

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 934

asked on Tuesday, 14 June 2011

MR SEENEY ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (MS JONES)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the bat colony in Gayndah—

- (1) What has the department done to alleviate the problems caused by the bat colony in Gayndah and how has the department measured the impact of this colony on the people of Gayndah living in the vicinity?
- (2) What trigger points need to be met to instigate actions to relocate the colony to a more suitable location?

ANSWER:

While this question was asked of Minister Jones, due to recent changes in Ministerial responsibility, I am now the Minister responsible for this matter and therefore provide this response.

- (1) The department has offered every assistance to the Council dealing with this complex issue. On 15 June 2011, a senior officer of the Department of Environment and Resource Management attended a public meeting at Gayndah to discuss the flying fox issue, hear resident concerns and assess the situation first hand. The local council Mayor, Joy Jensen, also attended the meeting.

At the time of the meeting, there were an estimated 100,000 flying foxes in the roost, however these were predominantly made up of little red flying foxes which are a highly nomadic species and are expected to move on as soon as their young are independent.

In the interim, North Burnett Regional Council will be lodging a fresh application to disperse the flying foxes, based on discussions held at the meeting. Naturally, approval to disperse the animals will only be required if they do not move on of their own accord.

The department is committed to maintaining ongoing engagement with council on this issue, and to provide general advice to assist council with the preparation of any application.

- (2) Under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, a damage mitigation permit can be granted where the decision maker is satisfied that:

- damage or loss is being caused, or is likely to be caused by the presence of a flying fox roost, or that there is a threat or potential threat to human health and well-being as a result of the presence of a flying fox roost;
- the action taken under the permit will not have any affect on the survival of the species in the wild; and
- the actions undertaken under the permit to disperse the flying foxes must be demonstrated to be humane and not likely to cause unnecessary suffering to the animals.

The department must also consider whether attempting to move flying foxes from a roost will result in the animals relocating to another site with a potential for an equal or greater level of public concern.