

LAND PROTECTION LEGISLATION (FLYING – FOX CONTROL) AMENDMENT
BILL 2012
SUBMISSION TO THE AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

20TH August 2012

The purpose of the Land protection Legislation Pest and Stock Route Management Act 2002 amendment Bill 2012 claims to be the method which should be adopted to control health risks posed by flying foxes.

Except for one virus in which a vaccination can prevent illness or death what scientific evidence has been provided that flying foxes are the vendor for any other?

The methods to be used in this Bill and to manage any health risks which may relate to flying foxes fail the community expectations for animal welfare and wildlife protection, and the laws relating to animal welfare and wildlife protection. .

We have recently seen the immediate shut down of the live export cattle trade following community outrage of animal cruelty.

We have seen the tuna industries change practices on how they catch tuna because of consumers concerns in relation to animal suffering.

We have seen the introduction of product status on goods in regards the use of animals testing on consumer goods.

As a consumer we are now demanding question on not only where our food comes from but how was it produced.

Did it involve chemicals, poisons, killing animals and so on?

How unfair would it be to those farmers whom went to the expense to change practices 10 and even 20 years ago to meet community standards and to net their crops with an approved exclusion netting against a number of animals and insects, suffer the consequences from consumers who could refuse to buy the fruit which they believe could be blood splattered.

Community expectation on animal cruelty could bring the fruit industry to a stand still in Queensland should landowners be empowered to destroy flying foxes.

Destroying flying fox roost, driving away and disturbing flying foxes are all acts of animal cruelty under the Animal Care and Protection Act. .

How could landowner's reasonable believe' that flying foxes pose a risk of disease or harm to residents and stock when the facts clearly state that such methods of management pose a greater risk to public health, and landowners are not experts. .

To give just some instances. During a Council run dispersal in Gladstone, flying foxes became so fatigued and choked from smoke they started falling into near by back yards. Falling at the feet of people not inoculated.

While on the subject of smoke during the same bat dispersal attempt, ambulances had to be called to nearby residents overcome by the smoke used to disperse the flying foxes.

And more recently in Duaringa Council Workers were witnessed and filmed in what could only be described by bystanders as illegal bat dispersal (no permit) in a public park which drove the flying foxes camp to take up roost in nearby back yards.

Last year in Emu Park a man in his eighties tried persistently all day without success to contact the authorities to rescue a flying fox which had become caught on his TV antenna on his roof. He decided to rescue the trapped animal himself. The risk to this person's health could have had an enormous impact on this mans life and the community if he had fallen from the roof. It was a volunteer wildlife carer that came to the aid of this man and the bat.

. Despite the terrible acts of animal cruelty that confront wildlife carers in relation to injured or trapped flying foxes as a direct result of fear bashing from the media and others with a personal agenda most rescue calls are genuine callers worried about the welfare of the flying foxes. **The only health risks to the public are those who are trying to rescue or harm flying foxes, and if they are not authorised and inoculated then the cost to the community could be a lot more than the community can afford.**

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It would be good business sense to support the volunteers who are willing to rescue flying foxes.

It would also be a duty of care to educate the public to protect and prevent unnecessary fear.

The bottom line is:

Left alone in their colonies to sleep in the trees during the day flying foxes do not pose a health risk to the community, and apart from the odd chatter from the young are not annoying. .

Flying foxes are not in plaque proportions in fact the biologist Sir Francis Ratcliff was commissioned by the Qld government of the day in the 1930's to survey flying foxes in Qld. In his notes the numbers calculated clearly indicate that numbers of all species of flying foxes of today continue to decline rapidly.

Flying foxes are very sociable animals and like to live together and visit other colonies, so on any given day it would appear that they didn't come back to the Camp. In actually fact they have gone on a sleep over to another camp. .

It would be hypocritical for a government to pass such a bill on the remote or rare health risks from flying foxes when state government funding is being withdrawn from human welfare agencies and health council such as the Cancer Council when Cancer is one of the biggest disease killers in this state. .

Does that mean that Cancer is no longer a health risk?

With expertise in the rehabilitation of Birds of Prey I am often annoyed at the lack of real knowledge and consideration for not only flying foxes, but the other wildlife that live in and around these flying fox colonies and roost, and the damage that driving away will cause these other species.

Many species of Birds of Prey would set up nesting sites near flying foxes colonies or roost for quick and easy meals you could say a fast food outlet and to teach their young to hunt. To drive away or kill flying foxes could tip many species to the point of no return. .

The Wedge Tailed Eagle, the White Bellied Sea Eagle, The Brahminy and Whistling kite will all take advantage of the local supply of food. Juvenile species will often accompany the Little Red Flying Foxes on their western pilgrimage

Many owls will also set up camp near by with Boo Book, Barn, Grass, living inside the colony to take advantage of the insects and small rodents which are disturbed when flying foxes disperse on dusk, along with members of the Nightjar family.

Powerful Owls are just another threaten species relying heavily on the flying fox for food and their survival so too the Barking Owl.

Snakes and goanna also rely on the permanent supply of food.

On a well moon lit night Kookaburras and Magpies have also been seen taking advantage of the smorgasbord of insects that are thrust into the air from the draft caused from the flutter of the wings of the flying fox on fly out and return. .

The flying foxes would have to be one of the most misunderstood creatures. Their constant harassment and persecution will be to the detriment of the human race in a number of ways. Their birth rate is extremely poor. Their habitat is being destroyed daily. Bats coming into care are underweight. Shouldn't take a rocket scientist to come to a conclusion on the next chapter!

Money would be well spent on

Educating people about living with flying foxes

Promoting flying fox colonies as a tourist attraction.

Support volunteer bat rescuers and rehabilitators

Be serious about Policing and Prosecuting offenders of the Nature Conservation Act

Providing financial support for approved exclusion netting

Restoring food habitat for flying foxes.

I am totally against this Bill for the above reasons.

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