

**Submission
No 21**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY
ZONES (REZ) ON RURAL AND REGIONAL
COMMUNITIES AND INDUSTRIES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Mr John Kelly
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Problems Caused by NSW Govt. Planning Dept's (DPIE) sponsorship of Solar Companies

(So called solar farms). A farm produces food or fibre.

“ The installation of solar panels on Prime Agricultural Farmland has become the most divisive issue affecting the Farming Community since the advent of hobby farms resulting in the loss of production of food and fibre.”

The decision to appoint an Agricultural Commissioner was made by the then NSW Ag. minister Nial Blair in Kelly's machinery shed Wongarboon early 2020. “The Land” newspaper reported the appointment of Mr. Daryl Quinlivan as the Ag. Commissioner on the 3rd December 2020 whose first announcement was a “last chance to keep prime ag land”. The Dubbo branch of NSW Farmers Association has sent three detailed submissions, the first on 28th February 2021 to the Ag Commissioner but have not received a reply. Since then another 2,000 acres have been covered with solar panels near Wellington to total over 4,000 acres of solar panels between Wellington and Dubbo.

The Planning Dept. held an information meeting at the Taronga Western Plains Zoo prior to the imposition of the Suntop Solar Collector on prime agricultural land close to and due west of Wellington. 40 Local farmers all voiced their objection to the Solar Panels.

The following includes constructive suggestions raised by those in attendance :--

Solar Panels should only be placed on land not suitable for mainstream agriculture.

Solar Panels could be placed on land reclaimed after mining.

Solar panels should be placed on desert areas where the resultant power can be transmitted by a single wire D.C. to the existing network then converted to AC. The USA has used this method of electricity generation and transmission.

The Suntop solar panels covering 800 hectares (2000 acres) have provided excessive runoff causing soil erosion to adjoining land holders. The visual pollution to nearby farm residences is unacceptable.

Neighbouring farmers public liability insurances will increase as the risk of an accidental on farm fire burning the solar panels could cost \$200m.

A neighbouring Suntop farmer has not been able to obtain comprehensive farm insurance for \$90 million cover

Neighbourly relationships that have existed for generations have now broken down to a stage that farmers adjoining the solar panels are not speaking to the ex farmers that have sold out to the solar company.

Usually neighbouring farmers and Local Govt. are not informed of adjoining solar panels for some months after an ex farmer agrees to sell to a solar company at up to four times the market value.

The NSW Govt. Planning Department will not take any responsibility for problems caused by the solar panel company to the adjoining farmer land holders. Any dispute that may occur would have to be solved by court action.

If a fire started in the Suntop solar panels by lightning or an electrical fault the resultant toxic fumes and smoke could necessitate the complete evacuation of the population of Wellington within an hour. Components in the solar panels include Cadmium, Lead and Arsenic. Conventional on land fire control measures would be unable to contain and extinguish the fire. Recently a grass started near solar panels near Wellington.

Local RFS were able to extinguish the fire. The solar company only had a 1950's Knapsack for fire control.

The Suntop property once a most productive grain, prime lamb and cattle enterprise has had all native trees, contour banks and fences removed so as to install boundary to boundary solar panels. NSW Farmers had asked the solar company to provide a 400m buffer with adjoining farmers but only 4m has been provided. District farmers are unable to compete with tax payer heavily subsidised solar companies to buy prime land and keep it in agriculture. Offers to purchase land from over 18 different solar companies for solar panels have been up to Four times the market value. Taxpayer contributions now total \$36 Billion annually to the ruinables.

Many local farmers have received above market offers from solar companies including a company who's head office is in China but most thankfully have rejected the offers so as to maintain their prime farmland in agriculture.

Mid 2024 Energy Co. has made available \$20m tax payer grants for community projects within Orana Region Energy Zone so as to bribe the community to accept the ruinables.

The solar panels at Suntop have a forecast life of 25 years then the Dept. claimed that the land can be rehabilitated in 18 months. Farmers at the meeting were insulted, that 50 years of improvements can be replaced in 18 months.

The Planning Dept. has ignored the farming community's objections and presently work has completed on installation of solar panels on 4,000 acres of Prime Farmland west of Wellington.

Australia only has 4 % of it's land area arable, suitable for growing food crops

The only reference to the present use of the district's prime farmland on the Dept's website is that it is Wiradjiry country, with no acknowledgement of agricultural production over the last 150 years.

Presently the Kilby and Kelly family's have the threat of solar panels adjacent to their Dubbo district farms. Apparently the NSW Planning Dept has given approval for this so called development.

We are appealing to the Ag. Commissioner Mr. Daryl Quinlivan to revoke the Planning Dept's permission to install more solar panels on prime agricultural farm land so as to set a precedent for the Planning Department (D P I E) to realise prime farm land can not be taken out of food and fibre production.

At the Annual General Meeting of the National Party in Port Macquarie , 17th June 2022, Mike Blake and I proposed the following agenda item:-- *That Conference call on the Federal Government to remove all Subsidies available to the Alternative (Ruinable) industry.* My supporting information included the following " Why damage our food and fibre production for a short term energy generation when tax payer's money wasted, could have developed a Nuclear Power Generation Industry, " was received by acclamation from the Conference floor.

The Suntop solar panels were the first large scale solar panel installation on Prime Agricultural Farmland in Australia. A recent ariel inspection by drone has indicated dryland salinity which had been avoided by previous farming practices. The leaching of the components as predicted by Prof. Ian Plimer, including Cadmium, Lead and Arsenic over the projected 25 year life of the solar panels combined with salinity will most likely render the once prime farmland contaminated and out of food and fibre production indefinitely.

Recently in the USA 1,000 acres of solar panels were smashed by a hail storm leaving the components in the top soil. How will the area be rehabilitated if ever? A tornado destroyed a path through another large scale solar panels.

Recently in East Anglia UK a solar panel plantation spontaneously combusted. Two nearby villages were evacuated.

As a member of the " Central West Orana Regional Energy Zone Community Reference Group " I am gagged each time I try to raise the problems caused by ruinables, by the so called independent chair. I feel it is futile of me to persist in this role while the Dept. Planning has no intension to consider the value of Prime Agricultural Farmland.

Late 2023 Energy Co. invited residents from within the ORANA REZ to comment on the need for ruinables. The results were 367 against, 3 in favour and 11 undecided.

The \$36 Billion annually of tax payer funds wasted on ruinables could have built 6 Modular Nuclear Power Stations placed on the site of existing coal powered power stations then use the existing powerline network for power distribution.

445 Nuclear Power stations have been built in 31 countries around the world but none in Australia.

Australia has supplied uranium to other countries including Russia.

Existing Nuclear Power Stations have a working life of over 60 years utilising 97% of input uranium.

Dr. David Gillespie MP, Senator Matt Canavan, Barnaby Joyce MP, Keith Pitt MP, Peter Dutton MP, Ted O'Brien MP shadow minister for energy, Prof. Ian Plimer, Robert Parker and Sky News presenters Chris Kenny and Gary Hardgrave are our main promotors of transition to Nuclear Power generation.

John Kelly, Former Chair Dubbo branch NSW Farmers and member State General Council