
Office of Utilities Regulation

Consumer & Public Affairs Department
Quarterly Performance Report

Quarterly Performance Report

April - June 2014

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36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10

Consumer & Public Affairs Department
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The Role of the OUR

The Office of Utilities Regulation Act of 1995 established the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) as a body corporate. Under the Act, the OUR is charged with the responsibility of regulating the provision of utility services in the following sectors:

- Electricity
- Telecommunications
- Water & Sewerage

The OUR's Objectives

- To ensure that consumers of utility services enjoy an acceptable quality of service at a reasonable cost;
- To establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers;
- To promote the long-term efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy;
- To provide an avenue of appeal for consumers who have grievances with the utility service providers;
- To work with other related agencies in the promotion of a sustainable environment; and,
- To act independently and impartially.

The Consumer and Public Affairs Department (CPA)

The CPA department of the OUR is comprised of the Consumer Affairs Unit, the Public Affairs Unit and the OUR's Information Centre (OURIC). This Department also supports the work of the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU) which is an independent advocacy group, the operations of which are facilitated by the OUR.

The Consumer Affairs Unit

The Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) acts as the main interface between the OUR and the public on a daily basis. The unit is responsible for the provision of policy recommendations to the Office on consumer related issues. The unit develops, monitors and modifies the Guaranteed Standards developed for the National Water Commission and the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited. It also has direct responsibility for the hearing, investigation and resolution of consumer appeals against utility companies.

The Public Affairs Unit

The Public Affairs Unit has primary responsibility for keeping the public informed about the role and functions of the OUR as well as to engender and maintain a positive corporate image. The Unit is also responsible for: managing media relations; managing the content on the OUR's website; the preparation of advertisements, press releases and public notices; and the production of the *Inside the OUR* radio and print features.

OURIC

OURIC is the information hub of the OUR. It houses a host of information relating to the utility regulatory environment which includes OUR's publications such as Consultative Documents and Determination Notices. The OUR's obligations under the Access to Information Act are discharged through the Information Centre.

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List of Acronyms

Can Cara	-	CanCara Development Limited (water & sewerage provider)
CPA	-	Consumer and Public Affairs Department (OUR)
CAU	-	Consumer Affairs Unit (OUR)
DEML	-	Dynamic Environmental Management Limited (water and sewerage provider)
Decal	-	Decal Wireless Ltd. (telecommunications provider)
Digi	-	Digicel
Flow	-	Columbus Communications Jamaica Ltd. (telecommunication service provider)
JPS	-	Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (electricity provider)
KMR	-	Kingston Metropolitan Region (Kingston, St. Andrew & St. Catherine)
NWC	-	National Water Commission (water & sewerage provider)
OUR	-	Office of Utilities Regulation
OURIC	-	Office of Utilities Regulation Information Centre
Office	-	The Director General and both Deputy Directors General

Executive Summary

The number of contacts received by the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) from April to June 2014 was 504. This represents 37 fewer contacts or a 7% reduction in the number received compared with the previous quarter. The reduction may be attributed to an overall decline in the number of contacts received from customers of the Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) and the National Water Commission (NWC) from whom the majority of contacts are received.

Notably however, there was a 27% increase in the number of contacts received for telecommunications providers Digicel and LIME compared with the preceding reporting period. This increase can be attributed to billing matters, service interruptions and poor quality of service. In relation to service quality and interruption of service, LIME saw a 69% increase in the number of contacts compared to the preceding quarter. In an effort to have a better understanding of the quality of service issues and to have them addressed, a meeting was held with LIME representatives on April 2, 2014. The company's agents advised that they were aware of the issues being experienced by its customers and outlined plans. The OUR formally wrote to LIME on April 8, 2014 requesting information that will be used to monitor the improvement in the service quality issues.

There was an increase in the number of contacts from JPS customers who were affected by service interruptions. This was as a result of the company's decision to curtail service to communities where it alleged that there were high levels of electricity theft. Subsequent to an investigation, the OUR issued a cease and desist order to JPS as it determined that this action was in breach of the company's licence obligations to its customers in the affected areas.

