

Question on Notice

No. 371

Asked on Thursday, 22 March 2018

MR N DAMETTO ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS (HON L ENOCH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the bat colony plaguing the town of Ingham and other North Queensland centres—

Will the Minister (a) accept that these animals pose a significant public health risk and (b) take positive action to provide additional funding to combat the infestation?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

- (a) According to publicly available information from Queensland Health, surveys of wild bat populations have indicated that less than 1% of bats carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus. In sick and injured bats, around 7% have been found to carry the virus.

Infected flying-foxes can only transmit the virus to a person through a scratch or a bite. Therefore, if you do not touch a flying-fox there is no risk of transmission. If a person is scratched or bitten, a post-exposure vaccination is available with a 100% success rate.

- (b) Under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, the Hinchinbrook Shire Council has an as-of-right authority to manage the flying-fox roosts in line with the *Code of Practice – Ecologically sustainable management of flying-fox roosts*.

In 2016, the Queensland Government initiated and funded a \$2.7 million program to improve the management of problem urban flying-fox roosts in north Queensland. As part of this program, the Department of Environment and Science has partnered with CSIRO and other contributors to conduct a three year research project on the *Alternative Management of Little Red Flying-fox Roosts* to further investigate the ecology, behaviour and management of this species. The data and recommendations will then be used to inform flying-fox management in other urban areas.