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Your Ref:593-05; 597-05

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 letters of 2 December 2005 forwarding a copy of petitions received by the House on 30 November and 1 December 2005 concerning the presence of flying fox colonies in the region of Mt Peter Road, Edmonton.

While I have great empathy for the residents in Edmonton who may be affected by the presence of the flying foxes, the primary responsibility for managing the flying fox colony in this situation lies with the landholder who owns the block, not with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (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 two species of flying fox that have been recorded at the colony, the spectacled flying fox and the little red flying fox, are both protected under State and, for the spectacled flying fox, Commonwealth nature conservation legislation. This means that any action that is taken against these animals can only be conducted under an appropriate permit and with the written approval of the landholder. Any request to relocate a flying fox colony is first assessed by an appropriate officer from the QPWS, prior to the issue of any permit. It should be noted that an assessment does not automatically indicate that a permit will be issued. These permits are usually issued to the local Council by the QPWS, and for the spectacled flying fox, a referral must also be obtained from the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage before any disturbance action can be taken.

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However, I have received advice that the location of the colony on Mt Peter Road is on a block that has been assessed as endangered Forest Red Gum forest (Endangered *Remnant Regional Ecosystem* 7.3.12), which means that it has been recognised as having special significance because it represents a small example of the forest and vegetation type that use to dominate the coastal lowland areas. Based on this special classification, it is unlikely that any physical measures that may be associated with the management of the roost trees associated with flying fox colonies in urban areas, such as trimming these roost trees, could occur in this particular situation.

I have also received advice that staff from the QPWS have met with the Principal Petitioner and provided advice on alternative methods that could be used to mitigate the problems caused by the flying foxes when they are resident nearby. I recommend that these alternative methods be pursued, as they are likely to be more applicable and effective when applied at the property level.

Any concerns regarding the health hazards from the flying fox colony, should be referred to Queensland Health's Tropical Public Health Unit Network in Cairns on telephone 4050 3600, and advice sought from it regarding this matter. Alternatively, this information can be obtained from the website:
<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/HealthyIslandResorts/topic/abl.htm>.

Inspections of the colony on 4 November 2005 and 10 January 2006 indicated that there are no flying foxes present at the Mt Peter Road colony, or if they are present they are in very low numbers and located in the centre of the block. Based on the results of these inspections, it now seems that the problems caused by the flying foxes are seasonal, which indicates that advanced planning would assist in minimising the impacts of the flying foxes. Staff from the QPWS would be happy to continue to provide advice to residents about ways they can mitigate the problems caused by the flying foxes. Residents can contact the nearest office of the QPWS to initiate the provision of this advice.

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