



Expert Panel, Waitaha Hydro [FTAA-2505-1069]

By email: Substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Westpower Limited's application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) for the Waitaha Hydro project.

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 regional benefits as follows:

- The proposed hydro scheme would make a significant contribution to electricity support for the West Coast. The maximum generation capacity of 23MW is expected to deliver between 120 to 140 GWh of electricity each year – which is enough energy to power around 12,000 homes – or approximately half of the West Coast's average annual electricity needs.
- Renewable electricity generation of this scale supports multiple outcomes including:
 - contribution to climate change targets, as increasing renewable electricity generation can displace use of fossil fuels in both the electricity and wider energy systems (eg reducing the use of thermal fuels for electricity generation, and supporting increased demand for electricity for sectors such as transport)
 - contribution to security of energy supply, both through increased generation but also geographic diversity of energy generation. The majority of the West Coast's electricity supply is imported in through the transmission network. Having a large source of generation closer to demand on the West Coast creates extra resilience to disruptions of supply during transmission outages
 - 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 – e.g by reducing input costs for commercial and industrial energy users.

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

Yours sincerely

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Hon Simon Watts
Minister for Energy