




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (7.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012 empowers landowners, including local and state government, to take the necessary and responsible action to address the serious health risks presented by increasing concentrations of flying fox populations in residential areas. The bill also removes section 88C of the Nature Conservation Act 1992, which applies penalties for the taking or the handling of flying foxes and the disturbance of flying fox roosts. The provisions of this bill seek to remove the protection for flying foxes and flying fox roosts from the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and introduce new measures under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 for the management of flying foxes similar to that of dingo control. The bill also proposes new provisions for the management of flying foxes under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002—an act for the management of stock routes and declared pests and weeds.

Flying fox populations are known to carry viruses deadly to humans: the Australian bat lyssavirus, which is closely related to the common rabies lyssavirus; salmonella; leptospirosis; SARS; and Hendra virus. The Australian bat strain of lyssavirus has caused two human fatalities since it was discovered in Australia in 1996. More concerning is the growing number of Hendra virus outbreaks among horse populations and the increased exposure to humans as a result. This virus has caused over 70 horse fatalities and four human fatalities since 1994. That is a 75 per cent fatality rate in horses and a 60 per cent fatality rate in humans. The recent discovery that the virus can be transmitted to dogs further escalates the risk to humans. 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 necessitates a review of legislation limiting dispersion and removal methods of flying fox populations from residential areas.

Extensive consultation and research has been conducted on the impact of flying foxes in urban areas as well as the impact of large colonies on crop production in agricultural areas. Residents forced to tolerate the presence of tens of thousands of flying foxes and the associated risk of disease are clear in their demands to have flying foxes removed from their communities by whatever means necessary. If a colony consists of grey-headed or spectacled flying foxes, any new flying fox management strategies may require approval from the Commonwealth under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

A submission from the Charters Towers Action Group states—

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 on 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 ...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 ... Hendra ... Sars ... by walking through bat faeces and urine in our public park.

Residents cannot enjoy the benefits of the park because the entities 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.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr KNUTH: The member has to hear this. The petition was not acted on by the state government. This submission is not by Shane Knuth; it is by the residents of Charters Towers. The submission states further—

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 ... 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

I do not want to talk just about Charters Towers; I want to talk about Yungaburra, where the people have suffered from flying foxes—up to 8,000 to 10,000 and sometimes 25,000—as well as Cairns, Townsville, Moranbah, Mount Isa. The list goes on.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! The member for Lockyer will cease interjecting. The member has not been taking interjections.

Mr KNUTH: This bill is all about giving the community the tools to be able to take action to deal with threats of disease and economic damage to both urban and rural people. It is also about improving the quality of life of people. This bill is about taking action.

Over the years there has been a perception that government departments are doing something about flying foxes. There are quotes in the paper about the great role they are playing in managing flying foxes. You can judge whether a government is doing a good job. If the bats are gone it has

done a good job, but if the flying foxes are still there and people are putting up with the plagues, the filth, the stench, the ticks, the parasites and everything that goes with it, then it has not.

I commend the minister for giving autonomy to the councils. That is something I have pushed for. Likewise I commend the Premier for his statement that he was looking to remove bats by whatever means necessary. I am hoping that the councils will do that.

(Time expired)