

11 June 2025

Electricity Authority
Level 7, AON Centre
1 Willis Street
Wellington 6011

Via email decentralisation@ea.govt.nz

Tēnā koe,

RE: Decentralisation green paper - submission from Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission on the Decentralisation Green Paper.

Equitable, justice-based decentralisation of the energy system is central to reducing government backed oligarchal exploitation of electricity consumers.

A Regulatory framework needs to empower and enable local communities and small business consumers not maintain control or ensure oligarchal profits are embedded in regulations.

Rapid, sustainable electrification is central to reducing climate change impacts. Current government policy is encouraging transition delay. Concurrent policies are needed which complement electrification such as banning gas connections to new houses or businesses.

We urge you to carefully define resilience in legislation and regulations. Resilience is not about consumers putting up with oppressive pricing for their electricity needs.

Decentralisation should revolutionise the electricity sector, not perpetuate existing systems of inequality, greed, and illusory actions on climate change commitment.



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Introduction

1. This submission is made by Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga on the Decentralisation Green Paper (the ‘paper’), released April 30, 2025.
 - (a) The submission covers:
 - (i) who we are;
 - (ii) our position;
 - (iii) the reasons for that position, via responses to the green paper questions;

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga

2. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga advocates for the interests of Ngāti Mutunga, supporting the social, cultural, economic, and environmental interests of Ngāti Mutunga uri wherever they may reside.
3. Ngāti Mutunga descends from a number of ancestors who lived in the area occupied today by ngā uri o ngā tūpuna o Ngāti Mutunga. These ancestors include Tokauri, Tokatea, Mihirau, Heruika, Pūrakino, Rakaupounamu, Uenuku (son of Ruawahia), Hineweo, Hineno, Te Hihiotū, Kahukura and Mutunga.
4. Ngāti Mutunga also descends from ancestors who arrived on the Tokomaru, Tahatuna and Ōkoki waka such as Taitaawaro, Manaia and Ngānganarūrū. Over generations the descendants of these tūpuna inter-married and became generally known as Ngāti Mutunga.
5. Ngāti Mutunga entered into a deed of settlement with the Crown on 31 July 2005, to settle its historical claims. Breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi are listed in the Ngāti Mutunga Claims Settlement Act 2006 and include land deprivation and disempowerment - words used by the Waitangi Tribunal in the Interim Taranaki Report.
6. Section 7(10) of Ngāti Mutunga Claims Settlement Act 2006 states:

“The Crown acknowledges that the cumulative effect of its breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi) and its principles has significantly undermined the traditional systems of authority, economic capacity and the physical, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of Ngāti Mutunga. The Crown acknowledges that it has failed to protect the rangatiratanga of Ngāti Mutunga in breach of its obligations under Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi).”
7. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga was established by Trust Deed dated 21 December 2005. Today te Rūnanga has around 2,500 members aged 18 and over. 2.4 The area of Ngāti Mutunga’s rohe is approximately 63,200 hectares (156,000 acres). A map showing our rohe is attached to this submission (Appendix 1).
8. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga areas of interest has been formally recognised by the Crown in the Ngāti Mutunga Claims Settlement Act 2006 which identifies our cultural, spiritual, historical and traditional association with the whenua and takutai moana extending from Titoki Ridge in the north to the right bank of the Waiau stream in the south, offshore out to 12 nautical miles and inland to the Taramoukou stream and the Waitara river.
9. The following Statutory Acknowledgement areas are recognised in Ngāti Mutunga Claims Settlement Act 2006.

- Statutory Acknowledgement for Coastal Marine Area adjoining the area of interest.
 - Statutory Acknowledgement for Part of Mimitangiatua (Mimi) - Pukearuhe Coast Marginal Strip.
 - Statutory Acknowledgement for Waitoetoe Beach Recreation Reserve.
 - Statutory Acknowledgement for Onaero River
 - Statutory Acknowledgement for Urenui River.
 - Statutory Acknowledgement for Mimitangiatua (Mimi) River.
10. Whilst Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga supports the submission made by Ngā Iwi o Taranaki, we do not consider Ngā Iwi o Taranaki as a mandated voice for the PSGEs of Taranaki and its work does not absolve the Crown of their obligations to deal directly with each iwi and hapū relating to any statutory processes and decision-making, nor does it preclude each PSGE and hapū from making individual submissions to regulations.
11. The content and recommendations of this response should not be taken as an expression of consent to anything contained in the draft regulations.
12. We note that the [name the iwi treaty settlement act and year] was negotiated for historical claims against breaches of te Tiriti o Waitangi and contains a Crown apology which states:
- the Crown seeks to atone for these wrongs;
 - the Crown seeks being part of the process of healing with the settlement; and
 - the Crown looks forward to building a relationship of mutual trust, co-operation, and respect for te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and its principles.
13. Our response to the Green Paper takes place against a backdrop of a steadily deteriorating Crown-Māori relationship.

