

CONFERENCE PROCEDURES

DATED - 21 October 2025

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Purpose of the Conference Procedures

The purpose of these conference procedures is to set the rules and timeframes by which the conference process will run and governing how the conference will be conducted. The conference procedures have been divided into 2 sections:

- Section 1 - Application timeline
- Section 2 - The principles of and rules for the conference process.

The application and other associated information is available through the Fast-track website at <https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz/projects/taranaki-vtm>

Amendments or Updates to the Conference Procedures

If any party wishes to apply for a variation to any of these conference procedures, a written request must be made to the Panel.

Revision Notes

Issue 1: First issue dated – 20 October 2025

Section 1: Application Timetable

Due to the fluid and evolving nature of the application process, the timeframes and dates listed may change. Please refer to the application website for the most up-to-date version

<https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz/projects/taranaki-vtm>

Date	Action
Mon 25 Aug 2025	Panel Set up
Tues 2 Sept 2025	Panel attended overview conference with applicant
Mon 08 Sept 2025	Panel invite comments from parties
Mon 6 Oct 2025	Comments period closed
Fri 10 October	Panel issued Minute 8 regarding conference to be held 21 - 23 October 2025. Parties must have confirmed with the EPA if they wish to attend and speak at the Taranaki VTM Conference in Hāwera
Mon 13 Oct 2025	Response to comments from the applicant
Wed 15 Oct 2025	Deadline for completing questionnaire attached to minute 8
21 – 23 Oct 2025	Conference held in Hāwera
20 Dec – 10 Jan 2026	Statutory shutdown period
18 March 2026	Decision due

Section 2: Conference Procedures

Principles/objectives of the conference process

1. In determining the approach to the conference, the Panel will be guided by the need to:
 - Ensure the Panel is well-informed about the content of comments received on the substantive application, including technical reports, assessments, and legal issues in contention.
 - Gather suggestions from participants on the content, structure, and drafting style of proposed conditions, including management and strategic plans.
 - Provide a forum for invited participants to present concise summaries of their comments and raise any additional relevant matters.
 - Clarify that the conference is not a formal hearing under sections 57 and 58 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, but a procedural briefing to inform potential future hearings.
 - Enable the Expert Panel to ask questions and engage directly with participants to clarify issues and gather insights.
 - Allow the Applicant to attend and respond to new information raised during the conference, with a five-working-day window post-conference for formal responses.
 - Avoid unnecessary presentations from parties whose comments were succinct and self-explanatory, while still welcoming their attendance.
 - Record the conference proceedings and publish transcripts and any additional information provided on the project website.
 - Use the conference to inform the Panel's decisions about which issues may require formal hearings or further procedural steps.
 - The conference aims to support efficiency, fairness, and transparency in the decision-making process.

Communication to the Panel and EPA

2. All communication and correspondence to the Panel in relation to the processing of the application must be made via the EPA via the following options:

Email: info@fasttrack.govt.nz (emails need to be smaller than 10 MB);

3. Unless otherwise directed by the Panel or considered administrative, all correspondence will be published on the Fast-track website. The EPA will redact certain contact details from the correspondence, in particular a commenter's personal email address and phone number.
4. EPA staff will attend, arrange and support the conference on behalf of the Panel.

Communication from the Panel

5. The Panel will communicate with the applicant and commenters through the EPA (on the Panel's behalf) by:
 - a. notices on the Fast-track website; and
 - b. email updates on the website, (unless a party opts out of electronic communications).

6. Formal notification of documents will be by way of the Fast-track website. The EPA will only notify commenters of documents being posted on the website where there is a legal requirement to do so, or the Panel directs it to do so. The responsibility is on the parties to check the EPA website for new information.

Conference notice, venue(s) and scheduling

7. The Panel issued Minute 8 on Friday, 10 October 2025 confirming conference dates and venue (see Section 1).
8. The conference will typically run from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, with short breaks mid-morning and mid-afternoon and a lunch break from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm. Catering will not be provided..
9. A detailed Conference Schedule will be published and updated as required on the Fast-track website, setting out the daily order of speakers and approximate timing.
10. The Conference Schedule is subject to change. Parties scheduled to appear may be advised of updates to the Conference Schedule by email. Where changes occur at short notice the EPA will endeavour to verbally communicate with affected parties.
11. Parties should remain flexible, as speaking times may change.
12. To enable a fair and efficient conference and to avoid repetition, time allowances have been provided but this will be guided by the Panel.
13. The order of parties appearing at the conference will be in general accordance with that set out in the conference schedule.
14. All parties are required to behave in a manner that assists the Panel and seek to make efficient use of the conference time available.
15. The Panel may ask any question of a party.

Opening the conference

16. The conference will open with a mihi whakatau, followed by morning tea and an opening statement from the Chairperson.

