



Tom Mackenzie

Bright idea could save millions of energy dollars

By David Bruce

Oamaru: An electricity efficiency programme with the potential to save New Zealand the \$400 million cost of building generation plants is to be piloted in South Canterbury.

If successful there, it could be rolled

out nationwide and save about 270MW peak load of electricity — about half of what Meridian Energy's proposed Project Aqua power scheme would have generated.

The Household Efficient Light Project (Help) is the brainchild of Energy Mad, an organisation headed by Christchurch

engineers Tom Mackenzie and Chris Mardon.

It involves encouraging 55% of New Zealand households — equivalent to 800,000 homes — to replace five most commonly used light bulbs with energy-efficient Ecobulb compact fluorescent lamps (bulbs).

If that could be achieved, about \$407

million would be saved building generation plants, peak load would be reduced and consumers would save about \$5 per household over the average 10,000 hour life of the bulb.

An environmental spin-off is that load bodies would have 36 million fewer light bulbs deposited in their landfills.

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The national proposal was outlined at the recent New Zealand Energy Trusts' conference in Wellington.

Energy Mad is looking to help community trusts to help implement the project, with the assistance of a major supermarket chain.

The aim is to sell five energy-efficient light bulbs at a voucher discounted price of \$10, subsidised by energy trusts.

And that is why Line Trust South Canterbury is keen to be involved.

South Canterbury chairman Rick Ramsay confirmed yesterday when contacted the pilot scheme would be launched at the end of this month.

The trust was investing about \$200,000 in the project, which would involve sales of about 65,000 light bulbs to 13,000 of South Canterbury's 21,000 homes.

"I'm really excited about it and it's amazing no-one has

thought about it before," Mr Ramsay said.

While it was known energy-efficient light bulbs could save electricity and money, no-one had put together a national programme which could be utilised at a community level. Mr Ramsay emphasised the project was community, not commercially-based.

It was completing negotiations with a supermarket chain to market the light bulbs.

Before the start of the pilot project, energy consumption

would be monitored, then checked as light bulbs were installed.

But the key would be a media and advertising campaign to ensure the sales target was met to maximise savings, Mr Ramsay said.

Once the South Canterbury pilot programme was completed, other energy trusts would be approached to take part.

That would lead to a nationwide campaign, hopefully about the middle of next year.

Waitaki Power Trust chairman Dennis Norman is interested in the project — he already has about a dozen energy-efficient bulbs in his home.

Under the trust's deed, it was charged with looking at the efficient use of electricity, as was Network Waitaki.

"It's an initiative I believe we can look at and do something about it," Mr Norman said.

He planned to raise the project for discussion at the next trust meeting.