

Flying-fox Camp Management Policy Review,
PO Box A290, Sydney South, 1232
Via email: flyingfox.policyreview@environment.nsw.gov.au

Submitted by
Nancy Pallin

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Re: Draft Flying-fox Camp Management Policy

I am very concerned that the draft policy will make matters worse for people and flying-foxes.

NSW has slowly developed a good policy solution to the issue of flying-foxes impacting on fruit crops. This has been achieved through consultation through the NSW Flying-fox Consultative Committee.

The draft Flying-fox Camp Management Policy, in contrast, has not had the benefit of this process. It is an attempt to resolve long term problems with short term actions. This will not be effective.

The causes of flying-fox camps being near human habitation are stated but these are not addressed in the policy. The policy needs to set limits on development near camps to avoid future conflict.

It is not possible to predict where flying-foxes will move if a camp is dispersed. Therefore, the policy should insist that all efforts are made to modify the interface between people and flying-foxes before the expensive and unpredictable action of dispersal is contemplated. Together with Local Government and affected residents, the NSW Government could provide an assistance program to fully insulate homes to reduce sound impacts, sails to cover outdoor recreation areas from droppings and air-conditioning to reduce the effect of odour. This would only apply to properties very close to roosting flying-foxes.

Monitoring

If Level 3 actions (dispersal) are approved then it must be properly monitored as set out in the 2007 flying-fox camp policy. Unless monitoring is required, it will not be possible to know whether the action has been effective and where the flying-foxes have moved.

Restoration of camp habitat

Trees in which flying-foxes roost deteriorate with repeated use. In the past flying-foxes were much more nomadic and weed infestation was not so intense. Then the trees had time to recover before the next time the flying-foxes used that camp site. With the human occupation of the highest quality land in eastern Australia, flying-foxes are forced to occupy ever smaller sites. The draft policy needs to emphasise that a collective effort is needed by all land managers, including the NSW Government to restore roosting habitat, limit development near camps and remove weeds.

Health Risks

The draft policy over-emphasises the risk to health caused by flying-foxes.

The risk from viruses has been clearly stated by NSW Health to be very low and reduced further by effective education programs.

Sleep disturbance can be eliminated by changing the home environment and helping people to understand flying-foxes. People who report being afraid of flying-foxes need psychological support to resolve this but it is unhelpful to base the whole policy on the experience of small numbers of people. I recommend that the reference to mental health be removed and the actual impacts on people living very close to flying-foxes be addressed.

Shooting

The Flying-fox Review Panel in its report in 2008 clearly stated that shooting flying-foxes was cruel. I urge that the whole section on shooting flying-foxes be removed from this policy.

Sustainability and balance

The draft policy talks about sustainability and balance but it does not require land managers to undertake conservation actions. Level 1 and 2 actions could all be used to further damage camp habitat rather than restore it.

Adopting a long-term objective to support habitat creation

This is a positive initiative and it needs to be the primary policy objective, because unless this is undertaken with enthusiasm, based on the best science and involving all stakeholders, the policy will be ineffective.

I sincerely trust that the policy will be greatly improved before it is finalised.