

24 June 2025

Electricity Authority
Wellington

By email: decentralisation@ea.govt.nz

Tena koutou

Canterbury Mayoral Forum Submission on the Electricity Authority Green Paper 'Working together to ensure our electricity system meets the future needs of all New Zealanders'

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Electricity Authority's Green Paper on the regulatory thinking about what a decentralised electricity system might look like for Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Context and background

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum (CMF) comprises the mayors of the ten territorial authorities in Canterbury and the Chair of the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury), supported by our chief executives. The purpose of the Forum is to promote collaboration across the region and increase the effectiveness of local government in meeting the needs of Canterbury's communities.

The eleven Councils in the region include Kaikōura, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn, Ashburton, Timaru, Mackenzie, Waimate and Waitaki District Councils, the Christchurch City Council and Canterbury Regional Council.

Canterbury is the largest geographic region and second most populous region in New Zealand. Canterbury is home to diverse communities and landscapes and consequently has different energy supply and demand needs across the region. Canterbury also makes a significant contribution to renewable electricity generation, mainly through its Waitaki hydro stations that produce a significant proportion of the nation's electricity.

Mayors standing together for Canterbury.

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The CMF's Plan for Canterbury 2023-2025 recognises that energy security will be critical for Canterbury to support opportunities for the region. It further acknowledges that renewable energy will become an increasingly important part of responding to climate change risks, and that Canterbury has an opportunity to be at the forefront of an energy transition to attract and retain talent, investment, and technologies.

General comments

1. The CMF is supportive of further discussion and consideration on the opportunities and challenges of what a more decentralised electricity system could look like in New Zealand.
2. We note that Mayor Sam Broughton, Selwyn District Council, shared an early perspective on decentralisation, and that this has been included in the online web messaging that introduces the Electricity Authority Green Paper.
3. The CMF has recently developed and published a [Canterbury Energy Inventory Report \(Inventory Report\)](#). This is now available online at the Canterbury Mayoral Forum website.
4. The Inventory Report provides an overview of the current energy landscape in Canterbury. It covers a range of energy matters and recognises the important and increasing role of distributed energy, and notes that Canterbury is a national leader in installed distributed generation of solar with 125MW (as of April 2025). Some of the opportunities and challenges highlighted in the Inventory Report that are likely to be of relevance to the discussions raised through the Green Paper are listed below:

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for community energy models • Local solutions for energy resilient communities • Improve energy efficiency • Confidently use and prepare for new technologies • Support and encourage new industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment and access to capital • Social license, community and consumer understanding • Managing peak capacity issues • Pricing pressures

5. Key insights from stakeholder engagement during development of the Inventory Report included:
 - **Energy and economic development are inextricably linked** – to support existing industry and attract new industry, energy is critical and there needs to be confidence in the region's direction and security of supply.
 - **A regional approach and plan for energy is urgently needed** – to realise the economic, social and environmental benefits for the region. There is strong support for this to be developed collaboratively with stakeholders.
 - **Coordination is essential** – the next phase of work to shape the energy future for Canterbury should coordinate across local, regional, and national plans and with existing

structures. It also needs to consider the impacts for nearby regions, for the South Island and for wider New Zealand.

6. We also highlight that as a region Canterbury exports significant agricultural produce and therefore building resilience into the electricity system is critical for sustaining the region's economy and its wider impact for New Zealand.
7. The Inventory Report is the first step in the broader piece of work in shaping the future of energy for Canterbury. We are now progressing the next stage of our work to develop a regional energy vision and strategic framework. There is considerable support from our stakeholders to form a collaborative view and approach on energy in Canterbury, and to ensure clear alignment and coordination with other relevant work programmes both regionally and nationally.
8. Given that we are at the beginning phase of our next stage of work and are yet to develop a collaborative and shared view on energy matters for Canterbury, we have not provided specific responses to the questions posed in the Green Paper.
9. We note the value in exploring the merits of a more decentralised model and what changes may be needed to meet the increasing demand for electricity. We are eager to be involved in any future discussions on this. Some additional points that we will be interested in discussing or hearing more about through this work are listed below.
 - a. The importance of managing peaks in electricity demand, particularly as demand increases due to economic growth and the decarbonisation of fossil fuel machinery.
 - b. The role of the electricity sector in reaching decarbonisation goals in NZ.
 - c. Circular economy approaches for energy management.
 - d. Surplus energy and buyback tariffs.
 - e. Alternative energy sources and systems i.e. biomass, biogas and decentralised or combined heat and power solutions.
 - f. Energy connectivity e.g. EV charging stations.
10. We are also happy to share our progress on developing a strategic energy framework for our region.

Further information

Our secretariat is available to provide any further information or answer any questions about our submission. Contact details are: Maree McNeilly, Canterbury Mayoral Forum Secretariat,

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Nāku iti noa, nā

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Nigel Bowen
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