Additionally, the unit fielded contacts from customers connected to, or being transferred to JPS' Residential Automated Metering Infrastructure (RAMI) system. The issues complained about included frequent service interruptions, for those who are connected, and lengthy delays being experienced by persons whose residences were to be newly connected to JPS' supply. The concerns highlighted regarding the RAMI system have been submitted for an *Office* decision.

Quarterly Report Details

Distribution of Contacts

The distribution of contacts received specific to each service provider is as follows:

- Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) – forty-four percent (44%)
- National Water Commission (NWC) – thirty-one percent (31%)
- Digicel – nine per cent (9%)
- LIME – twelve per cent (12%)
- FLOW, small telecommunications provider Decal Wireless and the small water provider Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd. (DEML) and CanCara Developers –four percent (4%).

The above percentages of the number of contacts received for the respective service providers indicate no significant change when compared with the preceding quarter.

Utilities Responsiveness

Acknowledgements

For the thirty-two (32) new appeals accepted during the period, information requests were sent through case letters and emails to the JPS and NWC. Fifteen (15) requests were submitted to JPS, of which two acknowledgements (representing 13%) were received. Of the eleven (11) requests sent to the NWC, three acknowledgements (representing 27%) were received.

Responses to Case Letters

The CAU received thirteen (13) responses from JPS to the case letters or emails sent requesting information. The 13 responses received represent an 87% compliance rate with the established response timeline.

No response was received from the NWC relating to case letters sent during the period.

Service Level Agreements

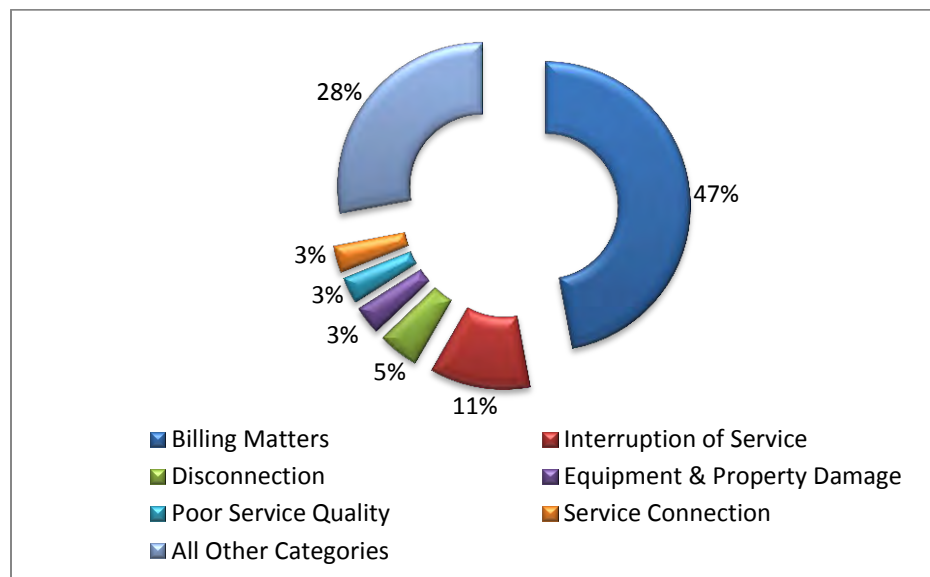
The Service Level Agreements were completed and signed by representatives of the JPS, NWC and OUR by the end of June as was scheduled. The agreement between the OUR and the NWC was signed on June 4, 2014 while the JPS signed the agreement on June 25, 2014.

It is anticipated that all parties to the agreement will adhere to the established timelines which will result in an improvement in each entities' performance and improved service to the customers.

Main Customer Concerns

Figure 1 (Below) shows that, the predominant reasons for contacts to the CAU were: Billing, Service Interruption, Disconnection, Equipment and Property Damage, Poor Service Quality and Service Connection.