The electrification agenda

14. It has been well and widely acknowledged that in order to meet our Paris Agreement targets and the growing demand for energy, Aotearoa New Zealand will need to:
- increase our supply and use of renewable energy¹;
 - improve our energy independence and resilience; and
 - reduce energy related emissions.
15. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has identified the need to *“not just diversify away from a single energy commodity but to change the energy system itself, and to do so while maintaining the affordable and secure provision of energy services. The growing impacts of global warming make this all the more important, as an increasing amount of energy infrastructure that was built for a cooler, calmer climate is no longer reliable or resilient enough as temperatures rise and weather events become more extreme. In short, we have to transform the energy system both to stave off even more severe climate change and to cope with the climate change that is already with us²”*.
16. The electricity system is a crucial component of the energy system. The Just Transition Programme was established to help share and co-ordinate the work of transitioning to a low emissions economy. Just Transition is a strategy to move regions toward a low carbon future, recognising that traditionally transitions have

¹ <https://www.eeca.govt.nz/insights/energy-in-new-zealand/the-future-of-energy-in-new-zealand/>

² <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/86ede39e-4436-42d7-ba2a-edf61467e070/WorldEnergyOutlook2023.pdf>

disadvantaged some groups more than others³. Just transitions are suggested as a powerful invitation for communities to develop positive visions for change, transform unfair systems, draw on diverse strengths and worldviews, and come together to solve problems in ways that work better for everyone. The Just Transition Programme is now closed.

17. We note the NZ government has failed to produce fundamental energy strategies which would inform the reform of the electricity system⁴. These strategies include:
- The New Zealand Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy (expired mid 2022).
 - The Green Hydrogen Strategy (incomplete).
 - New Zealand Energy Strategy (incomplete).

The Renewable Energy Strategy Work Programme is proposed to integrate these and other documents such as the Emissions Reduction Plan, the Electricity Price Review and Just Transition work.

18. We question the wisdom of the following policy reversals undertaken by the government to align with coalition agreements:
- the reversal of the ban on offshore oil and gas exploration without any consultation with iwi, hapū, or communities;
 - the removal of the Clean Car Discount Programme;
 - the disestablishment of the Government Decarbonising Industry Fund (GIDI);
 - the disestablishment of the Climate Emergency Response Fund (CERF); and
 - the removal of the agricultural emissions pricing advisory function of the Climate Change Commission.

19. We note with concern that Aotearoa New Zealand has been ranked 41st by the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), falling seven places from its 2024 ranking⁵. The assessment also identifies that the country's independent Climate Change Commission has warned that the country is not on track to meet its international climate obligations or 2050 emissions reduction target.

20. The CCPI also raises concerns that very little new renewable energy generation has been built in a decade with experts condemning:
- the absence of plans to phase out producing or consuming oil, gas, and coal;
 - the new government cutting most transport policies that were modelled to deliver the largest GHG emissions in the sector;
 - reducing spending on public transport while increasing spending on road building; and
 - removing support for electric and low-emission vehicles.

21. When viewed holistically these changes represent a distinct change in government focus from a Just Transition to an indefinite transition where new renewable energy capacity is positioned to subsidise and prolong continued extraction from stranded fossil fuel assets. It also sees long-term strategic emissions reduction actions replaced by short-term, emissions removals or offsetting actions which are either unachievable or based on fervent techno-optimism. The notion of energy justice, both across and within nations, also appears to have been discounted as an outcome of energy reforms.

³ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-growth/previous-economic-development-work/just-transition>

⁴ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/building-and-energy/energy-and-natural-resources/energy-strategies-for-new-zealand>

⁵ <https://ccpi.org/country/nzl/#:~:text=New%20Zealand%20falls%20seven%20places,GHG%20Emissions%20and%20Energy%20Use.>

Green paper questions

Question One – Do you agree with the description of decentralisation? If not, why not?

