

MEDIA RELEASE

Water and energy utilities perform well in 2019-20 but there is still room for improvement

Each year the ACT Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission reports on how well the licensed water and energy utilities performed in delivering safe, reliable and quality services to households and businesses. Today we released our report on the utilities' performance in 2019-20.

"Despite a challenging year with drought, bushfires and the onset of the pandemic, the five licensed utilities performed well in meeting their licence conditions and consumer protection obligations. But we see room for improvement in the quality of services ACT consumers receive," Senior Commissioner Joe Dimasi said.

Customer complaints about water, electricity and gas services all fell in 2019-20. But there were more complaints about the quality and reliability of sewerage services.

Continuing dry weather in 2019–20 resulted in the most complaints in five years about sewer main breaks and chokes, mainly caused by tree roots entering sewer main pipes and causing blockages.

More electricity customers experienced long unplanned supply interruptions because of the 2020 summer bushfires. Evoenergy also reported delays in meeting customer requests for new connections and alterations in 2020 because of COVID–19 restrictions.

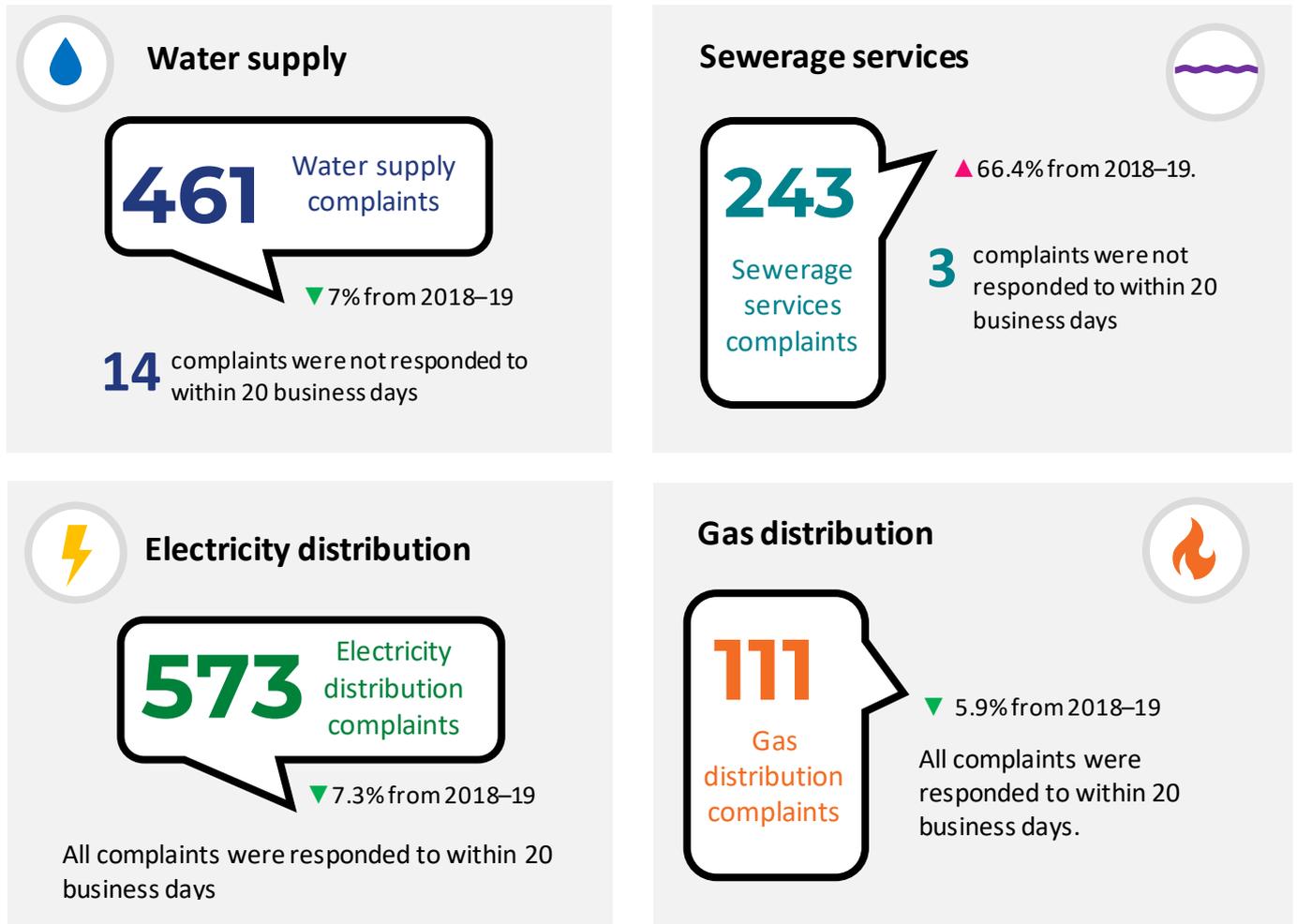
"Icon Water and Evoenergy performed better in meeting their minimum service standards during 2019-20. But they still failed to meet these standards hundreds of times during the year," Mr Dimasi said. "We will continue to monitor their performance and encourage them to take actions to better serve their customers."

