



NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ian Macdonald

Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy,
Minister for Mineral Resources, Minister for State Development

Customers protected from gas scheme

Operators of gas networks will now be held accountable to retail customers through the independent Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW Scheme, Energy Minister Ian Macdonald said today.

The *Gas Supply Amendment (Ombudsman Scheme) Bill 2009* passed through Parliament last night.

“This Bill will strengthen protections provided by the NSW Government to households and small business customers of gas,” Mr Macdonald said.

“All electricity and gas retailers and electricity distributors in NSW are now required to join the NSW Energy and Water Ombudsman scheme - EWON.

“The scheme is an independent service that resolves disputes between small retail customers and the service providers, such as EnergyAustralia.

“Prior to this new Bill, gas reticulators were not required to join the scheme because they did not have a direct contractual relationship with the end customers, the mums and dads.

“This made EWON powerless to assist these customers with a dispute.”

Every year, EWON receives a number of complaints from households or small businesses where the gas network has caused some inconvenience or damage to the small customer.

“The Government has acted to empower EWON to assist these small customers in resolving disputes with large companies,” Mr Macdonald said.

“I am pleased to say that two of the largest gas operators in NSW, Jemena and Country Energy had already joined EWON voluntarily.

“From this commendable voluntary action, EWON was already able to assist over 90 per cent of small gas users in NSW.

“As part of this new Bill, the Government will ensure that all small gas customers in NSW, the remaining 10 per cent, have the same support available to them.”

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