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Your Ref: 555-05

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Queensland Parliamentary Service  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 26 October 2005 forwarding a copy of a petition received by the House on 25 October 2005 concerning the presence of flying foxes in Charters Towers.

Two flying fox species roost in Charters Towers: the Black flying fox, which is a permanent resident; and the Little Red flying fox which is a transient species that utilises the township as a roost on a seasonal basis.

As all species of flying fox are protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, the State has no option but to manage any impact on these species through a permitting system. The Charters Towers City Council has been issued with damage mitigation permits to disperse the flying foxes, and the associated permit conditions guarantee that the activity is conducted in a way that ensures flexibility, species sustainability and is consistent with other legislative instruments.

During the end of the dry season, the Black flying foxes that are permanent residents of Charters Towers give birth to their young and, when considering the issue of permit conditions, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) must also take into account the welfare of the species and their offspring. The current permit conditions prevent disturbance to female flying foxes in late stages of gestation or those caring for dependent young, and these caveats minimise the risk of large-scale mortality to the recruitment of flying fox species in the Charters Towers area. The dispersal times are restricted to ensure that the activity is consistent with the provisions of the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*. The QPWS is prepared to work collaboratively with the Charters Towers City Council to continuously review permit conditions to try and find the combination of factors that achieves the greatest measure of success while ensuring the welfare of the flying foxes is considered.

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In relation to the introduction of a minimum cull to encourage the bats not to roost in residential areas, history has proven that culling is not a solution to the problem and is inconsistent with the guiding principles behind the conservation of nature. Culling will not be considered as an option to manage the flying foxes in Charters Towers.

The primary responsibility for managing the flying foxes in Charters Towers lies with the Council, not the QPWS. As the land tenure where the flying foxes are resident is not gazetted as protected area estate, there is no legislative responsibility for the QPWS to take primary ownership for the management of the flying foxes.

The QPWS is working collaboratively with the Council and is monitoring the flying foxes at Charters Towers. The Queensland Government has put in place the following actions to assist and work co-operatively with the local council to manage the flying fox situation in Charters Towers:

- provision of advice and support with respect to: health issues, funding options, dispersal techniques, habitat manipulation, alternate roosts and wildlife ecology;
- funded remedial tree pruning within Lissner Park to recover heritage-listed trees and reduce roosting sites for flying foxes;
- established an MoU with the Council to define agreed actions and clarify roles;
- established and maintained a community flying fox consultative committee;
- supervised dispersal effort;
- engaged community to mitigate perceptions and angst;
- recovered sick and injured flying foxes;
- disease monitoring of dead flying foxes;
- recovery of parasites for identification;
- engaged flying fox conservationists to mitigate perceptions and angst;
- resourced the rehabilitation of some orphaned flying foxes;
- provided media releases and interviews to promote a balanced understanding of issues; and
- flexibility in permit conditions regarding hours of operation and dispersal of gestating females or dependent young.

Staff from the QPWS based in Charters Towers and Townsville have provided ongoing advice to the Charters Towers City Council regarding the relative merits of dispersing flying fox colonies, and have always engendered a preference for more permanent solutions regarding town planning, buffer zones, habitat manipulation and alternate roosts. For four years, the Council has persisted with dispersal actions to mitigate the immediate impacts of the flying foxes, while only minimum resources have been committed to planning for more permanent solutions.

The management of flying fox colonies in urban area is not restricted to Charters Towers, and the Queensland Government is presently negotiating with the Australian Government to acquire funding for more strategic solutions and special projects focussed on habitat identification and mapping, community education, and alternate roost establishment. In this regard, I am inspired that the Council is continuing to pursue the adoption of an alternate roost site, and the Council is encouraged to consult with staff of the QPWS regarding site suitability. Technical expertise from the QPWS is available to both assist the chances of success with this project, and to support the process of acquisition and habitat establishment/enhancement.

In terms of pursuing long-term solutions to the presence of flying foxes in Charters Towers, please find below a series of suggested future actions that could be put into place (within the constraints of our legislation) to assist the Council to manage the flying fox situation in Charters Towers:

- identify parameters that characterise roosting and foraging habitat;
- identify secondary and tertiary preferred roost sites through radio or satellite telemetry;
- enhance roost habitat at secondary and tertiary preferred roost sites;
- establish new roosting habitat on Unallocated State Land (USL) outside the township based on identified roost characteristics. USL has the potential to buffer community from the impacts of large influxes of roosting Little Red Flying Foxes;
- support the Council in applying for funding to establish roost habitat;
- develop and install attractants (visual, audible and olfactory cues) at enhanced sites;
- establish/enhance foraging habitat within proximity to alternate roost/s; and
- initiate a flying fox education strategy including community service announcements for radio and television, media releases.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

**Desley Boyle MP**  
**Minister for Environment**  
**Minister for Local Government and Planning**  
**Minister for Women**