



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

Hansard Wednesday, 10 February 2010

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## **FLYING FOXES**

**Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (11.51 am): Last Friday at the Charters Towers Hospital a rescue helicopter aborted a landing after a colony of bats inundated its flight path. The helicopter was attempting to retrieve a patient from transfer to the Townsville Hospital. While local Charters Towers residents were not surprised to hear about the incident, the climate change and sustainability minister set the perception of being astonished that she was not informed that bats were in close vicinity of the hospital.

I say to the minister that this problem is not new. For eight years we have put up with this scourge. For six years I have continued to bring this issue to the parliament. These creatures have been living and roosting among residents year in and year out. The minister needs to comprehend that bats do not differentiate between the airspace surrounding hospitals and that surrounding homes or parklands while roosting. They do not articulate, 'This is a local hospital with sick patients; let's flap somewhere else.'

While I acknowledge and appreciate the minister's announcement to visit Charters Towers to look at this problem and the minister arranging for her department to enter into dialogue with council, unless assertive action is taken, such as previous bat removal resolutions by the government, it will be a complete waste of time and resources. The people of Charters Towers want action, not make-believe spin and jargon where previous permits only allowed councils to make noises for two hours in the early hours of the morning and then were forced to discontinue, all in the name of preventing the bats from stressing out. All this achieves is high cost, stressed residents and bats who return to roosting sites.

I call on the minister to acknowledge that the mitigation permits issued by the government are useless, costly and ineffective. The effective means of removal in areas like Charters Towers to resolve this problem is removal by helicopter repeatedly until bats are completely driven on. Bats carry a lethal virus that have killed people. Residents—the sick, the frail, the elderly and children—should not have to put up with this infliction. If all else fails to protect residents, then culling needs to be examined.

*(Time expired)*