



MEDIA RELEASE

Council pushes ahead with reckless plans for Cairns flying-fox colony

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Tomorrow the Council will once again discuss the contentious issue of flying-fox dispersals. The recommendation going to Council is to adopt the *General Policy for the Management of Flying Fox Colonies*; endorse the *Flying Fox Roost Management Activities Code of Practice*, and delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to determine, on a case by case basis, where and in what circumstances a Flying Fox Management Activity is to occur.

The General Policy states that ‘...the health and wellbeing of people is to be given primary consideration over the health and wellbeing of flying foxes where there is conflict between the two.’

“But what is the health risk that Council is referring to?” asks Cairns and Far North Environment Centre Coordinator Anna McGuire. “We would like Council to clearly explain what the health risk they refer to is, and to provide scientific data to support the claim that the Cairns CBD colony poses a significant risk to community health.”

“There is no risk of contracting lyssavirus if you don’t touch the flying-foxes. In the case of a scratch or bite, washing the wound and being vaccinated prevents infection. As we have said throughout this debate, the best way to ensure community safety is to educate people not to handle the flying-foxes and to make sure people know what to do in the unlikely event of a bite or scratch.”

“The colony is very popular with tourists who regularly gather to take photos and observe the colony. There is potential for international embarrassment in the event of a failed or damaging dispersal attempt, which could harm our reputation as an eco-tourism destination.”

“The policy also lists a set of principles to be considered when deciding on how to manage a colony. Absent from this list are two important factors: likelihood of success and assessment of potential negative outcomes of any action. It seems Council is not willing to demonstrate the common sense of learning from past dispersal attempts or to look at more practical alternative solutions.”

“It is important to note that the Code of Practice does not rule out removal of roost trees, merely stating that ‘No roost tree may be destroyed or modified when there are flying-foxes in that tree’. We hope that Council will appreciate the value of the established trees around our library and elsewhere in the CBD and not seek to remove or cause the death of these trees.”



“This is reckless decision-making by our Councillors. The cost of the dispersal will begin at \$50,000, but the true cost is unknown, as the dispersal would most likely result in an ongoing cost burden for ratepayers. The Council report states that \$150,000 per year would be required for ongoing actions to keep the flying-foxes away from the CBD. Is this really responsible use of ratepayers’ money?”

“It is alarming to see that Council looks to be continuing on an irrational path which is likely to create more problems than it solves while placing an ongoing financial burden on the community.”

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