




Speech By
Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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ADJOURNMENT

Ingham Botanical Gardens, Flying Fox Colony

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (5.35 pm): This week I tabled a petition on behalf of 2,858 petitioners in relation to their concerns about the flying fox colony which occupies the botanical gardens in Ingham. These gardens serve as Ingham's memorial gardens, accommodating our Anzac cenotaph and other memorials erected by the community in the Hinchinbrook shire. For many years the flying foxes that have periodically roosted in the botanical gardens in Ingham have been a noisy, smelly hindrance to the local community. In the past the flying foxes have come and gone and, although an irritating hindrance, the local community tolerated them on the assumption that they would move on as they have done in the past. This time the colony has not moved on for an extended period. As such, the people of Ingham are no longer prepared to tolerate this colony of flying foxes and they must be moved on.

Their extended occupancy has resulted in a number of adverse outcomes for the local environment and for the community. For example, the flying foxes have forced a local primary school to abandon its use of a bus pick-up and set-down area adjacent to the botanical gardens due to the smell, noise, mess and fear of disease. The flying foxes are damaging the health of the trees inside the botanical gardens—in particular a stand of historic trees planted between 1935 and 1940—by stripping vegetation off the branches and creating a reluctance on the part of local residents to use the gardens for recreational and memorial purposes, including our annual Anzac Day services.

Individual Ingham residents have written to the environment minister about their concerns regarding the flying fox colony in the botanical gardens. The minister responded by advising that local councils have a standing authority to manage flying fox roosts in urban areas. The Hinchinbrook Shire Council does indeed have a management plan in place, but on 4 November 2016 council officers were directed to cease the management activities authorised under that management plan by officers from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

It is unacceptable for the environment minister to advise Queenslanders that their councils are responsible for this issue, only to have officers from his own department intervene to prevent those actions being taken. Given that the minister's department intervened to prevent the Hinchinbrook Shire Council from undertaking these flying fox management activities, we can only assume that the department is now prepared to take full responsibility for managing this flying fox colony. The flying fox colony in the Ingham Botanical Gardens can no longer be tolerated. The numbers are larger and they are now permanently settled. There must be an intervention.

This petition requests that the minister direct his department to take the necessary steps to disperse this flying fox colony. The minister and his department must take responsibility for this given that they have prevented the Hinchinbrook Shire Council from undertaking management activities in accordance with its management plan.