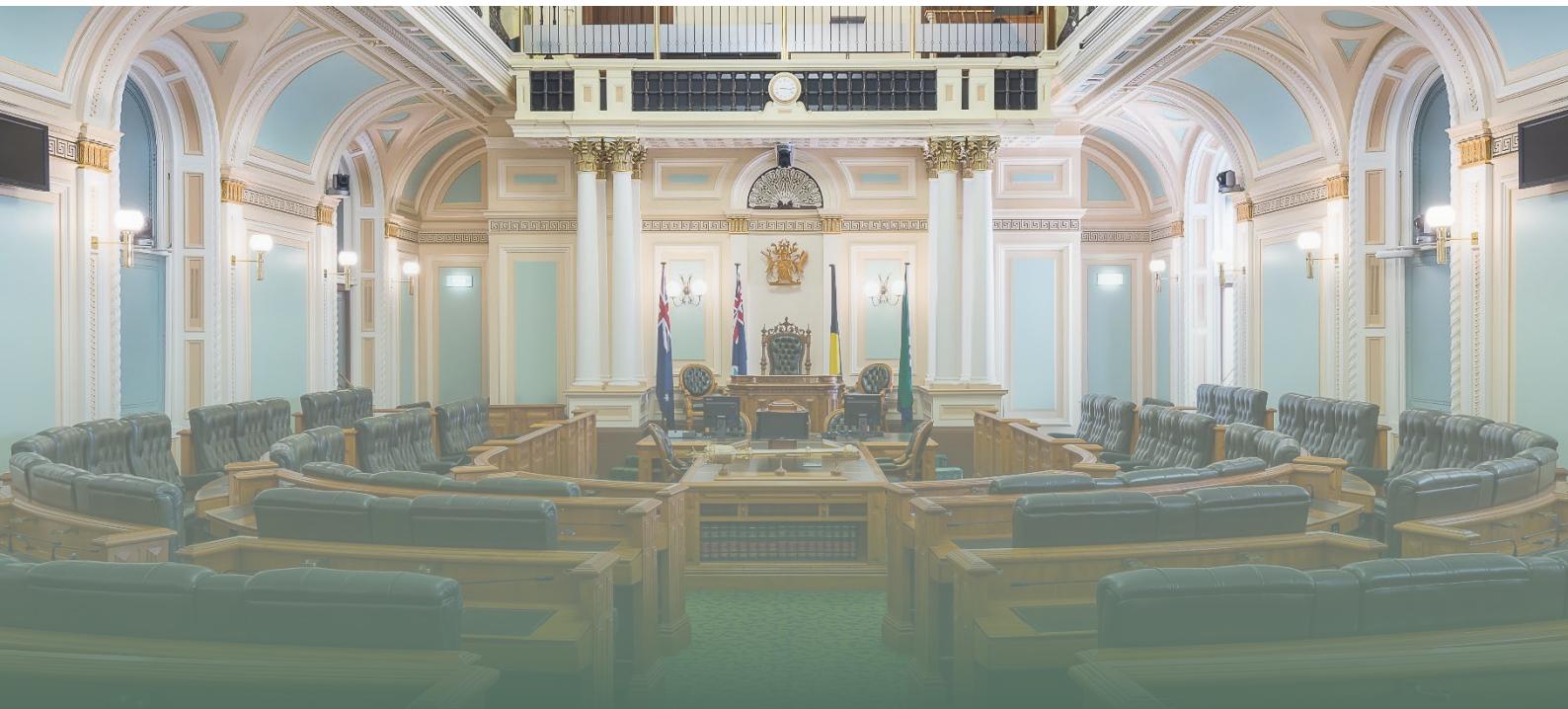




QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT **COMMITTEES**

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland Annual Report 2024-25

Governance, Energy and Finance Committee



Report No. 20

58th Parliament, February 2026

Governance, Energy and Finance Committee

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Deputy Chair	Mr Chris Whiting MP, Member for Bancroft
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All references and webpages are current at the time of publishing.

Acknowledgements

The committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Ombudsman and staff from the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland.

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Chair's Foreword

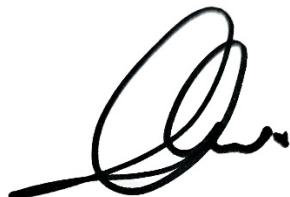
The Governance, Energy and Finance Committee has oversight responsibility for the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) under Schedule 6 of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly and is responsible for considering the entity's annual report under section 94 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*.

