

TO: THE PREMIER

SUBJECT: Flying-fox roosts at Charters Towers and in the

s.73 - Non responsive information

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Premier:

- **note** the following update on the status of dealings in respect to the flying-fox roosts at Charters Towers and in the Lockyer Valley and, in particular that:
 - Most of the flying-foxes at Lissner Park (Charters Towers) and Ravenswood in the Charters Towers Regional Council area (CTRC) have left.
 - Whilst the Lockyer Valley Regional Council (LVRC) has not recently received any complaints about flying-foxes near the Amaroo Retirement Village in Gatton, the council is in contact with EHP regarding flying-foxes at Helidon and Laidley.
 - EHP has commenced discussions with LVRC suggesting a more strategic approach through the development of a region-wide property management plan (PMP) that would cover all roosts following similar collaboration with Gold Coast City Council.

BACKGROUND**Charters Towers**

- In late December, the number of flying-foxes in Lissner Park increased greatly with a large influx of Little Red flying-foxes. CTRC contacted EHP on 17 December 2012 regarding the influx and requested details of what residents could do to deter flying-foxes from their properties without contravening the NCA. This advice was provided on 19 December 2012.
- EHP met with CTRC on 20 December 2012 at Ravenswood, which also experienced a large influx of Little Red flying-foxes (estimated to be 70,000). Attempts to disperse animals from around non-roost areas in Ravenswood were unsuccessful.
- No reports or complaints were received over the Christmas/New Year break.
- CTRC advised EHP on Monday, 14 January 2013, that the numbers of Little Red flying-foxes in Lissner Park started reducing after Christmas and most had left in early January. Little Red flying-foxes have also reportedly left Ravenswood.

s.73 - Non responsive information

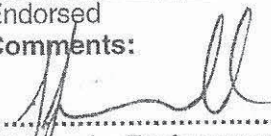
CURRENT ISSUES

- EHP has been working with many councils over the last couple years.
- Many councils including Moreton Bay Regional Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council, CTRC, Mount Isa City Council and Gold Coast City Council are developing property management plans (PMP). These plans aim to identify sites where flying-foxes will be discouraged, while providing for long-term sites for roosting where concerns will be minimal.
- This strategic approach is very important as flying-foxes, when dispersed, can move to places where they can cause even greater impacts on the community. This has occurred in a number of communities in the past and the problems it has created has led councils like Mt Isa, and now Charters Towers, to adopt strategies to identify alternative sites that can be managed to increase their attractiveness to flying-foxes.

Author Name: Dave Wildermuth Position: A/Director, WMU Tel No: 3330 5512 Date: 15 January 2013	Cleared by Sch 4 - Signature Name: Geoff Clare Position: ED, NCS Tel No: 3330 6240 Date: 15/1/13	Cleared by Name: Tamara O'Shea Position: A/DDG, CSS Tel No: 3330 6240 Date: 15/01/13	Recommended: Name: Andrew Chesterman DG, DEHP Tel No: 3330 6298 Date: 15/1/13
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- Gold Coast City Council is currently in the final stages of their PMP which covers 27 roost sites.
- The benefits of a plan for a whole of council area are:
 - It allows the council to hold a three year DMP (instead of the normal 6 months).
 - It provides an accredited framework which delivers public education and accommodates the ongoing use of public areas and activities and supports business, while protecting and conserving flying-foxes.
 - It allows councils to detail the current and future land use where flying-foxes are known to inhabit.
 - Councils will be able to set up management protocols for when new roosts are found.
 - Councils can plan future development and urban growth with flying-fox management practices.
 - Council can develop and have ready educational, intervention and conservation strategies.

s.73 - Non responsive information

Endorsed Comments: 		Sch 4 - Personal information	
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection		Chief of Staff	
Approved		Not Approved	
Comments:		Noted	
CAMPBELL NEWMAN Premier		Chief of Staff	

ATTACHMENTS

s.73 - Non responsive information

Author Name: Dave Wildermuth Position: A/Director, WMU Tel No: 3330 5512 Date: 15 January 2013	Cleared by Name: Geoff Clare Position: ED, NCS Tel No: 3330 5390 Date:	Cleared by Name: Tamara O'Shea Position: A/DDG, CSS Tel No: 3330 6240 Date:	Recommended: Name: Andrew Chesterman DG, DEHP Tel No: 3330 6298 Date:
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Trimming vegetation near residents or facilities is an obvious way to reduce the impact of roosting animals.

