

The growing threat from climate change and peak oil has seen governments aim to decarbonise energy supplies, focussing on renewable generation. Electricity can be seen as an essential service and historically the New Zealand government invested in the construction of large hydro dams and high voltage transmission lines to deliver electricity to homes and industry. The 1990 government's commitment to the economic theory of market forces and competition led to electricity being treated as a commodity which could be sold for a profit. This has resulted in a few large gentailers restricting the supply, keeping the price of electricity high and paying shareholders a good dividend. This model has also involved having a back up of burning fossil fuel, a complete betrayal of our emission targets under the Paris Agreement and also expensive. The high prices domestically have resulted in energy hardship for many households and some industries have been hit too. It is the users of electricity who have paid a high price as the money from their power bills is transferred to shareholders so increasing social inequity. We cannot focus on the technology and ignore the social effects.

Most players in the electricity industry, including "consumers" recognise the present system isn't really working and electricity users can't afford the high prices. The setting up of an Energy Competition Task Force by the EA to *"Investigate actions to strengthen the performance of the electricity market in the short- to medium-term, for the benefit of all consumers."* . . is a totally inadequate solution to the problem.

This consultation focuses on the electricity market, the language of "level playing fields" and "consumers", the presence of big gentailers, and it ignores the revolution to electricity supply and demand with the advent of solar panels, batteries and EVs. The ability of households to generate and store electricity has the effect of democratising the generation and use of electricity. The use of electricity close to the point of generation reduces the loss of energy by transmission over long distances so increasing the total energy available. Imagine if hospitals and schools and government buildings and large factories all generated the electricity and stored it.

I understand that market competition is the credo of the current government and the Energy Authority is bound by the 2010 Act work to achieve "a competitive, reliable and efficient electricity market for the long-term benefit of everyone in New Zealand".

This is a dilemma for those of us engaged in community energy, and for the lines companies working with home owners who have installed solar panels and are selling energy back to the grid. How are we to work together to reduce demand, democratise and share supply and reduce costs? Surelt this is where the EA should be focussing.

There will be small changes that can be achieved by this consultation but as long as we are limited to looking for market solutions the electricity revolution will be delayed and the efficiencies which could come from adopting a new focus will be delayed.

