

**Submission
No 143**

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

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Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry: Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on Rural and Regional Communities and Industries.

NSW Parliamentary Inquiry request to bring a Halt to All Renewable Projects pending a full and transparent Inquiry.

The “out of scope”, “out of control”, without proper, efficient regulation or local considerations of these renewable projects alone should require that a “state wide” halt to all these projects be implemented immediately.

Our recent and ongoing experience with Venn Energy seems to be proof that there are no appropriate measures or legislation in place to register and track these companies or protect the people they bully, cajole, coerce and railroad into acceptance of otherwise unacceptable terms, conditions and risks.

In order to explain our position, we will offer the following information as severely impacted neighbours to the Proposed Boree Solar Project at Geurie.

Our farm shares approximately 5 kms of boundaries with 3 of the secured properties. We are “downhill” from all 3 properties. Therefore, our outlook on 3 sides would be completely consumed by the proposed project.

Objections to the Boree Solar Project (Geurie) are as follows but by no means limited to our thoughts and experience as captured below:

Severe Lack of Appropriate or Timely Consultation:

- Consultation by Venn Energy and Ethos Urban has been insufficient and deliberately diversionary causing acute mental and emotional stress to the community of affected residents. For example;
- The host land holders were contacted prior to us and as Geoff Stocker-Lavelle and Marie Duffy stated over the phone on 2nd April 2025 they have “secured the land” already.
- Geoff Stocker-Lavelle commented that he could not get in touch with us in order to consult us. A letter to our address via Australia Post would’ve sufficed.
- Our first knowledge of the Boree Solar Project was on 27th March 2025. We do not have a mail delivery run and have to go to the Post Office to collect our mail. Many others are away weeks at a time and would not have received this notification in good time.

- For a meeting with Venn Energy plus an “independent” consultant we only had a week in which to respond and request a meeting which was only another week away. We were told that 2 people would be at the meeting there were 3, at one of the other neighbouring properties 5 people showed up.
- The timelines are totally unacceptable. People are busy, they have jobs, or stock and land to manage, some are on holidays, etc. This is not a, business to business consultation, this involves peoples’ lives, livelihoods and lifestyles. These timelines require a kneejerk response to action which causes unacceptable stress to people who should have been consulted some years ago at the point of initial inquiries into “securing” host landholders for a “proposed” project.
- Therefore, this process has not been transparent, in fact, it appears to have been deliberately evasive. This does not bode well for Venn Energy’s reputation here or further afield.
- We are not interested in hearing glib responses such as; “we adhere to strict government guidelines”. When we have experienced no such thing with Venn Energy or Ethos Urban (their supposedly unbiased consultation team).
- Marie Duffy mentioned several times that Venn adheres to strict Government Guideline and Regulations, however, we since been informed that once contractors enter the land they will damage the contour banks and change the balance which the biodiversity order relies on, as do we, the adjoining land holders.
- We are by far one of the most affected neighbours and expect that we should have been consulted much earlier. Earlier being “fully transparent” community consultation prior to “securing” properties. The landowners that have agreed to Venn Energy’s proposal, I’m sure, have no idea of the “full extent” of what they have signed up for.

Water Management:

- Where our properties sit and considering ALL of our water comes from the Proposed Area. It is inevitable that this water flow and

quality will not only be disrupted but destroyed forever, thereby, destroying our farming and biodiversification needs.

- All of the surrounding properties to us have contour banks, dams and gullies that are well established and work in order to slow and share the surface water across the land, some being shared up to 3 times between the properties before it makes its way down to our dams, the biodiversity area of our property and beyond. Change to any of the contour banks in any way will irreparably damage this system and thereby the downstream ecology.
- Excessive use of the water from dams will unbalance the flow and affect our dams. Our properties' dams are our only source of water for our livestock, crops and downstream to the area of Bio-Diversification – without them – we cannot operate; nor, I fear, can the environment cope.
- Water is required throughout construction of these solar farms. The townships of Geurie and Wongarbron do not have the water resources to supply the requirements.
- Ongoing water is required to ensure functioning solar panels, watering of trees, etc. The townships of Geurie and Wongarbron do not have the water resources to supply the requirements.

Toxicity:

- Soil disturbance due to the installation of systems would require the management of the huge weed burden to follow with selective herbicides which are “known” carcinogens. Add this to the water catchment, dams and biodiversity will lead to an environmental disaster.

