



MEDIA RELEASE: 12 years in the making: Goulburn community solar farm wins AFR Energy Award

A 12-year community effort to build a locally owned renewable energy project has been recognised with the 2026 Australian Financial Review Energy Award for Community Engagement.

The Goulburn Community Solar Farm was recognised for the persistence, collaboration and community leadership that turned a local vision into reality and now provides a model for other communities to take greater ownership of their energy future.

Led by the Goulburn Community Energy Co-operative, the project took 12 years of fundraising, community investment and government support to reach fruition. Smart Commercial Energy provided the engineering, procurement and construction for the project, working alongside Community Energy for Goulburn, Komo Energy and Trina Solar to bring the community's vision to life. Hundreds of community investors, volunteers and supporters were also involved across more than a decade of persistence.

The result is a community-owned 1.4MW solar farm with 4MWh of battery storage, delivering clean energy while keeping ownership and value within the local community.

Goulburn Community Energy Co-operative Chair Andrew Bray said:

“We now have a solar farm that is owned by the community, funded by the community, and delivering benefits back to the community for years to come.”

Smart Commercial Energy General Manager Kathryn Hoogesteger said the award recognised the collective effort behind the project.

“Projects like this do not happen because of one organisation. They happen because a community has the determination to keep going, and because the right people and organisations are prepared to work together to solve the problems along the way.”

The AFR award is the project's second major industry recognition this year, following its win in the Clean Energy Council's Community Value & Impact category.

Earlier this month, Atlassian signed a 10-year virtual power purchase agreement with the Goulburn Community Energy Co-operative, committing to purchase almost 70% of the farm's output over the next decade to help power its new Sydney headquarters when it opens in 2028. The deal gives the community-owned project a major corporate customer and further demonstrates the potential for community energy to play a meaningful role in Australia's energy transition.

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About Smart Commercial Energy

Smart Commercial Energy is one of Australia's leading commercial solar and energy storage providers, delivering high performing energy systems for some of the country's most recognisable brands, including Australia's largest behind the meter solar PPA for McCain Foods and more than 130 solar installations for Bunnings Warehouse.

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