

## **Stratford Renewable Energy Hub - Submission**

G. Healy – 28 October 2024

As a long-term resident and owner of a property close to the project area, I would broadly support the SREH, subject to a strengthening of measures to reduce or compensate for impacts arising from the siting of the upper reservoir.

Development of a renewable energy operation at the site of the decommissioned Stratford Coal mine stands to provide significant benefits including low-emission power at peak morning and evening times, and short and long-term employment greater than could be provided by extensive grazing as an alternative land-use.

Most of the development “footprint” of the project comprises the extensively cleared Stratford Mine Lease and adjacent areas, where the solar panels would be located. Some patches of native vegetation occur within that area. They have been maintained and improved under the Stratford Mine Environment Management Plan, and provide important habitat for fauna including the Squirrel Glider.

The SREH project would maintain protection of those areas.

However, at the site of the proposed Upper Reservoir there would be significant impacts on some Plant Community Types, and on several vulnerable, threatened or endangered fauna species for which they provide habitat. Those species include the Koala, Parma Wallaby, Stuttering Frog, Spotted-tailed Quoll, Grey-headed Flying Fox, Sooty Owl and Glossy Black Cockatoo.

The siting of the Upper Reservoir would unavoidably require the removal of a large area (around 130 hectares) of native vegetation. Land clearance is recognised as a key threatening process under State and Commonwealth legislation.

It is proposed to mitigate or offset the direct and indirect impacts of that clearance through establishing and retiring biodiversity credits under a Biodiversity Stewardship agreement. In order to minimise the direct impact of the clearance on species currently occupying the area or utilising it for feeding, breeding or passage, it is vitally important that the Biodiversity Stewardship area include areas adjacent to the upper reservoir site, and nearby areas that contain the Plant Community Types that will be reduced in extent.

The conditions of a project approval should require the inclusion of areas of relevant Plant Community Types in the Biodiversity Stewardship area(s), beyond that required to meet credit requirements, where the opportunity exists to achieve better outcomes.