




Speech By
David Kempton

MEMBER FOR COOK

**LAND PROTECTION LEGISLATION (FLYING-FOX CONTROL) AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr KEMPTON** (Cook—LNP) (9.10 pm): I am going to speak to the Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012. The member for Dalrymple is so obsessed with flying foxes we could be excused for thinking that Katter's Australian Party is a single-issue party. The problem with all populist political parties is that they are big on rhetoric yet silent on solutions. It is all too easy to say what the electors want to hear when you do not have to or simply cannot do anything about the problem. For example, you can rant all day about the duopoly of Coles and Woolworths and say all the things that voters want to hear and make outrageous promises, but you do not actually have to do anything. The reason for this is that you are not in government and you never will be in government, so there is no risk you will have to deliver on those promises or actually do anything about them.

Mr Knuth and Katter's Australian Party propose to deal with the complex flying fox issue by passing legislation that has one simple solution: flying foxes must be destroyed. There is no consideration by Mr Knuth as to why flying fox numbers are increasing or why they are congregating in populated areas. There is no consideration of the impact of altered land use practices, the impact of fire regimes on native vegetation and on flying fox numbers. There is no consideration of the movement of flying foxes or flying fox populations. There is no consideration of the impact of removal or destruction of flying foxes on the people living near colonies or the environment or the fact that they will just relocate. No. The answer is simple, as are the proposed amendments: just destroy the flying foxes. If only everything was that easy.

There is a huge population of flying foxes roosting in the centre of Cairns. How would the member for Dalrymple deal with this colony under his proposed amendments? He would not leave it to the local authority, the Cairns City Council, with all its resources. Mr Knuth, by his amending bill, would give any landholder adjacent to the colony the right to destroy or disturb any flying fox or destroy or disturb its roost. Methods of driving away flying foxes include using sound, light, smoke, electric current or chemicals. It beggars belief that Mr Knuth would propose the removal of tens of thousands of flying foxes in the middle of the Cairns CBD, using sound, light, smoke, electric current or chemicals, by any person owning land in the area without any restriction. I wonder how Cairns city would cope with days and days of noise, lights, smoke, electric currents or toxic chemicals used by a private landholder to move this huge colony. As to who regulates how much noise, how many lights, how much smoke and what types of chemicals can be used, the amending bill is silent. What would the locals and tourists think of this onslaught? Some tourists or migrants, seeing flashing lights, smoke, loud noise and confusion, might well be excused for thinking they are back home. I lost count of how many laws, regulations, codes and policies would be impinged upon by this vigilante approach.

Further, the proposed amendments are silent on how flying foxes might be destroyed. The member for Dalrymple has made it no secret that his favoured method is shooting. It is my guess that if Mr Knuth were to try to destroy the tens of thousands of flying foxes currently residing in the centre of Cairns he would require ammunition of the proportion used in the Kokoda campaign. I am not

attempting to make light of the seriousness of the flying fox problem, the risk of disease and the impact on people living near roosts, and neither does the LNP government. Our minister, Andrew Powell, the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, has taken the time to acquaint himself with all the facts, issues and implications and has introduced a responsible and workable approach to address this problem. Our government has given local councils the right to disperse, remove or manage flying foxes in urban areas without the need for a damage mitigation permit. This does not involve lethal means and there is a code to guide councils in a responsible manner. It allows councils to move quickly to resolve persistent problem colonies. Lethal damage mitigation permits are required outside urban areas. However, these will now be assessed and issued on a more reasonable basis to protect people and their livelihoods.

There is simply no need for the amendments proposed by Mr Knuth as they are either unworkable, unnecessary or unlawful. Whilst Mr Knuth might see himself as a modern-day masked avenger, he should leave the law-making to the experts. The proposed amendments are simplistic and unworkable and, whilst well intentioned, are ill-conceived. I cannot support this bill.