

Submission to Dunedin City Council opposing Proposed Sale of Aurora Energy 9 May 2024

All SCAN members who attended a recent discussion vehemently object to the proposed sale of Aurora Energy.

Wellbeing obligation of DCC

DCC's remit is to facilitate the wellbeing of ratepayers and the meeting of their basic needs: air, water, food, energy etc. To this end, it must take care of the fundamental infrastructure that has been built up communally over decades.

Loss of control

Electricity distribution is fundamental infrastructure, like the roads, the sewerage, the water supply, where surplus funds go towards the maintenance of it. It is a basic service, crucial to the wellbeing of people. Democratic local control over this is important. A sale will impact on the ability of council to have input into the direction of the lines company activities, including moving it towards carbon neutral operations. This would be detrimental to the council's ability to meet its 2030 Zero Carbon goal for Dunedin.

Gambling with rate payers' assets

A sale would mean gambling with rate payers' assets. A buyer would be given a monopoly to exploit and would prioritise profits to shareholders over maintenance and the wellbeing of people. There is the danger of the company being run down for short term gain and then having to be bought back by DCC at a much higher price to ensure fundamental services. The money invested from a sale could easily be lost on the market.

Alternatives

A consumer trust model like Waitaki Power Trust should be explored, that gives priority to consumer interests and allows more profit to be put towards maintenance and in service of local people the economy. This would alleviate the need for taking on more debt. If something must be sold, sell nonessential things, like the stadium. This way, DCC could recoup money that was diverted from Aurora maintenance for its build.