The department is also reviewing the approvals process for managing flying-fox roosts to reduce green tape and to allow a rapid response in the event of flying-foxes commencing to roost in a new area which is unsuitable in respect to community impacts.

Author: John Hueston
Telephone: 3330 6173
Date: 3 October 2012

Approved: Geoff Clare, ED NCS
Approved: Tamara O'Shea, A/DDG CSS
Approved: Office of the Director-General

CTS No. 14691/12

RTI DL RELEASE - EHP

Release

CTS No. 17494/12

Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection

Sch 4 - Signature		
Chief of Staff	PK	
Dated	21/12/12	
Approved	Not Approved	Noted
Further information required		
Minister	[Signature]	
Dated	12/12/12	

SUBJECT: Flying-fox management in Lissner Park, Charters Towers

TIMEFRAME

- The Minister's Office requested a briefing note on this issue.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Minister:

- note** the below information provided in response to the 'comments and wish list' sections of the attached correspondence (Attachment 1) regarding flying-fox management in Lissner Park.

BACKGROUND

- From 2002 to 2009, the Charters Towers Regional Council (the council) applied for and was granted 15 damage mitigation permits (DMPs) to disperse flying-foxes from the park. Flying-foxes continue to roost there despite the council's dispersal attempts over this period.
- There are two current DMPs held by the council for flying-foxes in the park.
- One DMP allows removal or pruning of dead limbs and branches (and associated mulching) from trees within the park for public safety and tree health purposes when flying-foxes are not present.
- These works must be undertaken in a way that does not disturb any flying-foxes in the vicinity to an extent greater than specified in the DMP.
- The other DMP allows non-lethal dispersal of flying-foxes from 'child sensitive areas' around the park's swimming pool and playground equipment if the animals move there.
- The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection has been working closely with the council through the course of the approved works program under their DMP.
- The council has recently been reported in the media (Attachment 2) as planning to encourage flying-foxes from the park over time by creating a sanctuary for them on the town's fringes, which could feature walking tracks and a golf course.

CURRENT ISSUES

- Five issues were raised in the "comment and wish list" sections of the attached correspondence.
- The first issue related to trialling helicopters to disperse flying-foxes. This would require CASA approval as the aircraft would be operating low over residential areas and exposed to potential flying-fox strike while trying to move the animals.
- A proposal to use helicopters to disperse flying-foxes from the park was previously refused by the department on public safety and animal welfare grounds.
- The council suggested 100 flying-foxes be fitted with radio collars to look at their movement patterns.
- In March of this year under the Hendra virus response program, Biosecurity Queensland fitted 40 flying-foxes across Queensland with satellite tracking devices, including four Black flying-foxes from Lissner Park.
- Biosecurity Queensland's Hendra virus response program is still underway as the satellite tracking devices are still transmitting. Preliminary data indicates that the Black flying-foxes originally from Lissner Park visit the Charters Towers region only sporadically, and in general, many tracked flying-foxes have been shown to travel considerable distances across Queensland.
- Biosecurity Queensland estimate the cost of fitting satellite tracking devices to 100 flying-foxes would be around \$250,000 for the tracking devices alone, excluding associated staff and fieldwork

Author Name: Michael Devery Position: Manager Wildlife Ops Tel No: 3330 5257 Date: 27 November 2012	Cleared by Name: Rebecca Williams Position: Director Wildlife Tel No: 3330 5512 Date: 3 December 2012	Cleared by Name: Geoff Clare Position: A/DDGS Tel No: 3330 5390 Date:	Recommended: Name: Andrew Chesterman DG, DEHP Tel No: 3330 6298 Date: 10.12.12 <i>Endorsed by DG via email.</i>
	Cleared by Name: Wade Oestreich Position: A/ED, NCS Tel No: 3330 5393 Date: 6 December 2012		

File Ref. (Remove if N/A)

Page 1

costs. Biosecurity Queensland indicated they may be interested in tracking a greater number of flying-foxes if local government (or another party) had the capacity to fund such a study.