Figure 1: Main Customer Concerns



Billing

Issues relating to billing continued to be the main cause for contacts to the unit, representing forty-seven percent (47%) of the contacts received. However, this represents an 11% percentage point reduction in billing related contacts when compared to the previous period.

For JPS and NWC, contact relating to billing represented forty-eight (48%) and sixty-three percent (63%) respectively. These billing related matters included adjustments that were applied to customers' accounts, high consumption, retroactive billings, disputed charges and estimated billing.

For customers of the telecommunications providers, billing related matters represented twenty-six percent (26%) of total contacts for both Digicel and LIME while seventeen percent (17%) of contacts for Flow were billing related.

Service Interruption

Contacts relating to interruption of service represented eleven percent (11%) of total contacts received which represented a three percentage point increase over the preceding quarter. Of this, JPS accounted for six percent (6%); LIME, three percent (3%) while the remaining two percent (2%) was shared among NWC, Digicel and Flow.

Disconnection

Disconnections accounted for five percent (5%) of total contacts received. JPS contacts accounted for three percent (3%) of the disconnection related issues while the NWC, Digicel and LIME shared the remaining two percent (2%).

Equipment and Property Damage

Issues relating to equipment and property damage accounted for three percent (3%) of total contacts. These contacts also represented seven percent (7%) of contacts specific to the services provided by JPS.

Service Connection

Service connection issues represented three percent (3%) of total contacts to the CAU. JPS and LIME accounted for two percent (2%) and one percent (1%) respectively.

Poor Quality of Service

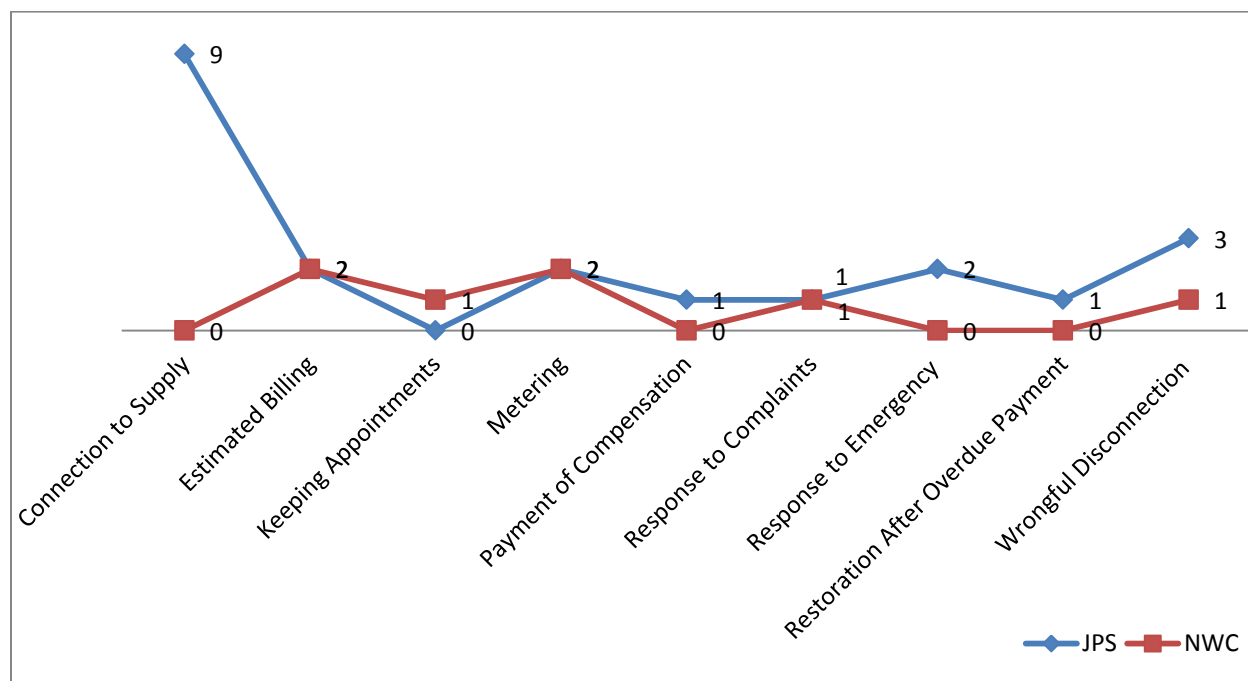
Three percent (3%) of total contacts received related to complaints about poor service quality from JPS, NWC, Digicel, Flow and LIME customers; with the latter having the highest number of contacts.

