



# REWIRED Episode 2 - Moon power and marijuana rumours.

## Griffith Solar farm podcast transcript

SOURCE	CONTENT
PAUL PIEROTTI	<p>I'm Paul Pierotti managing director of Caesar's Family Stores Group and I'm president of the Griffith Business Chamber.</p> <p>This is an unusual day here in Griffith because for the beginning of autumn for it to be very cool like it is today, and overcast, that's not common at all.</p> <p>It's been rumoured that we're one of the sunniest places on earth, I'm not sure if we really are, I don't think there are any statistics that actually show that. But from locals like myself that have lived here all our lives, we certainly do have a lot more sunlight than most other areas and it's really clear blue skies, it's quite unusual, and then at night our star line is something to behold really.</p>
MUSIC	FADE UP
COURTNEY CARTHY	<p>I'm Courtney Carthy... and this is REWIRED... a look at new large scale solar farms around Australia.</p> <p>The Australian Renewable Energy Agency... also known as ARENA... on behalf of the Australian Government... announced around \$90 million in funding for 12 large scale solar projects following a competitive round. After years of planning, construction is getting underway.</p> <p>This episode we're in Griffith New South Wales... and yes, like Paul says, it's overcast, a bit blustery but still t-shirt weather.</p> <p>I did check with the Bureau of Meteorology about the sunny claim... that's one to live on as a rumour... Griffith... a small city on the north western edge of the Riverina district is getting a brand new Large Scale Solar Farm.</p>

MUSIC	FADE UP
COURTNEY CARTHY	<p>If you're listening for the first time, welcome and thanks for downloading... this is episode two of our trip across some of Australia's large scale solar projects successful in receiving funding from ARENA... the first episode came from much further up north... in North Queensland at the Kidston solar farm... currently, like this one in Griffith... it's under construction and drawing on the local area for services, hospitality and sunny days.</p> <p>A quick aside - if you're listening on a podcast app - please subscribe, leave a review after and at any time you can find out more about renewable energy in Australia by going to <a href="http://www.ARENA.gov.au">www.ARENA.gov.au</a></p>
MUSIC	FADE OUT
COURTNEY CARTHY	Down the road from Paul's shops and about 7 kms out of town is a property next to the solar farm site... I turned up to the front door and asked for a chat...
GLORIA BADOCCO	Gloria Badoco
COURTNEY CARTHY	What sort of farm is this Gloria?
GLORIA BADOCCO	Rice wheat and a bit of canola
COURTNEY CARTHY	Gloria's husband John and their son are out harvesting at the moment...
GLORIA BADOCCO	At the moment he's on the rice...he mulches behind as they harvest the rice he mulches, he cuts it all up so it's easy when they've got to burn it off.

<p>COURTNEY CARTHY</p>	<p>Gloria and John have lived here for 48 years but the land has been in the family for over 60...</p> <p>Next door to their house is the site where a new solar farm will be built on part of their property</p> <p>It's being developed by Neoen...a renewable energy developer who has been talking about a solar farm nearby for years...</p>
<p>GLORIA BADOCO</p>	<p>They approached us about 5 years ago about it, and then nothing was done. So they just asked us if we'd keep them in mind, and last year they were waiting for the government to give them a grant on this solar farms - they've got three going at the moment, one in Parkes and one in Dubbo.</p> <p>The boys are happy because see what happens they've got our land but we can still utilise our water... because water's a big issue.</p>
<p>COURTNEY CARTHY</p>	<p>The grant Gloria mentioned is \$5 million from ARENA. About 10 percent of the total cost... This public investment helps get the Griffith solar farm commercially viable.. Parkes and Dubbo we'll get to them in coming episodes.</p> <p>In Griffith you could be forgiven for thinking there were more irrigation channels than streets once you get off the high street... it's an extremely water intensive farming area.</p>
<p>BEN JONES</p>	<p>Ben Jones, editor at the Area News in Griffith</p>
<p>BEN JONES</p>	<p>I think water is the number one in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area at the moment and generally has been for a long time. I think the prospects of the town is generally coupled with how well farmers are going with the water situation.</p>

