

Media statement

31 October 2008

Hearing closes on Transpower's proposal to upgrade the North Island transmission grid

The Board of Inquiry hearing into Transpower's proposal to upgrade the upper North Island electricity transmission grid was completed in Hamilton today.

The Board will now consider the evidence and submissions and will then issue a draft written report including its draft decision on Transpower's proposal. Transpower is proposing to build a new overhead electricity transmission line, underground cables and substations between Whakamaru to Otahuhu and Pakuranga in the upper North Island.

"We expect to produce the draft report and decision in some months. It is a substantial proposal and there are many submissions that the Board will consider under the Resource Management Act call-in process," said Judge David Sheppard, Chairperson of the Board of Inquiry.

Before the decision is finalised, Transpower, the nine affected local authorities, all 1244 submitters and the Minister for the Environment will receive a draft of the report and decision, and will have 20 working days to send their comments to the Board.

The hearing began in March this year and took place over 72 days in Hamilton, Takanini and Tokoroa. During the hearing Transpower and submitters presented legal submissions, witnesses presented evidence, and were cross-examined. A total of 152 submitters came to the hearing to present their submissions. The Board also visited sites along the entire length of the proposed route.

Please note the Board of Inquiry will not be commenting on Transpower's proposal.

For more information see www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/call-in-transpower/board-of-inquiry/

For any questions about the Board's processes contact Viv Smith, Project Manager for the Board, on 027 495 7096 or tpcallin@mfe.govt.nz.

Background for editors:

The Board's chairperson is Judge David Sheppard, a former Principal Environment Judge. The other board members are Kevin Prime, Dr Deborah Read and John Rutherford.

Transpower's proposal is to build a new overhead electricity transmission line, underground cables and substations in the upper North Island. The proposed line would be approximately 200km in length, supply power to the Auckland and Northland regions, and traverse the jurisdictions of nine local authorities (Auckland Region, Franklin District, Manukau City, Matamata-Piako District, South Waikato District, Taupo District, Waikato District, Waikato Region, Waipa District) through mainly rural land.

Minister Pete Hodgson called in Transpower's proposal on 8 August 2007 and appointed the independent Board of Inquiry. The ability to call in is a power the Minister has under the Resource Management Act to intervene in proposals of national significance.

Inquiry hearing

Commenced on 25 March 2008 in Hamilton

Day 1 to day 43: 43 hearing days between 25 March to 26 June 2008

- Transpower's legal submissions and 47 witnesses presented their evidence and were cross-examined

Day 44 to day 69: 26 hearing days between 7 July to 8 October 2008

- Submitter's legal submissions, evidence (and cross-examination of evidence) and submissions presented
- 152 submitters heard
 - 84 submitters heard at Hamilton
 - 48 submitters heard at Takanini
 - 20 submitters heard at Tokoroa

Day 70 to day 72: 3 hearing days between 29 to 31 October 2008

- Transpower's right of reply to submitters

Viewing of the proposed route and sites

The Board of Inquiry viewed the proposed route and sites over 7 days in July and September 2008. 115 sites along the 200km proposed route were visited.

Webpage: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/call-in-transpower/board-of-inquiry/proposed-route-and-sites.html>

Appeals against the final decision

Transpower, the nine affected local authorities, all 1244 submitters and the Minister for the Environment may appeal the final decision to the High Court on a question of law only. Appeals have to be made within 15 working days of being notified of the Board's final decision.