This report presents a summary of the committee's examination of EWOQ's annual report for the 2024-25 financial year (Annual Report).

The committee reviewed the Annual Report and held a public briefing with representatives of EWOQ on 29 October 2025. The committee also held a public briefing with representatives of EWOQ earlier in the year regarding its role and work up to April 2025.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Ombudsman and officers from EWOQ for assisting the committee with fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. I also thank the Parliamentary Service staff.

I commend this report to the House.



Michael Crandon MP

Chair

Executive Summary

This report presents the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee's (committee's) examination of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland's annual report for the 2024-25 financial year (Annual Report).

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) provides assistance to residential and small business consumers. It helps to resolve disputes between customers and their energy and water retailers and distributors, identifies systemic issues arising from customer complaints, and promotes its services to communities across Queensland.

The Annual Report details EWOQ's performance, customer demographics, workforce, services, connections to stakeholders, governance and financial position in 2024-25. It shows that, despite a challenging workload, EWOQ met most of its performance targets and maintained a stable financial position in that period.

The committee is satisfied that the Annual Report complies with the relevant legislative requirements and standards

The committee made one recommendation, found at page v of this report, that the Legislative Assembly notes the contents of this report.

Recommendation

Recommendation 1 2

The committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly notes the contents of this report.

1. Introduction

This report presents the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee's (committee's) examination of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland's (EWOQ's) annual report for the 2024-25 financial year (Annual Report).

1.1. Overview of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland

EWOQ was established under the *Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006* to investigate and resolve certain disputes involving energy and water providers.

EWOQ has 3 primary functions:

- to receive, investigate and facilitate the resolution of disputes between residential and small business customers and their energy and water retailers and distributors
- to promote its services throughout Queensland to those who may need assistance
- to identify systemic issues arising from complaints received from customers.¹

EWOQ is independent and is not subject to direction.²

1.1.1. Ombudsman

Jane Pires was appointed Energy and Water Ombudsman (Ombudsman) in December 2016. Due to statutory limits on the length of such appointments, 2026 will be her last year in that position.³

“ *I am heading into my last year in this role and I am making sure the team is set up ready to continue on and continue to improve and expand, because I am very keen to make sure the ombudsman service is available to consumers as the energy market changes and, with all that is coming in, we can provide the service they need.*

Jane Pires, Energy and Water Ombudsman

15 October 2025, Public Briefing⁴

1.2. Role of the committee

The committee was established by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 28 November 2024 as a portfolio committee.⁵

The committee is responsible for oversight of EWOQ.⁶ This responsibility includes examining EWOQ's annual report and, if appropriate, commenting on any aspect of the report.⁷

¹ Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ), *Annual report 2024-25*, p 2.

² *Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006*, s 16.

³ The Energy and Water Ombudsman holds office for a term of not more than 5 years and may be re-appointed, but not if the total of the person's terms of appointment would be more than 10 years: *Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006*, s 52.

⁴ Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 15 October 2025, p 5.

⁵ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88; Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly, Standing Order (SO) 194.

⁶ Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly, sch 6.

⁷ Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly, SO 194A.

1.3. Inquiry process

The Annual Report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 26 September 2025 by the Hon David Janetzki MP, Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership.

EWOQ provided the committee with a public briefing on the Annual Report on 15 October 2025. EWOQ also provided the committee with a broader public briefing on its work on 2 April 2025.

Details of the witnesses who appeared at both briefings are provided at Appendix A. A transcript of the briefing is available on the committee's webpage.

1.4. Legislative compliance

The committee's deliberations included assessing whether the Annual Report complies with the requirements of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019, and the annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies.

Committee comment



The committee is satisfied that the Annual Report complies with these requirements.



Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly notes the contents of this report.

2. Examination of Annual Report 2024-25

The Annual Report provides information about EWOQ's performance, customer demographics, workforce, services, connections to stakeholders, governance and financial position in the 2024-25 financial year. Each of those issues is discussed in further detail below.

2.1. Performance

As the Annual Report notes, in 2024-25, EWOQ met 'a substantial portion'⁸ of its measures of success. EWOQ achieved 15 of 22 performance targets and a further 4 targets were within 5 points of being met.⁹ Table 1, on the next page, provides an overview of EWOQ's performance against 22 measures of success.

