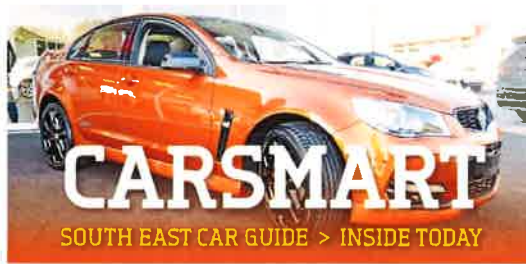


The Border Watch

Tuesday, July 25, 2017

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South East solar farm potential

SANDRA MORELLO

A CLEAN energy development company leader has vowed to return to the Limestone Coast to identify potential sites for a large-scale solar farm or roof top projects.

CountryWide Energy - which is building a \$40m solar farm near Wangaratta - yesterday met with regional councils, politicians, businesses and farmers about potential projects.

The company has also not ruled out canvassing biomass energy projects, such as those fuelled by surplus wood residue.

It is understood a number of farmers also attended the forum to flag interest in attracting a solar farm development on their properties.

The company revealed it would investigate installing a technologically advanced battery storage system if a large solar farm became a reality in the Limestone Coast.

Company director Geoff Drucker said yesterday he was buoyed by the interest shown in the region, which was crying out for power security and affordability.

"We will look at anything that would generate renewable electricity - biomass, pumped hydro and solar," Mr Drucker said.

Continued page 2



RENEWABLE SURGE: Renewable energy developer Geoff Drucker inspects the power infrastructure in the Mount Gambier district yesterday. Picture: SANDRA MORELLO

Pair pay price for robbery

Men await sentencing following forced debt collection guilty verdict

TODD LEWIS

GUILTY was the verdict for two men who falsely imprisoned a man before forcing him to withdraw \$8000 from his bank and surrender it to the pair.

Following a four day trial, a jury revealed on Friday they were satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Benjamin Peter Aranui, 30, and Adam Gary Wiggins, 33, committed the offences of false imprisonment, aggravated theft and aggravated robbery.

Both men were acquitted of an additional charge of aggravated assault causing harm.

The charges relate to an incident on January 6, 2016, when both Aranui and Wiggins attended the victim's home at 7am with weapons and forced their way in.

With Wiggins holding a sword and Aranui holding a tomahawk, the pair told the victim "it was time he paid his debts".

Wiggins knew the victim and started questioning him about an

inheritance he had recently received from his father.

The pair asked where the victim's wallet was and when they could not find it, a boot was thrown at the man.

The prosecution said the victim felt threatened by the pair who said they would "take him out to the pines and cut his legs off".

Aranui stole a torch and GoPro video camera from the premises before all three men left on foot.

The prosecution said the victim felt he had no choice but to go with Aranui and Wiggins.

They attended another property where Wiggins demanded a debt from another person before assaulting him.

The three men then walked to a third property and the victim said Wiggins continued to swing the sword in front of him as they walked.

After arriving at the shed of the premises, Aranui and Wiggins told an occupant of the property to watch the victim while they had a discussion.

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Renewable energy developer to explore South East for potential sites

From front page

Mr Drucker said biomass - fuelled by wood residue - was potentially an exciting project given the scale of these developments in Scandinavian countries.

"We believe one in five projects that we look at will get through," he said.

Mr Drucker said the company needed to secure affordable land, connection to the power grid, council approval and investment before a project could be given the green light.

"A large-scale solar farm would run into the tens of millions of dollars," the company official said.

But he said the company had investors who were passionate regarding solar projects in Australia.

"These are overseas and Australian investors - that opportunity is there," Mr Drucker explained.

Asked about power grid connectivity, he

flagged it could be a long process but could be shortened given there was only one distribution company and one transmission player in South Australia.

"Our goal will look in areas where we can inject energy and it can be connected to the grid to provide growth," Mr Drucker added.

He said targeting growth regions meant there was a long-term opportunity to sell power into the marketplace.