- Having the department take control of the management program for flying-foxes in Lissner Park as has been proposed would not be a practical arrangement. Local government has a permanent presence in the town and subject to finalisation of a flying-fox management plan are best placed to implement any local approved actions on the ground as and when required.
- The nearest departmental wildlife management resources are located approximately 140km away in Townsville.
- The council has requested that they be able to prune the trees as of right (other than for dependent young being present and left when the flying-foxes are disturbed).
- Departmental officers have been working closely with the council in respect to the council's approved program of remedial pruning/removal of dead and dangerous limbs and branches from trees in the park which flying-foxes are not present in at the time. This includes departmental officers being available, where necessary, to assist the council in determining circumstances where power tools may be used in closer proximity to roosting flying-foxes than the standard 80m allowed under the permit conditions when conventional tools are used.
- Over time this ongoing direct departmental input is not expected to be necessary. Observations and learnings about how flying-foxes react to different equipment or techniques, such as the use of electric chainsaws in closer proximity to the animals will be written into specifications for DMP conditions or into a species management program for the park. This will provide greater decision-making autonomy to the council within the approval framework.
- The final comment relates to a harassment schedule of five minutes every half hour on a 24 hour basis as a dispersal method. A key consideration of assessing a DMP application including that regime would be humaneness. For example, if a frequent disturbance program were conducted during periods of hot weather, flying-foxes can be affected by heat exhaustion with lethal consequences. Hence any such application would be assessed on its merits.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mayor has also sent me a copy of their Biosecurity Fund Submission. He is keen for I and DEHP to support their proposed medium term solution (acknowledging financial contributions not available), particularly in media

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Incoming submission, including 'comments and wish list'
- Attachment 2 - Media article 'Council battling for foxes' - Townsville Bulletin 8 November 2012.

Author Name: Michael Devery Position: Manager Wildlife Ops Tel No: 3330 5257 Date: 27 November 2012	Cleared by Name: Rebecca Williams Position: Director Wildlife Tel No: 3330 5512 Date: 3 December 2012	Cleared by Name: Geoff Clare Position: A/DDG, CSS Tel No: 3330 5390 Date:	Recommended: Name: Andrew Chesterman DG, DEHP Tel No: 3330 6298 Date:
	Cleared by Name: Wade Oestreich Position: A/ED, NCS Tel No: 3330 5393 Date: 6 December 2012		

Damage Mitigation Permit No. WIMP11388312 (Dispersal of Wildlife)

This permit is valid - 18 June 2012 to 17 December 2012. It is an approval that controls the way in which we maintain our trees in Lissner Park, Charters Towers. The conditions of this approval are as follows:

Conditions of Approval - (Lissner Park Tree Pruning, Charters Towers)

- PB1 No work to be undertaken in a tree that contains flying-foxes.
- PB2 No work with power tools is to be undertaken within 80km of a tree containing flying-foxes.
- PB3 Any work with power tools must cease if it causes the flying-foxes to lift and remain in the air for 5 minutes or more.
- PB4 Maintenance work must cease and EHP contacted if the work results in physical harm or mortality of a flying-fox.
- PB5 EHP must be contacted at least 48 hours before work commences so an EHP officer can conduct a site assessment.
- PB6 All works are to be conducted in accordance with the CTCRC's document 'Lissner Park - Maintenance Plan 2012 sent to EHP on 10-5-2012.
- PB7 EHP may direct works not to commence or to cease at any time.
- PB8 Approval of Stage 3 works is subject to CTCRC providing EHP with a plan for the work and approval of the plan by EHP. The plan must denote the location of the trees that will be subject to remedial pruning and the extent of the required pruning.

Comments and Wish List:

Lissner Park is on the State Heritage Register. Many of the fig trees were planted as part of the Boer War Memorial in 1910 and some as early as 1891 when the park was established. The trees in the early 2001 extended to cover extraordinary dimensions but over the last 12 years of flying-fox inhabitation, many of the trees have died and been removed, many are still dying, all of them have been severely pruned and most have lost their century old canopies. The maintenance of trees should be a council right. Many of the limbs present a huge safety risk for the general public and the flying-foxes themselves. The collapse of one such limb killed 40 flying-foxes earlier this year. Council should be permitted to address public safety by pruning or removing dangerous limbs. This should be extended to include clean-up activities as well. The only exception should be if dependant young flying-foxes remain in the trees being pruned when they first lift into the air. There are 600 odd trees in the near vicinity and I can't see a problem with the flying-foxes finding a temporary home while trees are pruned. The park is a centre piece to the town and should be maintained as such.