⁸ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 12.

⁹ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 12.

Table 1 Performance against measures of success		
Targets met or exceeded	Targets close to being met	Targets not met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer complaints against EWOQ Staff training and development program (hours/FTE) <i>My workgroup</i> factor Media enquiries responded to within timeframes Invoices issued on time Policy submissions submitted on time Reports produced on time Potential Systemic Issues not reviewed in 7 days Cases closed in less than 60 days Cases closed over 90 days Publish quarterly newsletter Increase social media followers Number of policy submissions made Number of ANZOA interest group meetings attended Number of community outreach activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer web/email contacts responded to within 3 business days Customer satisfaction with EWOQ service Annual <i>My workgroup</i> factor employee engagement Cases closed in less than 28 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer calls answered within 20 seconds Average speed of answer of customer calls Increase website page views

Source: EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 12.

The Annual Report states that EWOQ's success in meeting performance targets relating to the time taken to close cases reflects an improvement on previous years. It attributes that improvement to the dedication of staff and the introduction of a more efficient case management system.¹⁰

Regarding EWOQ's failure to meet performance targets relating to customer calls, the Annual Report notes that '[i]ncoming call volumes, team member leave, training and technical issues following the implementation of the Microsoft Digital Contact Centre August 2024' contributed to those results.¹¹

2.2. Customers and their experiences

The Annual Report provides information about EWOQ's customers' experiences and their satisfaction with the assistance provided by EWOQ.

2.2.1. EWOQ's customers

In 2024-25, 80 per cent of EWOQ's customers resided in South East Queensland, compared to 70 per cent in the previous year. This reflected a relative decline in complaints

¹⁰ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 5.

¹¹ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 12.

from regional areas, which were higher in 2023-24 due to ‘the rollout of new billing systems and extended wait time across customer service channels’.¹²

The vast majority of customers (98 per cent) who contacted EWOQ were residential customers, most of whom (59 per cent) contacted EWOQ by phone.¹³ The remaining customers who contacted EWOQ were small business customers.¹⁴

2.2.2. Customer satisfaction

The data presented in the Annual Report indicates that a large proportion of EWOQ’s customers were happy with the assistance it provided to them. For example, in 2024-25, 78 per cent of surveyed customers said they would recommend EWOQ to others, 80 per cent of customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience, and 67 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the time EWOQ took to investigate and resolve their complaint.¹⁵

EWOQ’s customers were less satisfied with the final outcome of their complaints than with their overall experience. This was particularly true of customers whose complaints were referred back to their provider and customers whose complaints were investigated by EWOQ. Only half of these customers (54 and 50 per cent, respectively) were very satisfied with the final outcome.¹⁶

According to the Annual Report, customer satisfaction with final outcomes is ‘often influenced by whether the complaint was resolved in favour of the customer or the provider, as well as the complexity of the case type’. In addition, the report notes that the ‘refer back’ process (which applies to customers who contact EWOQ before attempting to resolve their issue directly with their provider) ‘can sometimes be perceived as unhelpful and result in lower satisfaction scores’.¹⁷

To help improve the experience of customers referred back to their providers, EWOQ has updated its email template ‘to include relevant complaint details, helping to reduce resolution timeframes and improve clarity for customers’.¹⁸

2.3. Workforce

As of 30 June 2025, EWOQ employed 46 officers on a full or part-time basis, constituting 44.3 full time equivalent (FTE) roles. This workforce was roughly evenly split between the corporate team (48 per cent of FTE roles) and frontline and frontline support roles (52 percent of FTE roles). The majority of EWOQ’s workforce were employed full time on permanent contracts. Almost three-quarters of EWOQ’s workforce were women, including several women employed in senior leadership roles.¹⁹

¹² EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 14.

¹³ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 14.

¹⁴ Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 15 October 2025, p 6.

¹⁵ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 17.

¹⁶ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 18.

¹⁷ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 18.

¹⁸ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 18.

¹⁹ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, pp 20-21.

The Annual Report details the approaches and strategies that EWOQ maintains in relation to flexible working arrangements, learning and development, employee relations, performance management, workforce diversity, workplace health and safety and employee achievement and recognition.²⁰

2.4. Services

The Annual Report details the number of cases managed by EWOQ in 2024-25, the type of cases it managed and how they were resolved.

