




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.45 pm): In speaking to the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I commend the minister for adopting more than half a dozen of the recommendations of the committee. I acknowledge the great job of the committee staff. It is good to see the recommendations of the committee accepted. The committee process is a big undertaking. There are a lot of public hearings and a lot of submissions. It is very important that the people of Queensland and the different interest groups are represented. The committee report states—

The policy objectives of the Bill, as set out in the Explanatory Notes are to:

- deliver greentape reduction reforms to reduce costs to business and government while maintaining environmental standards
- support firm but fair environmental regulation, and
- promote the recovery and use of waste within the economy.

...

Environmental Offsets Act 2014, to clarify and strengthen legislative clauses to reinforce the intent of nil duplication of offsets across and within jurisdictions, and other minor amendments in response to issues raised since the Act's commencement on 1 July 2014

...

Nature Conservation Act 1992, to require councils to prepare a Statement of Management Intent for flying-fox roost management, as the final component of that management framework for defined urban areas

In terms of that objective, I am not quite sure but it is my understanding that the amendments give more responsibility to the councils for the management of flying foxes. I believe that is very important. Over many years we have had arguments between councils and governments.

We see in a report in the *Australian* newspaper that flying foxes were the host of the ebola virus. Flying foxes around the Congo River carried the ebola virus. It then spread through monkeys. The outbreak occurred on the banks of the Ebola River, which is why it is called the ebola virus. The flying foxes move from Africa through South-East Asia and Australia and back to Africa. Flying foxes are the hosts for many diseases. We have lost about 90 horses and think there have been about seven human deaths.

The government has removed about 25 per cent of funding to the councils that could be used to disperse flying foxes. We are getting the councils to take on this responsibility but they do not necessarily have the funds to remove the flying foxes. It costs a lot of money and requires a lot of workers to remove flying foxes. We need a pool of money for this purpose and then councils could apply for funding out of that pool. It does not mean that every council in Queensland would apply for that funding, but if they have a flying fox problem they could apply. If we give the councils the

responsibility to move the flying foxes on and we have taken away 25 per cent of their funding it is going to be very difficult to deal with the flying foxes unless there is the option to cull them—and I know the member for Barron River disagrees with me. That option is questionable.

Mr Trout interjected.

Mr KNUTH: We cannot chop down every tree. I know that the New South Wales government is taking a strong position. I say to the minister that councils are playing their role but at the same time there is a lack of funding available. We definitely support the policy objective of this bill but we also need funding for those councils to do that. Likewise, if the councils are given the opportunity to access funding to remove the flying foxes and the councils do not use that funding to do so and the people feel that the flying foxes are a serious health risk to their community, I believe that legislation and measures should be put in place so that the state government can step in as an overarching power to ensure that councils do move those flying foxes. I believe that this would be a step in the right direction. Such a motion might be brought up at the Local Government Association conference this week. But we need those resources to be able to remove those flying foxes. Likewise, to reiterate, we want to ensure that the councils do move those flying foxes. As I was saying, they are a serious health risk and they should not be living and roosting amongst people. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.