

Feedback form: New Zealand's draft National Infrastructure Plan

Your details

Name [REDACTED]

Organisation (if applicable) University of Waikato

Position (if applicable) [REDACTED]

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About you

Please tell us which best describes you

☒ New Zealand citizen or resident

☐ New Zealand business owner/operator

☐ Industry professional

☐ Community organisation representative

☐ Local government representative

☐ Central government representative

☒ Researcher

☐ Other (please specify): Click or tap here to enter text.

Sector or topic of interest

Please list or briefly describe the topics or sectors you are providing feedback on:

Affordable and secure electricity

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Date

27/06/2025

Your feedback

The most important infrastructure issue is the need to construct more renewable energy storage. This must be on a sufficient scale to have internationally competitive electricity prices, avoiding the economic impact of dry years (as in the dry winter of 2024). Cheaper electricity is a prerequisite for sustained economic growth.

There are a number of energy storage options possible, all involving significant cost. For example, the Lake Onslow pumped storage scheme has an estimated \$16b construction cost.

Unexpectedly, the Draft National Infrastructure Plan makes no mention of the need to investigate dry year infrastructure options. There is only a bland heading "Our dry year risk challenge needs close monitoring". We have been "closely monitoring" the dry year risk challenge for decades and have achieved nothing. What is required is a clear decision to finally construct dry year infrastructure – not a diversion once again to "market policies".

Unfortunately, any form of bipartisan electricity infrastructure policy is not possible because the coalition partners (on ideological grounds) reject even the concept of significant government spending on energy infrastructure beyond the needs of Transpower. For that reason, the detailed business case evaluations of renewable energy storage options (started under the Labour government) were prevented from being completed, following the 2023 change of government.

However, a change of government again in 2026 is likely to see a restart of evaluation of renewable energy storage infrastructure options. The requirement here will be that work is progressed sufficiently far, so that it can't then be halted by another change of government in the future.