2.4.1. Overview

The Annual Report states that in 2024-25, EWOQ:

- closed 9,581 cases, a decrease of 14 per cent from the previous year
- assisted with 7,479 complaints, a decrease of 19 per cent from the previous year
- delivered \$933,861 in customer benefits (such as refunds, billing adjustments or goodwill gestures) an increase of \$117,229 from the previous year.²¹

The vast majority of cases managed by EWOQ related to electricity (88 per cent). Billing was the most frequently raised issue, representing three quarters (75 per cent) of customer complaints.²²

At the public briefing on 15 October 2025, the Ombudsman noted that common billing issues related to:

- billing errors
- confusion regarding estimated and actual bills (and related bill adjustments)
- the application of rebates or concessions.²³

Figure 1, on the next page, illustrates how the cases closed by EWOQ in 2024-25 were resolved. As that figure shows, most cases were referred back to the provider (where a customer has not engaged with them before contacting EWOQ) or referred back to the provider at a higher level.

The Annual Report provides additional information about how cases within each category were managed.²⁴ It also provides additional disaggregated data on electricity complaints, gas complaints and water complaints.²⁵

²⁰ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, pp 21-23.

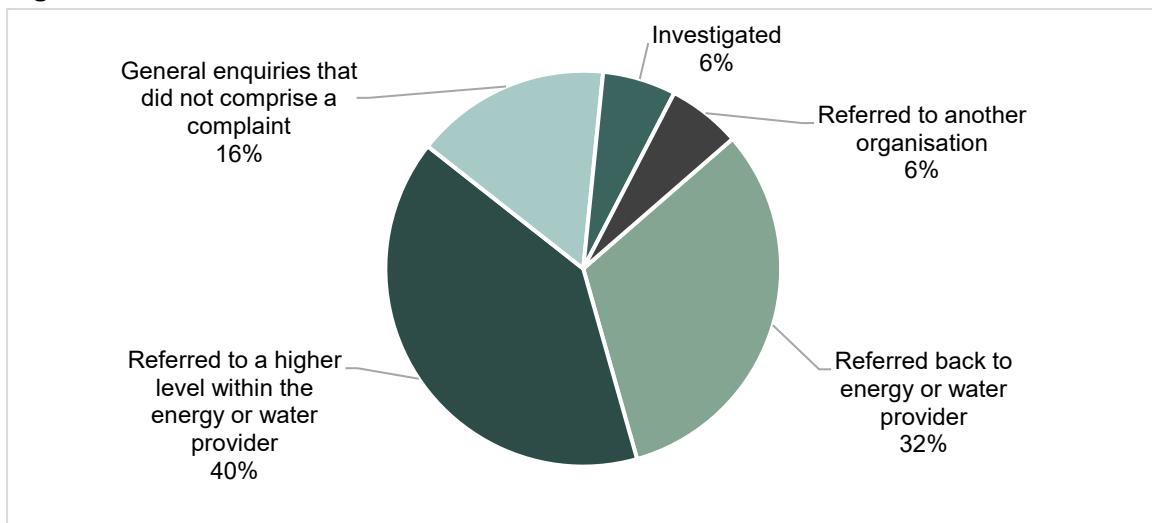
²¹ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 24.

²² EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 24.

²³ Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 15 October 2025, p 2.

²⁴ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 25.

²⁵ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, pp 29-35.