Release

Damage Mitigation Permit No. WIMP11696412 (Dispersal of Wildlife)
Valid - 30 August 2012 to 28 February 2013

Conditions of Approval - (Lissner Park - Child Sensitive Areas)

- PB1 The permittee must notify DERM on the day prior to dispersal activities commencing, so that a conservation officer may conduct a site assessment if required.
- PB2 Dispersal activities shall not commence if dependent young or heavily pregnant flying-foxes are present in the area to be dispersed (to be determined on the day of dispersal).
- PB3 Dispersal activities must be carried out in accordance with the dispersal plan submitted by council on 24 January 2012, and only in the area designated 'area of concern' on the map submitted with the application. Any deviations must be approved by DERM prior to being implemented.
- PB4 Dispersal activities must immediately cease, and DERM must be notified immediately if:
- A flying-fox appears to have been killed, injured or harmed;
 - A flying-fox appears to be suffering unnecessary or unreasonable stress; or
 - Flying-foxes disperse to another area that is not an appropriate alternative roost site.
- PB5 DERM may direct works not to commence or to be ceased at any time.
- PB6 A registered wildlife carer or qualified vet (innoculated for Lyssavirus) must be on call at any times that dispersal activities are being undertaken.
- PB7 The permittee must carry out further dispersal activities if the flying-foxes move to a location that is determined by DERM to be an unsuitable location.
- PB8 Charters Towers Regional Council must develop a flying-fox management plan to address longer term management of the species within 6 months of the commencement of this permit, prior to the issuing of any subsequent DMPs.

Comments and Wish List:

- Queensland Parks and **Wildlife** to take control as flying-foxes are wildlife.
- Trials to be conducted with helicopters.
- Fit 100 flying-foxes with radio transmitters to assess their travel itineraries.
- Allow 24 hour harassment maybe 5 minutes every half-hour.

These are just some ideas, but the main focus should be on relaxing permit conditions for trials. It is only by conducting trials that a long term solution may be found.

Ravenswood:

Council has an approval in the form of a letter to protect designated public facilities such as the showgrounds and the public town pool.

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Council battling for foxes

DANIEL BATEMAN | November 8th, 2012



FLYING foxes are no longer public enemy No.1 in Charters Towers, with the town's council now embracing bats instead of wanting to shoot them.

Charters Towers Regional Council is pushing ahead with plans to establish a wildlife sanctuary 3km away from its CBD.

It hopes this will attract the large colony of flying foxes that has taken up permanent residence in the park in the middle of the town.

At a potential cost of \$1.5 million over three years, the sanctuary is to include a wildlife hospital, where sick and injured bats can be treated, and walking tracks.

Instead of viewing the endangered animals as a menace to residents, who have complained for years of the smell and noise from the colony - which at times has numbered 50,000 - the council is now even considering turning the bats into a tourist attraction.

It is a complete u-turn from the council's previous policy of trying to cull the noisy winged creatures that have irritated residents for more than a decade.

Acting Mayor Wally Brewer, who admitted he was one of the many residents who originally wanted to see the bats shot, said he had grown to understand the importance of keeping flying foxes alive.

"If we went and shot 40,000 bats, we're probably looking at \$120,000 in costs just for the ammunition alone," he said.

"I don't think people find that acceptable any more, though - the wholesale slaughter of animals."

The council is drawing up concept plans for its wildlife sanctuary, which is to be located near Gladstone Creek and modelled on the success of Yarra Bend Park, to where Melbourne City Council successfully relocated bats away from its heritage-listed Botanic Gardens in 2003.

Cr Brewer hoped the proposed wildlife hospital would be used by James Cook University to educate veterinary science students in the treatment of sick and injured wildlife.

"We will have something that is sadly lacking here, and that's somewhere where people can take injured wildlife, where they can be housed and looked after," Cr Brewer said.

"It will include bats.

"As much as I did want to shoot them, I don't feel that way any more."

