

media release

taskforce urgently required to avoid further electricity failures

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'Widespread electricity system failures across the country yesterday clearly indicate the urgent need for a taskforce to ensure ongoing security of electricity supply', says the NZ Council for Infrastructure Development. 'The taskforce should be composed of representatives from both industry and government; and should deliver results which ensure New Zealanders have an electricity system which not only meets our basic needs but which we can be confident will adequately serve future demand and function efficiently under the stresses which caused it to fail this week'.

'Over the past two years the Electricity Commission and the Government has deliberated over options to upgrade transmission to the top half of the South Island and to Auckland. We are still awaiting a solution, says NZCID Chief Executive Stephen Selwood. 'Looking back to the 1998 Auckland power crisis we can see a pattern that is not delivering results. Then it was four months before operations were normalised. In the following seven years New Zealanders have faced successive supply issues across the entire gamut of the system: transmission lines, hydro lake levels, vulnerability to weather damage, regulatory uncertainty, consenting disputes, project cancellations and the significant and ongoing question of long term fuel supply. To this date none of these issues has been resolved'.

The NZ Council for Infrastructure Development is writing to Hon. David Parker, the Minister of Energy, requesting that an appropriately empowered taskforce be established. The Minister has acknowledged the significant underinvestment in electricity infrastructure over the past several decades. 'But', says Mr Selwood, 'the concern is the absence of an agreed program of action to ensure that the current system deficiencies are promptly resolved'.

He adds, 'we must stop focusing on the micro issues and look at the entire electricity system as it functions – as a whole. Only then can we effectively identify the issues and implement an agreed program of action. A taskforce driven to deliver results will be invaluable here'.

further information



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