

Media release
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STREAMLINING APPROVALS FOR AUCKLAND'S LIFELINE ESSENTIAL

"The Electricity Commission's decision to approve the new transmission link from the Waikato into Auckland is a vital step towards securing Auckland's future electricity needs", says NZ Council for Infrastructure Development Chief Executive Stephen Selwood. "It's essential that we bolster the city's power lifeline. Recent failures have made that apparent. This decision is a welcome step forward. We must now consider fast tracking approvals to make it happen sooner than later".

"A single shackle failure blacked out Auckland last June. The fragility of the grid is already clear. While the problem remains unresolved we are putting ourselves at serious economic and social risk", says Selwood.

The economic impact of the black out was significant. Costs ranged from between \$50m and \$70m. There is a clear social jeopardy also. For families and those vulnerable or at risk, the impact of being with out electricity can be dire, even tragic.

Waikato's seven local authorities are currently working together to coordinate their Resource Management Act (RMA) processes. Selwood say that's pleasing. But on an issue of such national importance, he is concerned that councils will be placed in the undesirable position of weighing national good against the property rights of their local constituents. "This issue is one of national significance. While it is important that legitimate rights are protected, we must find a viable compromise that ensures Auckland's electricity supply is secured for the future".

By exercising his legislated "call in" powers, the Environment Minister can do just that, elevating projects of significance directly to the Environment Court board of inquiry . According to Selwood this is the logical approach to resolving a complex consenting issue in a timely and efficient manner. "Already the approvals process has taken three years. We now risk futher protracted deliberation both at local and Environment Court level. Ministerial call in will allow both local and national interests to be considered in balanced single step. Both property owners and electricity users will benefit from just getting on with the job".