

# Building the Future: Our Plan to Electrify NZ

Over this term, National has made tremendous progress bolstering New Zealand's energy security – by enabling greater development of renewable energy through comprehensive RMA reform, ending Labour's oil and gas ban, and securing strategic reserves of coal, diesel, and LNG.

Now National is focused on helping Kiwis to become more energy independent and reduce their power bills by supporting them to electrify their own homes, farms, and small businesses.

A re-elected National Government will continue our plan to Electrify NZ by:

- **Launching the Home Energy Fund** – a central government and council-backed financing platform offering long-term loans, secured against the home and repaid through rates, so households can invest in solar, batteries, insulation and other energy resilience measures without large upfront costs.
- **Enabling electrification in the new planning system** – clear, national permitted-activity rules so Kiwis can install rooftop and ground-mounted solar, batteries and micro-hydro schemes on their own property without a consent.

## Home Energy Fund

Kiwi families are under pressure from rising power bills. Rooftop solar, batteries, insulation and modern electric appliances can ease that pressure and make homes more resilient – but high upfront cost put them out of reach for many households, and existing green loans from commercial banks are limited.

The Ratepayer Assistance Scheme, long advocated for by Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) and Rewiring Aotearoa, offers a practical, market-based answer by providing a low-interest loan secured against a homeowner's property and repaid over time on their rates bill.

A re-elected National Government will implement a narrower version of the Ratepayer Assistance Scheme, called the Home Energy Fund – a national financing platform jointly owned by central government and participating councils that offers ratepayers low-interest, long-term loans secured against their property.

The Home Energy Fund pays the approved installer upfront, and the homeowner repays the low-interest loan over ten years, either through a charge on their rates bill or on sale of their property.

Because these loans are secured by property and backed by Crown and local government balance sheets, they can be offered at low, competitive interest rates. Council participation will be voluntary, but based on advocacy from LGNZ, we expect strong interest from councils across New Zealand.

Energy resilience investments eligible for support through the Home Energy Fund include:

- Residential solar and battery storage,
- Insulation, heat pumps, and other investments in residential electrification.

Establishing the Home Energy Fund will require an amendment to the Local Government Act and a one-off Crown equity investment of \$7 million for a 20% shareholding in the new entity, with the balance funded by participating councils and the LGFA. Loans from the Home Energy Fund will be available to ratepayers with at least 20% equity in their property.

## Enabling electrification in the new RMA

This term, National delivered on our plan to Electrify NZ – turbo-charging new renewable energy projects by requiring resource consent decisions within one year and consents that last 35 years,

while cutting red tape holding back transmission and distribution upgrades. Four renewable energy projects have also been consented through Fast Track.

Those reforms are supporting a robust pipeline of new generation, but Kiwis still face costly, confusing rules to develop small-scale renewables on their own property, making the process slow and expensive.

For example, Rewiring Aotearoa found Environment Canterbury has required ground-mounted solar installations to apply for a water discharge consent, because rain runs off the panels and could carry bird droppings. Hurunui District Council, meanwhile, requires consent for any free-standing installation larger than 25m<sup>2</sup> - barely enough to power an average New Zealand home.

It's not just solar that's hard. Micro-hydro and battery storage also face fragmented and confusing consenting requirements region to region.

There are huge opportunities to supercharge small-scale renewables like solar and micro-hydro on Kiwis' own land. New Zealanders should be able to draw on the abundant natural resources on their own property with as little red tape as possible.

That's why the next National-led Government will go further. We will set clear, national rules so that small-scale renewables – rooftop and ground-mounted solar, micro-hydro and battery storage – are largely permitted as of right on your own property.

Specifically, National will:

- **Let property owners install rooftop solar without a consent**, even where height limits or landscape overlays would otherwise get in the way.
- **Make small-scale on-farm ground-mounted solar a permitted activity** with standard rules to manage genuine effects and sensible safeguards to protect land that is environmentally significant.
- **Allow small-scale battery storage not enclosed by an existing building as of right**, subject only to standard rules managing genuine effects.
- **Permit small run-of-river micro-hydro for on-site use**, where it stays below a set size and meets standard environmental conditions that protect the river, fish passage, and other water users.