Figure 1: How cases were resolved in 2024-25

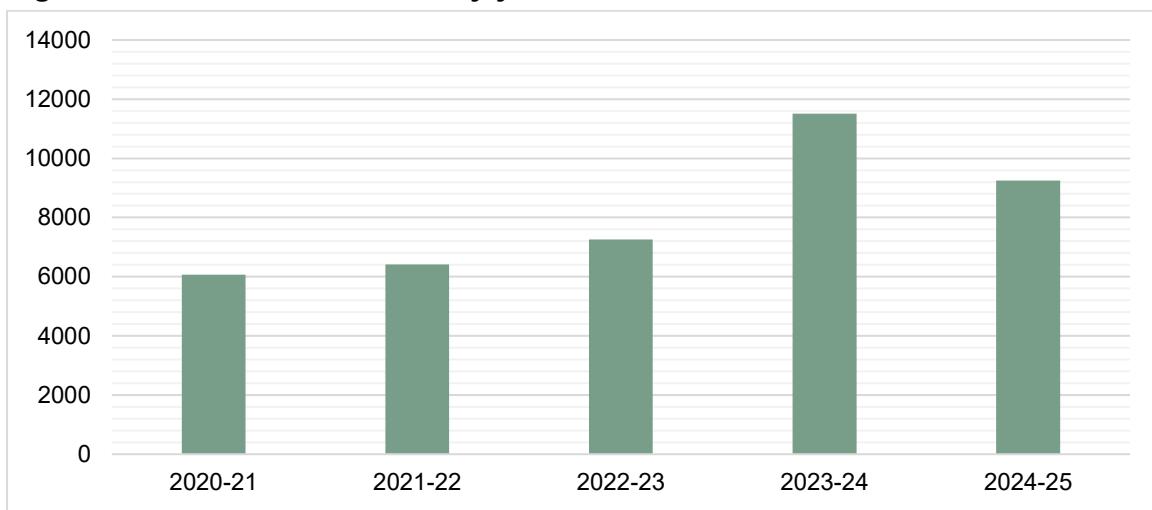
Source: EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 24.

The Annual Report states that in 2024-25, EWOQ:

- strengthened its ability to assist embedded network customers by establishing a dedicated Exempt Seller Coordinator role²⁶
- identified 37 potential systemic issues and issued 20 systemic issue notices to providers.²⁷

2.4.2. Changes in workload

Although the number of cases received by EWOQ in 2024-25 declined compared to 2023-24, it remained higher than in preceding years. Figure 2, below, illustrates this change.

Figure 2: Total cases received by year

Source: EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 71.

²⁶ Embedded networks are privately owned energy networks commonly found in retirement villages, apartment blocks and caravan parks. As noted in the Annual Report, most embedded network operators are classified as exempt sellers, meaning they are not required by the Australian Energy Regulator to hold a retailer authorisation.

²⁷ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 28.

At a public briefing on 2 April 2025, the Ombudsman advised the committee that the increase in cases in 2023-24 was concentrated in the period between January and June 2024 and was largely due to cost-of-living pressures affecting consumers in Queensland. She explained that EWOQ experienced a similar, temporary increase in its workload in 2017 when the roll-out of smart meters commenced in certain regions. It is also typical for EWOQ to receive a higher volume of complaints in the first half of the calendar year, when consumers receive bills for their energy use in summer.²⁸

At the public briefing on 15 October 2025, the Ombudsman advised the committee that EWOQ anticipates that hardship complaints 'will be a continual and growing issue as we go forward'. This expectation is based, in part, on the end of electricity rebates, which reduced the bills received by consumers in the relevant period.²⁹

In light of the anticipated increase in hardship complaints, EWOQ has conducted refresher training on hardship assessments for staff who handle these complaints.³⁰

2.5. Connections

The Annual Report provides details of EWOQ's investments in outreach and engagement, reconciliation activities, contributions to public policy, and connections with peers and scheme participants in 2024-25.³¹

Key highlights in these areas included the following:

- a significant increase in EWOQ's outreach and engagement activities including travel to Townsville, Palm Island, Doomadgee, Normanton, Croydon, Rockhampton and Cherbourg
- a major upgrade of EWOQ's public-facing website significantly enhancing accessibility and improving the visibility of information about common complaints
- competing a range of digital advertising campaigns to raise awareness of EWOQ's services and share timely information on energy and water issues affecting Queenslanders
- updating Cultural Engagement Protocols to better support respectful and meaningful engagement with First Nations Peoples
- contributing to the Australian Energy Regulator's review of Payment Difficulties Protections under the National Energy Consumer Framework, including the minimum disconnection threshold
- development of an improved Scheme Participant Portal.³²

²⁸ Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 2 April 2025, pp 6-7.

²⁹ Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 15 October 2025, p 2; Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 2 April 2025, p 8.

³⁰ Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 15 October 2025, p 2.

³¹ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, pp 38-41.

³² EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, pp 38-41.

In response to a question taken on notice at the public hearing on 15 October 2025, EWOQ advised that it would be continuing to undertake outreach activities across Far North Queensland into 2025-26 ‘to strengthen community engagement and improve access to dispute resolution services’.³³

Committee comment



The committee looks forward to hearing further about the insights gained, and outcomes achieved, from EWOQ’s engagement with regional and remote communities across Queensland.

