*aN ENERGY regulators’ Public interest toolkit*

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We expect our regulators to support the public interest, however what do we mean by ‘the public interest’ and how can we know that regulatory proceedings result in decisions that support it? Similar questions were top of mind in 2010 when the New Zealand Electricity Authority was established. In response, the Authority published its Foundation Documents which included the principles and procedures underpinning good consultation, a clear and precise explanation of its statutory objective and efficient regulation principles.

To assist other regulators looking to develop their own public interest definition and approach, this paper translates these key concepts into a ‘Public Interest Toolkit’ comprised of the following four checklists:

1. Regulatory Proposal Checklist - provides a logical roadmap to ensure the regulator (and not the utility) frames the application review process
2. Public Interest Checklist - assists regulators in first defining the public interest (for example, what is in and out of scope) and then evaluating options against the public interest definition
3. Consultation Checklist - ensures that utilities have ‘done their homework’ prior to filing their application
4. Efficient Regulation Checklist – supports the Public Interest Checklist by giving guidance on efficient regulation

It is hoped that this Public Interest Toolkit can assist regulators looking to develop their own public interest definition and then shape regulation to align private behaviour with it.