Agricultural Impact:

- Productive land classified as primary production should be used for primary production and not be even considered as industrial wastelands, which is effectively what happens when solar, wind and the infrastructure to support these project, are installed. Many parts have good soil and well established native and improved pastures. Drilling holes and concreting in of posts to support thousands of panels obviously damages the soil profile. Trenching in

cables will mix the soil horizons together mixing the layers, humus top soil being A horizon, together with the next layer known as B horizon together with rock and clay will permanently reduce if not kill the land for any future use agriculturally.

Biodiversity & Environment:

- As our property has a large biodiversity order area, that is not common in the area, there is an abundance of wildlife and it would need to be kept as it is. Any risk to the well-established balance of the ecosystem being changed is of great concern. The area is a form of filter that absorbs the surrounding properties' water. Habitat for birds of prey that hunt on the surrounding farms. Yes, birds of prey; eagles, hawks, falcons, kites. It is widely known around the area that there are breeding pairs of wedge tail eagles on several properties – amazing. We also have threatened species of birds. The risk of change to the balance of nature is too great. The water that feeds into the area all comes from the proposed Boree Solar Project (Geurie) areas. A detailed study is paramount, “prior to” any further progress or applications being made by Venn Energy.

Fire Risk:

- The location of BESS units as stated by Marie Duffy as she pointed across our landscape and above is to be spread along the project. With a large biodiversity order adjoining and easement running from the Mitchell Highway to Firbank Road this is a huge risk for everyone. Our property has 5 kms of boundaries to the proposal and with the risk of thermal runaway in BESS being not just possible but plausible, makes this proposal unacceptable due to the catastrophic risk it poses to us, the surrounding properties, stock and human life. Our Rural Fire Service (RFS) has stated they are not allowed to fight fires on solar farms. Even if all BESS units were to be located in one place with appropriate mitigation installed the risk is still far too great.

Visual Pollution:

- We would be heavily impacted by seeing a solar array of panels on 3 sides of our property, approximately 5 kms worth.
- Glare from the solar panels would also create interference with our everyday life and health.
- Night time lighting on-site, would interfere with our night sky, wildlife, stock, lifestyle and health.

Noise Pollution:

- During the construction phase of the proposed project, noise levels would be unacceptable for us, with heavy trucks and machinery, post drivers and various other machinery required.
- IF such a project were to go ahead there would be Battery Systems that would be humming and creating constant noise pollution.

Dust and Air Quality:

- Self explanatory.

Interference with Trees and Wildlife Corridors

- Self explanatory.

End of Life Clean Up:

- Venn may have their name on the contract BUT if Venn is sold off or closes its door as is typical of companies prior to End of Life of Project. There is some sort of fund, however, this is, apparently, not implemented until 5 years prior to the end of the project. In Venn's case this would be in 25 years.
- Who is then obliged to clean up the solar panels, cabling, posts, concrete, reparation of lands, contours, water flow, fencing, re-seeding the ground, replacing the micro-biome that is lost and indeed bring the land back to a productive state for agriculture?

We moved here for the peace, the quiet, the vast rural vistas and the opportunity to live in harmony with nature in a self-sustaining manner.

I would not be able to live here on our piece of paradise should such a project go ahead.

How would Venn and the State Government then compensate us? How would you compensate 15 years of dreaming, planning and financing such a dream? Where would we then move to? How much sweat equity would we then need to create another dream? This is not like selling an apartment or a suburban house. This is where we have become part of the land and all that entails.

These projects are “denying Australians our food security”. Lands designated “Primary Production” are being turned into vast industrial complexes with massive impacts on local communities and the environment – none of which are being considered or respected by these companies.

From the moment construction begins with any of these projects there is “irreversible” damage to the soils, waterways and air quality.

There are also massive human rights issues involved in the mining of the products used in these Battery Energy Storage Systems and infrastructure which have never been taken into consideration. And yet, as a country, we are forced to accept and ignore these global atrocities.

We’ve all seen wildfires, they’re wild because they are “out of our control”. On this risk basis alone all work on these “renewables” should come to an immediate STOP!

All of these things are completely unacceptable. Australia needs to take back its lands, listen to the voice of the people and the communities to be impacted, not the politicians who are supposed to protect us, as quite clearly, this is currently not the case.

We are only too happy to further assist with this State Inquiry.

With Regard
Mary Noglik & Les Dwyer-Gray