

My name is Ian Anderson, I am a retiree and a farmer.

I am writing in conditional support for the Merino Solar Farm

In recent years Crookwell 3 Windfarm has been built on a neighboring property less than 2 kilometers from me. I understand the issues of being a neighbour to a renewable energy project site!

The issues around social licence for Renewable Energy Projects have yet to be properly addressed in NSW. Multinationals do tend to railroad their plans and actions through over local farmers.

The access road to Crookwell 3 Windfarm borders my property and was crown land and a neglected track. Now this track is a significant road which supports heavy machinery and during the years of construction there were some 56 truck movements per day over a multi year period.

Trees which formed a windbreak to my property were destroyed to make way for delivery of turbines and heavy equipment.

I have received zero compensation for the disruption to my farm and family health.

So yes, I am in favour of renewable energy farms, but I believe particular attention needs to be paid to formalizing compensation to neighbouring properties and in this case our local Goulburn Community also.

It seems, as someone who has had first hand experience, that any compensation or support from the renewable company is only provided based on the ability of neighbouring farmers and local community members to negotiate with these multinational corporations, who know that their project is 'state significant' and therefore railroad their project through with little concern to community impact.

If Merino is to be given licence to build the solar farm, and I believe that they should be, specific, substantial, community benefits should be enforced.

I believe at this point in time neither Gundary Solar Farm nor Merino Solar Farm have fully engaged with the community to assure us of their commitments to build a solar farm that directly benefits our community financially: neighbours; TAFE and skill development; community projects i.e. Rail Trail; job creation during construction and on going; local business hiring; electricity discounts for residents, etc.

These multinationals are billion, if not trillion dollar companies, and they bring their knowledge, skill and capital to help create more profit for their shareholders. They have a great opportunity to invest into our community so that we benefit too! Co-investment opportunities should be a government default position, enabling our community members to be a partner in the project.

We have a community owned solar farm here in Goulburn, going online on March 11th. The people of Goulburn are not against Solar or Renewable Energy, we just want to be a partner in the outcome. We want to be a beneficiary to the profits, because, as a community, we carry the load of disruption.

In conclusion, I conditionally support the construction of Merino Solar Farm on the proposed site, provided there are substantial ongoing benefits to neighbouring farmers and our broader Goulburn community.

It is clear that NSW Government will see this (and other) renewable projects as State Significant and therefore given a blanket go ahead.

If the electorate is not satisfied with the proposed benefits from the project, they will vote accordingly.

This project (and Gundry) has the opportunity to be a flagship project, setting the standard for how renewable projects can be constructed in NSW and in partnership with the local community. Let's make it so!

Best regards
Ian Anderson