



**HINCHINBROOK**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

**STATEMENT OF  
MANAGEMENT INTENT  
FOR FLYING-FOX ROOST  
MANAGEMENT  
IN HINCHINBROOK**

**September 2016**

This Statement of Management Intent has been prepared to outline Council's level of responsibility in relation to flying-fox roost management, the legal flying-fox roost management framework within which Council must work and Council's intents in relation to any management actions undertaken.

This Statement of Management Intent was endorsed by Council on 27 September 2016 and has effect from that date until superseded.

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# Statement of Management Intent For Flying-Fox Roost Management in Hinchinbrook

## 1. Background

The Hinchinbrook Shire Council recognises the importance of flying-foxes to our natural landscape and their critical ecological role in maintaining the unique biodiversity of North Queensland.

The Ingham flying-fox roost has historically been a permanent home to three species of flying fox, the Black Flying-Fox, the Grey-Headed Flying-Fox and the Spectacled Flying-Fox, and a periodic home to the Little Red Flying-Fox.

All flying-foxes are native species protected under the *Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992*. The Grey-Headed Flying-Fox and the Spectacled Flying-Fox are listed as 'Vulnerable' and afforded greater protection under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999*.

The Hinchinbrook Shire Council is committed to finding a balance between reducing conflict associated with flying-foxes roosting in urban areas, and the conservation and welfare of these important native species.

## 2. Authority

Under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, local governments in Queensland have authority to undertake roost management of flying-fox roosts in designated Urban Flying-Fox Management Areas (UFFMAs). This authorisation restricts management activities to non-lethal methods undertaken in accordance with the *Code of Practice – Ecologically Sustainable Management of Flying-Fox Roosts*. Other activities are authorised under the *Code of Practice – Low Impact Activities Affecting Flying-Fox Roosts*.

An UFFMA for a local government area is defined by maps available from the website of the Department of Environment & Heritage Protection (EHP). The Hinchinbrook Shire contains three identified UFFMAs, one each at Ingham, Lucinda and Forrest Beach.

Outside an UFFMA, a local government requires a Flying-Fox Roost Management Permit (FFRMP) from EHP in order to undertake any management activities.

Further information on the Queensland Government's roost management framework is available by searching 'roost management' on the EHP webpage [www.ehp.qld.gov.au](http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au).

## 3. Purpose

The purpose of this Statement of Management Intent (SoMI) is to articulate the Hinchinbrook Shire Council's approach to management of flying-fox roosts in UFFMAs.

Any management activity undertaken will involve a risk assessment addressing human health and safety, and nuisance impacts that may be created or increased in the surrounding environment.

Council will monitor emerging management approaches utilised by the State government and/or other local governments in relation to the management of flying-fox roosts to assist in development of efficient and effective management options.

#### **4. Locations of the UFFMAs in Hinchinbrook**

UFFMAs in Hinchinbrook are located at Ingham, Forrest Beach and Lucinda. A map of the Hinchinbrook UFFMAs is attached as Annexure A.

Residents who wish to view a map of their own property in relation to the UFFMA can do so through the following website:

<http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/livingwith/flyingfoxes/management-areas/map-request.php>.

#### **5. Council Intentions and Considerations**

Council will co-ordinate the management of flying fox roosts on Council owned or State land placed under the control of Council pursuant to the *Land Act 1994* within and outside the UFFMA when required. Costs relating to the management of flying-fox roosts will be negotiated prior to the application for any permit or implementation of any action.

Council will not take action in the management of flying-fox roosts that are solely on State Land not under Council control or solely on private land or on a combination of the two.

Where a flying-fox roost is located on both private and Council controlled land, Council will work with the relevant landholder to manage the roost. Costs of management will be negotiated prior to any management action taking place.

Council's management considerations of flying-fox roosts will include:

- (a) a full risk assessment considering the welfare of the community and the flying-foxes;
- (b) amenity impacts of the flying-fox roost;
- (b) impacts on residents and community services;
- (c) identification and management of economic impacts associated with the flying-foxes and their roosts;
- (d) reduction of human/flying-fox conflicts;
- (e) educating the community about flying-foxes;
- (f) conservation of flying-foxes and their natural habitats in the Hinchinbrook Shire;
- (g) the history of the roost site and the surrounding environment;
- (h) numbers and species present in the roost and their breeding cycles;
- (i) the desirability of possible outcomes as a result of any management action.

