

17 February 2026

Fast-track Team

Email: substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

FTAA-2509-1100 The Point Solar Farm – Application by Far North Solar Limited

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Fasttrack Approvals Act (FTAA) application for the Point Solar Farm proposal by Far North Solar Limited. Meridian Energy Limited (Meridian) provides the following comments on this application for the Panel.

The proposed solar farm is positioned alongside part of Meridian's Operating Easements over Lake Benmore (ROT 391611 – Canterbury Registry and the Lower Ōhau River (ROT 391614 – Canterbury Registry) herein referred to as 'the Operating Easements'. Meridian holds operating easements over the lakes and rivers that form part of Meridian's Waitaki Power Scheme (the Scheme). The land is owned by the Crown with operating easements granted to Meridian in perpetuity. The Operating Easements include the right for Meridian to store and discharge water, right to access, right to undertake erosion works, right to remove people in emergency situations involving public safety or the security of electricity generation and to undertake the operation and management of the hydro facilities associated with the Scheme. The Crown has also covenanted not to permit or consent to any development or change of use or change of zoning of any of the Operating Easement land without consulting with and obtaining the consent of Meridian. Separately the power stations, dams and canals (including the Ōhau C Tailrace) are held under freehold title by Meridian.

It appears that a small part of the proposed solar array and proposed landscape planting along the true left of the Twizel River is located within the Hydro Inundation Hazard Overlay shown in the Mackenzie District Plan. This overlay represents areas that could be flooded in the unlikely event of failure of any of the dams and canals associated with the Waitaki Power Scheme (and Tekapo Power Scheme). While the likelihood of a structural failure of a dam or canal is very low, the consequences could be serious for people, property and the environment.

Meridian therefore highlights the risks to people and assets associated with developing within this overlay and the potential for parts of the site to be inundated in an unlikely event of uncontrolled release of water from the Waitaki Power Scheme.

Given the location of the site and what appears to be only a small overlap of the development with the Hydro Inundation Hazard Overlay, Meridian remains neutral to the development within the Hydro Inundation Hazard Overlay. However, Meridian seeks that the consequences that result from the potential inundation are considered in the final design of the solar array, and that the Hydro Inundation Hazard Overlay is ideally avoided. Meridian offers Far North Solar Limited the opportunity to work together to support a more detailed understanding of the risks for this site.

If the solar array does not avoid the Hydro Inundation Hazard Overlay, Meridian requests that the Panel impose a condition of consent on Mackenzie District council land use consent requiring the applicant to work with Meridian to develop, maintain and routinely review an emergency response plan and evacuation guide for this hazard at this site, so that risk to people and assets is minimised in the event of an emergency. Such a condition could be as follows:

The consent holder must, in consultation with Meridian Energy Limited, prepare, implement and maintain a current Emergency Hydro Inundation Response and Evacuation Plan for that part of the site subject to the Hydro Inundation Hazard Overlay in the Operative Mackenzie District Plan (or such replacement) for the purposes of minimising the risk to life and property (including assets) that may arise from the uncontrolled release of water from the Waitaki Power Scheme. The Emergency Hydro Inundation Response and Evacuation Plan must be provided to the consent authority prior to construction beginning on the site, and any subsequent updates of that Plan must be provided within three (3) months of an update being finalised.

Yours Sincerely

Nick Reuther
Environmental Programme Manager
Meridian Energy