We agree that DER's are a key component for decentralisation and that digitisation will be important for consumer choice. However, we point out that decentralisation and the Just Transition to renewables are both vulnerable to climate change denial and delay.

There is no effective competition in the electricity market so the big gentailers are able to adapt their generation and retail operations to insulate themselves from competition.

What is needed is a revolution of the way we think about energy and how the government incentivises change. This is unlikely to occur while they are still the majority shareholder of the current rentier gentailers. How the government manages this continuing conflict of interest has been a concern for some time.

Consumers should be the primary beneficiaries of a decentralised energy system. Centralised generators and retailers/gentailers should no longer monopolise electricity production and trading.

We would like to see homes and communities as traders of excess electricity which would require them having the ability to both draw from the grid when needed and direct electricity they have generated into the grid when they wish. Battery storage and technology such as VEN could allow them to buy electricity when it is cheap and sell it when the price is high.

DER's using micro-hydro, run of river generation is problematic for hapū and iwi. The main issues are:

- the question of freshwater ownership which is currently based on Crown assumptions;
- the privileging of landowners with exclusive rights in the absence of clear regional plan rules;
- the unknown cumulative and incremental impacts on rivers and streams.

Effectively, the only technology that decentralisation would apply to is solar generation and battery storage. We urge meaningful and comprehensive consultation with iwi and hapū before consideration of run of river generation methods as viable options for a decentralised electricity system.

Question Two - Do you agree with the articulation of the potential outcomes and benefits from decentralisation for consumers? If not, why not?

The recent Commerce Commission decision to increase revenue limits for Transpower and local lines companies is the opposite of what needs to happen in the electricity sector. This extra revenue will be used to support investment in maintaining the network and network growth.

We expect energy sovereignty to be a key outcome of decentralisation. This involves reduced dependency on gentailers who extract massive profits from consumers while failing to invest in network upgrades and expansion.

Some suggested benefits, such as accelerated decarbonisation and electrification are dependent on non-existent government incentives. Others such as equitable access to low-cost electricity assume that electricity cannot be free to the most vulnerable in our communities.

Question Three - Do you agree with the articulation of the possible challenges to unlocking the benefits of decentralisation? If not, why not?

Yes. We agree that rapid electrification is a worthy objective. The adoption of renewable energy needs to meet the needs of those that are most vulnerable and in the most need.

Question Four - Do you agree with the articulated opportunity statement for a more decentralised electricity system? If not, why not?

The articulation appears at odds with current government policy around the oil and gas sector. Incentivising extractive, emissions producing industries sends the wrong signal. We are concerned at the apparent transition delay approach the government is taking. This approach is in line with most other western countries where vested interests are in danger of having their oil and gas assets stranded by a comprehensive and rapid transition to renewable electricity.

Question 5 - What other feedback would you like to provide to input into the discussion on, for example:

- a) what a more decentralised electricity system might look like,
It would actually be decentralised to allow consumers to control their own energy needs – not a perpetuation of existing monopolies on generation, trading, and retail in the electricity sector.
- b) how this might benefit consumers, and
This would allow competitors to enter the market and consumers to exercise their power as consumers.
- c) what might be needed to unlock these benefits.
A revolution in legislation and corporate behaviour which stops normalising the profit maximisation economic model.

Question Six - What are other emerging case studies we could learn from?

High performing electricity markets are characterised by competitiveness, resilience, integration, sustainability, and inclusiveness. A high performing electricity market for Aotearoa New Zealand needs to do all these things plus the regulator needs to acknowledge te Tiriti o Waitangi in legislation and practice. Energy inequality disproportionately affects Māori – allowing communities to build energy sovereignty provides a means to address that inequality.

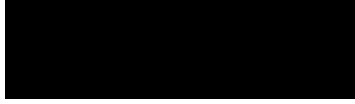
Your non-extensive list of international examples of decentralised energy systems is based on three countries – the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Sweden uses a combination of wind, bioenergy, and solar and is on track to achieve 100% fossil-free renewable electricity production by 2040⁶. Other countries such as Germany, Uruguay, China, and Norway are leading the way in the development of renewable energy.

Decentralised Renewable Energy Solutions (DRES) are necessary where the conventional distribution of electricity is neither efficient nor profitable⁷. How could this apply in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand?

