Submission to the Merino Solar Farm EIS

Community Energy for Goulburn Inc
January 2026

BACKGROUND

Community Energy for Goulburn Inc (CE4G)[1] is a community association based in Goulburn NSW, focussed on establishing renewable energy projects in the local region. Its first project is a community owned 1.8MW AC solar farm being constructed by a cooperative established by CE4G in 2020 - Goulburn Community Energy Cooperative (CGEC)[2].

CE4G, in collaboration with CGEC has raised over $3.3M from mainly local investors and received a $2.3M grant from the NSW Government to build the solar farm with battery on the outskirts of Goulburn. The cooperative has 300 members, 80% of whom are from the local region.

SUBMISSION

CE4G supports the construction of a solar farm in the Tirrannaville area but subject to a number of conditions:

1. The establishment of a significant benefit sharing fund based on recent industry best practice.

The current guidelines by the NSW Dept Planning of $850 / MW pa is inadequate when compared with the potential profits from the project, and in comparison with recent industry practice (eg Winterbourne, Pottinger Energy Park, Collector wind farm, etc). We believe the project can and should contribute to a benefit sharing fund at a much higher rate, and include financial incentives for neighbours, support for substantial community projects, and contributions to the local council. Small scale community projects such as sports facilities should be avoided. **The current proposed financial contribution to benefit sharing is inadequate.**

2. A commitment from the developers to employ local people and local businesses on the project wherever possible

[1] www.ce4g.org.au
[2] www.goulburnsolarfarm.com.au

Our experience with the community owned solar farm is that employment of local workers and businesses has the benefit of keeping as much financial benefit within the community as possible and reduces any local opposition to the project. While acknowledging that external expertise is necessary in a project of this complexity, there are local businesses and workers already familiar with solar projects of modest commercial size and the community can benefit from employing these assets in the project.

3. Financial support for the establishment of a community energy hub in Goulburn

Local Energy Hubs are a network of regional outreach centres to provide information and support to help our community navigate the energy shift – from home electrification to large-scale renewables – delivered by trusted, local people. The Goulburn region could benefit from such a hub that would educate and inform the local population about the benefits of renewables in the region.

> "The creation of a network of Local Energy Hubs would create avenues for local participation and build the trust needed to achieve our decarbonisation goals, while delivering long-term regional development."
> **Helen Haines MP,** Independent Federal Member for Indi

4. Opportunity for local people to invest in the project

Our experience is that there is a strong appetite for investing in renewable projects that keep the profits within the community. The cooperative has 300 members, over 80% of whom are local people, who have invested $3.3M of their own money in the project, commenced and auspiced by CE4G. Providing opportunities for locals to invest in local projects has the additional benefit of securing support for such projects among the community.

5. Creation of a training fund for apprentices to enter the renewable industry.

In order for a long term benefit to the community from this project, a fund that can support future training of local people in the renewable energy industry should be established by the proponent. This may take the form of a scholarship with the local TAFE for apprenticeships, or study at university in a field associated with renewable energy, for local applicants.

In general, CE4G supports the construction of renewable projects in the region provided they contribute financial assistance to the local community. We support the construction of the Merino Solar Farm.

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