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6 September 2012

Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Members

I refer to the *Land Protection (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012* and wish to present a submission for your consideration.

The Charters Towers Action group, residents and ratepayers of Charters Towers support our elected member of Parliament, Shane Knuth, Member for Dalrymple.

Charters Towers residents support the land protection legislation (Flying-fox control) amendment Bill 2012.

The Charters Towers community's efforts to have the flying fox colony removed from our public park, Lissner Park, have been ignored by previous state governments and DERM (Dept Environment and Resource Management).

Lissner Park is situated almost in our city centre.

Because of the noise and smell of the roosting bat colony, residents close to Lissner Park, businesses and elderly are forced to lock their doors and windows because of the stench, the noise and smell of bat excreta.

Residents are also forced to put up with the smell of dead flying fox carcasses in our public parks, backyards and streets of our town.

Residents of Charters Towers consider this a health problem. Bats carry Hendra Virus. Domestic dogs and cats could eat these dead bats.

As stated previously by DERM, Hendra Virus can be transmitted to dogs by flying foxes.

Biosecurity Queensland publically stated in a newspaper article that 2 dogs have been infected with the deadly Hendra virus.

Local government workers employed by Charters Towers Regional Council, working in Lissner Park under the bat colony are in fear of catching a bat-borne disease in the soil and dust as the Park is being mowed and maintained by council workers.

Friday 10 August 2012: Queensland Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young issued a public health warning against workers working under bat colonies.

Bat saliva could enter through the eyes or mouth.

Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL) could be transmitted through a bat bite, eyes, nose or mouth and that more than 100 cases of potential exposure to ABL were reported in Queensland each year.

Charters Towers residents were at risk of catching ABL, histoplasmosis, Hendra, and/or Sars coronavirus by walking through bat faeces and urine in our public park.

Residents cannot enjoy the benefits of the park because the amenities provided by the council are always covered in bat faeces and potentially urine and birthing products.

In August 2020 a petition calling for the removal of flying foxes from Lissner Park and signed by 2061 residents was submitted to the state government and DERM. Again, this petition was not acted on by the state government.

Our town has a public swimming pool which is adjacent to the Park. Thousands of bats deposit faeces in the pool as they fly off across the pool to their nightly feeding ritual.

Residents consider this a health hazard and cannot enjoy the benefit of the pool provided by our local council.

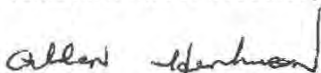
Faeces also covers residents' houses, cars and washing hanging on outside clothes lines.

Our tourist industry is also suffering because of the bats on Lissner Park. Tourists who visit Lissner Park cannot enjoy our 100-years-old shade trees which are heritage listed and have picnic tables and chairs under the shady trees because of the bat colony overhead.

On 27 November 2012 approximately 800 protestors, including Charters Towers Regional Council Mayor, Ben Callcott; Shane Knuth State Member for Dalrymple; Bob Katter, Federal Member for Kennedy and the Charters Towers Action Group marched through the city centre to Lissner Park.

The protest rally against the bats in our public parks was vocal in their demand to shift the bats so the community can regain use of their Park.

Residents of Charters Towers invite environment minister, Hon Andrew Powell and premier Campbell Newman to visit Charters Towers and hold a public forum to discuss the bat problem regarding their removal from our beautiful park.



Allan Henderson  
Charters Towers Action Group





BEWARE: Experts have warned of the health risks of handling bats.

Picture: Scott Radford-Chisholm

## Bat health warning

IT'S that time of year again when Queensland Health warns residents and tourists to avoid contact with bats.

The warning comes after public health experts issued a Public Health Order on Cape Tribulation business, Bat House.

The organisation was found not to have appropriate measures in place to prevent bat bite or scratch injuries to staff or visitors.

Queensland's chief health officer Dr Young said it was important that anyone who has ever been scratched or bitten while handling a bat at the Bat House should phone 13Health for advice (13 432 584).

Dr Young said all bat scratches and bites require treatment, including vaccination, to prevent the development of Australian bat lyssavirus (ABL) infection.

Dr Young said that treatment should ideally be provided as early as possible after a bat bite or scratch, but that it is still of benefit later, as infection can take a number of years to develop.

Dr Young said ABL could be transmitted through a bat bite or scratch, or through exposure of the eyes, nose or mouth to bat saliva, and that more than 100 reported cases of potential exposure to ABL were reported in Queensland each year.