Guaranteed Standards

As shown in Figure 2, the number of contacts received by the CAU in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards amounted to twenty-one (21) for the JPS and nine (9) for the NWC. For JPS, contacts in relation to perceived Guaranteed Standards breaches related to *Connection to Supply, Estimated Billing, Metering, Response to Complaints, Response to Emergency, Restoration After Payment of Overdue Amount* and *Wrongful Disconnection*.

In the case of the NWC, the areas complained about related to: *Estimated Billing, Keeping Appointments, Metering, Response to Complaints and Wrongful Disconnection*.

Figure 2: Guaranteed Standards Contact



Utility's Performance on Guaranteed Standards

JPS' report regarding its performance under the Guaranteed Standards scheme, during the reporting period, indicated a total of 8,735 breaches being committed, attracting a potential pay-out of approximately \$41.9 million. Actual payments in relation to these breaches amounted to \$396,152; sixty percent (60%) of which was by way of automatic compensation.

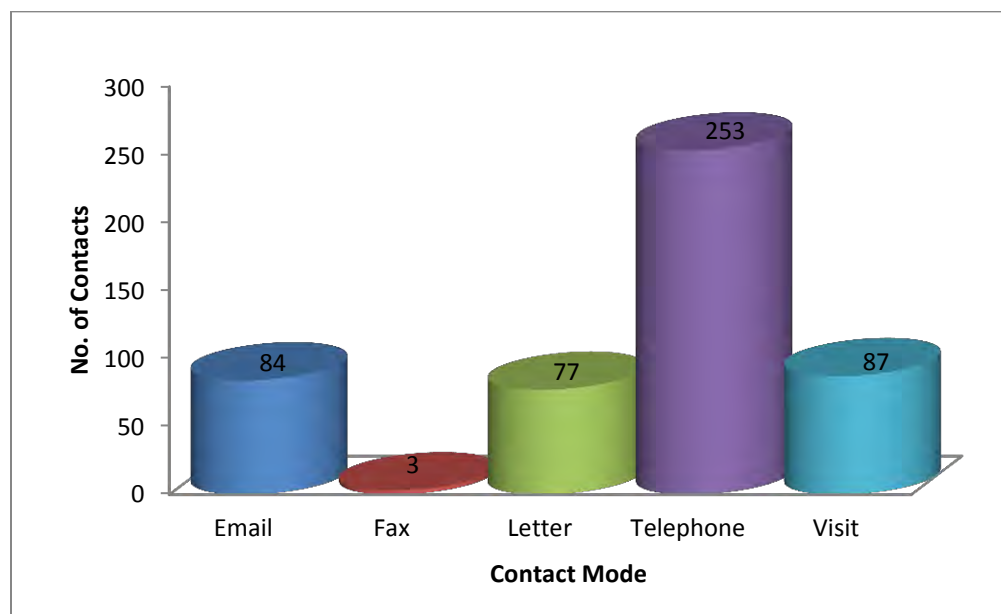
The report from the NWC for the review period was not received at the time of writing.