Commenters appearing at the conference

17. All comments will be read and considered by the Panel before the conference. Commenters do not have to attend the conference if they do not wish to; their views will be considered by the Panel regardless of their attendance.
18. Commenters wishing to speak must confirm their participation and any availability constraints by the deadline in Minute 8. Commenters may speak to their comments themselves, or they can choose to be represented by a lawyer, an advocate or other person (eg a friend or family member). If not representing themselves the commenter must advise the EPA who will speak to their comment.
19. A joint representation (where one person makes a representation on behalf of several commenters) is encouraged where the comments are of a similar nature.
20. If commenters do not identify opportunities for joint representation, or if the Panel considers there is likely to be excessive repetition at the conference, the Panel may require joint presentation or set reasonable time limits where the same or substantially similar points are to be raised, consistent with natural justice.
21. When speaking at the conference, a commenter may only address the matters within the scope of their lodged written comment.
22. A limit may be placed on the time commenters have to make their representation.
23. All parties presenting at the conference are required to bring written or hard copies of their presentation or provide to the EPA an electronic version of this document prior to presenting. This can be done by emailing your document to info@fasttrack.govt.nz.
24. Questions will be limited to those from the Panel.

Speaking via video-conference

25. Any party may request the Panel to allow their representation be given via video conference.
26. Request must state the name, location and reasons attendance in person is not possible.
27. The date by which any request must be made is specified in minute 8.
28. Each request will be considered on its merits and will be allowed if it is reasonable and practicable. If permission is granted by the Panel, the party will discuss the necessary arrangements with EPA staff to determine feasibility.

Presentation/electronic media requirements at the conference

29. Where any commenter or their representative intends to use electronic media (eg Power Point) as part of their presentation they must advise the EPA and state what electronic media is required by the date specified in minute 8.
30. EPA systems at the conference will enable the viewing of PDF documents, PowerPoint presentations, picture files and video files (using a standard .mp4 or .wav video format). Intentions to use electronic media should include the type of electronic media to be used, and whether any specific system or software requirements are needed. Electronic media presented at the conference must meet the electronic copy requirements in Appendix 1.

Presenting in Te Reo / Sign Language

31. Any party, representative may speak in Te Reo Māori at the conference. The EPA must be informed of the intention to use Te Reo Māori so that an interpreter can be arranged.
32. Karakia, powhiri, or mihi will not be translated into English or recorded on the transcript unless this is specifically requested before the conference. To aid the Panel, an English interpretation of the karakia, powhiri or mihi may be provided by the presenter.
33. Any commenter may provide their oral comment in Te Reo Māori, in which case an English version is to be provided by them.
34. Any commenter may present in New Zealand Sign Language at the conference. The EPA must be informed of the intention to use New Zealand Sign Language so that an interpreter can be arranged.
35. Requests to present in Te Reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language must be submitted by the date in minute 8.

Written record of proceedings

36. The EPA will have the conference proceedings recorded and transcribed. The transcripts will be made available on the Fast-track website, usually within two working days of the close of the conference.
37. The record of the conference proceedings will also be provided on the Fast-track website and include:
 - a. a summary of proceedings, including a list of the commenters who have spoken at the conference;
 - b. a list and copy of all documents presented at the conference;

Role of EPA Support Staff

38. The EPA Conference Manager will make the arrangements for the conference on behalf of the Panel and will attend the conference to assist the Panel with the administration of the conference. The Panel will also be supported by an EPA Application Lead to assist with document management and to manage the conference schedule. The EPA Application Lead can be contacted by email on info@fasttrack.govt.nz.
39. All communications and correspondence to the Panel shall be via the EPA support staff.

Media requirements

40. The conference will be open to the public (except where sensitive information applies). Media Representatives may attend the conference.
41. Independent recording is prohibited at the conference as the conference will be officially recorded and transcribed for publication on the Fast-track website.
42. Media interviews are not allowed in the conference room. Panel members are not available for media interviews. The EPA will be available to provide process information to the media.
43. All media enquiries should be directed to media@epa.govt.nz.

Health and Safety at the Conference

- 44. Each party is responsible for their own health and safety while attending at the conference.
- 45. EPA staff will take reasonable steps to maintain a safe environment at the of all conference venue.
Any safety concerns should be raised with the Conference Manager.
- 46. Hazards or potential hazards should be raised with EPA staff as soon as practicable.
- 47. In the event of an emergency during the conference, parties are to adopt the emergency procedures specific to the venue, and follow the instructions of EPA or venue staff should evacuation be required.

Decision

- 48. The expected date for the decision release is specified in Section 1.

Requests to deviate from these procedures

- 49. Any request to depart from these procedures must be made in writing to the Panel and include full justification
 - Email: info@fasttrack.govt.nz (emails need to be smaller than 10MB)

Appendix 1 – Requirements for documents

Information presented at the conference

1. A hard copy of any information presented at the conference in support of oral comments may be provided on the day. Hard copies and electronic copies should be given to the Conference Manager when you arrive and these documents must comply with the hard copy and electronic copy requirements outlined below.
2. For parties who have been permitted to present using electronic media, the presentation files should either be emailed to the EPA, at least the day before the party is scheduled to appear, or given to the Conference Manager on a portable storage device upon arrival at the conference venue.

Electronic copy requirements

3. An electronic copy of any document can be emailed to the EPA at info@fasttrack.govt.nz.
4. The electronic documents should, where practicable, be provided as a Microsoft Word document or a searchable PDF. If this is not possible, other arrangements should be made with the EPA before providing the document.
5. If a party is providing comments that include video clips, photographs or images then one copy on a portable storage device (eg USB Stick) is to be provided to the EPA.
6. Any party unable to create electronic copies of a document must contact the EPA to make other arrangements before the date the document is due to be lodged.