

Sirs and Madams,

I have read the entire paper and I'm very disappointed. I did not see "the way forward" of your subtitle. While I don't know your terms of reference, I suspect the Government will also be disappointed. In their position I would expect, from an "expert" panel, some innovative solutions ordered by both effectiveness and cost. Instead you have supplied a comprehensive description of the problem and by concentrating your data gathering on the organisations "at the coalface" you have come up with their standard responses: they need more money, and regulation, and added your standard excuse: more information is required. Quoting "coalface" organisations depends on empirical data which can easily be given the wrong weighting. For example; given there are more cellphones in New Zealand than people it's hard to believe lack of access to the internet is a widespread problem. Second, classifying lack of access to energy as an emergency (AF1) is naive, unrealistic and pointless - child abuse is an emergency and has been for years, it doesn't seem to be abating. Thirdly, you have no idea how many strugglers there are who haven't yet dropped into your purview.

Glossing over the LFC phaseout and ignoring the removal of prompt payment discounts, which have increased my energy costs by 20% (I am in the bottom quintile) claiming they disadvantaged others is as fatuous as it was when the Govt did it. Sure it benefited some of the wealthy but the wealthy will always game the system to utilise most of your proposals: it's part of the problem with targeting: some will always be disqualified who shouldn't be.

Suggesting that MSD/WINZ could be part of the solution is unrealistic: MSD is acutely aware it is their taxes they are giving away and the parsimony is culturally intrinsic.

While I agree schools are the place for energy education they don't seem to have been that successful lately - but that's well beyond your scope.

I don't think a line by line analysis of this paper is my role but I will make some suggestions.

The problem is poverty rather than energy. Perhaps benefits and pensions could be tax free. Maybe the primary cause of poverty, high accommodation costs, needs to be tackled by a different mechanism than accommodation allowance..Maybe the winter fuel allowance needs to be scaled to reflect latitude and remoteness. Maybe change in our expectations of support is required.

The remote areas problem (AC4?) is caused by the lack of a national operational body (like we had until 30 years ago) who can average small populations out of more dense ones (subsidy). Being off-grid no longer prevents access to electricity and distributed generation is becoming more affordable. Could remote landlords be required to provide an electricity source. The problem then becomes people being so desperate for (cheap) accommodation they accept unsuitable homes (probably conditional on accepting that status.)

The house I live in may not meet the healthy homes standard but I manage and don't want to give it up. That is my choice. And there lies the crux: should people accept the consequences of their choices.

Iwi should be proactive in dealing with Maori poverty, including affordable electricity access, and should be the contact or supporting organisation. I cannot comment further on this.

Paying Consumer to expand Powerswitch to provide the one point for all information rather than setting up a new organisation. .

Disconnection issues (AC5, AF3) need to be dealt with by the retailers. Perhaps disconnection or refusal could be made illegal - this might incentivise them to proactively identify at risk consumers and offer solutions before the problems become critical. They have the data on missed payments and high bills - make them responsible for it.

And/or Govt could indemnify the retailers at the kilowatt rate paid by the Bluff smelter.

I note the retailers are desperately trying to find external markets (exporting hydrogen, importing data centres) to ensure electricity prices remain high - should the Govt be limiting this.

In summary, I believe the price of electricity is too high and the Govt can easily manage this by regulating the retailers and generators - although I note that as the Govt is a major shareholder of the industry we do get some benefit from this.

At last - going to the summary - I see your answers. I will critique briefly.

HH1 - where do you stop: in the 70s it was ceiling insulation, the 90s was floor insulation, 10s were double glazing. Temporary repairs and drawing good curtains at the appropriate time is a quicker fix (facile but valid) but requires proaction from the dweller.

HH2 - excessive. Even gaining 30 or 70% improvement is a win - why are you insisting on "full" benefit.

HH3,4 - unnecessary? Given the new tenancy regulations, how big is this problem now? Is the solution just slow to filter through.

HH5 - perhaps a better solution might be to limit what is available on the market: minimum of 4 stars?

KN1 - another layer of bureaucracy! If those people aren't networking already they're in the wrong job. I can see the point of a list -but that can be attached to Powerswitch.

KN2,3 - unqualified to comment.

KN4,5 - pay Consumer to do this as part of Powerswitch. I note the CAB manual is a great example of an encyclopedia of relevant specific knowledge.

KN6 - my bill seems pretty simple to me and in my poorer moments the only significant figure was the bottom line.

AC1,2 - make the retailers responsible as above.

AC3 - need some idea of how far the rollout has got and what's impeding it first. This was a retailer initiative in their own interest.

AC4 - no way. If you choose to live in the back of beyond then you accept the consequences of your choice. Also, having an off grid capability is becoming cheaper and more desirable if not essential.

AC5 - does it really matter which devil you deal with? Make the retailer responsible as per AC1,2.

AC6 - I don't understand this!

AF1 - ridiculed previously above.

AF2 - agreed in part as per above

AF3 - is there an argument that if these things can all be done remotely there should be no charge at all.

AF4 - setting regulated very low rates for prepay might alleviate this as retailers squirm to avoid them.

AF5 - retailer responsibility as above

AF6 - another bit of incomprehensible gobbledygook.

CP1,2 - just keep re-arranging those deckchairs

CP3 - no longer relevant if the retailer has to del with the problem on disadvantageous terms as above.

CP4 - sorry. Why would a solar power provider not be bound by industry requirements?

End

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individual