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ANIMAL LIBERATION QUEENSLAND

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Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee
Qld Parliament

Land Protection Legislation (Flying Fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012

Dear Committee Chairperson

Thank you for allowing Animal Liberation Qld an opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation amendment.

Whilst Government legislation relating to the treatment of flying foxes has been passed and this bill may not now be considered, we feel it is necessary to put on the record Animal Liberation Queensland's concerns regarding this proposed amendment.

We have listed our concerns regarding this amendment, as described in the explanatory notes, on the following pages and we look forward to hearing that this proposal is no longer being considered.

If you have any questions regarding our submission please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Annette Guice
President

Policy Objectives

The objective as stated in the explanatory notes says –

... empowers land owners (including local and State government) to take necessary and reasonable action to address the serious health risk presented by increasing concentrations of flying-fox populations in residential areas. The Bill also removes s88C of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 that applies penalties for the taking or handling of flying-foxes and disturbance of flying-fox roosts.

The wording to take necessary and reasonable action is worrying as who decides what is necessary and what is reasonable. With the land owner being empowered by this proposed amendment it would seem they are the one who decides this very important question. Without suitable expertise and objectiveness I think this wording leaves grey area in which varying degrees of interpretation could be applied.

The other issue of great concern is the proposal to remove an animal from the protection of the Nature Conservation Act. Animals in Queensland currently have very little real protection and too allow the removal of bats from the Nature Conservation Act could set a precedent for future similar decisions and as such should not be allowed.

Reasons for the Bill

In this section it is stated:

The Australian Bat strain of Lyssavirus has caused two human fatalities since it was discovered in Australia in 1996.

Whilst these deaths are very sad and we feel for their families, we do not believe this justifies the destruction of bats and their roosts across Queensland. More people are killed almost every day on the roads but we don't plan to ban cars.

It further states:

The emerging conditions of rising flying-fox populations, especially black flying-foxes, in urban areas of Queensland and subsequent increased exposure of domestic animals to flying-foxes and the associated risk to human life necessitate review of legislation limiting dispersion and removal methods of flying-fox populations from residential settings.

Yes there seems to be more colonies within human population centres but this is more likely caused by our expansion into bush land and the lack of food for bats due to the floods and droughts has brought them closer to urban areas. The idea that nature is expected to move on whenever we move in, is no longer accepted by the wider community. Nature and all its inhabitants must learn to live together and this includes native Australian bats. We do not believe there is sufficient risk to the public to warrant the slaughter of bats that this proposal will entail.

General Comments

The demonising of bats by the media has caused unwarranted concern among some of the community and has allowed the idea of killing bats to be considered acceptable. Many of the bats of Australia are in decline and two are listed as vulnerable but they have been included on the list of bats allowed to be shot. The Government should encourage constructive and positive interactions with bats and support more the work done by the bat rescue groups.

Bats are mammals that have dependent young for many months after birth so not only are you condoning the shooting of adult bats but also the slaughter of their young. This could seriously endanger their future survival.

The recent welcome decision by the Queensland Government to further protect turtles and dugong from cruelty is in stark contrast to the treatment Queensland bats are currently receiving.

There is no scientific evidence to suggest or support the notion that shooting 'scouts' will deter further bats. And we question how the numbers shot and whether it is done humanely will be monitored? The bats of Queensland require more protection not less if they are to survive and continue to play their important role in propagating our native forests.

In closing we call on the Queensland Government to reconsider its proposal to allow the shooting of bats and the removal and destruction of their roosts.