⁶ <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/11-countries-leading-the-charge-on-renewable-energy/>

⁷ https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Remember/Assembly/Thirteenth-session-of-the-Assembly/13A_Decentralized-Renewable-Energy-Solutions-for-Remote-and-Isolated-Communities.pdf

Nāku ra,



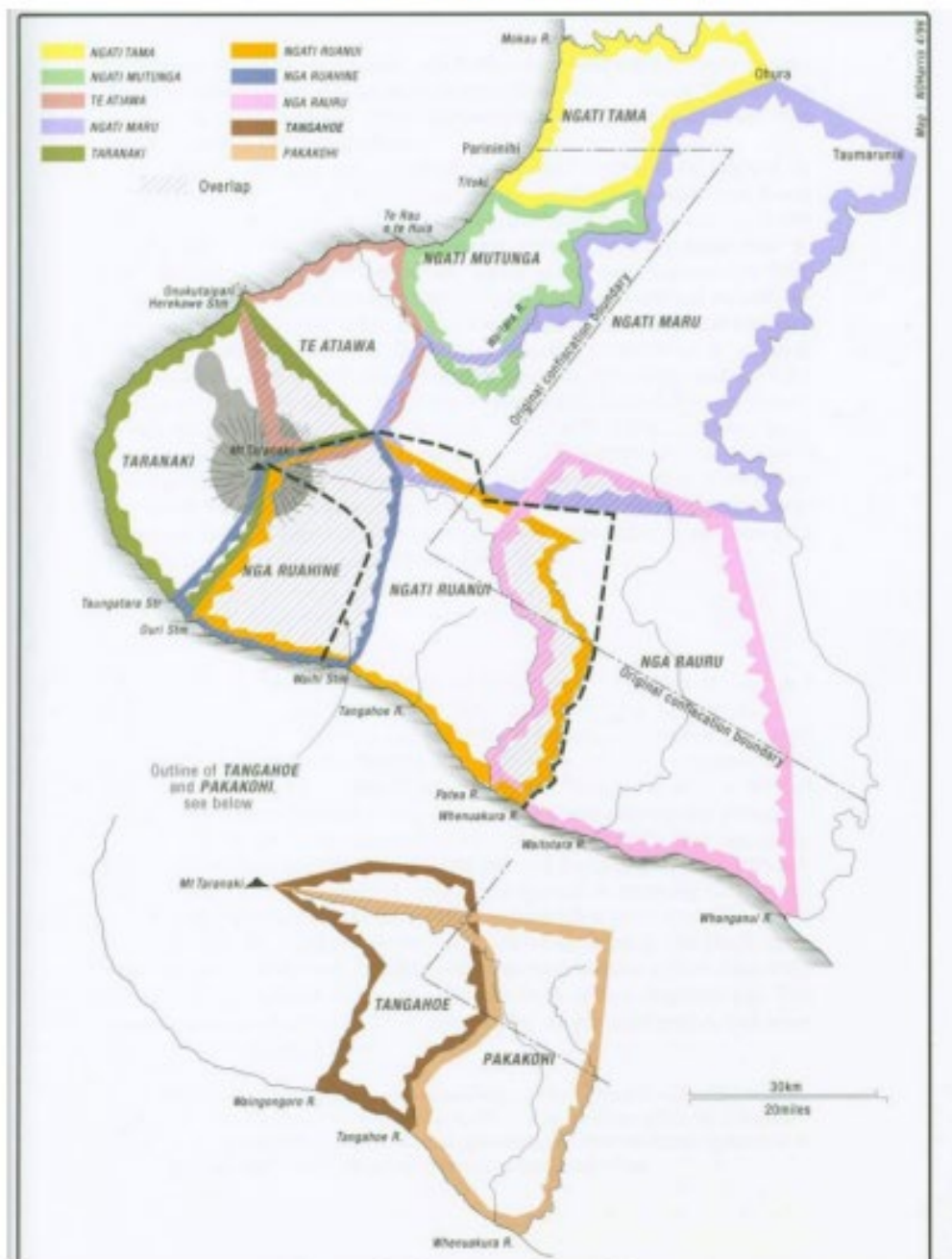
Mitchell Ritai

Pouwhakahaere

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Mutunga



Map showing Ngāti Mutunga rohe



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