

Hon Simon Watts

Minister of Climate Change
Minister for Energy
Minister of Local Government
Minister of Revenue



To: Expert Panel, The Point Solar Farm (FTAA-2509-1100)

By email: Substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Far North Solar Farm Limited's application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) for The Point Solar Farm project in Canterbury.

I am providing these comments in my capacity as Minister for Energy, under section 53(2)(j) of the Act.

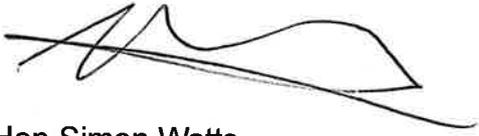
I have considered how this project would support the purpose of the Act, i.e. *to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.*

I consider this proposed project has significant national benefits as follows:

- The proposed solar farm would be very large by New Zealand standards and make a significant contribution to national electricity supply if constructed. The project is proposed to generate 420 megawatts-peak (MWp), which would meet the (averaged) energy needs of around 100,000 households.
- Renewable electricity generation of this scale supports multiple outcomes including:
 - Contribution to security of energy supply through increased generation and diversity of energy generation—the South Island currently does not have much solar generation capacity.
 - Downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices, which supports more affordable energy for New Zealand firms and households. Affordable energy also has wider flow-on benefits to the wider economy, for example by reducing input costs for commercial and industrial energy users.
 - Contribution to climate change targets, as increasing renewable electricity generation can displace use of fossil fuels in both the electricity and wider energy systems (e.g., by reducing the use of thermal fuels for electricity generation, and supporting increased demand for electricity for sectors such as transport).

I support the Panel's continued consideration of this application.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Simon Watts'.

Hon Simon Watts
Minister for Energy