2.6. Governance

The Annual Report provides details of EWOQ’s governance framework, including the Executive Management Group, Advisory Council, and the organisation’s risk management, accountability, compliance and integrity processes.³⁴

The Advisory Council provides expert advice and sector perspectives, while the Executive Management Group is responsible for operational leadership and delivery against strategic and legislative obligations.

The Annual Report does not identify any significant changes to these arrangements in 2024-25 indicating stability in oversight and internal control structures. The governance arrangements detailed in the Annual Report appear broadly consistent with those maintained by similar organisations.

2.7. Financial position

The Annual Report provides details of EWOQ’s financial position. It notes that EWOQ is primarily funded by scheme participants — energy and water retailers and distributors operating in Queensland — who are required to pay an annual participation fee and user-pays fees.³⁵

The Annual Report indicates that, in 2024-25, EWOQ maintained a stable and balanced financial position with revenue and expenditure closely aligned. It had:

- income of \$9.14 million, the vast majority derived from user-pays fees (\$8.60 million)
- expenses of \$9.14 million, with 72 per cent attributable to employee expenses
- assets totalling \$4.4 million, comprised of cash and cash equivalents, receivables, prepayments, and plant and equipment
- liabilities totalling \$3.9 million.³⁶

³³ EWOQ, correspondence, 24 October 2025, p 3.

³⁴ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, pp 42-47.

³⁵ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-25*, p 49.

³⁶ EWOQ, *Annual report 2024-2025*, p 49.

Committee comment



EWOQ plays an important role in assisting residential and small business consumers, particularly in resolving disputes with energy and water providers. The committee thanks the Ombudsman, and their office, for the assistance they provided to Queenslanders in 2024-25.

The committee welcomes the continued investments EWOQ has made to improve the experiences of its customers, including initiatives aimed at strengthening service delivery and enhancing its ability to resolve cases in a timely manner. The committee also recognises the value of EWOQ's community outreach and engagement activities, which contribute to raising awareness of the scheme and improving access to services, particularly for communities that may face barriers in seeking assistance.

The committee encourages EWOQ to continue investing in its people and systems in the future.

Appendix A – Public Briefings, Brisbane

Public Briefing, 2 April 2025

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland

Jane Pires	Energy and Water Ombudsman
Rowena McNally	Chair, Energy and Water Ombudsman Advisory Council

Public Briefing, 15 October 2025

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland

Jane Pires	Energy and Water Ombudsman
Angela Arico	General Manager, Strategy, Operations & Governance

