

Submission to the Commerce Commission re Aurora CPP

From Central Otago Grey Power

Along with 270 Grey Power members on fixed retirement incomes, Central Otago has a number of younger people on low incomes working in the horticultural industry. One of Grey Power's aims is to look after the health and wellbeing of our older citizens; another is to address poverty levels. The planned increase in the Aurora line charges for Central Otago is going to cause hardship; physically, mentally and financially for many of our families.

Aurora's delivery of electricity and lack of maintenance has been unsatisfactory in the past, and unless there are massive changes I can't see it improving. People with medical problems need an uninterrupted power supply to keep machines working. When outages are planned and consumers notified, arrangements can be made for the hiring of generators. However these outages don't always happen as notified so the expensive generators are not needed. Later, when we have unexpected outages, back-up generators are not available. More planning and accountability is needed.

Central Otago winters are much colder than those in Dunedin. The clean air regulations have seen multi-fuel and older wood burners removed from homes and replaced with heat-pumps. Council flats are also heated by electricity so there is no heating alternative for these people. Do they keep warm and go hungry, or eat and stay in bed to keep warm? The superannuation heating increase for the winter months has been of great value but it would need to increase substantially to counteract these intended line charges.

The regional pricing formula is grossly unfair to those of us living in rural areas. Dunedin has had the benefit of Aurora dividends paid to the DCC who own the company. The networks in both Dunedin and Queenstown have both had better maintenance than the Central Otago network. Central Otago people have paid their line charges and much of this money has been used elsewhere. It is surely time that Central Otago was subsidised by Dunedin. We are one region so the price increase should be the same over all networks. I'm sure you have the power to convince the DCC to address this inequity.

The only scenario we can support is scenario 2 which, although will cost more in the long term, is the one with the least impact on the monthly account.

Aurora must become accountable for the provision of a power supply that is affordable, reliable and safe.

Maybe a rebates scheme, similar to the rates rebate, could be introduced to help all those on low incomes.

Margaret Hill

President Central Otago Grey Power

6th December 2020