

↳ Certainty of electricity supply to Auckland takes a further tentative step forward

The NZ Council for Infrastructure Development welcomes the Electricity Commission's notice of intention to approve Transpower's Auckland grid upgrade proposal, but questions what value can be added from yet another round of consultation that will add five to six months before a final decision to approve the upgrade is committed.

The rules that govern transmission investment proposals allow certain parties to request that a public conference be held before the Commission finalises any decision. The Commission will release a detailed statement of reasons for its decision in mid-February, and will hold briefing sessions during the remainder of that month to explain the reasons for its decision. An opportunity for making written submissions is expected to run until about late March and a public conference is anticipated in late April or early May, assuming that one is requested.

"One would have to question what further issues could now be tabled at this late stage of the process, or what difference that might make, says NZCID Chief Executive, Stephen Selwood, especially following the extensive consultation and analysis on this proposal that has already occurred and given that there is still a significant RMA consultation and hearings process still required.

"Providing certainty on the grid upgrade path is critical to delivering the Government's draft energy strategy which is reliant on getting distributed renewable hydro, geothermal and wind generation capacity to market via a robust transmission grid.

"Final determination of the upgrade path will encourage generation investment decisions, and will boost business and investment confidence generally.

"Certainty of direction is also critical for the communities directly affected by the upgrade path decision. There are few things worse than uncertainty about what's going to happen.

"It is to be hoped that, once the upgrade path is approved, a streamlined consenting process can be achieved this year so that Transpower can get on with the essential task of providing diversity of electricity supply into Auckland", Selwood says.

(ends)

I Notes to editors

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NZ Council for Infrastructure Development

NZCID (www.nzcid.org.nz) is an authority at the forefront of infrastructure development issues. Our numerous members stem from sectors across New Zealand, including: equity owners, service providers, public sector agencies, major infrastructure users. Together we share a clear purpose: world class infrastructure for the benefit of all New Zealanders. A goal we are committed to achieving by:

- ↘ Raising awareness of the fact that infrastructure underpins our community's quality of life and that inadequate infrastructure holds back New Zealand's economic and social growth
- ↘ Generating valuable debate on the quality and level of infrastructure provision to meet New Zealanders' needs
- ↘ Encouraging the implementation of best practice infrastructure provision and management
- ↘ Identifying the condition of New Zealand's infrastructure and the challenges facing our infrastructure providers