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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Inquiry into the management of nationally protected flying-foxes in the eastern states of Australia

Issue date: Monday, 27 February 2017

Living with fruit bats

Flying-fox management report tabled in Parliament today

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy today released the report of its inquiry into the management of nationally protected flying-foxes in the eastern states of Australia.

Flying-foxes are vital in maintaining some of Australia's most significant ecosystems, acting as pollen and seed dispersers for a wide range of native plants. For a range of possible reasons, including the loss of natural habitat and the expansion of human settlements, flying-fox camps are becoming more common in urban areas across the east coast. These camps and the behaviours of the flying-foxes can have notable economic, social and health impacts on residents, businesses and farmers, and have put pressure on local councils to take action.

The Committee Chair, Andrew Broad MP, said that it is vital that the appropriate environmental protections for nationally protected flying-foxes are based on sound research and data. These protections should translate into conservation and recovery efforts that have meaningful effect, while limiting the impacts on affected communities at the same time.

"Nationally protected flying-foxes are environmentally important, and we need to ensure they continue to thrive into the future. At the same time, we've been listening to communities along the eastern seaboard, and it's clear that the impacts of flying-foxes on affected residents can be significant. The Committee has heard that impacts can range from the inability of some residents to use outside areas, due to smell, noise and waste impacts, to the considerable disruption caused by large camps in the middle of business districts or adjoining nature parks. Residents and councils need additional support to help communities understand the protections, legal requirements, and the management options open to them", he said.

Mr Broad said the Committee sought to make recommendations that complement existing efforts to protect, conserve and recover affected flying-fox populations, while providing support for the local councils who are often tasked with the complex job of balancing regulatory requirements and the pressing needs of local communities.

"These recommendations are designed to provide some immediate support and guidance for relevant stakeholders", Mr Broad said. "The inquiry also highlighted the need for better coordination across all levels of government, additional funding and research, and clearer guidance for decision making."



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To that end, the Committee has recommended the establishment of a cooperative body to coordinate and compile information on management actions undertaken across the country, and identify policy and research priorities relating to nationally protected flying-foxes across all levels of government. In addition, the Committee has also called for funding for these priority actions and research, and the development of a decision-making tool and education resources for local councils.

The Committee's report and further details about the inquiry—including submissions, terms of reference, and the roundtable public hearing transcript—can be obtained from the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/flyingfoxes.

For media comment:

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