<p>COURTNEY CARTHY</p>	<p>And with growth in local agri-business comes increased demand for local infrastructure...</p> <p>Paul from the Business Chamber celebrates the area's success but says services, like electricity, have to keep up...</p>
<p>PAUL PIEROTTI</p>	<p>One winery in Griffith... which is Cassella Family Brands, they produce Yellow Tail, and just outside of my shop here a train goes past each day with 70 20-foot containers of wine a day, 7 days a week, all year round, leaving to the US which is Yellow Tail. Which is now found everywhere in the world and a massive success story for the Cassella Family here in Griffith who now have over 2000 staff at their winery, and that winery has grown to a point where the winery on its own uses more power than the whole town of Narrandera. And they can't get anymore power, they need further infrastructure investment to deliver more power so they can expand, they're growing rapidly. They're now growing very strongly into the beer market, especially craft beers, with a joint venture with coca-cola, they're looking to grow that into a massive export brand as well, so there's huge opportunity here but unfortunately we're not seeing the infrastructure in to support that.</p>
<p>COURTNEY CARTHY</p>	<p>When completed the Griffith solar farm may offer some of the support Paul is after... and it aligns with the the clean green reputation so important to the region's customers...</p>
<p>PAUL PIEROTTI</p>	<p>There is no doubt that areas like Griffith have become the preferred food and fibre supplier to the world, we're recognised, very well recognised globally as having the highest quality clean and green produce and fibre. Brands like Sunrice in Leeton here are an example of a global success story with the majority of the rice grown here being sold at a massive premium into Asian markets because it's known to be a better product. And we know we can produce better quality and it's a highly recognised brand to premium buyers in other markets and those markets are growing rapidly. So our potential in this area is huge.</p>

COURTNEY CARTHY	<p>When it's switched on later this year the Griffith solar farm will offset emissions equivalent to 20 thousand cars or 66,000 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup>... and it could power around 11 thousand homes.</p> <p>For now the solar farm looks like an empty paddock squashed between the highway and Gloria's house... the only difference being a brand new barbed wire fence.</p>
GLORIA BADOCCO	<p>Yeah! A lot of people have asked me if we're growing hemp, controlled you know for the government or whatever it is, yeah a lot of people have asked us. Because they see the big fence go up see.</p> <p>The town's going to benefit from it, the town's going to need 80 I think it is or 88 electricians in one hit. Obviously as the panels go up they must have to have the electricians. But you know the motels will benefit from it, the restaurants will benefit from it, so, the town's going to benefit.</p>
COURTNEY CARTHY	<p>Gloria mentioned Chris... he was their contact at Neoen, the renewable energy company, that stayed in touch over the years the project has been jumping through the necessary hoops.</p>
GLORIA BADOCCO	<p>Chris is really nice, we've had a lot to do with Chris over the years, a lot to do with him. We don't have as much to do anymore now because he's finished that, but he comes down and he'll still call in or give us a call and we'll go out for tea. Now it's a guy called Walter, no I'm not real sure...</p>
MUSIC	
WARREN WOO	<p>My name is Warren Woo, I'm the construction project manager for Neoen Australia. I've done many before and I've done ones in the US also.</p>
COURTNEY CARTHY	<p>Warren's in town for a community meeting this evening... he says the funding provided by ARENA after the competitive round helped Neoen get going sooner rather than later to get the timing right...</p>

<p>WARREN WOO</p>	<p>And sometimes time can kill, time can kill a project. So I definitely think it was a very good move, that we had this process, this competitive bid. Otherwise we wouldn't know which projects and when they'd be coming off the ground, and it's a delay, right. And it just means more carbon dioxide in the world right.</p> <p>I think what we're seeing right now is a bit of a parity, and what I mean by that is solar price has gone down dramatically and with this bid process through ARENA we've seen a dramatic decrease, which is amazing. I think it's been a very successful program that ARENA has put in, and we've seen that even right now with the right type of projects. We're seeing that funding isn't even needed to extend, so that means we're competitive! We're competitive with all these other traditional energy sources that we're hoping to phase out as much as possible and go to clean energy.</p>
<p>COURTNEY CARTHY</p>	<p>On site with Warren is Chris Todd... a tall guy in jeans and had a goatee.</p>
<p>CHRIS TODD</p>	<p>I'm from Bouygues Construction and I'm the site supervisor for the solar farm.</p> <p>There's just on 112 thousands solar panels, quite a daunting fact when you get 112 solar panels to get put in somewhere, it does kind of add up. We'll slowly chip away and get them installed, and hopefully that won't be a problem.</p> <p>Our peak workload will be between 80 and 100 people and then we'll probably look at about preliminary we'll have about 20 or 30 people doing some civil works and some other bits and pieces around the place. Then the piles, will be two machines, possibly three machines, with a work crew of three people, 9 people working around the machines.</p> <p>Not highly labour intensive but when we start to get to the technical end when all the panels are installed and we have a whole lot of sparkies around running cable and wiring things up so that'll be quite a tedious job on 112 thousand panels.</p> <p>I know the solar panels themselves have come quite far in the past 10 to 15 years. So what originally was a good idea with a solar panel if we all</p>