"If there is no growth, it is a stagnate area," Mr Drucker said.

"But in the Limestone Coast, there appears to be a lot of enthusiasm about growth."

He said the political landscape, such as the Federal Government's commitment to reducing emissions and South Australian Government being a leader in renewable energy, was driving renewable energy projects.

Regarding the possibility of attracting a large-scale solar farm project to the Mount Gambier district, Mr Drucker said the high

cost of the land was one major issue.

"The higher the productivity of the land, the more expensive it is," he said.

He revealed the 20 megawatt farm at Wangaratta was being built on 20ha.

"There are some projects in South Australia that are 100 megawatts and they would be on 250ha," Mr Drucker said.

But he said the company could roll out large roof-top solar panel installations on agricultural or processing facilities as an alternative.

"This is particularly worthwhile if underneath uses a fair bit of the energy and we can provide that energy directly to the business," Mr Drucker said.

He revealed the company would canvass individual council areas for potential projects, including talking with landowners and business operators.

"We also have to determine the location and strength of the power network so we can go to SA Power Networks and say to them 'here

is a site, can we inject more energy into the grid," Mr Drucker said.

"If they say yes and the land is suitable, then that could happen probably at a minimum of 18 months before power generation."

Mr Drucker said the company would be interested in speaking with landowners close to significant power lines, not transmission infrastructure.

"We like to focus on solar farms of 30 megawatts or less, which would be connected to distribution lines," he said.

He said the solar panel farm would also have a sun tracking system.

Regarding gas mining, Mr Drucker said his company was not an advocate of gas expansion and particularly fracking.

"Gas is not a renewable energy source," he said.

The company is also exploring opportunities in the Riverland as well as Glenelg Shire and Albury-Wodonga in Victoria.

'Debt collectors' await sentencing

From front page

The pair then rang the victim's bank and when the victim refused to speak, prosecution alleged Aranu hit him in the face with a motorcycle shock absorber.

The jury was not satisfied beyond reasonable doubt the assault occurred.

The three men then attended the bank branch on Bay Road and the two defendants argued about whether either of the pair should enter the building with the victim.

Wiggins did go in with the victim and could be seen on security camera footage

standing very close to the victim while he made the withdrawal.

After making the withdrawal, the defendants took the money and the victim "bolted" from the scene.

Instead of contacting police due to being frightened, the victim spoke about the transaction to a bank representative who then engaged authorities.

A host of witnesses were called and a range of evidence was heard by the jury over the course of four days.

Following the verdict of guilty, both Aranu and Wiggins were remanded in custody for sentencing submissions.

Templeton adjourned

Negotiations continue as former businessman faces six counts of false statutory declarations

A FORMER prominent Mount Gambier businessman who is facing six charges of making untrue declarations has had his matter adjourned until August 28 while negotiations between the prosecution and defence counsel continue.

Frank Emmanuel Templeton, 71, was excused from attending the brief hearing in the Adelaide Magistrates Court yesterday.

Templeton is yet to enter pleas on the six counts which arose following an investigation by the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

Commissioner Bruce Lander said in a statement on May 29 a summons outlining the charges was served on the defendant on May 3.

He was charged with "six counts of wilfully making a statutory declaration, knowing that declaration to be untrue in a material particular".

It is alleged the offences occurred in Templeton's capacity as a public officer in Mount Gambier between August 7, 2013, and April 28, 2014.

Templeton was in the news in 2014 when Templeton Constructions was liquidated, resulting in 19 employees being stood down.

At the time unsecured creditors were trying to recoup losses of up to \$1.5m and employees were owed an estimated \$500,000.

The company's assets were sold collectively to a regional company on September 16, 2014.

There is currently no known correlation between the charges Templeton faces and the collapse of Templeton Constructions.



MATTER ADJOURNED: Frank Templeton outside iconic Mount Gambier steel fabrication company Templeton Constructions in 2014.

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