




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (9.18 pm), in reply: I thank all speakers here tonight. It was a very relevant debate. To give an understanding to members who are unsure of what it is like for people putting up with bats year in, year out, I will table some newspaper articles in relation to flying fox issues: 'Towers: We won't cave in on bats'; 'Town fights for flight of critters'; 'Enough is enough'; 'Bat words'; 'QPWS tell locals: time to move out'; 'Virus. Concern over SARS virus linked to bats in China'; 'Law places bats before town's kids'; 'New angle in bat attack'; 'The bat war'; 'Chemical fix?'; 'Batty laws'; 'Bat health check call'; 'Bat virus worry is with us again'; 'Elders say they'll kill Towers bats'; 'Flying virus factories'; 'Disease strikes bat-ridden town'; 'Vigilance crucial as Hendra risk increases'; 'Copter scare'; 'Bats invade school'; 'The bat wars'; 'Towers bats to go'—that is a pledge by the Newman government; 'Council calls on state amid nasty virus fears'; 'Bat fight'; 'Promise to move bats'—once again the Premier promises to move the bats by whatever means necessary; 'Hendra back in north'; 'Bats linked to bacterial virus'; 'Bat blitz? Can Do'—in which the Premier said he would get rid of the bats by whatever means necessary; 'Warning on backyard bats'; 'Warning on hungry bats'; and a picture in the *Courier-Mail* of the woman who was threatened with a \$100,000 fine for disturbing a colony of flying foxes.

*Tabled paper.* Media articles regarding bat colonies [\[2552\]](#).

I take this issue very seriously. Tonight there has been talk about who is responsible, who should take the glory and who is getting the credit. However, this is more important than who takes the credit. This is about people's quality of life, which for many has been ruined year in, year out. As I have already said tonight, I commend the minister for taking this move to give councils more responsibility. Part of the bill that I introduced would have returned the responsibility for the removal of flying foxes to local government. For years, there have been arguments within governments and departments about councils not being able to receive the appropriate permits to provide effective outcomes in moving on bats by whatever means necessary. I commend the minister for this, because it is such an important issue. The member for Thuringowa talked about this being a great victory for the LNP because a permit will allow residents to remove flying foxes. However, those residents were threatened with fines of \$100,000 and jail sentences for disturbing flying fox colonies. The Premier told John Mackenzie that he regretted that threat of fines.

**Mr Powell:** As did I.

**Mr KNUTH:** That is right. We are saying that that is a good outcome. If we can remove the bats from Yungaburra, it is a good outcome. If we can remove the bats from Charters Towers, it is a good outcome. If we can remove the bats from places all over the state, it is a good outcome. This is about trying to get that outcome. It is not about glory or who gets the credit; it is about getting outcomes and returning power to the councils.

We come in here and debate this issue, which I feel so passionate about because for 10 years I have come into this parliament and talked about bats. I do not want to keep coming into the parliament to talk about bats. A good government is one that, if it says it is going to do something then

we see action. If we go to Charters Towers and the bats are still there, that will give an indication of whether or not they are doing a good job. That is the indication. Tonight we have seen a lot of backslapping and heard about how wonderful, how great and how good the minister is. He has been applauded for sending out a media release at six o'clock in the morning stating that the councils will be given a permit. All of that is fine, but when the bats are gone I will slap him on the back and give him credit.

I commend the minister for this action, that is also part of the legislation that I introduced to the House. My bill stated that if councils refused to take responsibility, the minister has the overarching power to step in and make those councils do something. I hope that that will be an outcome of what the minister is putting forward.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Dalrymple, please pause for just a moment. Members, there are too many conversations in the chamber. People are not listening to the speaker.

**Mr KNUTH:** That is in the bill because there are councils that are sympathetic to flying foxes. For the past 10 years I have seen councils that are sympathetic to flying foxes and they will not move on the bats. The minister has made a good decision, but they need to follow up to ensure that if councils do not take action and year in year out people are still putting up with the filth, the stench, the ticks, the parasites and the threat of viruses, the minister can step in and take action.

I appreciated the gesture from the Premier when he indicated that he was prepared to work with me if a particular council in my electorate would not take action on flying foxes. I am very happy to work with the Premier in that regard because that is a good gesture. While the minister has told councils that the responsibility will go back to them, he must put forward criteria to ensure that those councils are able to move the bats by whatever means necessary. They can take whatever action is put in front of them through the criteria that the minister may put forward, but the reality is that if all else fails we may have to look at culling. Flying foxes have been flapping around, year in year out, making people's lives a misery and governments have continually looked after and taken care of the flying foxes. When the flying foxes move into a residential area and they are well looked after they will keep coming back. You have to make it uncomfortable for the flying foxes otherwise they will keep coming back. The minister can give the councils autonomy and we can pat ourselves on the back, but if the criteria makes it impossible by placing restrictions on the permit system we are wasting our time here tonight. We are simply back slapping and saying what a great job we are doing.

Part of the bill removes section 88C of the Nature Conservation Act. As I said, the Premier has said that he regretted threatening fines of \$100,000 or jail sentences for those prepared to take action themselves to remove the flying foxes. For eight years, people have lived with a roost of flying foxes. There has been talk about setting up a bat habitat and about where the poor flying foxes will go. There are 400 square miles for such a habitat within one kilometre of that flying fox colony. It is ridiculous that we came to that point.