Mode and Geographical Distribution of Contacts

Mode of Contact

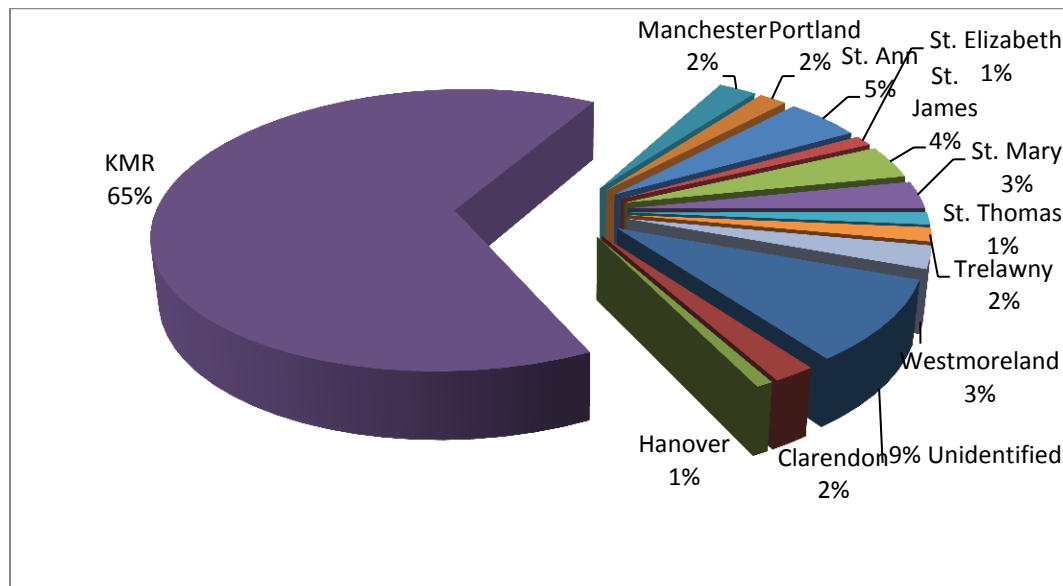
The telephone continues to be the method most frequently used by consumers to contact the OUR. Of the five hundred and four (504) contacts received, fifty percent (50%) were received by telephone, e-mails and visits accounted for seventeen percent (17%) each, while letters represented fifteen percent (15%) of contact mode. The remaining one percent (1%) of contacts was received via fax. (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Mode of Contact



Kingston continued to account for the highest number of total contacts at sixty-five percent (65%), as depicted in Figure 4. St. Ann had the second highest number of contacts at five percent (5%) while St. James accounted for four percent (4%) of total contacts. St. Mary and Westmoreland each shared three percent (3%) each of total contacts and the remaining parishes each had a share of two percent (2%) or less. For nine percent (9%) of the contacts received no location/parish information was provided/ recorded.

Figure 4: Geographic Distribution of Contacts



Closures of Appeals ¹

Twenty-four (24) appeals were resolved and closed and of this, twenty (20) were carried forward from previous periods while four (4) represented new appeals received during the period.

Outstanding Appeals²

One hundred and three (103) appeals remain outstanding and these were carried forward from previous periods. Of these outstanding appeals, forty-six percent (46%) and thirty-eight percent (38%) represent billing complaints from JPS and NWC customers, respectively. Matters relating to alleged damage to JPS customers' equipment represent eleven percent (11%) of the outstanding appeals; while the remaining five percent (5%) account for other appeal categories.

Credits/Compensation

Resulting from our investigation of appeals, an amount of \$3,447,744.68 was secured for utility customers. Eighty percent (80%) and nineteen percent (19%) were applied as

¹ Breakdown of Appeals Closures can be seen in Table 3

² Breakdown of Outstanding Appeals can be seen in Table 4

credits or other compensation to JPS and NWC customers, respectively. The remaining one percent (1%) was shared between Digicel and LIME.

Tables

Table 1: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities) January – March 2014