	can remember 15, 20 years ago when they first started coming out in various forms...
COURTNEY CARTHY	On calculators...
CHRIS TODD	Yeah yep, and now we're looking at them on everyone's roofs, and now these panels that are going on here are the next generation of solar panels, so as far as I've been told, and I shouldn't really be quoted, they can even generate some form of power with a full moon.
SFX	GATE CLOSE
COURTNEY CARTHY	So this might seem fanciful... but we'll find some evidence in future episodes that during a full moon, at night, at least tiny bit of charge can register.  Back to Chris in Griffith...
SFX	GATE OPEN
CHRIS TODD	...some form of power with a full moon. So, they're that far advanced and they're quite strong, they can handle a lot of hail and things like that so, our technology is progressing in such a way that these panels are far greater than what they were. I think now we now need to start looking at the storage of the power, battery generation, I think that'll be the next generation of solar panels.
COURTNEY CARTHY	Chris is talking about one element of renewable technology that teams of people are working away at feverishly... to date ARENA has funded projects working on a solution... there's plenty of info on the website... <a href="http://arena.gov.au">arena.gov.au</a>  At this stage those parts of the town who know about the brand new large scale solar farm seem chuffed.
GREG LAWRENCE	My name's Greg Lawrence, manager of tourism and economic development for the Griffith City Council.
COURTNEY CARTHY	I pulled him out of the solar farm community meeting at the Griffith Theatre...

GREG LAWRENCE	The initial build stage of course, 120 odd people, most of these are being sourced from locally, I know the organisation has been using a list that I've supplied so it's fantastic to see the local economy being stimulated and then of course there's the ongoing maintenance of the project but more importantly it's about sending a good clear message that Griffith is alive and open and ready for business... we're very pleased to have an organisation like this come to town.
COURTNEY CARTHY	So how many more solar farms do you want?
GREG LAWRENCE	We've got plenty of open spaces so we'll take as many as we can accommodate. When we think about Australia with you know we've got a mediterranean climate here in Griffith, 9 months of the year there's plenty of sun - although I know you don't need a lot of sun to get these things going - look I think it sends a good message. I know the boys have been showing me their plans how they've aesthetically landscaped the area so it sits in situ with the environment... I think it's fantastic.
COURTNEY CARTHY	Also at the meeting is a local contractor Tom Armstrong from Armstrong's Plant Hire...  His company has picked up 6 week contract with the solar farm constructing internal roads.
TOM ARMSTRONG	We're one of the longest running earth movers around town, there's a few people around but we're the third generation so there's me and my brother who've stepped up in the role now.
COURTNEY CARTHY	Was it a bit of a surprise or when you see a mob like this rolling into town you think, yeah, we can do that.
TOM ARMSTRONG	Yeah nah, we're a pretty big company now. We've grown to adapt to these bigger companies now which is pretty good. We seen it come up and thought this is perfect, up our alley with the gravel and the road base, just doing the earthworks side of things suits us down to the ground.
COURTNEY CARTHY	Back at his furniture store Paul Pieretti from Griffith Business Chamber maintains his advocacy for the local industry and decentralisation of services.



PAUL PIERETTI	What we'd like to see is these energy production capabilities being able to supply locally and being able to do that more competitively because they don't have the losses over transmission and they don't have all the infrastructure costs in trying to deliver... If you wanted to create a decentralisation strategy there's a great one... allow the industries that are booming in the area to be more cost effective by having affordable and deliverable power so that they can grow and employ more people.
MUSIC	
COURTNEY CARTHY	Next episode we'll be in Parkes New South Wales, home of the Dish... the CSIRO radio telescope made famous by the film...  One thing to know about Parkes... if you have to meet someone for a coffee at 6:30 AM, a certain fast food restaurant is the only place to go.
GEOFF RICE	There's nowhere else at this time of morning... this is where all good meetings are held.
COURTNEY CARTHY	And not too long after I get lost trying to find the Parke's solar farm....
DENIS JAMES	Denis James... This is Bogan Gate Right... What's it like Great... quiet... Yep... Exactly right... Don't worry about it, not much traffic coming past here.

COURTNEY  
CARTHY

The running tally on what the solar farms we've visited will generate is already impressive...

So far, between Kidston's and Griffith's solar farms, when they're completed they'll generate enough power for 27,000 homes... and that amount of solar energy saves over 180,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year.

Do subscribe on your podcasting app and find out more by going to [www.ARENA.gov.au](http://www.ARENA.gov.au)

I'm Courtney Carthy, thanks for listening to Rewired...