The council has spent more than \$250,000 on removing flying foxes from its 130-year-old Lissner Park over the years, including mustering the animals using a helicopter, using shotguns loaded with pyrotechnic cartridges, and even helium balloons painted with images of hawks to scare them away, but they have had at best limited success.

Cr Brewer said there was scope for turning the flying foxes into a tourist attraction, if the sanctuary idea worked.

North Queensland Wildlife Carers bat carer Dominique Thiriet applauded the council for its new approach to flying fox management.

"All of the attempts to remove flying foxes have been quite cruel and very costly, and I think it's good news that they're looking at other options," she said.

Have Your Say

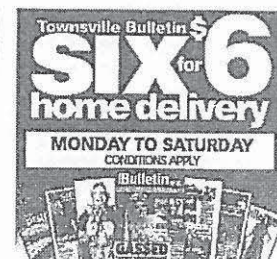
Latest Comments:

What brilliant news, I'm impressed. We are always on the lookout to travel to places where you can see "David Attenborough moments" and bat flyouts in the evening are such moments. Charters Towers - you're on my list of places to visit now.

Posted by: Helen Mjad of NSW 12:37pm today

I wish for once that all those do-gooder greenies had to live right under a colony of these bats for an extended period of time, and then they "MAY" understand the angst that people have had to put up with. If we continue to let these misfits tell us what we can and can't do in our own backyards, we can say goodbye to the way of life we currently know. Go and spread your drivel among people who care, IF you can find anyone who is prepared to put up with you.

Posted by: Paul of Northern Beaches 03:01pm Thursday 8th



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It's going to be a bit embarrassing if the Charters Towers park residents just don't want to move

Posted by: *Kate of Townsville* 12:53pm Thursday 8th

This is great news. I have read the feedback and find it interesting that some people have such feelings of malice towards the bats. Ignorance is very dangerous and a little bit of knowledge even worse. There are 4 species of flying fox in Australia so those black clouds that Mr Butterworth refers could be any one of those. I ask people to take a step back, do some research so that you have an informed opinion. <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/plants-and-animals/flying-foxes-home-page/flying-foxes-about-flying-foxes>

Posted by: *Madonna Davies of Townsville* 12:25pm Thursday 8th

Would love to know how the council plans on keeping the bats in this sanctuary. Coming from Melbourne I can assure you that the relocation of bats there didn't work, they just flew back. Electronic collars perhaps?

Posted by: *AM of Kirwan* 10:58am Thursday 8th

Hey, Warren Butterworth, newflash for you: the flying fox is a native creature, the cane toad is an invasive foreign import (much like white settlers). An excellent decision by the council on this - finally. After all the myths, misinformation and "they're like cane toads" nonsense out of the area we find sense and intelligence. Let's hope we continue to see intelligence replace buffoonery and knowledge replace ignorance in the matter of flying foxes.

Posted by: *Gavin Kavanagh of Hervey Bay* 10:38am Thursday 8th

There is a huge colony of bats and I mean huge in the Townsville Palmetum Park / Botanic Gardens. The Council has warning signs but otherwise it's been kept very quiet...

Posted by: *John nankervis of Cranbrook* 10:35am Thursday 8th

Huge well done to this council for having the foresight to see that there ARE other options and it is possible to co-exist without arrogantly assuming that as humans we have the right to destroy and kill. These animals are less of a pest on the planet's surface than humankind is. Let's see more of these decisions, please!

Posted by: *sarah of UK* 10:05am Thursday 8th

At long last it is good to finally see a council taking the initiative to preserve what is left of our wildlife. For too long developers, councils and human greed have been more concerned with the destruction of the environment for the sake of a few dollars profit. When we take away the homes of the wildlife the animals in a lot of cases have no other option than to move into areas that have been raped, pillaged and plundered for human greed. Maybe the Townsville Council should start considering safe havens for wildlife as Townsville expands further north.

Posted by: *Ian Davis of Douglas* 09:06am Thursday 8th

Well done Charters Towers Council - congratulations on moving with the times and recognising the important role these animals play in our environment. Great news for flying foxes and other wildlife that will benefit from the proposed hospital. Hopefully other councils can learn from your great lead and follow you!