"Because bats don't normally approach humans, bat bites and scratches most commonly occur as a result of someone trying to rescue or pick up a sick, injured or distressed bat," she said.

"Anyone handling bats should be vaccinated and wear personal protective equipment.

"Prompt treatment following a bite or scratch from a bat can prevent serious disease and possibly death."

There have been two cases of human infection due to ABL, both in Queensland and both fatal; one in 1996 and one in 1998.

Dr Young said anyone who finds a sick or injured bat should make contact with a fully-vaccinated wildlife rescuer or carer who is

trained to handle and care for bats.

Queensland Health is working closely with the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland to investigate the matter, and manage the current situation to ensure public safety.

In the event someone is bitten or scratched by a bat or exposed to bat saliva through the eyes, nose or mouth, Dr Young advised:

1. Do not scrub the wound - wash the wound gently but thoroughly for about five minutes with soap and water.
2. If bat saliva has entered the eyes, nose or mouth, flush the area thoroughly with water.
3. Contact a doctor or the nearest hospital immediately. Treatment involves a course of vaccinations that is necessary to protect the person against ABL.

For more information visit [www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au) or call 13 HEALTH (13 432 584).



# Enough is enough



COMMUNITY RALLIES ... Martin Sullivan, Allan Henderson, Member for Dalrymple Shane Knuth, Wayne Erikson and Charters Towers Regional Council Mayor Ben Callcott browse the signatures collected on a petition calling for an end to the bat crisis in the city.

By TRUDY BROWN

A GROUP of Charters Towers residents has had enough of the flying fox colonies roosting in Lissner Park and is calling on State Government Ministers to visit the city.

Allan Henderson is leading an action group that has drawn up a petition calling for Natural Resources Minister Stephen Robertson, Environment Minister Kate Jones and Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) wildlife management director Nick Rigby to debate DERM's decision not to allow the removal of the bats in Lissner Park at the children's play area at 6pm any day of the week.

Mr Henderson's petition calls on the Queensland Parliament to note residents' strong objection to the "astounding decision of the wildlife management director Nick Rigby and the State Government to reject the Charters Towers Regional Council's application to move the bats from Lissner Park".

At the launch of the petition this week, Mr Henderson said the people of the city had had enough.

He said the community was in support of the council's effort to move the flying foxes from the park, so the area can be used again.

"Charters Towers residents are at risk of catching Lyssavirus or the Hendra virus by walking through bat faeces in the park," Mr Henderson said.

He said there are faeces on the paths, tables and chairs and other areas in the park that render it unusable by locals.

"Charters Towers residents cannot enjoy the benefits the council has provided in Lissner Park such as barbecue tables and chairs and a play area for the children because these public facilities are always covered in bat faeces," he said.

"Council workers have to wear plastic overalls and dust masks

when mowing and cleaning the park because of the risk of unhealthy dust particles in the air.

"All Charters Towers residents agree that when the bats leave the park at night to feed, bat faeces covers their houses and cars while they're flying around our city area.

"And in inclement weather, bat faeces can be smelt several kilometres away from the park."

Mr Henderson said the action group was in support of the efforts by Member for Dalrymple Shane Knuth and the Charters Towers Regional Council to get rid of the flying foxes out of the urban area.

He invited the ministers and Mr Rigby to come to Charters Towers and to see for themselves what the local residents have been putting up with for years.

"There's lots of people saying Mr Rigby doesn't know what he's



COVERED UP ... council staff are required to dress in protective clothing for their own safety when working in Lissner Park.

talking about," Mr Henderson said.

In July DERM wildlife management director Nick Rigby told council he was not satisfied on the balance of probabilities that using a helicopter to muster the bats to Gladstone Creek would not result in death or injury of any of the animals.

Mr Rigby said there was no information available as to whether striking a flying fox with a rotor blade would result in immediate death and that air pressure and turbulence would not result in flying foxes being propelled into trees or other structures.

And that he took the advice of the RSPCA regarding the organisation's concern about animal welfare when making his determination.

In less than a week the action group has collected more than 500 signatures from locals supporting the petition.