#### **6. Management Approach**

Council will generally not support or undertake disturbance activities aimed at dispersing flying-foxes from roosts given that previous dispersal attempts undertaken under current legislation and within accepted practices have proven unsuccessful. The unpredictability of flying-fox movements often results in a less acceptable outcome for the community by shifting conflict to different sites and causing stress, injuries or fatalities to the animals. (Hall 2002 per DECC 2009; GCCC 2014)

The Queensland State Government promotes that it is best to manage flying fox roosts in-situ with the development of strategies to reduce their impact (DECC, 2009). Legislative provisions with which Council must comply compels Council to practice these limited strategies in the interest of achieving a workable solution. The alternative is to do nothing.

Various levels of vegetation management can be used to create a buffer zone around a roost site or it may result in passive dispersal. Passive dispersal has been achieved with the removal of 75% of the understorey and 30% of the canopy (GCCC 2014).

In keeping with the Queensland State Government current management strategies, any implementation of flying-fox roost management activities will be conducted in a staged approach from lesser impact activities to higher impact activities where required.

Management approaches will follow the following stages:

- Stage 1 – Education. Council will seek to educate the affected community in relation to living with flying-foxes. Interpretative material in Annexure B is being implemented by several Queensland local governments;
- Stage 2 – Vegetation management of weed species. Removal and/or treatment of weed species will be conducted as the first stage of vegetation management activities.
- Stage 3 – Minor trimming of native vegetation without aiming to disperse animals from the roost with the aim of minimising human/flying-fox interactions.
- Stage 4 - Vegetation management of native species to create buffer zones. Buffer zones can help to reduce human/flying-fox interactions.
- Stage 5 - Vegetation management of native species. Management should progress from the understorey to the canopy with the aim of removing as little vegetation as possible while aiming to render the habitat unsuitable for roosting flying-foxes (GCCC 2014).

In accordance with the Code of Practice – Ecologically sustainable management of flying-fox roosts, no roost tree will be destroyed or modified when there are flying-foxes in the tree, or when flying-foxes are near to the tree and likely to be harmed as a result of the destruction or modification. All management actions will immediately cease, and DEHP will be immediately notified if flying-foxes appear to have been killed or injured.

## **7. Further Information**

For further information on local government flying-fox management activities please contact the Hinchinbrook Shire Council, 25 Lannercost Street, Ingham (PO Box 366, Ingham, 4850), telephone: 4776 4600.

For further information for residents dealing with flying-foxes on private property please contact the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection at <http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au>.

## **8. References**

New South Wales Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC). 2009. Draft national recovery plan for the Grey-headed flying-fox *Pteropus poliocephalus*, NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

City of Gold Coast, 2014. City of Gold Coast Flying Fox: Statement of Management Intent.

# Appendix A





# Living with Flying-foxes

## Flying-foxes

Flying-foxes have been around for thousands of years and are essential for forest pollination and seed dispersal. Nationally, flying-foxes have reduced in number, largely due to clearing of their habitat. Without flying-foxes there would be less pollination and it is likely we would see the decline of our native forests.

There are a number of flying-fox camps within Noosa Shire and across South-east Queensland. Individual flying-foxes regularly move between camps and, at times, camps can become completely vacant.

Three species of flying-fox are known to occur at times in the Noosa area. The Little-red Flying-foxes follow seasonal flowering of Eucalyptus and Melaleuca trees and although they can arrive in large numbers, they only stay for several weeks until flowering is finished. The Grey-headed and Black Flying-foxes stay longer depending on local food availability.



Grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*)

## Issues with flying-foxes

Like many animals, including domestic pets, flying-foxes can carry transmissible viruses. A small percentage of flying-foxes carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL) and Hendra virus. Hendra virus can only be transmitted via horses. Infection from Lyssavirus can only be transmitted by bites or scratches from bats and is extremely rare. If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, seek medical attention immediately. There is no evidence that infections can be spread from droppings or living near a flying-fox colony, however it is recommended that normal sanitary hygiene measures are practiced by regularly washing hands.



Black Flying-fox (*Pteropus alecto*)

Flying-foxes are an extremely social animal and use noise to communicate and protect their territories. During mating season, flying-foxes can become quite vocal.

At times, there may be a strong odour emanating from the camp. This is often mistaken for the smell of droppings but is attributed to flying-foxes marking their territories with their scent glands.

