



MEDIA RELEASE  
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## **WEL Energy Trust grant funding skyrockets from \$4.5M to \$9.5M**

Waikato's environment, economy, and communities are set to be the big winners of a \$5 million increase after WEL Energy Trust's annual grant funding allocation skyrocketed from \$4.5 million this year to \$9.5 million proposed for next financial year.

WEL Energy Trust's Draft 2020-2021 Annual Plan was released today (27 February) for public feedback.

Trust Chair Mark Ingle says the increase of more than \$5million is the result of a long-term strategy to achieve transformational impact across the Waikato in regional priority areas aligned with global goals.

"The increases will support region-wide innovation and collaboration that we haven't seen before. Potentially this could be the gamechanger for achieving the long-term systemic change outlined in the Trust's community investment strategy which also supports the outcomes of the Waikato Wellbeing Project and is based on the United Nations' global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," said Ingle.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern joined Waikato community and business leaders to launch the region's first set of wellbeing targets to end poverty, fight inequality and act on climate change. The targets provide a powerful tool for councils, iwi, philanthropic organisations, businesses and community groups to inform decision making and take collective action.

"We know that to change and improve systems that really make a difference to communities in the long term, we need to look at a change in thinking," said Ingle.

WEL Energy Trust is a Community Trust which is 100% shareholder of WEL Networks Ltd, the electricity lines distribution business operating in the Waikato region.

In the past two years WEL Energy Trust has supported WEL Networks Ltd to replace the previous electricity lines rebate programme with lower lines charges to residential customers, and in the development of innovations such as OurPower, a low-cost electricity retailer. These changes are aimed at lowering electricity prices across the region, especially for consumers most in need, and have also led to this significantly higher grant and investment income for the Trust.

*Here for the Community'*

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“With that comes the responsibility to think very strategically about the best ways to distribute that income, so we are looking forward to receiving applications from organisations across the Waikato whose kaupapa aligns with the Waikato Wellbeing Project (2030) objectives,” said Ingle.

The \$9.5 million includes a \$3.5M grants budget , with an additional \$2.5M for impact grants to support the Waikato Wellbeing Project targets, and a special grant of \$3M to be paid over five years to support a backbone organisation to help people to navigate the complex ecosystems associated with catalysing the Waikato Wellbeing Targets into action. A further \$500,000 is proposed in 2020/21 to support organisational development, collaborative activities and measurement of outcomes.

“A pool of this size also means we are very interested in hearing from the community about where we’re heading and how we’re doing it. We are asking people to visit our website and read the annual plan alongside the community investment strategy, then provide general comment on the strategic direction and five priority outcome areas,” said Ingle.

“Through this feedback process we also hope to continue to increase understanding in the community of what the Trust is trying to achieve.”

*People can provide feedback by reading the draft annual plan alongside the 2019-2022 community investment strategy and completing the survey on the Trust’s website [www.welenergytrust.co.nz](http://www.welenergytrust.co.nz) or by emailing [shelley@welenergytrust.co.nz](mailto:shelley@welenergytrust.co.nz) by 19 March. People are also invited to speak to their submissions at the Trust Meeting at Perry House, Hamilton on 25 March.*

**ENDS**

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**Attachment: Image for WEL Energy Trust Chair, Mark Ingle**

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