I know that many members here tonight did not read the bill. While some of them wished they could support it, many did not read the bill. The bill removes section 88C, which relates to the fines of \$100,000 and the jail sentence that were introduced by the Labor Party when in government. I was led to believe that the first thing that the LNP would do would be to remove section 88C of the Nature Conservation Act to ensure if people had a colony of flying foxes roosting above their homes they could do something about it. They could remove those bats without the threat of fines, harassment or jail. They could remove those bats and relieve themselves of that scourge. That is what this bill does. This is not something that has just been brought up or pulled out of the hat. This is something that has been thought through, year in year out, and I have been working with those residents, year in year out.

Some members expressed concern that people will pull out their guns and shoot flying foxes in their backyards. This bill does not permit that. The bill removes section 88 of the Nature Conservation Act. If anyone shoots a flying fox in a residential area then it is an offence under the Weapons Act. This is just like the LNP is seeking to do in the Land, Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill with the removal of the riverine protection permits.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Dalrymple, I am advised that you are currently referring to a matter before the House that is not the bill that is the subject of this debate. I would ask you to restrain your comments to the bill that is currently being debated.

**Mr KNUTH:** The committee recommended that the Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill not be passed due to potential inconsistency with the federal Environment

Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. As it says in my legislation—and many people did not read this bill—

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! I would ask people to go outside if they wish to have conversations that are not part of this debate. I call the member for Dalrymple.

**Mr KNUTH:** It is part of the legislation that if there are two different flying foxes involved—that is, the grey headed flying fox and the spectacled flying fox—then the federal government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act would overrule this legislation. There is no inconsistency at all between the federal government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and this state legislation.

This bill provides the legislative framework to ensure that if landowners feel that their health and livelihood is threatened then they can take action. If there are bats within a jurisdiction the relevant council would need to take advice from the federal government in relation to the removal of those flying foxes. This does not conflict with the federal government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Flying foxes are in plague proportions. It has come to the point where we have to do something about the continual plague of flying foxes. The flying foxes are in plague proportions. The last thing we want is a pandemic and a build-up in flying fox numbers. There has been an explosion in the number of flying foxes. The department indicated that the number of spectacled flying foxes has exploded fivefold over the last 10 years. The same has happened for the red flying foxes and the black flying foxes. We have to do something about that.

I support this bill. I cannot see how we can get anything better than this. This is about federal and state legislation complimenting each other. It is about giving the minister the overriding power to step in if councils do not take action. It is also about giving councils the autonomy to make decisions. It is about giving residents the right to move, disturb or harass a colony of flying foxes without the threat of fines of hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is about residents who are not able to put up with flying foxes year in and year out having the support of the government. We do not want to come back year in and year out to debate this—

**Mr Cox** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** You can interject. The member for Thuringowa indicated before that he was the LNP representative for Dalrymple. I have not seen him restore the healthy lifestyle program. I have not seen him get rid of the bats. I have not seen him take a stand on the sale of QR National. I have not seen him stand up for the 15 health staff that he has just sacked. I have not seen him reemploy three research scientists he sacked and who all voted for the LNP.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Dalrymple, resume your seat. I will ask members to please keep order in the House. I call the member for Dalrymple.

**Mr Hopper** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! I also warn the member for Condamine who has not been absent from conversations in this chamber either. Across the chamber there are too many conversations going on that are not related to the debate. I call the member for Dalrymple.

**Mr KNUTH:** The member for Thuringowa likes to call himself the LNP spokesperson for Dalrymple. We had another LNP spokesperson for Dalrymple in the newspaper article that the member just quoted. We have two spokespersons for Dalrymple. I do not know who the LNP spokesperson is. Is it the member for Thuringowa or is it the previous candidate for Dalrymple?

**Mr Cox** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** Why does the LNP spokesperson for Dalrymple not stand up for his electorate? Stop rolling over. Get off the ground and take a stand. Stop dodging and weaving to the point that you are invisible. Stand up for your electorate.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Dalrymple, I appreciate there is an exchange with respect to an interjection however you will make your comments through the chair and refer to members by their correct title.

**Mr KNUTH:** It is very important that the minister, as he acknowledged, gives permits to councils but, at the same time, the criteria must be workable. Otherwise, we will have the situation where they are only allowed to harass the bats from five o'clock to seven o'clock in the morning and then stop and have a vet on site. That is the sort of permit you gave the Yungaburra residents.

This is about getting action. This is about removing those bats by whatever means necessary. It does not necessarily mean culling. It is about providing effective permits. It is good that the Premier said that he is warning councils. I wholeheartedly support that. I wholeheartedly support the position that the minister has taken with regard to councils. We want to ensure the criteria is put in place.

That is why I have brought this bill before this House. I care about the residents. I care about the people. I do not care about the politics. I want to come in here and say that the bats have gone. I want to be able to come in here and shake the minister's hand and thank him. I would like to come in here and thank the Premier when the bats are gone. I would rather come in here and say that the bats have gone rather than come in here and point the finger, brag and backslap. This bill provides the legislative framework for this to happen. I am passionate about the bill. I commend the bill to the House.