

Hon Shane Jones

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Resources
Associate Minister of Finance
Associate Minister for Energy



8 April 2026

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – The Lake Pūkaki Hydro Storage and Dam Resilience Works application (FTAA-2510-1120)

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this substantive application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA 2024).

The FTAA 2024 has been established to provide a regime that makes it easier and quicker for regionally and nationally significant infrastructure projects to gain the approvals needed for development, in support of this Government's economic growth objectives.

I have considered the application and its alignment with the priorities of my Regional Development portfolio. My comments are attached as Annex One.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shane Jones'.

Hon Shane Jones
Minister for Regional Development

Annex One – Regional Development comments

Project overview

1. Meridian Energy has applied for Fast-track approval to temporarily ease access restrictions on Lake Pūkaki contingent water storage for hydro-electric generation. Meridian is currently authorised to operate Lake Pūkaki between 518 and 532.5 metres above mean sea level (mRL). Fast-track consent is sought to operate as low as 513 mRL at any time for the next three years (through to 31 December 2028) without requiring Transpower to initiate electricity supply triggers as System Operator.
2. Making stored water down to 513 mRL readily available at any time would provide the equivalent additional output to power around 75,000 homes. Meridian Energy estimates that it would result in lower wholesale electricity prices by seven per cent on average, reduce price volatility, and lower costs for electricity consumers by a total of \$437 million per annum.
3. Meridian Energy is also seeking approval to permanently install rock armouring at Pūkaki Dam to ensure the structure's resilience to wave erosion when operating the lake at levels below 518 mRL. As part of this work a Wildlife Authority is sought for the disturbance of lizards across the site, as a lizard survey identified a possible lizard habitat within the planned work areas.

Regional Development comments

4. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the proposed development would have significant regional and national economic benefits through reduced costs to energy users, with the potential to improve regional employment opportunities such as through increased investment in regional manufacturing capacity.
5. The application primarily has implications for New Zealand's energy system, and commentary from the Energy portfolio will be important in assessing the strategic importance and potential energy system impacts of the project.