Customers are entitled to receive rebates to recognise when the quality of utility services they have received was less than adequate. Of the 1346 rebates that customers were entitled to in 2019-20, only 24 rebates were paid. Customers had to apply to claim the rebates and many customers did not know they could get a rebate.

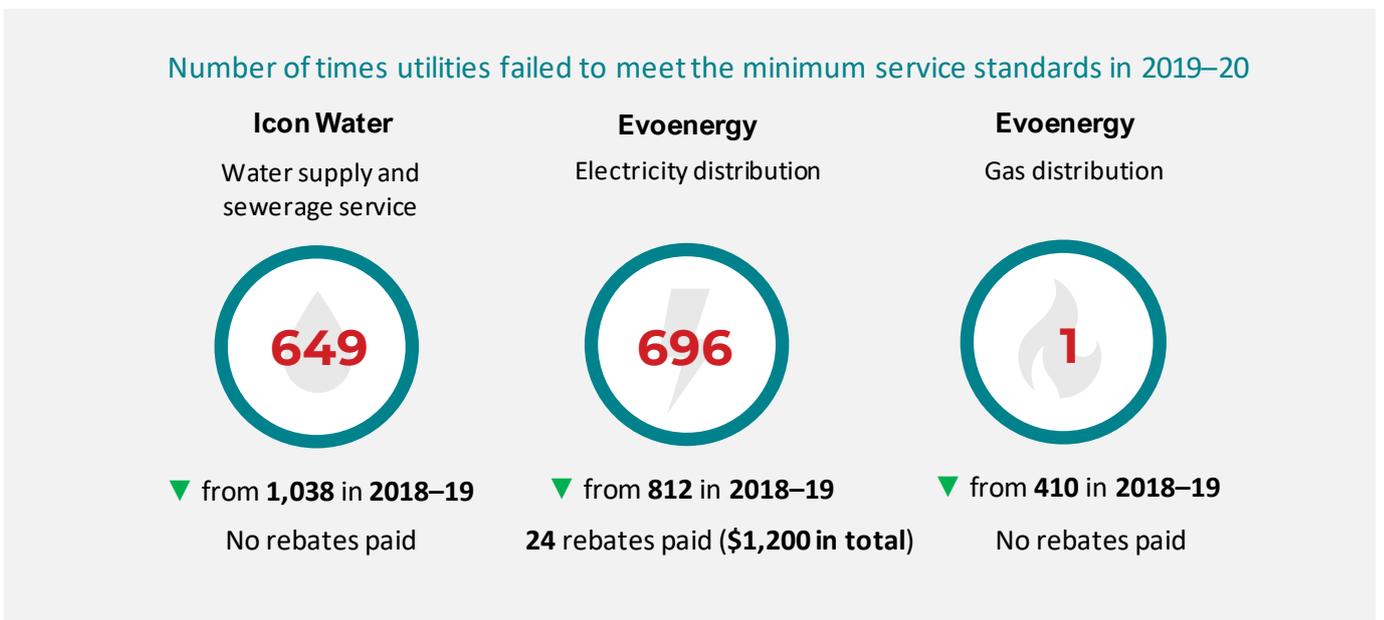
We have strengthened the Consumer Protection Code to ensure that, from 1 July this year, customers who do not receive guaranteed minimum levels of service will automatically be paid a rebate without having to make a claim. We will report on the utilities' compliance with this obligation in next year's report.

Our full report is available on our website www.icrc.act.gov.au.

Customer complaints



Consumer protection



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Contact

To contact the commission, please visit www.icrc.act.gov.au.

Or contact

Tel: 02 6205 0799

Email: icrc@act.gov.au

Background

The commission licenses 5 utilities to operate in the ACT: Icon Water for water and sewerage services; Evoenergy electricity and Evoenergy gas for electricity and gas distribution services; Transgrid for electricity transmission services; and East Australian Pipeline Limited (EAPL) for gas transmission services.

We do not license retail energy providers. Energy retailers are authorised under the national energy customer framework by the Australian Energy Regulator, which reports annually on their performance.

In December 2019, we made a new Consumer Protection Code, which took effect from 1 July 2020. The new code strengthened consumer protections. Details are on our website at <https://www.icrc.act.gov.au/utilities-licensing/consumer-protection-code-review>.