

NICK DAMETTO

Member for Hinchinbrook



MEDIA RELEASE

12/10/2018

All cards on the table to fix bat problem

EAGLES, drones and even green ants could be just some of the options used to disperse a filthy flying fox roost plaguing Ingham, says Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto.

The Katter's Australian Party (KAP) MP said he was open to considering any non-lethal option that would move the colony of flying foxes out of Ingham's Botanical Gardens.

"That colony is an ugly stain on our beloved town where the smell, noise and spread of potential disease is simply unacceptable," he said.

"I often reside at my mother's place which is near the colony and the stench is unbearable, residents are fed up and at their wits' end. That's why I'm calling for any non-lethal solution out there which could be used to get rid of these bats."

Mr Dametto said several innovative ideas from residents had already been proposed, including using a drone to scare and muster the roost, establishing birds of prey nests in the area and even unleashing green ants to get flying foxes out of the trees.

Last week, Hinchinbrook Shire Council successfully used low impact, non-injurious water spray to deter flying foxes from settling in trees at Ingham's Rotary Park.

"After speaking with Hinchinbrook Shire Mayor Ramon Jayo about this issue, one challenge identified when dispersing a flying fox roost is once the colony has been broken up it is hard to determine where it will settle next. Methodology needs to be used that not only drives them away but also pushes them towards an area where they won't disturb or inconvenience someone else," Mr Dametto said.

The current Code of Practice governing the "Ecologically sustainable management of flying-fox roosts" permits councils to destroy a flying fox roost, drive away or attempt to drive away a flying fox from a roost and disturb a flying fox in a roost – all of which are restricted to non-lethal deterrence methods.

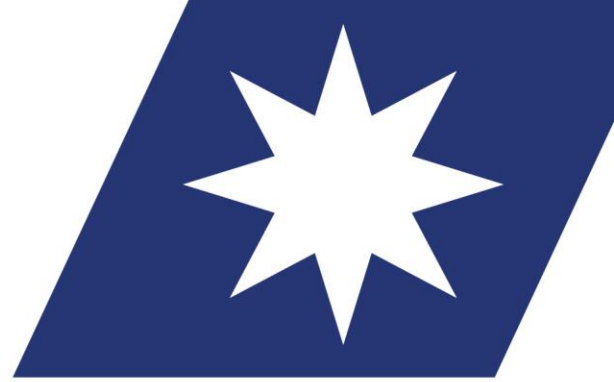
Those methods extend to use of smoke, noise, light, foggers, BirdFrite and "scarecrow" type devices.

"I will continue to work with all stakeholders, including council and State Environment Minister Leeanne Enoch's office, in trying to rid our town of this problem. Personally, I stand with local residents like Mario Torrisi who believe we should shoot them all but it is not 1960 and times have changed," Mr Dametto said.

"We should be trying any method we can within the law to disperse this colony and make sure it doesn't return."

Mr Dametto said he also shared community concerns about the colony's proximity to Ingham State School, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School and Hinchinbrook Aquatic Centre.

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“I do not want these bats posing a health risk to anyone, least of all our school children,” he said.

“Their safety should be paramount.”

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Media Enquiries

Michael Serenc – 0423 108 848