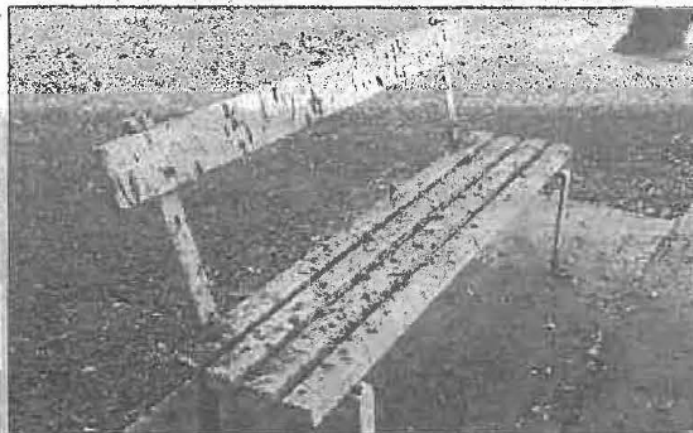
The petition can be found at Herbert Hall Hardware, the Charters Towers RSL, Reid Liquor and PK's Snack Bar.

Mayor Ben Callcott said the council was in support of the petition.

"It will show the Parliament the people of Charters Towers have had a gut full of bats," Cr Callcott said.

He said the petition and the number of signatures on it was evidence it was not just the council trying to get the bats moved from the urban area.

Mr Henderson said if the State Government continues to ignore the cries of locals it will end up with blood on its hands as it is only a matter of time before someone become infected with a bat borne virus and dies.



FACILITIES FILTHY ... park benches, picnic tables and paths are covered with excrement from the flying foxes roosting in Lissner Park.



11. 8. 10.

Tourist Information Center,  
Sheraton Towers

Dear Sir/Madam,

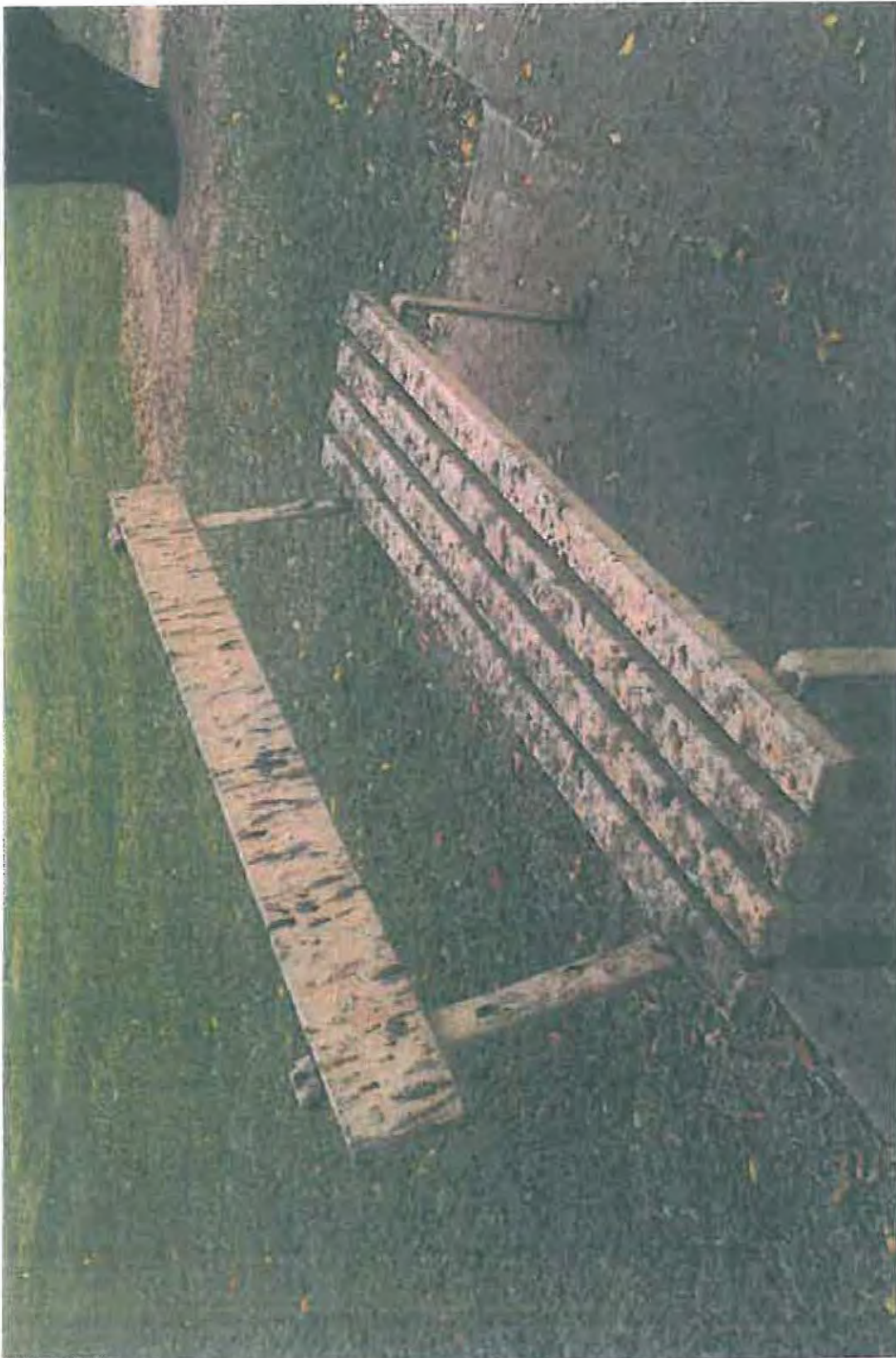
As we are regulars various travelling & staying in your town, which we love visiting, we would like to add our voice for the removal of the bats. We are definitely in support of their removal.

