

Responses to Parliamentary Committee recommendations in Report No. 14 of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee December 2012

Parliamentary Committee recommendation 2:

The committee recommends that the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection review the current status of flying-foxes as 'protected' under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, in view of the findings of 2012 population surveys.

Government response: Not supported

The Queensland Government does not support this recommendation.

All native wildlife in Queensland is "protected" under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA). Under the NCA native wildlife is prescribed one of the following statuses as –

- (a) extinct in the wild wildlife; or
- (b) endangered wildlife; or
- (c) vulnerable wildlife; or
- (d) rare wildlife; or
- (e) near threatened wildlife; or
- (f) least concern wildlife.

The NCA provides for different types of wildlife, and animals with different conservation statuses to receive a wide range of different protections under specific provisions of the act and under its individual regulations and conservation plans.

This ensures that all wildlife is afforded some basic level of safeguard against unregulated activities and gives the government the ability to modify controls that regulate various activities concerning native wildlife as needed. Without this level of protection, it would be possible for members of the public to kill these animals or to interfere with a roost site under almost any circumstances, regardless of the impacts.

The government believes a more sensible approach is to maintain the status of flying-foxes as protected under the NCA, but ensure that regulatory and policy settings ensure a balanced approach that protects flying-foxes, and ensure that their impacts on communities and businesses are carefully managed and minimised to the degree possible.

On 14 February 2013, the first count of the National Flying-fox Monitoring Program was undertaken. EHP staff will undertake surveys, with the help of volunteers, across the State on a quarterly basis. The four year program will cover the two nationally threatened flying-fox species, the grey-headed flying-fox and the spectacled flying-fox. Other flying-fox species occurring in the range of these species will also be counted. The National Flying-fox Monitoring Program will give local Councils and EHP better information for managing local flying-fox populations. It will also provide a better understanding of flying-fox numbers and their movements.

Parliamentary Committee recommendation 3:

The committee recommends that the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection commission research into flying-foxes to better understand:

- The reasons flying-foxes are moving into urban areas
- The key factors that determine the selection of roost sites by flying-fox colonies, and
- Guidelines for councils and residents on species of trees and plants that provide food sources for flying-foxes, and suggesting that councils and residents not plant those species.

Government response: Supported

The government supports the committee's recommendation however careful consideration of the resulting costs; budget and resource availability would need to occur before any commitment is made into the commission of flying-fox research.

Parliamentary Committee recommendation 4:

The committee recommends that the government support further research into methods to disperse flying-fox colonies from roosts where required, in consultation with local councils. This includes researching alternative methods to contain flying-fox colonies, and the dispersal and relocation of flying-fox colonies in areas where contact with urban communities is having a detrimental effect.

Government response: Supported

The government supports the committee's recommendation and would support further research by a scientific institution into non-harmful methods of flying-fox dispersal. The government is currently developing a new policy approach which takes into account urban flying-fox management and flying-fox roost dispersals. This policy approach will take into account recommendations from the scientific community and local government authorities. The policy approach will also ensure that each time an intervention is carried out at a roost site that an opportunity is taken to learn and evaluate its success.

Parliamentary Committee recommendation 5:

The committee recommends that the government monitor the progress of, and where required offer support to, the proposed fauna centres to be established in Mount Isa and Charters Towers, as a long term approach to relocate flying-fox colonies from urban areas in other areas of the state.

Government response: Supported

The government supports the committee's recommendation and will monitor the progress of the establishment of the proposed fauna centres at Mt Isa and Charters Towers; however careful consideration of the resulting costs; budget and resource availability would need to occur before any commitment is made to support a fauna centre.


Parliamentary Committee recommendation 6:

The committee recommends that research continue to be undertaken to find more cost-effective netting and other procedures to protect the fruit crop industry from flying-fox damage.

Government response: Supported

The government supports the committee's recommendation however careful consideration of the resulting costs; budget and resource availability would need to occur before any commitment is made into the commission of flying-fox research by the government.

The government will continue to encourage growers to implement non-lethal measures, and to commission industry led research and product development into such measures, and offer support for the installation of netting through its Sustainability Loan Program.

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