

## Good News Friday Edition 8 – Community Owned Solar Farms



### POWER TO THE PEOPLE

There is a growing desire from many of us to be directly involved in our community's transition to a clean energy future. In Edition 2 we heard that Canberra's (ACT's) transition to 100% clean energy was supported by Community Solar Farms like 'Solar Share'. But how does it work and what are my options? This is a growth area and the models for community investment are also maturing.

In the regional area where I live on the south coast of NSW, we have a community organisation (not-for-profit) called Repower Shoalhaven who has been supporting business, community groups and institutions by raising capital funds through local investment for over 7 years. They can offer a \$0 upfront cost for the installation and immediate savings on the electricity costs for the supported business (community group etc). The business owns the system at the end of the investment term. Last year, Repower Shoalhaven, partnered with a clean energy market retailer to build the first Solar Farm (3MW) in the Shoalhaven Region with \$500,000 of community investment. I was fortunate to be one of the investors for the project. It feels really good that I am contributing to clean energy on large scale to support my community. I also worked with the installation team installing some 8000 solar panels. Great fun!

[Repower Shoalhaven | Local Solar Power & Energy Projects](#)

### Grong Grong Community Solar Farm

[\(3\) Facebook](#) (3 minute promo video)

A new and very interesting project is a couple of weeks away from coming online for anyone to get involved. The 1.7MW solar farm is located on farmland not far from the NSW Riverina town of Grong Grong and will pioneer the first large scale 'Solar Garden' in Australia. The garden plot in this case is 3kW of solar panels. The Haystacks Solar Garden is an exciting partnership initiative that will allow 333 people who can't have roof top solar to participate in the clean energy transition. So, if you are a renter, live in an apartment or don't have an appropriate sunny roof - this project provides a solution.

Enova Community Energy from northern NSW has been selected as the electricity retailer and will credit the solar power generated for each solar gardener on their electricity bill. [Haystacks Solar Garden - Australia's first large-scale Solar Garden \(enovaenergy.com.au\)](http://enovaenergy.com.au)

Further to this there is also the opportunity for anyone to become a community investor.

What does the funding model look like? It comprises of 3 streams.

1. In February 2020, the project received \$1.3m from the NSW Government Community Regional Energy Fund.
2. The Haystacks Solar Garden Cooperative members (333 members NSW residents only) will contribute \$1.4m
3. Community Shareholder investment of \$0.6m (from \$250)

If you want to find out more about getting involved see link below through Komo Energy who are managing the development and installation of the farm.

[Home - Grong Grong Solar Farm](#)

The idea of farmers combining agriculture with renewable energy will, in my estimation, become common place in the near future, especially if they are located relatively close to regional towns. Everyone can benefit. The farmer receives an additional income stream. Energy for the community is generated locally. Business and community members can invest and receive a return, creating jobs and investment locally. They build and own the infrastructure providing more energy security and resilience for their community.

I will leave you with some quotes from the Solar Farm landholder Gemma Purcell...

*“As farmers we know first hand the challenges facing primary producers in the Riverina, any opportunity to diversify farm revenue streams builds resilience into our business”*

*“We already grow breakfast oats, bread wheat, malted barley and a decent steak for our city counterparts, why not add solar energy into the mix so they can boil their kettle, toast their bread, heat the pan and chill their beer with clean energy that we have harvested for them?”*