

HEALTH RISKS

‘Appropriate management of flying-fox camps to mitigate disease and health risk is necessary.’

Comment:- What about the impacts of humans on flying fox health? No proof of health impacts to humans unless bitten.

‘Human health and safety has to come first. While risks are very low, OEH strongly recommends that people avoid contact with and handling of any flying-fox.’

Comment: Since the only possibility of sickness occurs after handling of bats, why the emphasis on ‘health risks’ especially when very low? Biodiversity protection should take priority over humans since without a healthy ecosystems we all will perish anyway.

SHOOTING OF BATS BY ORCHARDISTS

‘Outside of urban camp management, shooting to scare or kill animals may be authorised for orchardists in rural and peri-urban NSW.’

Comment: Instead of shooting to kill or scare bats, use wildlife-friendly netting, subsidise the orchardists for the costs.

DISPERSAL

‘Camp dispersal will be allowed in accordance with this policy and as part of an approved camp management plan’

Comment: Dispersal is highly stressful for bats and involves potential deaths.

‘There may be undesirable impacts arising from the dispersal of a camp. Where flying-fox camps are in close proximity to urban settlements and are causing issues through noise, odour, prevalence of flying-fox droppings, or health impacts (including mental health), proactive management of camps is recommended.’

Comment: What about the impact on the mental health of people who love and care about flying foxes knowing that they are being dispersed with potential fatalities?

‘Dispersal may result in relocating the animals rather than resolving the issue. Past disturbances in Australia have sometimes failed to remove flying-foxes from the area or have resulted in flying-foxes relocating to other nearby areas where similar community impacts have occurred.’

Comment: Disturbing flying-foxes may have an adverse impact on animal health.

‘The cumulative impacts of flying-fox camp dispersals may negatively impact on the conservation of the species and the ecosystem services flying-foxes provide.’

Comment:- Why is the government supporting dispersal when it knows it is just moving the problem on to somewhere else? Why can't we just learn to live with them harmoniously? They put up with human noise and stench and we perform absolutely no ecosystem services like the flying foxes do.

CONSERVATION OF THREATENED SPECIES

All three species are protected in NSW, as are all native animals, under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). The Grey-headed Flying-fox is also listed as vulnerable to extinction under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act). This means licences may be needed to harm all three species or to undertake actions in or near camps that are likely to harm Grey-headed Flying-foxes (see Section 7 on streamlining legislative requirements).

Comment:- Why is the government handing out licences while expecting threatened species to be conserved? Already we have 'managed' 38% of our mammals to extinction creating the world's worst record. I don't trust government interference in native populations.

POPULATION ASSESSMENT

'The CSIRO is to assess Grey-headed Flying-fox population numbers and distribution. In 2013, the National Flying-fox Monitoring Program (NFFMP) commenced. It establishes a reliable benchmark on the size of flying-fox populations and will monitor population trends in subsequent years as well as population dynamics. It involves quarterly counts at all known daytime roost sites of Grey-headed Flying-foxes across the species' national range, over at least four years.'

Comment: If they don't know population numbers why are they interfering when they could be driving them to worse conservation status?

ZONING

'It is recommended that land managers consider the location of historically and currently occupied camps or potential flying-fox camps early in strategic planning processes, particularly when planning future residential areas, schools or other sensitive infrastructure.'

'When planning the development of greenfield areas, the presence of existing flying-fox camps should be recognised through local environmental planning controls (e.g. appropriate land use zoning and development control plans). This should include ensuring that new development proposals have appropriate buffers and that any additional hazard reduction activities that become necessary will be able to occur without being unduly impacted on by existing camp locations. Sites that have the potential to function as flying-fox maternity camps should be a priority for conservation. Where possible, efforts should be made to revegetate and regenerate these areas.'

Comment: Agree. Should have been done long ago!

LEVEL 1 MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

‘Trimming of understorey vegetation or the planting of vegetation.’

Comment: Understorey vegetation is needed by the flying foxes to retreat to in extremely hot weather.

LEVEL 2 MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

‘Disturbing animals at the boundary of the camp to encourage roosting away from human settlement.’

Comment: It is well known that stress leads to Hendra virus outbreaks. However Level 2 is certainly better than Level 3, dispersal or shooting.

BUFFERS

‘Where creation of buffers is proposed, particular conditions are likely to include:
– pruning or removing of flying-fox roosting habitat should occur at night or at other times when the flying-fox camp is vacant - any tree lopping, trimming or removal of trees is undertaken under the supervision of a suitably qualified arborist.’

Comment: I approve the supervision of a suitably qualified arborist in removing/lopping/trimming of trees, however if done at night when the flying foxes are away foraging how will they know where to return if their roosting habitat is gone?

MANAGING FLYING FOX CAMPS

‘The 2009 report of the NSW Flying-fox Licensing Review Panel (DECC 2009), an independent review panel, found shooting to be effective in reducing levels of crop damage in certain circumstances. However, when larger numbers of flying-foxes visit orchards, shooting may prove ineffective. The most cost-effective long-term crop protection strategies were found to require netting.

From July 2015, shooting licenses will only be issued in special circumstances.

Regulation of shooting in such circumstances is guided by the NSW Government’s *Policy and Procedural Guidelines for the Mitigation of Commercial Crop Damage by Flying-Foxes* (2014).’

*Comment: Let flying foxes manage themselves, as we manage ourselves!
Stop interfering with native animals as it always is to their detriment. I am totally opposed to shooting flying foxes in any circumstance. Invest in netting for all orchardists instead.*

APPROVALS

‘Provide options for land managers to obtain upfront five year licensing to improve flexibility in the management of flying-foxes Approvals will be issued for five years.’

Comment: What about review of population numbers? What if populations plummet, can't these licences be cancelled?

URGENT APPLICATIONS

‘A land manager may apply for a licence under section 91 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* to disturb or disperse a flying fox camp before a camp management plan has been completed if there is an immediate and significant issue.

‘The NSW Government is continuing to work closely with the Australian Government to develop a one-stop shop for environmental approvals.’

Comment: This is a quick and nasty approval process without proper regard for the species’ well being.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

‘Understand how different parts of the community perceive flying-fox issues and design fit-for-purpose approaches to community engagement.’

Comment: - clearly there is a dire need for educating the public away from the perception that bats are dirty and diseased and stressing their ecological benefits.

NUISANCE

‘they can congregate very close to homes and generate health risks, nuisance and damage to significant vegetation’

Comment: The damage done to significant vegetation by humans is far worse than that done by flying foxes. Why the persecution?

CASE STUDY: ALBURY BOTANIC GARDENS

Comment: The case study of Albury Botanic Gardens did not mention how many fatalities were discovered.

FOOD/ROOSTING HABITAT CREATION

‘Establishing alternative habitat for flying-foxes will commence in early 2015 and will include a map to identify priority areas for habitat creation. Increasing habitat in these locations will enhance the conservation of flying-foxes while avoiding undesirable interactions with the community.

‘The long term vision of the policy is to help ensure the conservation of flying-foxes by enabling land managers to establish and protect sufficient and appropriately located food supplies and roosting habitat while avoiding undesirable interactions with the community. ‘Enable long term conservation of flying-foxes in appropriate locations by encouraging land managers to establish and protect sufficient food supplies and roosting habitat.

Comment:- This is good. needs to be more habitat for them. We are the ones who have disturbed their habitat in the first place causing this problem. How will the government be assisting land managers to achieve this? Will there be financial support?