

Minutes of the meeting of the Network Connections Technical Group

**Held on 5 February 2025, 9.00am to 3.00pm
EA Office, Level 7 AON Centre, 1 Willis Street**

Members present: Grant Benvenuti (Chair), Gavin Bonnett, Ronald Beatty, Michael Gibbs, Howard Wood, Paul Blue, Matt Gazzard, Tim Edmonds, Trent Tscheuschler, Stuart Johnston, Suzanne Doran

Apologies: Anna Li, Rupert Holbrook

In attendance: Allen Davison, Seran Ramanathan

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed the members to the meeting.

- 1.1. The Authority noted the NCTG would discuss DG proposals at this meeting and focus on load proposals at the next meeting in March.
- 1.2. Allen spoke to the high volume and quality of the submissions received. This has provided great value and given the Authority much to consider.
- 1.3. The project is scheduled to take decisions to the EA Board in mid-2025. This is a challenge given the amount of feedback received. The Authority is considering options to speed up delivery of the project (eg, additional resource). One option is to defer some proposals to stage two of the Network connections project, although this is not preferred.

2. General discussion

- 2.1. The NCTG noted the non-pricing proposals need to be considered alongside the proposed pricing reforms. This issue will be discussed in more detail at the March meeting.
- 2.2. Part 6 needs to better consider embedded networks, which are increasing in number in NZ. Stage two of the Network connections project will consider.

- 2.3. The NCTG thought more clarity was needed on proposed Part 6 timeframes and extensions. It was noted the worst-case scenarios in terms of proposed maximum timeframes are lengthy.
- 2.4. The group thought the network capacity data proposal was important. The “where available” caveat may lead to some networks coming forward with data only at their discretion. The Authority is undertaking complementary work to encourage greater visibility of network capacity data. Members thought privacy and data ownership of network capacity data needs to be further considered.
- 2.5. The NCTG supported applying Code proposals to all distributors, regardless of the size of the distributor.
- 2.6. The group discussed the relative merits of Code prescription versus the Code providing principles and industry developing the operational detail. In general, the group supported the move towards less prescription but thought certain requirements (eg, timelines) should be in the Code.

3. Specific discussion

Maximum export power

- 3.1. NCTG discussed the feedback received and noted there was general support for this approach.

Medium DG process

- 3.2. NCTG agreed the lower size threshold for medium DG is too low at 10kW and should be increased (with values from 15-30kW discussed.) This issue is outside scope and will be considered in stage 2 of the Network connections project.
- 3.3. The group preferred DG thresholds based on size rather than complexity but wanted some greater latitude for very large DG applications (eg, timeframes) to reflect these can be more complex.
- 3.4. Different size thresholds (for both medium and large DG) were discussed and their relative merits. This included aligning DG size thresholds with metering categories. The NCTG concluded the proposed upper size threshold for medium DG (300kW) was appropriate. This was thought to provide the best balance of sector benefit against participant cost.

Large DG process

- 3.5. The NCTG thought finite timeframes should apply but that large DG applications are complex and finite timeframes can be hard to implement. Both access seekers and distributors understand more time is sometimes needed to complete work to the required standard.

- 3.6. The group discussed the “deemed to be approved” proposal if distributors fail to meet finite timeframes for medium/large DG. It was noted there was strong distributor feedback against this proposal. The Authority will consider this feedback further.
- 3.7. The NCTG thought greater latitude around timeframes would be valuable for DG applications of 1.5MW and above. The proposed timeframes (and extensions regime) should remain, but the Code should allow distributors to seek further extensions from an access seeker. Where this extension is not granted, the distributor should be able to approach the Authority for a decision on whether a further extension should be granted.
- 3.8. The NCTG agreed maximum timeframes should not become targets. It thought increased scrutiny of Part 6 processing timeframes, and public reporting of this, would encourage better sector performance.
- 3.9. The group thought there might be a case for a 5MW+ DG application process in future, given this size of application is likely to be much more complex. Given this, such a process should allow timeframes to be directly negotiated between the distributor and access seeker.
- 3.10. The NCTG agreed the proposed interim stage for large DG applications is valuable and should progress.
- 3.11. The NCTG noted some submitters argued more than 30-business days are needed to negotiate a connection contract. The Authority agreed to consider this.
- 3.12. Members generally agreed that evidence of a project investment decision as a prerequisite for final approval was not workable.

Pre-application phase

- 3.13. The Authority noted the Streamlining Connections Programme would lead on pre-application phase development. There was general NCTG support for this approach. It was noted the Code only applies once a Part 6 application is submitted. The operational detail in the pre-application phase is best *co-developed* by the ENA and access seekers.

Retain approval of the initial application stage

- 3.14. The NCTG thought the requirement to approve/decline an initial application should remain. This provides a clear indication to both parties that this stage is complete, and the next stage can commence with timeframes confirmed.

Prioritising applications using long-term benefit to consumers

- 3.15. The group noted the pushback in submissions against prioritising applications based on the long-term benefit to consumers. Generally, the NCTG thought this approach

was not suitable for distributors. Their core expertise is connecting as many parties as quickly and efficiently as possible. The Authority agreed to reconsider this proposal.

Complementary applications

- 3.16. The NCTG saw value in Code changes that support/allow access seekers to share information, to encourage more complementary actions and compromise. Privacy issues would need to be considered.

Network visibility programme

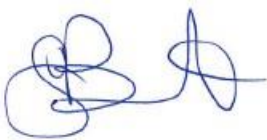
- 3.17. Andrew Zielinski (EA) and Gary White (EA) presented on the Authority's network visibility work (eg, consumption, capacity and network operating data). They sought NCTG feedback on data ownership, appropriate timings to provide data, real/perceived barriers and hurdles (eg, privacy) to sharing/using data, relative merits of different data
- 3.18. Can do, rather than "deemed to approve" being final, the distributor can apply to the authority to have that timeframe extended (for medium and large).

4. Next meeting

- 4.1. The NCTG agreed to meet again in March (date to be confirmed).
- 4.2. The meeting concluded at 3pm.

Confirming that the NCTG has approved that the meeting minutes are a true and correct record.

Dated: 28 March 2025



Grant Benvenuti

Chair