



Understanding the Fast-track Application process

What's happening?

At Contact, we're looking at smarter ways to use our existing hydro power stations and assets, like Lake Hāwea, to ensure there is plenty of electricity for every New Zealander.

We are applying to the Government to use the **Fast-track Approvals Act (2024)** process to change how the Clutha Mata-au hydro scheme operates. The proposed changes include exploring options to:

1. adjust the operating range of Lake Hāwea by two metres. This would let us store more water to use and access when electricity demand is high, or rainfall is low.
2. temporarily reduce Lake Hāwea by two metres beyond normal operations, only to be done as a last resort if New Zealand ever faced a serious electricity shortage.

This process isn't part of the usual Resource Management Act (RMA). It's a new pathway created to enable approvals for nationally critical projects that will benefit New Zealand.

We are committed to keeping the community informed every step of the way.

[Learn more](#) about the Fast-track Approvals Act.

How would these proposed changes benefit New Zealand?

The proposed change to operating levels at Lake Hāwea would help generate more renewable electricity from our hydro dams, making sure there's enough power when demand is high – especially in winter.

Having the option to temporarily reduce the lake level as a last resort would help keep the power on during emergencies or extreme situations.





How the process works

There are two main stages:

1. Referral application

- Contact applies to the Government to refer the project into the Fast-track process.
- The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) manages the referral process. This includes checking how the proposal aligns with the Treaty of Waitangi and getting feedback from certain groups, like local councils, before the Minister makes a final decision.
- While there is no set timeframe, this stage can take around two to three months.

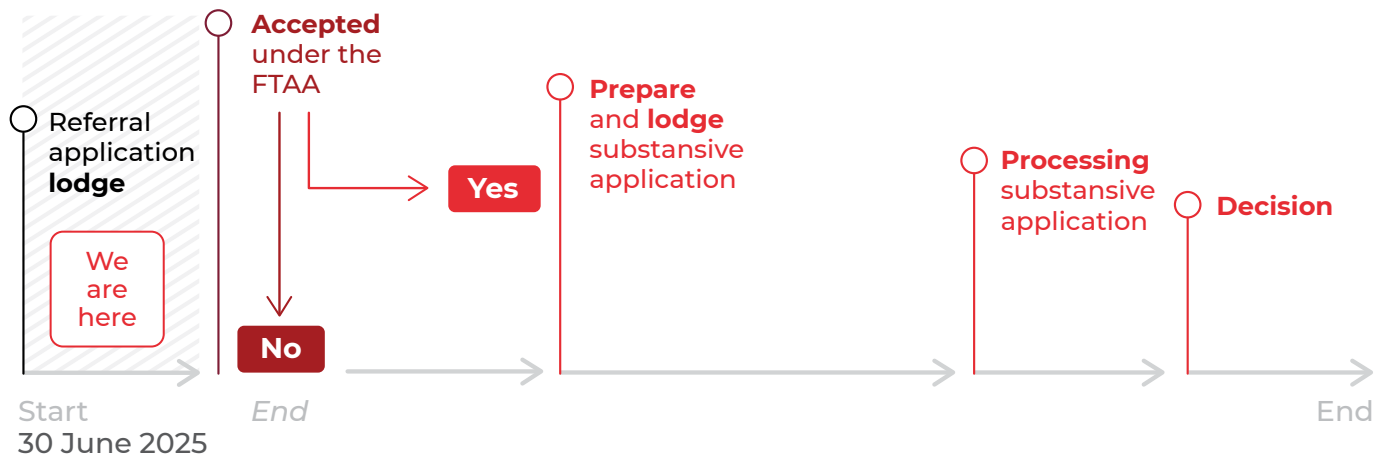
If accepted, Contact will have up to two years to prepare a full (substantive) application.

2. Substantive application

This is the detailed application that includes expert studies to understand the project's potential effects. Experts are currently expected to look into the following areas:

- Ecology and wildlife
- Dust and air quality
- Water flow and hydrology
- Cultural values
- Landscape and visual impact
- Recreation
- Economic effects
- Erosion and land stability

This information, along with comments from specified people through the process, helps the independent panel make its decision.



Want to know more?

Visit contact.co.nz/cluthahydroscheme or email hydro.engagement@contactenergy.co.nz

