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Media Release

Electricity Commission looks for transmission alternatives

The Electricity Commission wants to talk to the public over alternatives to Transpower's proposed transmission grid upgrade between Whakamaru and South Auckland.

Commission chair Roy Hemmingway said today (Friday 27 May 2005) the Commission wants to meet people and industries affected by Transpower's transmission proposal.

"We are looking for ideas for all viable alternatives that we can study," he said. "We have published a consultation paper on our website called 'Alternatives to Transpower's proposed Whakamaru-Otahuhu transmission upgrade' and we are open to all ideas.

"Submissions to our consultation paper close on 13 July 2005 and, prior to that date, we also plan to meet with interested parties in the South Auckland and Waikato regions to discuss our consultation process.

"The Commission wants to ensure that Auckland has a reliable supply of electricity and is open to considering all transmission upgrade alternatives before arriving at any decision. We are not looking to predetermine or endorse any particular transmission proposal at this stage."

As the electricity industry regulator, the Commission is required to consider and if appropriate approve transmission investment plans proposed by the

national grid operator Transpower, in order for Transpower to recover its costs for those investments from its customers.

“Our approval process involves consulting widely with interested parties about possible transmission alternatives. Submissions to our paper are an important part of this consultation process. When we consider alternatives we want to start with a blank sheet of paper with no preconceptions so that we can arrive at the best solutions. The public and industries concerned are encouraged to provide the Commission with whatever information they have. Even if a party is able to identify projects at a conceptual level only, we want to hear from them.”

“The Commission recognises it has been prudent for Transpower to start preliminary work toward grid development to meet identified growing electricity demand, particularly in the Auckland region,” Mr. Hemmingway said. “But the Commission has the role of exploring all viable alternatives before approving any of Transpower's proposals.”

The Commission’s review of the submissions will start in July and will be published in August for further comment. A final decision on the proposed Waikato-Auckland upgrade is expected before July 2006.

The Commission’s consultation paper is available on <http://www.electricitycommission.govt.nz/consultation/transaltern> Submissions close at 5.00pm, Wednesday 13 July 2005, and should be addressed to the Commission at: info@electricitycommission.govt.nz or Electricity Commission, PO Box 10041, Wellington, entitled ‘Auckland transmission-upgrade alternatives consultation’.

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