There are places we will now not stay because of the bat problem, so consequently these places miss out on our patronage. Bats smell, pollute our vehicles, are so noisy & we know carry nasty viruses.

Many travellers we have met have voiced the same opinion, so we wish you well & hope you will be able to remove the bats & enjoy more tourists visiting & staying

longer in a most interesting & beautiful town.

Yours sincerely  
Graham & Helen Rumble  
(H. Rumble)



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## CHARTERS TOWERS BAT RALLY



PROTEST ... Charters Towers residents rally over the city's bat problem

Photos: EVAN MORGAN



INJURED ... Anthony Burnham shows the site on his arm where he was bitten

### Blood-sucking insects add to angst in the Towers

ANTHONY Burnham says he has the scars to prove the colony of bats infesting Lissner Park in Charters Towers are much more than a mere eyesore.

The Charters Towers resident was at Saturday's bat protest march and showed the *Townsville Bulletin* a scar on his left arm that Mr Burnham said was caused by an insect that latched on to his skin and fed on his blood.

# Town fights for flight of critters

MICHAEL THOMPSON



CHARTERS Towers may be under siege from a colony of bats, but the town's residents say government bureaucrats will be the next ones experiencing a siege.

Civic leaders have promised that Charters Towers will not let up in its fight with the State Government over plans to muster the bats away from the area, specifically Lissner Park, with the use of a helicopter.

Kennedy MP Bob Katter even indicated that Sustainability Minister Kate Jones could face legal action over the issue, while Dalrymple MP Shane Knuth warned the State Government that protesters might make their presence felt in Brisbane itself.

More than 600 of the town's residents marched in protest on Saturday at the Department of Environment and Resource Management's refusal to grant the local council a permit to use a chopper to muster the bats away, as there was no guarantee the bats would not be harmed.

Locals marched down Gill and Deane streets on their way to the park, and cheered when wave after wave of bats flew from the Lissner Park trees due to the noise of the protesting residents.

Mayor Ben Calcott said the town's residents had to keep pressure on a government that he said has so far pandered to groups opposed to actions such as the one his council was proposing.

"Sadly, we are restricted to foolish, unsustainable legislation. It's about time that governments developed the guts to govern for the



Young protesters hold placards during the rally in Charters Towers on Saturday, at which more than 600 people attended

majority of people rather than to submit to weak-minded, foolish minority groups with romantic aspirations," he said.

"These bats are not endangered, in fact they are in plague numbers and more and more communities are feeling the effects of bat infestation. They are no longer living in their natural habitat, they have come to town and living off man in all respects."

Mr Knuth said local residents were at serious risk from the estimated colony of 20,000 bats, and that government big-wigs should have a look at the problem for themselves.

"We're at risk because they are a hazard, they are a vermin. They have killed seven people and 37 people have been affected, and the government has introduced legislation to overcome that legislation and hit us with \$100,000 fines if we

want to take action in our own hands. That is why we are here to protest today," he said.

"All we're asking for is that the premier or environment minister, come here and then say 'how have you put up with this filth for 10 years?'"