	Description	JPS	NWC	LIME Landline	LIME Mobile	LIME Internet	DIGI	Small Telecoms Provider	Small Water Providers	FLOW	Other/ Not Utility Provider Related	TOTAL
A	Contacts for the Quarter:											
(i)	New Appeals	18	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32
(ii)	New Appeals - Pending Information	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
(iii)	New Complaints	15	3	2	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	25
(iii)	New Enquires	34	7	1	4	0	0	0	3	0	1	50
(iv)	New Opinions	9	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	14
(v)	New Referrals	148	127	23	21	9	40	1	3	5	1	378
	Total Contacts	224	157	27	25	9	46	1	7	6	2	504
B	Total Appeals from Previous Periods											
C	Closure/Resolution of Appeals:											
(i)	Withdrawn by Customer	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
(ii)	Outside of Jurisdiction	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
(iii)	Resolved in favour of Customer	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
(iv)	Resolved in Favour of Utility	11	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
	Total Closures	20	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
C	Outstanding Appeals with the OUR:											
(i)	Awaiting Final Letters to Customers	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
(ii)	Undergoing Analysis/Determination	28	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53
	Total Outstanding Appeals with the OUR	30	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56
D	Outstanding Appeals with Utilities (Awaiting responses)	31	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47
	Total Outstanding Appeals	61	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	103

Table 2: Distribution of Contacts by Utilities

Complaint Category	Service Providers									Totals
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	Flow	LIME	Decal Wireless	Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd.	CanCara Development Ltd.	Other/ Not Utility Related	
Billing Matters	107	99	12	1	16	0	1	1	0	237
Customer Service Practice	3	3	2	0	5	1	0	1	0	15
Defective Streetlight	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Disconnection	13	6	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	23
Equipment Damage	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Guaranteed Standards Query	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Health & Safety	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Illegal Connection	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Interruption of Service	28	7	5	1	16	0	0	0	0	57
Irregular Supply	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Leak at Meter	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Metering	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Meter Installation	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Other	24	18	20	2	13	0	1	3	2	83
Payment Arrangement	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Payment of Compensation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Phone card	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Poor Quality of Service	1	3	3	2	6	0	0	0	0	15
Property Damage	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Reconnection	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Response to Emergency	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Service Connection	14	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	15
Total	224	157	46	6	61	1	2	5	2	504

Table 3: Distribution of Appeals by Utilities (Closed)

Complaint Category	Service Provider		Totals
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	11	4	15
Disconnection	1	0	1
Equipment Damage	4	0	4
Illegal Connection	1	0	1
Irregular Supply	1	0	1
Metering	1	0	1
Property Damage	1	0	1
Total	20	4	24

Table 4: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)

Distribution of Appeals Outstanding			
Complaint Category	Service Providers		Totals
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	47	39	86
Disconnection	0	1	1
Equipment Damage	11	0	11
Illegal Connection	1		1
Leak at Meter	0	1	1
Meter Installation	0	1	1
Property Damage	2	0	2
Total	61	42	103

CAU's Performance on Service Standards (Appeals)

Activity	Service Standards	% Compliance	Comment
Acknowledgement of Appeals	Within 2 business days of receipt of customer's correspondence	66%	Total New Appeals 32
Case Letters/ Other Utility Contact	Within 5 business days of acknowledging customer's correspondence	69%	Total Case Letter/ Email sent to utility 32
Correspondence Copied to Customer	Customer is to be copied on all correspondence submitted to the utilities pertaining to their complaint	100%	
Final Response	Within 18 business days of receipt of all necessary information from relevant parties; where no further information requests was needed	71%	Total responses received from utilities to Case Letters submitted during the review period 7

Appendix

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN DOCUMENTING CUSTOMER CONTACTS

Appeal:	Any contact in which the utility company has completed an investigation into a customer's complaint, the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome and writes to the OUR asking for an independent investigation of the matter.
Complaint:	Any contact expressing dissatisfaction with the handling of a complaint by the utility company and to which the OUR takes steps to resolve without conducting a formal investigation.
Customer Contact:	Any contact made to the OUR to register an appeal, inquiry, opinion, etc. Contact can be made through the telephone, post, electronic channels (emails, website, and Facebook page) and visits.
Enquiry:	Any contact requiring verification/confirmation of information relating to the OUR, a utility service, policy and/or practice, etc.
Opinion:	Any contact expressing a view about the actions, practice or terms of service, etc. of a utility company or the OUR.
Referral:	Any contact advised by the OUR to consult the relevant utility company because the complainant had not initially utilized or exhausted the complaint procedure within the relevant utility company.