Posted by: *Marcia Abraham* 09:02am Thursday 8th

After all these years...common sense finally kicks in.

Posted by: *Will of TSV* 09:25am Thursday 8th

What a wonderful, clever idea. Sounds like an all round winner for flying foxes, wildlife carers and the public in general. Once people have interacted with the bats, it would be very hard not to fall in love with them. Good on you Council - great decision.

Posted by: *Lee-Anne Burgess of Australia* 08:23am Thursday 8th

Congratulations to the council for this intelligent, sensible and compassionate solution! May our native forests stay forever populated by these beautiful and vulnerable Aussie mammals!

Posted by: *Caron Krauth* 07:39am Thursday 8th

So \$150,000 is so much to spend getting rid of them but \$1.5million isn't?

Posted by: *AM of Kirwan* 07:14am Thursday 8th

I would love to speak to the person/s who counted the flying foxes which is now the basis of the claim "Endangered Species". Maybe our politicians and do-gooders should get in their motor cars and travel this country and see the millions of colonies and watch the black clouds rise from the camps at dusk and return at dawn. These animals move about. They don't stay in the one spot. They seek a camp where there is sufficient food and cover and when they destroy it, they move to another. They, like the cane toad, are PESTS.

Posted by: *Warren BUTTERWORTH of Townsville* 06:45am Thursday 8th

More Comments

We welcome your comments on this story. Comments are submitted for possible publication on the condition that they may be edited. Please provide your full name. We also require a working email address - not for publication, but for verification. The location field is optional. [Read our publication guidelines.](#)

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COPY

From: Corro EHP Minister
Sent: Friday, 16 November 2012 7:35 AM
To: Lanham Glenys
Subject: FW: Charters Towers Regional Council - flying fox DMPs

Importance: High

Attachments: Damage Mitigation Permit Summary of Conditions.doc.doc

From: Shaw Gary On Behalf Of DLO EHP
Sent: Thursday, 15 November 2012 5:35 PM
To: Corro EHP Minister
Subject: Charters Towers Regional Council - flying fox DMPs
Importance: High

Hi MECU

Re: Charters Towers Regional Council - flying fox DMPs

Minister Powell has requested a briefing note to update him on the interactions with Charters Towers Regional Council re flying fox DMPs.

In particular, he has requested that the Department respond to this issues raised in the attached document under the heading "Comments and Wish List".

While it is appreciated this is not a formal application, the Minister seeks an assessment on these comments all the same.

Please provide by COB Thursday, 29 November 2012.

Thanks
 Gary

Gary Shaw
 Departmental Liaison Officer
 Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
 Level 13
 400 George Street BRISBANE

Tel: 07 - 3330 6250 Fax: 07 - 3330 6306
 E-mail: Gary.Shaw@ehp.qld.gov.au
 visit us at <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/>

From: Fiona Procter [mailto:Fiona.Procter@ministerial.qld.gov.au]
Sent: Thursday, 15 November 2012 4:31 PM
To: Shaw Gary; DLO EHP
Subject: Briefing note request
Importance: High

Hi Gary

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Suggest a turn around time of two weeks would be adequate please.

Thanks
 Fiona

☒ Description: Fiona - Signature

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- PB8 Charters Towers Regional Council must develop a flying-fox management plan to address longer term management of the species within 6 months of the commencement of this permit, prior to the issuing of any subsequent DMPs.

Comments and Wish List:

- Queensland Parks and Wildlife to take control as flying foxes are wildlife.
- Trials to be conducted with helicopters
- Fit 100 flying foxes with radio transmitters to assess their travel itineraries
- Allow 24 hour harassment maybe 5 minutes every half-hour

These are just some ideas, but the main focus should be on relaxing permit conditions for trials. It is only by conducting trials that a long term solution may be found.

Ravenswood:

Council has an approval in the form of a letter to protect designated public facilities such as the Show grounds and the public town pool.

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Hon Andrew Powell MP
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection

Ref CTS 19582/12

21 DEC 2012

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Mr Shane Knuth MP
Member for Dalrymple
Stock Exchange Arcade
2/76 Mosman Street
CHARTERS TOWERS QLD 4820

Dear Mr Knuth

Thank you for your email of 17 December 2012 concerning the removal of flying-foxes from Charters Towers, given the current influx of Little Red flying-foxes.