Droppings can cause staining and it is recommended that covers be placed over outdoor furniture, and pavement areas are washed down as soon as possible.

## Management of flying-foxes

As a rule, Council does not interfere with the natural behaviour of native animals including flying-foxes. Flying-foxes are protected under the *Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Grey-headed Flying-foxes in particular are protected under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and are listed as a 'vulnerable' species.

If a flying-fox camp is located on Council land, and bats are disturbing neighbouring residents, Council may apply to the State and Federal Governments to improve the vegetation separation between the flying-fox camp and residential housing.



Little-red Flying-fox (*Pteropus scapulatus*)



Paperbark (*Melaleuca quosneana*)



Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*)

Nectar from flowers is an essential food source for flying-foxes



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# Fear Not!

## Health Issues

A very small proportion of flying foxes may carry lyssavirus which is potentially fatal to humans. The virus is transmitted via saliva and only through a bite from an infected bat. People will not be exposed to lyssavirus when flying foxes fly overhead, when they roost or feed in garden trees or even from touching their droppings.

## Helping Hand

If you encounter a sick, injured or orphaned flying fox do not approach or handle it.

Please call the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services on **1300 ANIMAL** or **1300 264 625**.

Please report flying foxes electrocuted on power lines, because an electrocuted mother may have a live baby clinging to her.

Illustration by Paul Davis with artwork by Michelle Henry & Jonathan





# Love is in the Air



## A Noisy Affair

Flying foxes reach sexual maturity at about two years of age. Male flying foxes stake out their territory by rubbing branches with scent from glands on their shoulders.

After a noisy courtship, mating occurs in March.

## Birth

After six months of pregnancy, the mother, hanging upside down, gives birth during daylight hours. After the baby's head emerges, labour ceases for a while to allow baby and mother to rest. Then the baby is quickly born and scooped up in its mother's wings to prevent it from falling to its death.

The mother licks the baby clean and guides it to one of her two teats to suckle milk. Female flying fox teats are located underneath each wing.

## Growing up

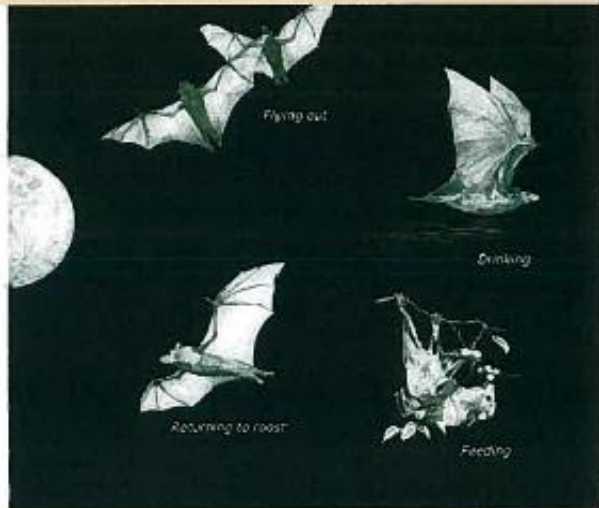
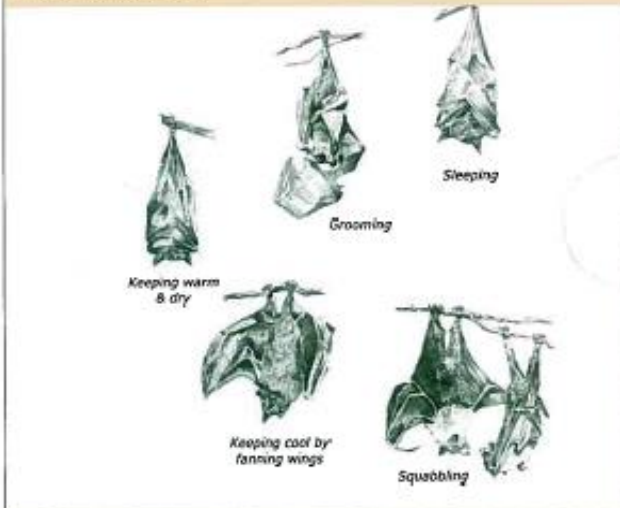
For the first six weeks of its life, the baby flying fox clings to its mother's body even when she flies out to feed. Then it is left at night in a "creche" with other young flying foxes, waiting for its mother to return to feed it. The young flying fox begins to fly at about three months of age and is weaned and able to feed itself by four months.