Statement of Reservation

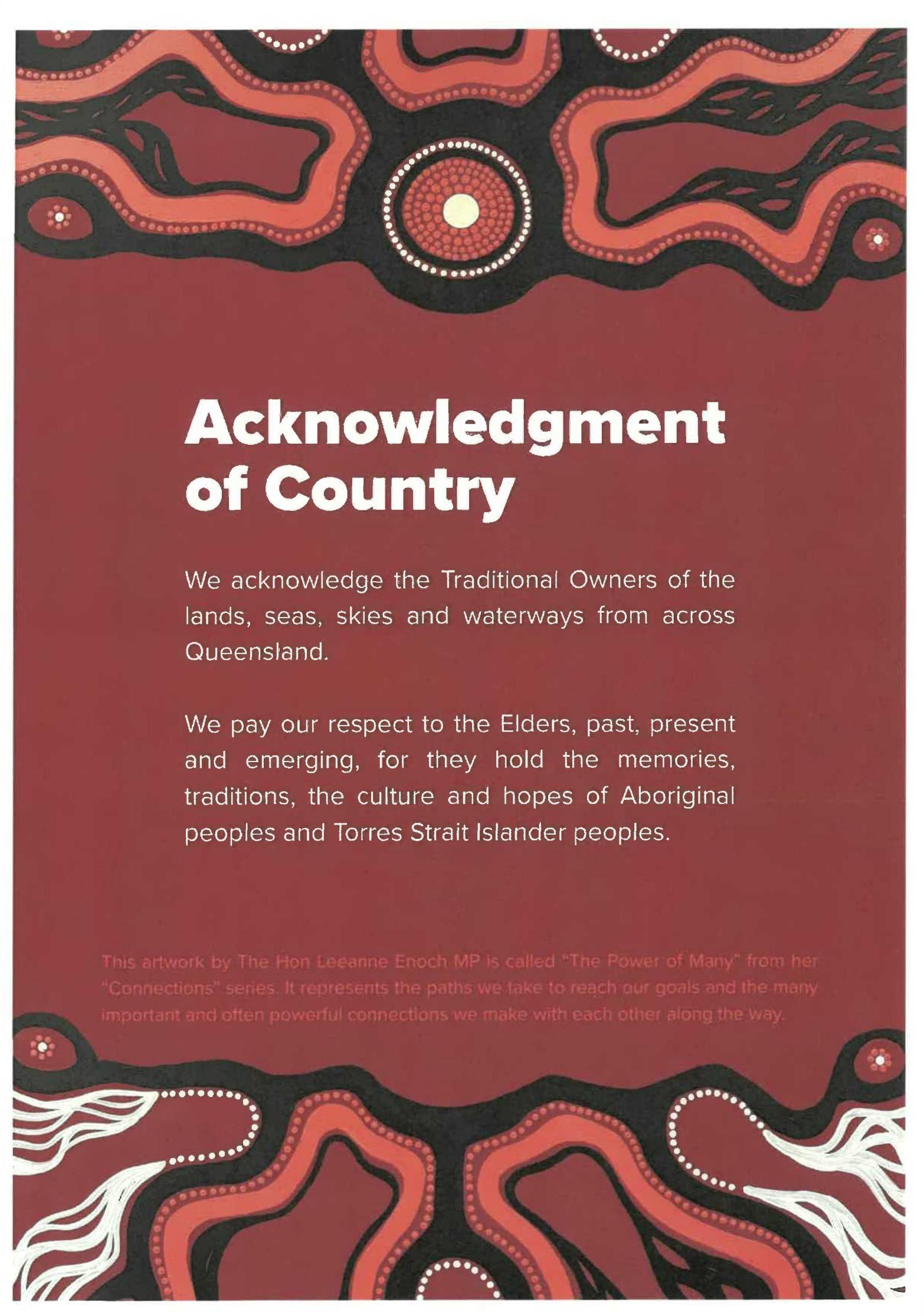


Statement of Reservation

**Governance, Energy and
Finance Committee**

**Oversight of the Energy and Water
Ombudsman Queensland**





Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands, seas, skies and waterways from across Queensland.

We pay our respect to the Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This artwork by The Hon Leeanne Enoch MP is called "The Power of Many" from her "Connections" series. It represents the paths we take to reach our goals and the many important and often powerful connections we make with each other along the way.

Queensland Labor Opposition

The Labor Opposition believes the 2024-2025 Annual Report from Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (the report) should act as a wakeup call to the Crisafulli LNP Government on the ongoing affordability challenge Queenslanders are facing.

The report states:

'Many Queenslanders benefited from significant energy bill relief this year. The Queensland Government's \$1,000 Cost of Living rebate, alongside the Australian Government's \$300 Energy Bill Relief Fund rebate provided welcome support at a time when cost-of-living pressures continued to affect households across the state. These rebates had a noticeable impact. We saw a reduction in complaints related to billing, including high bills, and credit issues such as payment difficulties and hardship. This suggests that financial relief measures can play a meaningful role in easing stress for consumers and reducing the need for dispute resolution.'¹

This is a clear assessment of the positive impact of affordability support measures.

The decision of the Crisafulli LNP Government to cut the \$1000 universal rebate, coupled with its failure to deliver the promises 'structural' cost of living relief, has hit the pockets of Queenslanders hard, with the Ombudsman expecting an increase in hardship cases as a result.

Mr WHITING: To take you back where you started, you said that, with the reduction of state energy rebates and going into the higher energy season, you are expecting more hardship cases in the future. I am just clarifying that is what you said.

Ms Pires: Yes, that is correct...²

The report makes clear that electricity disconnections remain a significant concern, and the Labor Opposition finds that the decision of the Crisafulli LNP Government to cut universal energy rebates will exacerbate this concern.



CHRIS WHITING MP
MEMBER FOR BANCROFT
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE



BISMA ASIF MP
MEMBER FOR SANDGATE



LANCE MCCALLUM MP
MEMBER FOR BUNDMABA

¹ 2024-2025 Annual Report from Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland

² [Transcript - 15 October 2025 - GEC - Briefing - Oversight of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland](#)
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