Outlook

Maximising benefits from local electricity generation

From Nick Biland [redacted]
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To Connection Feedback <connection.feedback@ea.govt.nz>

[redacted]

Hi there

My name is NICK BILAND, and I'm a home owner from Auckland.

I, like many others, am excited by the potential of better empowering consumers who are fundamentally reshaping our energy future through investment in distributed generation like rooftop solar, and battery storage.

As a recent installer of rooftop solar I now have first hand experience of how my export of power to the grid is capped at 5kW which seems a waste of the resource.

I agree with the Electricity Authority Te Mana Hiko (Authority) aim to remove unnecessary barriers to more efficient investment in distributed generation and maximise the benefits it brings for all New Zealanders.

Currently, I understand there are arbitrary restrictions on the amount of power those with rooftop solar and batteries connected to distribution networks can export to the grid. Higher export limits should speed up distributed generation (eg, rooftop solar) and battery adoption rates because the payback period will be reduced and incentivise bigger systems to be installed. This will increase savings for homeowners and also help bring down the price of electricity for everyone on the network - which is a critical driver of the economy and business.

I support the Electricity Authority proposals to improve export limits for small-scale distributed generation (DG) by:

- setting a default 10kW export limit (with allowance to set lower limits where appropriate based on an industry-developed assessment methodology) for small scale distributed generation connections (up to 10kW capacity),
- setting default voltage response settings for inverters (using Australian setting) and allowing for distributors to set different settings where appropriate.

I support the Electricity Authority proposals to improve export limits for large-scale distributed generation (DG) by:

- mandating distributors to use an industry-developed bespoke export limits assessment method to set export limits for larger DG
- Mandating the use of the latest inverter performance standard for low voltage DG

Making sure the way bespoke export limits are set for many small businesses, community groups, farms and households who want to install more than 10kW of solar is really important to get right, so that unnecessary limits are not placed on the scale of their solar and battery installations. This critical group of customers installing mid size solar are typically not resourced to engage in the connection process with distributors in the same way that the large utility scale distributed solar and battery firms are. Therefore it's important that the proposed assessment method that distributors use is transparent, fair and its use is monitored by the Electricity Authority to ensure it is not used to unnecessarily limit distributed generation.

Allowing for distributors to set lower default limits than 10kW where appropriate using an industry-developed export limits assessment methodology, might be needed in specific situations but it should not be used as a way for EDBs to avoid improving network management approaches to support more customer solar investment and continuing to impose arbitrary unnecessary export limits. Electricity Authority scrutiny should be applied here, to monitor use.

Higher export limits will have widespread benefits for all New Zealanders and strengthen the resilience of the electricity supply. For example, distributed generation can increase the energy resilience of local communities by reducing reliance on electricity generated from centralised, grid-scale generation. Plus solar and battery systems can provide essential back up if there is a power outage, providing power for essential communications, EV charging and basic needs.

The country is screaming out for more generation and we know there is currently spare solar energy being curtailed by the networks that could be helping, especially in a dry year. We want to encourage the biggest possible solar systems because it reduces the costs for the homeowner and for everyone else on the network and higher export limits will help do that.

I support the Electricity Authority proposal to prohibit distributors from imposing any limits on the nameplate capacity of installed distributed generation. Limiting how much solar customers install for their own use is unnecessary and does not maximise benefits to customers. Larger solar systems can be designed to provide optimal supply and battery storage, and exports back to the grid via the inverter are limited so they don't breach required export limits.

I have recently installed solar and despite both my installer and my power retailer saying there is no limitation in the equipment that has been installed, I am prevented from exporting more than 5kW. On the basis there is no good reason for the cap of 5kW - I have read it is based on every home installing solar - it seems a waste not to permit export up to 10kW thereby helping to reduce the reliance on non-renewable generation. I would personally look to optimise my system for export and I have seen

significant times where I could export significantly more than I do. I could also imagine that the removal of export rates could be beneficial to the network and I would also consider adding extra PV and battery capacity.

Thank you.

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Kind regards
Nick Biland
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