I empathise with residents who are being affected by the large number of animals currently in the city, but the answer to this problem does not have a simple solution, such as culling the animals, as the legislation you proposed would have allowed.

I do not say this because I, or this government, puts flying-foxes before people - far from it. First and foremost in my priorities is the safety and wellbeing of our communities and I will consider any option that can assist.

One of the reasons your legislation was rejected, following careful analysis by the committee, was because of the potential for it to exacerbate the problems it sought to address by bringing more people into contact with flying-foxes.

I do not dismiss for a minute how real this issue is for the people affected and I genuinely wish to work with communities which are faced with this problem to find lasting solutions. We are doing so in a number of places across the state, including Mt Isa, Gayndah and Duaringa where we have excellent relations with the respective councils.

I am pleased to say that we are also working very constructively with the Charters Towers Regional Council and have been in close contact with it both before and after the most recent increase in numbers. Department of Environment and Heritage Protection officers have also been on the ground in Charters Towers in the past 48 hours to assess the situation.

Currently, the trees containing flying-foxes outside Lissner Park are not roosts as defined under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and hence permits are not required to disturb animals outside the park. This is because roosts, under the legislation, are defined as places where flying-foxes come to breed and raise young from time to time. As the animals have not yet used areas outside the park to breed, they are therefore not roosts.

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Consequently, the department has been able to provide the council with information to enable it to provide residents advice about non-harmful techniques to scare flying-foxes from their properties. A copy of this is provided for your information.

As you will also be aware, the council has in the past been granted numerous damage mitigation permits (DMPs) to reduce the impacts of the flying-foxes in Lissner Park. This includes a current permit related to the swimming pool area. Departmental officers have been in contact with the council in recent days to ensure it has whatever support it needs in relation to taking actions under this permit.

I assure you that flying-fox management remains a priority for the government. Progress is under way to review the DMP system for flying-fox roosts to deliver a more streamlined and rapid assessment process.

While this review has good potential to assist communities in some circumstances, in the case of Lissner Park, there are several factors influencing flying-fox behaviour that a revised DMP system will be unlikely to be able to address. This is why the council's vision of creating an alternative place for flying-foxes to roost is important. I agree that it is not a substitute for continuing to find ways to reduce impacts on residents in the meantime, but it is an important long term measure and I encourage you to support the council in its efforts to pursue this.

I hope this information is of assistance when replying to your constituents. Should you have any further enquiries, please contact my Chief of Staff, Mr Troy Collings on 3239 0844.

Yours sincerely



ANDREW POWELL MP
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection

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Management of Flying-foxes in Charters Towers

- A large increase in the Little Red flying-fox population in Lissner Park and the surrounding residential area (several streets around the Park) has occurred recently.
- This is a normal behaviour and is caused by the flowering of local plants which brings large numbers of little red flying-foxes into the Charters Towers area.
- Lissner Park is a known roost site which accommodates Black flying-foxes year round and seasonal influxes of Little Red flying-foxes.
- Flying-foxes (commonly referred to as fruit bats or bats) are a protected species under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, and it is an offence to kill or injure them, or to interfere with their roosts.
- A large number of Little Reds are currently using the Lissner Park roost, with additional animals having spilled over into trees around the local residential area outside of the known roost area.
- EHP officers have assessed the situation and at this point in time, the trees containing flying-foxes outside Lissner Park are not afforded the protection given to roosts under the *Nature Conservation Act*.
- While the animals themselves are protected and cannot be harmed, outside of the known roost area it is not unlawful to scare them off or otherwise disturb them.
- Therefore flying-foxes in Charters Towers' backyards can, at this point, be scared away or deterred from landing by residents by noise or lights (or other non-harmful methods) provided the animals are not harmed.
- Some key points for residents to remember:
 - When you move the flying-foxes on from your property it is possible that they will fly next door, or to the nearest suitable habitat, so your neighbour will need to be aware of your activities. You and your neighbours may wish to coordinate your efforts.
 - You are not permitted to kill the flying-fox, or use methods that would be likely to harm the animal as they are a protected species.
 - Flying-foxes get stressed very easily in the heat of Charters Towers in summer and it does not matter how much you try and move them on during the day they will continue to try and return to a shady spot.
 - The best time to try and keep them out of your back yard is early in the morning before they settle in for the day. i.e. between 4am and 8am.
 - The best way of moving flying-foxes is to try any or all of the following methods when they are coming into land in the early morning:
 - o Loud sounds such as clapping, or banging pots together.
 - o The use of a garden hose by sending spray up the tree itself, but not directly on the flying-foxes.
 - o Honking the car horn
 - o Other loud sound or scare tactics
 - o Use of smoke by burning things such as hay, grass or straw in petrol drums (to keep the fire contained) under the colony
 - o Lights, by directing torch beams into the foliage.
 - Residents must, however, ensure that they comply with local laws in applying any non-harmful methods to scare off flying-foxes.
 - Catching diseases directly from flying-foxes is extremely unlikely. If you find a sick, injured or orphaned flying-fox, do not touch it. Contact your local wildlife care organisation or the RSPCA Qld.
 - To dispose of a dead flying-fox use a shovel and/or tongs to remove it and then burn or bury it. **Do not touch the bat without wearing thick gloves.** If

