

**Clarence Valley Council
FLYING FOX DISPERSAL COMMITTEE**

MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2017 COMMENCING 9.30 AM AT THE MACLEAN COMMITTEE ROOM

MINUTES

Attendance:

Jason Thompson, Office of Kevin Hogan MP - Federal Member for Page; Debbie Newton, Office of Chris Gulaptis MP - Member for Clarence; Cr Andrew Baker; Des Schroder, Director Environment, Planning & Community; Rod Wright, Natural Resource Management Coordinator; Ron & Dianne Browning; Edwina Cameron; Andrew Potter and Denise Worrill

| Item | | Discussion/ Comments | Reporting Officer | Actions | Action Officer |
|-------|--|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 01 | Welcome to Country | | Des Schroder | | |
| 02 | Introduction | | | | |
| 03 | Apologies | Kevin Hogan (represented by Jason Thompson), Chris Gulaptis (represented by Debbie Newton) and Cr Novak | | Accepted | |
| 04 | Confirmation of Minutes of meeting held 28 July 2017 | Accepted | | | |
| 05 | Business Arising | | | | |
| 05.01 | Outcome of 15 August Council meeting on the Committee Resolution - Flying Fox Dispersal Licence | Committee updated on Council resolutions. | Des Schroder | Noted | |
| 05.02 | Parliamentary Members feedback on consultation with Ministers | None to report, Jason will follow up with Kevin Hogan. | Jason Thompson | | |
| 06 | Report on the NSW Local Government Flying Fox Forum | See attached report by Rod Wright | Rod Wright | Council report to recommend that the Federal Government Inquiry recommendations be adopted by the Government. | Rodney Wright/ Des Schroder |

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|------|--|---|---|--|
| 07 | <p>Consideration of the notation report to Council on 19 September (attached) on costings and request for the Flying Fox Dispersal Committee's feedback</p> | <p>The discussion was wide ranging but the cost reality of a full blown dispersal was appreciated by the committee. The committee then turned its attention to looking at viable cost effective options which led to the action resolution, which involves extending the urban buffer area and looking at new compensatory habitat. This may eventually involve a 'nudging' of the flying fox in the winter months away from the houses in the rainforest gully. Nudging may possibly be done without a dispersal licence under the guidelines.</p> | <p>Committee recommends that:- <i>That Council review the Maclean Flying Fox Management Strategy to include an urban buffer strip as far as Kerry Street and as well as examining compensatory habitat options which will possibly enable the flying fox to be 'nudged' into these new areas of vegetation. That a likely cost be determined for Council funding and outside sources- including applying for the current state round of flying fox grants- close April 2018.</i></p> | <p>Rodney Wright and Des Schroder to prepare a report to Council</p> |
| 08 | <p>General Business</p> | <p>None</p> | | |
| 09 | <p>Date, time and venue for next meeting</p> | <p>February date and time to be determined</p> | | |
| 10 | <p>Meeting close</p> | <p>11.00 am</p> | | |

- Staff report on the Flying Fox Forum 2016 held in Sydney 25-26 October
- Australian Government Parliamentary Inquiry 2016 Recommendations

Executive Summary

Flying foxes act as important pollen and seed dispersers for a wide range of native vegetation across the east coast of Australia. Due to their ecological importance in maintaining some of Australia's most significant ecosystems, work needs to be undertaken to ensure the preservation of flying fox species across the country.

The reduction in suitable foraging and roosting habitat, among other factors, has impacted on the population size of several species, leading the Spectacled Flying fox and Grey-headed Flying fox to be listed as 'Vulnerable' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The expansion of human populations across coastal New South Wales and Queensland has led to flying fox camps becoming increasingly located in urban and rural residential areas, possibly from movements of camps due to loss of natural habitat, or the expansion of human settlement into traditional flying fox habitats.

The growing propensity of flying foxes to roost in urban areas has caused more frequent interactions between the species and Australia's human population. The location and size of these camps can have notable economic, social and health impacts on residents, business owners, and the agricultural community. These impacts have increasingly affected residents' quality of life, and put pressure on Local Government to take action.

There is uncertainty around the reasons for the increase in urban roosting behaviour, and the accuracy of population estimates of these flying foxes. The highly-mobile nature of flying foxes—the Grey-headed Flying fox in particular—contributes to difficulties in ensuring that data is accurate and determining whether management actions will have lasting results.

Increased urban roosting in recent years has led councils to implement a number of management techniques. These include actions to deter flying foxes from returning to an established roosting spot, known as dispersals, in order to reduce the impacts on affected communities. Local councils are often tasked with the difficult job of balancing their legislative responsibilities for the conservation of flying foxes, with the needs of local communities.

This inquiry considered the Commonwealth and State protections afforded to the two threatened flying fox species, the interaction between State and Commonwealth regulatory frameworks, and the varied approaches to managing the camps that cause tensions. Consistent with the terms of reference, the focus of the inquiry was to ensure that the regulatory framework enables the effective management of flying fox camps, while securing the appropriate environmental protections.

