



FAO Abdul Khan
Commerce Commission

2 October 2026

RFI 001 Waioatahe interruption, additional information, Question 2

Q2. What steps has Transpower taken since the previous two events and what are Transpower's plans now to ensure that forest owners meet their obligations under the Electricity Regulations so that trees do not impact transmission network operations.

[From previous response]

Since the previous vegetation-related events, Transpower has implemented a number of measures to improve identification and management of vegetation risks affecting the transmission network. These include implementation of vegetation-specific LiDAR surveys in 2023, and more undertaken recently on a two-year cycle, with resulting data used to model conductor positions under a range of operating and weather conditions. This allows us to identify vegetation violations with significantly improved accuracy to the previous methodology, establish work priorities, and support engagement with tree owners, forest owners, and managers.

[Additional information]

Using the tools described above, we record detailed information on tree species, height, and position for each span and tower location. We then prioritise engagement with forestry companies and managers based on identified vegetation violations. However, forestry owners and managers currently have no obligation under legislation—including the RMA and Electricity Act—or the Trees Regulations to maintain a prescribed setback from Transpower assets, so Transpower has no legislative or regulatory basis for requiring such setbacks.

The remedy for Transpower's view of vegetation violation can only be achieved through negotiation.¹

Forestry owners prefer to fell their own trees rather than have Transpower do so. Trees felled by Transpower are "cut to waste," resulting in lost commercial income for the forestry company.

¹ In some instances, we may be able to commence legal proceedings, after the fact, that tree owners were negligent. Litigation can take several years while doing nothing to stop trees being planted or removing high-risk trees, and is counter-productive to Transpower being able to obtain ongoing access for asset patrols and maintenance.

Negotiations therefore focus on avoiding premature felling and aligning tree removal with harvest schedules, which are typically based on a roughly 30-year cycle from planting to harvest.

Over the three years prior to Cyclone Vaianu, Transpower and its service provider proactively worked with forestry owners and their forestry managers to remove large sections of the forest along the EDG-WAI B line. This engagement involved reviewing the forward harvesting programme for each forestry block, developing an Electrical Hazard Management Plan (EHMP), and then removing the relevant section of forest in a controlled manner. As negotiations, maintaining good relationships with the landowners is paramount. Arriving at an EHMP may take 6 – 12 months, to accommodate harvests for favourable market conditions.

Since 2022, there have been four EHMPs developed in the section of EDG-WAI B line, in spans 84 to 118 (where the faults were), involving approximately 110–120 days of forestry removal along that section of the line. Transpower has provided electrical stand-over support (overseeing and supervising third party work occurring near live electrical assets), for the harvesting crews during felling operations adjacent to the circuit.

Next steps

Recent amendments to the Trees Regulations, introduced in 2026 but not yet in force, will improve Transpower's ability to manage vegetation risks. They enable notices requiring the removal of *fall-distance* trees and place limited restrictions on planting near electricity lines. Transpower will continue combining operational vegetation management, engagement with forest owners and managers, and advocacy for appropriate regulatory settings to reduce the risk of future vegetation-related interruptions.

Transpower has also initiated a programme of meetings with all forest managers and the service delivery manager in each region, to understand the time frames for harvesting.

Your sincerely

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