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burying it, ensure that the hole is deep enough so that a dog could not dig it up.

- If bitten or scratched by a bat do not scrub the wound. Wash the wound gently, but thoroughly, with soap and water for at least five minutes. Apply an antiseptic (e.g. povidone, iodine or another iodine preparation or ethanol alcohol) and cover the wound. Contact your doctor or hospital immediately.
- Little Red flying-foxes are a highly nomadic species which can only be expected to remain in Charters Towers while there are sufficient natural food sources to sustain the large number of animals.

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From: Dalrymple Charters Electorate Office <Dalrymple.Charters@parliament.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 17 December 2012 11:31 AM
To: Environment
Cc: Frank C. Beveridge (FBeveridge@charterstowers.qld.gov.au); Northern Miner; news.brisbane@aap.com.au; news@4bc.com.au; news@cqnews.com.au; news@nqn.newsltd.com.au; news@couriermail.com.au; localnews@seven.com.au; Media Rep - Jessica Vanvonderen; radio.news@abc.net.au; Media Rep - Daniel Hurst; news.townsville@aap.com.au; Media Rep - Gabrielle Dunlevy; Tsvnews@winqld.com.au
Subject: Minister Andrew Powell: Urgent action demanded by Charters Towers residents for flying fox removal
Importance: High
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Minister

As you are aware, Charters Towers is currently inundated with an estimated 100 000 bats.

My office has had a steady stream of angry residents, at their wits end, phoning or physically calling in to demand action.

A resident who visited my Charters Towers office this morning was shaking with anger.

Charters Towers has not forgotten your and the Premier's promise to put people ahead of flying foxes and remove them by whatever means necessary – yet they are still here, in increasing numbers.

The government has rejected my Flying Fox Control Amendment Bill 2012 which would have solved the problem and removed flying foxes from residential areas.

Flying foxes have caused four human deaths, 80 horse deaths and carry many lethal viruses.

Your Government declared it would be a Government of accountability.

We don't want another round of spin with the Government ducking, weaving and hiding from the issue.

We demand action.

We want the flying foxes removed by whatever means necessary – as promised.

We are not going to sit quietly for another three years for a bat habitat to be established and hope the flying foxes will be enticed to relocate.

You know as well as we do there is no guarantee that this will happen.

The flying foxes have invaded residential properties, school and college properties, Eventide, business premises, and put our swimming pool (which is adjacent to Lissner Park) in danger.

Our town swimming pool had to be closed on Sunday because of severe contamination from bat excreta.

This is of particular concern because of the school holidays and anxieties that our children may be in danger.

Families can no longer use Lissner Park, traditionally the venue for family picnics, weddings, concerts etc.

The community has reached boiling point with some threatening to remove the flying foxes themselves – by whatever means necessary.

It is appalling that residents are forced into this position because the Government has failed in its duty to protect its people.

We have sick, frail, elderly residents, children and families condemned to live with the filth, stench, screeching of disease-carrying flying foxes.

We ask you to personally visit Charters Towers and explain to residents why you have failed to deliver on your election promise to remove the flying foxes- yet they are still here.

Regards

Shane

Shane Knuth MP

Member for Dalrymple

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