

Submissions
Electricity Authority
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16th April 2013

By email to submissions@ea.govt.nz

Submission on Review of advisory group administrative arrangements

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our views concerning the efficacy of advisory groups. Our comments relate mainly to the Wholesale Advisory Group.

Our view is that the Advisory Groups should be established to provide independent advice to the Electricity Authority. The Advisory Groups should foster development of new ideas and different ways of looking at the various problems that concern the industry. Unfortunately our experience so far with the WAG is not along these lines. There is a strong desire for the members of the WAG to reach consensus on every matter. It seems to us that this will lead to suppression of innovative ideas and a majority rules kind of approach. Whilst we appreciate that members of advisory groups are independent it is only natural for members to reflect the perspective of their employers. If the membership of advisory groups is dominated by supply side thinking people then ultimately it is consumer views that are over-ruled in the seeking of a consensus view. This does not help the Electricity Authority meet its statutory objective.

We believe that the large number of Authority staff that attends meetings of the WAG does not help to develop fresh ideas. Authority staff will naturally have their own ideas of how matters should be dealt with and solutions to various problems and it will be very hard for these Authority staff members not to try to influence the WAG members to go along with their views.

We think that only one Authority staff member should attend advisory group meetings and that individual should not be a member of WAG, but perform an administrative role.

The chair of WAG should not be at all concerned about the group reaching consensus, but should rather facilitate a think tank and encourage new and innovative ideas to be put forward. The papers developed by WAG should not necessarily be designed for consultation – except when there is a need to disseminate ideas more widely to stimulate widespread discussion and debate.

If the Authority chooses to ignore our views then at least the Authority should ensure that consumers are much better represented on Advisory Groups than they are at present.

Regards

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