

GOULBURN MULWAREE LANDCARE LANDSCAPES INC.2300552



This submission supports the Gundry Solar Farm Project with the following mandatory provisos:

1. The provision of electricity at a discount to residents of Goulburn who are renting and therefore cannot mitigate their power bills through installation of roof top solar;
2. The provision of electricity at a discount to charitable organisations in the Goulburn Mulwaree Shire who provide services and accommodation to disadvantaged groups within the community;

Other Issues

Having read the EIS in some detail, GMLL sees no indication of any innovations employed in this project – it is a “bog-standard” solar park. The “maybe” mention of Agrisolar activities - the opportunistic grazing of sheep – merely saves the operator the cost of grass cutting to reduce fire risk.

I wish to disclose that I also have a position on the Working Group at Western Sydney University developing a CRC bid for 2025 on the precise topic of Agrisolar. This is in no way a conflict with my role as Chair of GMLL. In fact, the entire CRC bid developed out of my exposure as a community representative, to the Gundry Solar Project and has received endorsement from our Committee. Therefore, GMLL proposes that it will actively assist the proponent in gaining social licence for the project if:

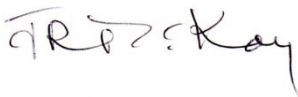
- LightsourceBP (LSBP) undertakes a pilot study on at least 8 hectares (which should produce 4 MWp dc) where 50% of the area is used for elevated panels for the purpose of cattle grazing. The other 50% should have spacing of 10 metres in width to permit appropriate horticulture and cropping (vegetables, lucerne or cereal haymaking). Preferably all panels should be tracking north/south and should have the capacity to retract to a vertical position to allow for the passage of machinery when required.

- GMLL will assist LPBP with labour and introductions to our network of scientists – agricultural, environmental and social – to promote the pilot. It will also endorse, in writing, any grant applications that LSBP may care to submit to support the additional expenditure that might be incurred through the pilot.
- GMLL is aware of the full Agrisolar projects that LSBP has undertaken and continues to undertake in the Northern Hemisphere (see Solar Power Europe Handbook and White Papers). The Stop the Gundry Solar Farm group has been adamant that the LSBP project will remove traditional agricultural land from production and will damage the ecology of the area. Water retention, reduced evaporation, crop protection (hail, sunburn and frost), biodiversity enhancement, soil carbon sequestration and improved aesthetics are the co-benefits of Agrisolar together with improved energy outputs through heat reduction. Why should Goulburn not gain the benefit of research and development that LSBP has carried out abroad as part of this project?
- This pilot would partly counteract the objections received from neighbours and Council. Recent discussions held between me, and Council, have indicated a softening of attitude if Agrisolar strategies were to be employed. It is obvious that developing the whole site as an Agrisolar farm would be risky and expensive, but the small pilot would be cost effective and able to be promoted favourably locally and nationally as the first of its kind.

In conclusion, I would recommend that a Community Benefit Fund of best practice proportions be established and run independently of Council or other organisations that might have a conflict of interest (including Landcare). Annual rounds of competitive grant applications should be considered by a panel of experts from outside the LGA as is managed by Transgrid, Veolia and a number of philanthropic organisations.

Gundry Solar Project should blaze a new trail for solar power in Australia, not continue business as usual. We need to meet our emissions reduction targets and Agrisolar is one of the avenues to achieve our goals.

Sincerely



Julia McKay
Chair

<https://www.solarpowereurope.org/insights/thematic-reports/agrisolar-handbook-1>