

Submission to the Review of Section 62 of the Electricity Act 1992 (2013 review)

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History

In the time before rural reticulation the average farm had a 2 ½ KVA diesel generator. These were known as lighting plants and were mainly run at night to provide electric lights. Wood or coal ranges provided the water heating and cooking. Refrigerators were mainly kerosene, shearing plants were run by diesel or petrol motors. Since reticulation the coal ranges have been replaced by electric stoves and electric hot water cylinders. Refrigerators and deep freezes are electric. We now have many electrical appliances that were not available before reticulation like dishwashers etc. Shearing plants are now all electric, so the loss of rural reticulation or mains power would have a significant impact on the average farm.

What would I do without reticulated power?

Having had experience with alternative power systems, I would require a system that requires the minimum of maintenance and is simple to use.

- (a) I would install a low price 8-12 k/w generator to run the shearing machinery and workshop welder. I consider these low price generators are suitable for intermittent use only.
- (b) I would install solar photovoltaics panels to charge deep cycle batteries and an inverter to run light load house hold appliances.
- (c) I would install 2 gas stoves (bottle gas, one for the homestead and one for the shearer's quarters).
- (d) I would install 2 gas water heating systems (one for the homestead and one for the shearers quarters)

Other options

- (a) Wind power. Most rural facilities are in valleys away from suitable wind sites. Not an option in my area.
- (b) Mini Water Turbines. These aren't an option unless they are located close to where the electricity is needed and they can be high in maintenance requirements.

Why am I concerned?

My electricity is supplied by the Lines Company by way of a 11 KV single phase earth return system through rugged hill country. The line was mainly built by farmers about 50 years ago and very little upgrading has been done. The line has a high number of outages and must be nearing the end of its economic life. It could be patched up to run for many years at high cost. When outages occur they often have to be found by helicopter. I understand my electricity supply is one of the most uneconomical the Lines

Company have. At present my line charges are more than my electricity charges. If the line charges rise considerably some customers on the line might prefer to install an alternative system. Loss of customers would mean loss of line charge income making the line more uneconomic.

Conclusion

- (a) I support option (F). The subsidy required to maintain connections on uneconomic lines is recovered from all electricity users. There is considerable cross subsidisation by way of local government rates from rural areas to urban areas. Socialised costs are a fact of life in N.Z.
- (b) If my continuance of supply is going to be stopped, I would like 5 years notice.
- (c) Whatever the outcome of the Review line's companies should have to consult with consumers on uneconomic lines.