The recommendations outlined in the report are intended to complement the existing efforts to protect, conserve and recover affected flying fox populations, allowing them to be managed in the most appropriate and sustainable way possible, while limiting the impacts on the livelihoods of those in the communities affected. The recommendations are designed to provide more immediate support and guidance for relevant stakeholders, taking into account the longer-term recovery objectives set out in the draft recovery plans for the Spectacled Flying fox and Grey-headed Flying fox. Central to these aims is national coordination, funding and research, clear guidance for decision making, and community education.

To support these aims the Committee has recommended the establishment of a cooperative body to coordinate and compile information on the management actions and priorities for reform relating to nationally protected flying foxes across Commonwealth, State and Local Government jurisdictions. The Committee has also highlighted the need to fund priority actions and research, and the development of a decision tool for Local Governments when faced with flying fox camps that affect their residents. Finally, the Committee recommends the development of education resources to assist local councils in affected jurisdictions and potentially affected jurisdictions.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

4.14

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government propose a national or eastern states flying fox consultative committee or working group to the Council of Australian Governments. The consultative committee or working group would be responsible for centrally compiling information on referrals and management actions, and identifying priorities for legislative harmonisation, research and funding for future action in the management of nationally protected flying foxes.

Recommendation 2

4.28

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a dedicated funding pool for flying fox research and conservation actions, to enable:

- continued funding of the National Flying fox Monitoring Programme for at least the next 10 years;
- committed funding for the priority actions outlined in the recovery plans for both the Spectacled Flying fox and Grey-headed Flying fox;
- targeted national research into flying fox roosting behaviours and habitat loss impacts; and
- any other research that allows for the timely evaluation of flying foxes under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, informed by rigorous data, at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation 3

4.38

The Committee recommends that the Department of the Environment and Energy develop, in consultation with relevant State and Local Governments, a tool that assists councils to make decisions on action, referral and education in the most appropriate way, relevant to the flying fox impacts in their jurisdiction.

Recommendation 4

4.49

The Committee recommends that the Department of the Environment and Energy, in consultation with other relevant organisations, develop a suite of education resources for Australian communities regarding flying fox ecology, behaviour, environmental significance, health impacts, and management options. These resources should be promoted by the Australian Government to local councils, communities, businesses and all relevant stakeholders in affected jurisdictions and potentially affected jurisdictions.

- NSW OEH has tools to assist groups work through issues and come up with options to address issues. OEH funding of \$1mill provides funding up to \$50 000 per Council who have issues to assist with implementing a plan or developing a plan.
- Ongoing decline in foraging habitat seems to be one reason increased urbanisation flying foxes.
- There is quarterly monitoring coordinated by CSIRO and this indicates Grey-headed population steady at around 700 000 but statistically further monitoring required to be robust. Spectacled Flying fox mainly in QLD and NT declined by 80 % in recent years and reasons unknown but likely linked to habitat and food resources loss/clearing.
- Extreme heat events (over 42^c) leading to mass deaths of flying foxes affecting Blacks more than Greys with some camps losing more than 50% of animals.
- Flying fox critical species for pollination of hardwoods and range of species.
- Ku-ring-gai Council managing reserve and habitat to encourage flying fox into centre and away from periphery where impacting residents. Council engaged Dr Peggy Eby University NSW to guide the process.
- Lot of research happening on movement, conflict, disease, etc. Time lapse footage of a number of flying fox that were tagged with satellite tracker and showed movements up and down the east coast. Light bulb moment for me that demonstrates mobility of animals.
- A number of councils have a dedicated flying fox officer and put a lot of resources and money into communication and management.
- Two workshops one on what councils and others want in way of research and another one on developing guidelines for managing and responding to heat events. There is no live forecaster and pre-emptive warning about when colonies might go down. Some councils, like Richmond Valley and Byron, have faced huge clean ups after heat stress deaths.
- Population spreading further south colonies showed up in Adelaide, Melbourne, Bega etc.
- Batemans one year dispersal successful but they have a dedicated flying fox officer and up to their third one as very demanding position and with very little thanks whichever way you go. Their situation involved up to 70 volunteer immunisations against Lisa virus with some thinking flying foxes were ready to move on anyway.
- Comments on issues with Hendra Virus and while still no absolute answer general consensus is that transmission from bat to horse via urine and as only viable for approx. 2 hours it is likely it might be via direct exposure. Uptake vaccine not high with some campaigning against its use. Lot of overlap between horses and flying foxes but infections and outbreak still relatively low so not easy for all the dots to align for infection to occur.
- Must involve all stakeholders in decision process. Putting forward one option to address issue is too simplistic for such a complex issue.

NSW Forum

Really just a workshop, for the 60 people around 40 councils, OEH staff, Fed Gov staff and a couple of others that were there, to highlight areas where councils need help from Government and researchers to manage their local colonies. This ranged from improved policy, delegations to councils, funding, expert support etc.

Proceedings will be out soon and available.