# "Welcome to My Life"

**Day:** Before dawn, flying foxes return to their roost trees, often to the same spot. Creched babies reunite with their mothers by call, sight and smell, and enjoy a welcome feed.

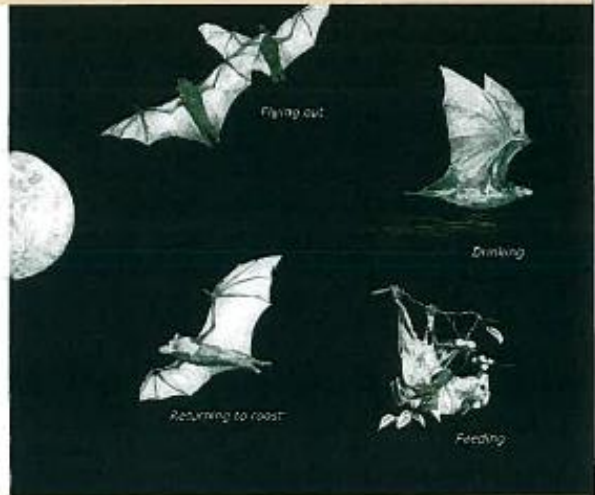
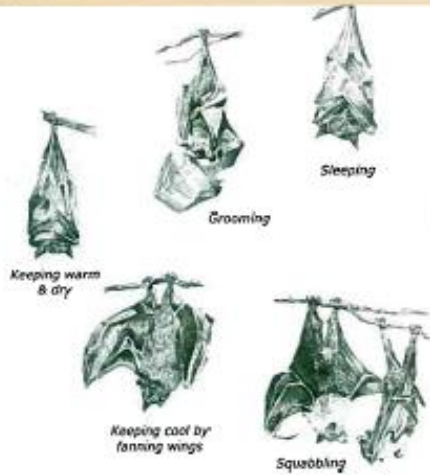
**Night:** Flying foxes and the smaller microbats, are the only mammals which truly fly. Whilst microbats use echolocation, flying foxes rely on sight and smell to find the fruit and blossoms they feed on.



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# Flying foxes of Toon Toon Creek

All flying foxes have large eyes and good vision. They have dog like noses and like dogs have a good sense of smell. Flying foxes use their excellent sight and sense of smell to find blossom and fruit. The names given to the different species of flying fox are very descriptive.

**BLACK FLYING FOX**  
*Pteropus alecto*



You will find Black flying foxes here all year round. They have a ruff of dark reddish fur on necks and shoulders. They weigh about 700 grams and have a wingspan of over a metre.

**GREY-HEADED FLYING FOX**  
*Pteropus poliocephalus*



Grey-headed flying foxes migrate from southern areas to this colony in the winter. They are about the same size as Black flying foxes and have color of golden fur around their necks. Unfortunately, their numbers are so low they are in danger of extinction.

**LITTLE RED FLYING FOX**  
*Pteropus scapulatus*



If you happen to be here in summer you may see the many thousands of migratory Little red flying foxes. They go wherever there are blossoms. They weigh less than 300 grams. Little reds roost in clusters in the lower branches of the trees.





# Batty Behaviour



## Smell

The musky smell of a flying fox colony is not due to their droppings or urine but from their natural scent. Scents are used for identification, marking territory and attracting members of the opposite sex. Scents also allow individuals to track each other at night while foraging and moving between roosts.

## Noise

After humans and primates, flying foxes have the largest number of different calls. Forty different calls have been identified for the Grey-headed flying fox. Since the hearing range of the flying fox is similar to ours, we can hear their calls clearly. Colonies are the noisiest at dawn and dusk. Although not aggressive in the camps, when feeding flying foxes will defend favoured food trees with loud vocalisations as well as physical aggression.

## Personal Hygiene

The fruit and nectar eaten by flying foxes is digested quickly, taking only 20 minutes to pass through their digestive system. Therefore, most faeces are expelled away from their roost site. Flying foxes normally hang upside down but to avoid soiling themselves, they hang by their thumbs to defecate and urinate. Flying foxes are very clean animals and considerable time is spent grooming their fur using their feet and thumb. They keep their wing membranes clean by licking with their very long tongue.

