

Dear Dr. Kerry Schott.

As an octogenarian and former Federal Member of Parliament I am appalled at the present Federal and State Government policies in regard to the provision of energy in N.S.W.

I am resident in Griffith within The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and was astounded in 2019 and 2020 to witness The Local Government of the area agreeing to the establishment of Solar "so called farms" on valuable irrigation land. The same occurred in an adjacent irrigation areas

The M.I.A. was established early last century at great cost to be a food bowl for the nation. Now after millions of dollars recently being spent on refurbishing the system through The Murray Darling Basin Plan, The Federal Government is providing more millions of dollars to assist mainly foreign companies to cover a great deal of the area with solar industrial complexes. Is this madness?

The only people gaining from this are the landowners willing to sell or lease their land and of course the mainly foreign owned companies that with the assistance of government subsidies must be laughing all the way to the bank. The sad thing is both State and Federal Governments are doing this so that they are seen to be green, when if they were courageous enough to broaden their horizons, there are better alternatives.

As many would know, two thirds of Australia is arid or semi-arid and only five to six percent is arable. This compares to New Zealand eleven and China twelve percent respectively. More importantly, less than one percent of N.S.W. is irrigated.

If the Global warming theorists are correct average temperatures are to rise by 1.5 celsius in the short to medium term, reducing cereal growing areas in N.S.W. and other parts of Australia dramatically. We are not sure what geographical areas will be most affected but doesn't this mean that every parcel of arable land and particularly irrigation land will become indispensable for food and fibre production?

The usual arguments that are put forward for solar industrial complexes is that cheaper power is being provided. Most would know that when extremely generous tax payer subsidies are being provided the power is anything but cheap! Government money certainly brings out the entrepreneurs.

Another furphy is that the projects will provide jobs. I don't know about other locations but I would imagine that it is the same with the projects that I am aware of where most of the work is done by backpackers and when the project is completed they move on. Even on the biggest projects only very few work opportunities remain when the installation is completed.

Another irony with the situation is that most solar absorbers and wind powered generators are made overseas using substantial amounts of carbon related energy sources, in some cases imported into those countries from Australia.

I understand that the installation of these solar industrial complexes is based on a contract between the installing company and each individual landowner. What will happen in thirty to thirty five years when technology progresses and the installations are no longer viable? Obviously in the contract there would be an agreement that the installing company would be responsible for removing the detritus. One must ask, to where? The small local land fill dump?

Personally I cannot believe a large company, especially if at that time they are antagonistic toward our government, or if they become bankrupt, would despite the law, fulfill that obligation. The matter of removal will be for the land owner who probably won't be able to afford it. The land owner could possibly then declare bankruptcy and local ratepayers through Council will be left having to pay the bill.

Within the M.I.A. the economic multiplier effect from farm production is 3.5, meaning that for every \$1000 of farm gate production there is an additional \$3500 of dependent activity. In relation to a solar or wind industrial complex it amounts to next to nothing.

We are extremely fortunate in Australia to have many energy resources that includes coal, gas and uranium and because of much misinformation we have ignored the most reliable and least polluting energy source and that is uranium.

If, over the last fifty years we had not had such strong mainly politically motivated scare mongering opposition to Nuclear Power we could have led the world in researching its benefits. Fortunately however, now with small nuclear powerplants available we have the opportunity to have a secure pollution free power source for local areas without covering scarce arable land with unsightly industrial solar complexes and their associated ugly power grids. Of course governments would have to show some intestinal fortitude in educating the electorate to the benefits of nuclear power.

Anyone who believes that other countries, despite their assertions, will, to the detriment of their populations and more particularly their regimes, substantially cut their emissions, is living in cloud cuckoo land. That is why many countries in the world, while paying lip service to lowering their emissions are constructing new age coal fired power stations and at the same time, in order to balance out their emission targets, are constructing nuclear power stations as a matter of urgency.

The construction of a power grid from N.S.W. to South Australia through irreplaceable arable and irrigation land should fill us all with trepidation. Not only because of the reduction of food and fibre producing land but also, though this may seem conspiracy theory nonsense, for the easy target it provides to those who may wish to sabotage the system that is designed to provide power for a significant area of populated southern Australia.

The Energy Council in their recommendations must take into account a myriad of conundrums. The main one being that at this stage in world history, no matter how many industrial solar and wind installations that cover valuable agricultural land are being established at misguided government behest, they cannot provide an uninterrupted power supply even with the most up to date battery technology. Therefore if Governments are not prepared to use emission free nuclear power there has to be a number of energy sources currently available within Australia brought into use if we are to maintain our present standard of living while at the same time protecting our irreplaceable farming land.

Noel Hicks

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