

Comment on the Woodstock Renewable Energy Hub Referral EPBC 2023/09616

Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the EPBC referral of the Woodstock Renewable Energy Hub (EPBC 2023/09616). QCC is the peak environment body in Queensland, currently representing 51 member groups and has been supporting communities to protect our natural environment since 1969.

We recognise the need to reduce our emissions as soon as possible to protect unique and irreplaceable Queensland ecosystems including the Gondwana and Wet Tropics World Heritage Areas, where every incremental increase in temperature rises significantly reduces habitat range for endemic species.

Renewable energy is one of the best and fastest ways we can reduce emissions. However, building the renewable energy we need cannot come directly at the expense of the species and habitats we are attempting to save and protect.

Queensland's terrible land clearing and nature protection record has left many species endangered and means that the areas of remaining vegetation and habitat must be protected. The Woodstock Renewable Energy Hub would have a development footprint of over 1,000 hectares of largely remnant vegetation, which includes potential habitat for 12 threatened and migratory species, particularly the black-throated finch, squatter pigeon and greater glider.

The southern Black Throated Finch has lost 90% of its habitat already and the area proposed for the Woodstock Renewable Energy Hub has been mapped as critical habitat for the survival of the species by the 2023 draft Recovery Plan¹.

The EPBC Referral itself identifies the “potential for significant residual impacts to black-throated finch (southern) and squatter pigeon (southern) due to adverse impacts on habitat critical to the survival of these species”.

Queensland is blessed with abundant solar resources which should mean solar farms can be developed without impacting critical habitat.

We urge the Department to declare this a controlled action, and require an Environmental Impact Assessment. The proponent must work with experts including the Black-Throated Finch Recovery Team to assess if there is a potential solar development which does not impact critical habitat. The Recovery Team have identified that offsets, as usually required by development

¹ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2023) [National Recovery Plan for the Southern Black-throated Finch \(*Poephila cincta cincta*\)](#)



under the EPBC Act, are not serving the Black-Throated Finch and the survival of the species is dependent on protecting the remaining habitat.

We urge the Department to make protecting habitat the highest priority in assessing this development proposal.

Kind regards

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