Speaking in front of the gathered rally-goers, Mr Katter was scathing in his condemnation of the government's refusal so far to have the bats removed from the town.

"Our cause is not flippant, it's not unimportant, it is quite literally a matter of life and death," he said.

"We have got lyssa virus and in the health department document, it simply says if you get lyssa, you die. There's no survival rate from lyssa virus.

"Now when they tested the bats in Queensland, of the ones they



Lissner Park bats flee from the noise of protesters

tested, 30 per cent were positive for lyssa. Now remember I'm not saying it's as simple as it stepping out of a bat and into a human, but the water supply is one way."

Mr Katter said Ms Jones, the sustainability minister, will be getting a letter from him warning Ms Jones of her responsibilities to the Charters Towers community.

"We're going to move down the pathway of legal action, we're not going to muck around," he said.

"They're not going to go just after her to force her to get rid of the bats, they are going to point out to the minister who is not giving us this permit, that by not giving us this permit, you have placed our life in jeopardy.

"And she will be getting a letter from me before the end of this week clearly indicating to her that if anyone dies, then we are prosecuting her for criminal negligence."

swarms of the small unidentified insects to Charters Towers, saying they had resulted in some workers being hospitalised over the years.

Mr Burnham said the wound had caused him plenty of discomfort and he laid the blame squarely on the bats.

"It's what they bring with them, we all know that, it's not just me that's got one of these, plenty of people around town are suffering from the same thing," he said.

"Everyone's just had enough, they've been here too long, it's been about 10 years now since they've infested this area and it's time for them to go, it's just too unhygienic and dangerous to have them here like this any longer."

The long-time Charters Towers resident was one of many at Saturday's rally, which started opposite the town's McDonald's restaurant and wound its way down Deane St into Lissner Park, the scene of the town's bat problem.

If government bureaucrats win at the thought of bats being killed in the name of clearing Charters Towers of their unwelcome presence, 79-year-old Alf Williams said they probably shouldn't look up towards the town's power lines if they ever paid a visit.

"You could probably count on five or six every night at least, they come on and feed on the mangoes nearby and they get electrocuted," he said.

"Now they say they're frightened of the chopper knocking one or two, but five or more are getting electrocuted every night, it's a bit a redundant really.

"And one of my mates, who is a chopper pilot, said he wouldn't even come close to a 100m of the bats because they just take off, I don't really see what the problem is with using a chopper."

— MICHAEL THOMPSON



# Townsville Bulletin

[townsvillebulletin.com.au](http://townsvillebulletin.com.au)



Wednesday, August 4, 2010

\$1.20

Freight extra

## Towers: We won't cave in on bats

A PETITION urging government action on flying foxes in Charters Towers is to be presented to State Parliament next month.

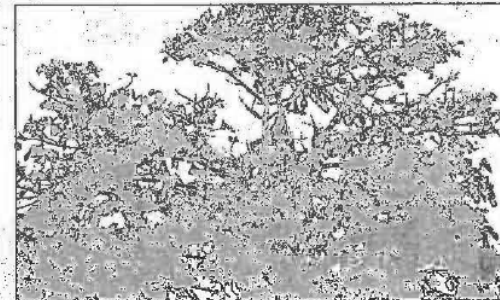
Dalrymple MP Shane Knuth, who will present the petition, said a decision by the Department of Environment and Resource Management to refuse permission for Charters Towers Regional Council to use helicopters to clear flying foxes from Lissner Park had been the final straw.

"Before they used to use the excuse that we wanted to use lethal means to move the bats and now that we come up with a non-lethal way to move them, they still knock us back. It is a disgrace," he said.

DERM wildlife management director Nick Rigby told council he was not satisfied that flying foxes would not be killed or injured while being mustered to another location by helicopter.

Mr Knuth said this proved the government cared more for bats than it did for people.

"I would like to see the environment minister come here and debate the bat problem any



### TERRIBLE . . . bats in Lissner Park

evening at 6pm when they are flying away to feed," he said.

Resident Allan Henderson said people had been lining up to sign the petition.

"Everyone in town wants them gone. No one can use that part of the park where they roost during the day. There's flying fox excrement all over the picnic tables. It's terrible. Lissner Park has become a bat reserve," he said.

Mr Henderson said the people of Charters Towers wanted their park back.





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