

Media release  
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## **"CALL-IN" PROCESS SHOULD APPLY TO ALL NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

The New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development (NZCID) welcomes today's announcement by Minister Pete Hodgson that he will call in Transpower's Waikato to Auckland transmission line proposal.

"This approach should be taken for all infrastructure projects of national significance," says NZCID Chief Executive, Stephen Selwood, " a practice that is common place overseas."

"Comparative jurisdictions like Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Ireland all have streamlined consent processes for projects of national importance, enabling projects to be approved in 12 to 18 months."

"In New Zealand it regularly takes seven to ten years to bring projects to a construction start, twice as long as it takes to build them," Selwood says.

"Electricity Commission approval for the Waikato transmission line has already taken three years. Without intervention it was likely to experience further delays while being considered by multiple local councils and the Environment Court.

"Delays in approving infrastructure projects of this significance can have major social and economic consequences.

"Estimates of the cost of blackouts caused by transmission failure last June in Auckland ranged from \$50m to \$70m, and ran the risk of serious social and health impacts resulting from loss of power in the middle of winter.

"National projects such as the completion of Auckland's Western Ring Route, the Waikato expressway, Tauranga's strategic roading network, along with hydro, wind and irrigation projects in the South Island and wind, geothermal and thermal electricity generation projects in the North Island, all need to be advanced with urgency. These projects are of national significance and warrant streamlined consenting processes," Selwood says.

"We have to acknowledge that with good long term asset management planning, and with extensive and robust consultation processes, well developed infrastructure proposals can and do proceed successfully through the RMA process. But the costs in time, money and stress on local communities are often extremely high," Selwood says.

"Frequently, local authorities are forced to deal with complex strategic issues on limited resources and with little in the way of national policy or standards to guide them.

"Environmental concerns are often used as a proxy for self interest. In some cases, projects can take up to a decade or more before they are finally approved, meaning years of uncertainty for both the proponent and the affected communities.

"Use of the call-in process under the RMA for major projects enables concerns of the public to be heard by an independent Board of Inquiry, while enabling a more efficient hearings process." Selwood says.