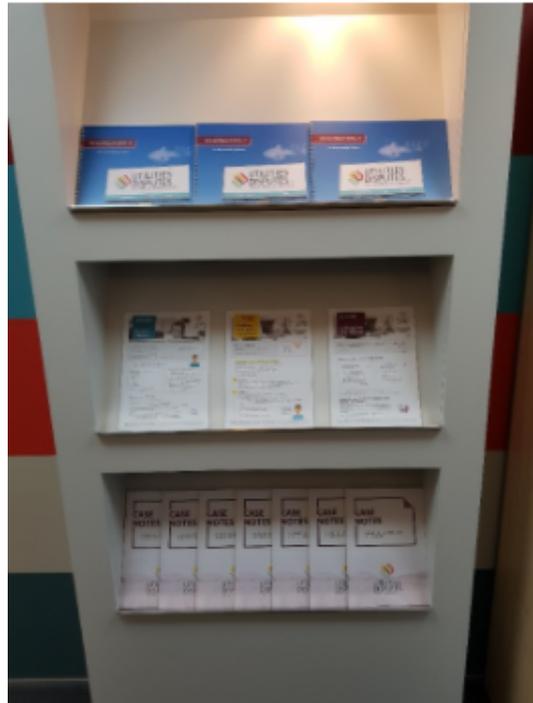
[Read more](#)

instead of her neighbour's account. Ms T said once she saw how high the bill was, she adjusted her power usage and the next bill dropped.

Ms T said she wanted the retailer to pay the difference between the high bill and her average power usage because it was responsible for the delay in billing.

The retailer said Ms T used the power and it was not responsible for Ms T's power consumption.

[Read more](#)



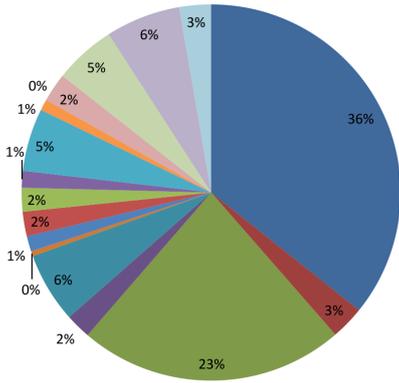
Our publications on display as you enter our office: Annual Report, Fact sheets and Case Note book

Recent case statistics - energy

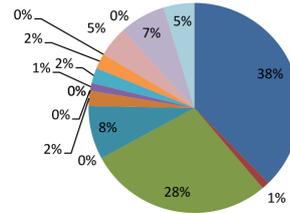
Nature of Complaint issues by Energy Type

For the period: 1 Mar 2017 to 28 Feb 2018

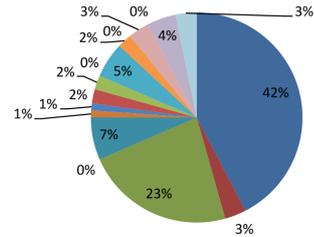
Overall



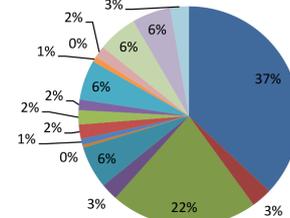
Electricity



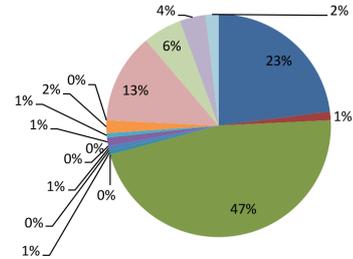
Gas (reticulated natural gas)



Dual Fuel



LPG (cylinders)



- Billing
- Customer service
- Disconnection
- Land
- Lines, poles, pipes & related equipment
- Meter
- Prepay
- Supply
- Switch
- Credit
- Debt
- General
- Lines
- Marketing
- Other
- Provision
- Not Recorded

Have you liked our Facebook page?



We frequently update our Facebook page:

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

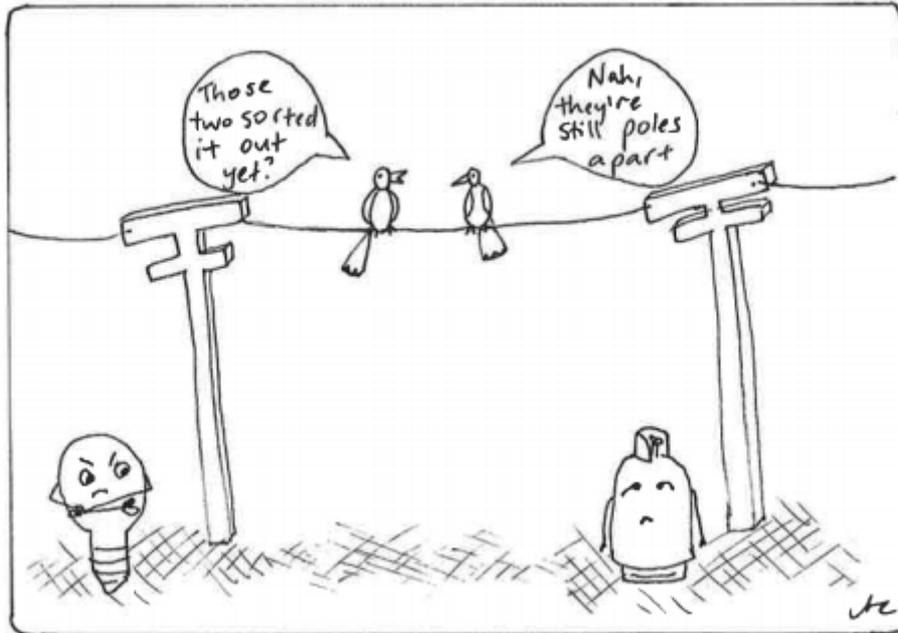
with news, industry information, updates about what we are doing, and who we are visiting.

Please LIKE our page and SHARE anything useful with your audience :)



Easter hours

The office will be closed on Good Friday (Friday 30 March) and Easter Monday (Monday 2 April). Please feel free to email us or leave us a message and we will contact you when we are back in the office, from 8:30 am on Tuesday 3 April.



unresolved electricity + gas disputes

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.



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Our email address is:

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Call us on:

0800 22 33 40

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