

FLEXFORUM |

28 August 2025

A report on FlexForum affairs in 2024-25

New Zealand has had a rich history of using flexibility with hot water heating ripple control although its use has fallen away in recent years. Today the level of potential flexibility is so much greater than just hot water heating with better metering data, innovative retail tariffs, Home Energy Management Systems, smart appliances, rooftop solar (with and without batteries) and EV charging. Even so, we are only harnessing a small proportion of what is possible. If we have the right evidence and the right institutional arrangements flexibility would make a significant contribution to affordability and security here and now.

Since coming in as FlexForum chair I have spoken with many members and stakeholders and am impressed with the effort being applied to unlocking the flex potential. From what I have learned, imagining what is possible and enlightened organisations taking a lead, are not the problem. The problem is the willingness and ability to use flexibility at scale.

While I have been meeting members and stakeholders a crisis has been unfolding in the New Zealand energy sector. As I have learned about the work being done to unlock flexibility and its potential to participate in meeting the challenges facing the sector I have thought a number of times "never let a good crisis go to waste." It is clear that more decision makers at each point of the supply chain and in regulatory bodies want to know how flex can help deliver a smart, sustainable, reliable, and affordable power system, and what actions are needed for flex to be a practical, scalable contribution to the security and affordability challenges confronting the energy system. Harnessing the potential of flexibility ordinarily makes good sense but it would be good if we can take advantage of the heightened level of interest and make flexibility a significant part of the solution to the current situation.

With these observations, here is a report on FlexForum activity for the past year.

- FlexForum membership
- A list of activities and achievements from the past year
- Observations from discussions with Members and partners over the past year.

FlexForum membership keeps growing

FlexForum attracts parties with a range of perspectives on flexibility but all interested in harnessing it. FlexForum membership has increased from 35 in August 2024 to 45 Members today.

The membership spans the electricity ecosystem. No other entity in New Zealand regularly brings together experts from transmission and distribution, electricity retailer, metering and data services, EV charging, software and connectivity suppliers, professional services, universities and real consumers.

This breadth means participation gives exposure to the experience and perspectives of fellow members, the opportunity to share problems and test ideas with flexibility experts, and stronger connections to flexibility activity.

Activities and achievements from the past year

FlexForum is not a large organisation and operates with ~ 1.75 FTEs. Getting things done greatly relies on the time committed by members, in addition to their day jobs, to share perspectives and expertise and support day to day operation.

With this in mind, the list of activities and achievements from the past year is impressive.

- developed and published [Flexibility Plan 2.0](#) in April 2025. The upgraded plan puts a more explicit focus on supporting the choices people have when considering and saying yes to flex, and has 41 steps to enable an evolution to a smart, flexible, and consumer-centric power system
- delivered Flex Day 2024 in October 2024 coming up with six ideas to accelerate progress delivering the Flexibility Plan
- partnered with EECA to support its scale demand flexibility pilot project, inking a services contract in April 2024. Five FlexForum members are collaborating with EECA on this project and the outputs will include several of the ideas identified at Flex Day 2024
- published a [deeper dive into the nature and source of the holes in the flexibility value](#) stack in March 2025. These insights were developed using workshops between September and November 2024 (following a request from the Electricity Authority) and a further workshop in February 2025. The exercise highlighted again the value of using structured workshops to identify facts and issues, test positions, and enable the iterative exploration of ideas.
- provided [10 pieces of advice](#) to the Commerce Commission, Energy Taskforce, Electricity Authority and MBIE on topics ranging from filling the holes in the value stack, to enabling people to get prompt and personalised advice to expanding the permitted voltage range.
- completed a second assessment of sector progress with delivering the Flexibility Plan.
- initiated a lunchtime FlexForum series giving members the opportunity to test and share flex ideas with members.

People are interested in what FlexForum is thinking and has to say through its website, newsletter and LinkedIn.

- The website saw 2467 new users in the year to July 2025, a 64% increase from the previous year.
- The monthly newsletter is the main way we share what FlexForum is up too. The mailing list increased 14% from 349 to 396 this year. The average (total) open rate for each newsletter is 45%. This is good for online newsletters. The average click through rate (CTR - how often people follow links in a newsletter) is high at 12%. An average CTR is 4-5%.
- FlexForum is not big on the socials, but LinkedIn followers increased by 48% over the year to July 2025 from 356 to 526. We shared about 4-5 posts every month. Average post engagement is about 60 a month, though has increased to 64/month in 2025.

Observations from discussions with Members and partners

A key part of my role as Chair is to make sure Members are getting value from their participation in FlexForum. Over the past year, this has led me to discuss their FlexForum experience and expectations with many Members and partners.

From the discussions, two key recurring messages stand out:

- People want to know what everyone else is doing to get more flexibility into the system.

- Progress towards unlocking the potential of flexibility to manage the system and for consumers to be rewarded for providing their flexible is not going fast enough.

These messages are reflected in the 2025 assessment of progress with the Flexibility Plan and provide a clear direction and purpose for FlexForum activity in 2026.

Closing comments

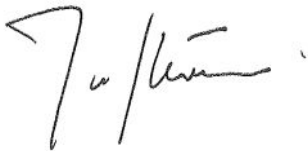
FlexForum is not an advocacy group. Nor a someone should group. It is a we will group. This is a great strength.

We are working to quantify the potential flexibility in the system today that is not being accessed but for better arrangements and greater interest in using it. Confirming the scale of flex available will focus the sector more.

FlexForum will continue to be here to support members walk the talk on flexibility and I look forward to playing my part alongside Craig in the coming year.

I would like to acknowledge:

- **The Steering Group.** Membership of the Steering Group is a voluntary position. Far from a perfunctory administrative function, this is a group of people who represent the membership and are fixated on '*making it easier for households, businesses and communities to maximise their value from flexibility*'. I particularly note the contribution of Shay Brazier and John Campbell who contributed significantly, and are stepping down from the Steering Group at the AGM.
- **Members.** The many conversations with members that I've had in the past 12 months have exposed me to the engine room for making flexibility easier for people. Your efforts in your day jobs and in turning up to FlexForum sessions to discuss, debate, and test thinking about critical flexibility topics is how we will unlock the full potential and benefits of flex for the power system and households, businesses and communities.



Toby Stevenson
Independent Chair
FlexForum