

Who are the re:generations partnership?

re:generations is a partnership between Roger and Melissa Robson-Williams and Nature to explore how to be more regenerative than extractive in the ways we grow much of our own food, fibre and fuel, restore native bush on our property, manage waste, and generate a surplus of renewable electricity. It was created to deliver environmental and social benefit for current and future generations of humans and other species living around Oxford, Canterbury. Roger works as a Chief Sustainability Officer and Melissa as an environmental scientist.

The electricity system

In Aotearoa New Zealand we need a reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity system. Distributed energy generation and storage can make a significant contribution to achieving this.

Rewarding participants

It follows that we need to set the rules of our electricity system to encourage more people to participate in it by investing in renewable generation e.g. roof top solar and storage e.g. batteries.

One important consideration is rewarding participants for supplying electricity into the network at peak times. One way of achieving this is through a peak distribution export tariff which provides a fair payment that reflects the long run cost of avoided network investment.

45kVA connection limit or 45kW maximum generation capacity limit

We **do not agree** with the Task Force's limit on what constitutes a small business.

The 45kVA connection limit or 45kW maximum generation capacity limit would restrict many small businesses (like ours) and organisations, like schools, marae, farms and community groups from accessing peak distribution export tariffs.

Many of the community organisations and businesses that would be excluded from accessing the peak distribution export tariff would not be well-placed to negotiate this directly with their distributor. They would simply miss out.

Our experience

re:generations is located on 8 hectares in rural North Canterbury. We have already invested in 20kW roof top solar with significant battery storage and will add a further 10kW solar generation capacity in early 2026.

We had originally hoped to develop a 100kW distributed renewable generation asset but have had to substantially reduce our ambitions mainly due to opacity regarding the necessity and likely costs of possible network connection upgrades.

Setting the connection limit at 45kVA or maximum generation capacity limit at 45kW for 'small businesses' like ours would provide a further disincentive for us, and other farmers, schools, marae and community groups to develop distributed generation and storage assets.

Capacity to negotiate with network companies

At re:generations we consider ourselves to be relatively well-informed about the electricity system, having completed the inaugural Orion Community Energy Activator during 2024. Nevertheless, we found interactions with our local network company about our proposed project very challenging. Despite goodwill from the many individuals we interacted with, it seemed that company rules and systems precluded them from providing very much useful information.

The idea that as a small business we would be able to negotiate a peak distribution export tariff is, frankly, completely laughable.

Why this matters

The peak export tariff will provide a fair incentive for customers to include battery storage with investment in distributed generation like solar. Combining local generation with battery storage not only reduces the need for network upgrades and reduces everyone's energy bills, it also provides local resilience. For example, marae and schools with rooftop solar and batteries can act as local hubs for the community in a power outage. With an increase in extreme weather events this will be increasingly important to provide backup options for communication, EV charging and other community needs until power is restored.

The cost of networks and our electricity grid is important to consider because it makes up around half of household electricity bills and is expected to drive most of the electricity price increases over the coming years. This is predominantly due to increasing distribution network costs,

so encouraging options to offset and lower network investment and cost is key to help lower bills.

In our rural communities solar and batteries on farms is a win-win for farmers and the local community. It can provide a valuable revenue stream for farmers using very little land and help lower electricity system costs for local customers, providing more resilience and creating an opportunity for the roll out of on-farm public EV charging options and development of EV charging corridors in rural communities.

These unnecessary limits on who receives peak distribution export tariffs would be a step in the wrong direction and a missed opportunity to support customers to invest in a more flexible, affordable, sustainable and resilient local energy supply.

If the Authority wishes to create a limit it should be set to include all customers with up to 1MW of generation capacity. This is a sensible level that includes local community organisations and businesses who are not well-placed to negotiate for a fair deal, but would exclude utility generators and large industrial customers.

***Use electrons instead of molecules,
not too many,
mostly renewable.***

Thank you for taking the time to read our submission on this important topic. We are available for any follow up discussions if that would be helpful.

Roger and Melissa Robson-Williams, re:generations partnership