

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1513

asked on Thursday, 1 September 2016

MR BOOTHMAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION AND MINISTER FOR NATIONAL PARKS AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF (HON DR S MILES)——

QUESTION:

With reference to residents of Catalina Park, Upper Coomera having been subjected to an ever-expanding Flying Fox colony that has encroached onto a large townhouse complex and the limited effect of the vegetation management undertaken by Gold Coast City Council.

Will the Minister advise given the serious health concerns of Lyssavirus and Hendra virus, what steps the department and council can undertake to further negate this issue in the Yuan Creek and surrounding residential precincts?

ANSWER:

Local governments have as-of-right powers to manage flying-fox roosts in Urban Flying-Fox Management Areas in compliance with the '*Code of Practice – Ecologically sustainable management of flying-fox roosts*'.

This means the Gold Coast City Council is authorised to undertake a range of roost management activities in dealing with the Catalina Park and Yuan Creek flying-fox roost. Actions that the Gold Coast City Council can take under the code of practice include: destroying a roost by removing roost trees; dispersing the roost by driving the animals from the site; or modifying a part of the roost through the trimming of trees.

Council may also undertake roost management activities on private land, such as a privately-owned townhouse complex, provided it first obtains permission from the landowner or body corporate. Private landholders may also undertake roost management actions provided they obtain a Flying-fox Roost Management Permit from EHP under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Regarding concerns about urban flying-fox roosts spreading Lyssavirus and Hendra virus, Queensland Health advises that the risk of contracting the Lyssavirus is very low and that transmission occurs when someone is bitten or scratched by a flying-fox. If this happens, there is a post-exposure vaccination available. To avoid potential exposure to Lyssavirus is easy – members of the public should not handle sick, injured, or even seemingly healthy flying-foxes.

Hendra virus can only be transmitted to humans from horses. A pre-exposure vaccination is available to protect horses against the Hendra virus.

The Government is also working to improve the effectiveness of flying-fox roost management activities by delivering better understanding of flying-fox behaviour and the factors that attract them to specific locations. In the 2015-16 Budget, the Government allocated \$2.7 million to support this work, which will be delivered in partnership with the CSIRO and in consultation with local governments.