

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Queensland's Threatened Species Crisis: Landmark Report Prompts Calls for Change**

Today sees the release of a [landmark report](#) highlighting the impacts of the Queensland Roost Management Laws of Flying Foxes across Queensland. Half of flying-fox species in Queensland are listed as threatened species, and the current management laws are allowing for potentially harmful dispersals and disruptions to roosts with no environmental assessments at all.

Liz Downes from Wildlife Preservation QLD Townsville Branch says:

*"Flying foxes move from place to place; we need to stop being scared and making these snap judgements when roost populations increase, and start understanding that these movements are seasonal. We humans don't live in a bubble, we should know better than that. We have two jewels in our Queensland crown – the rainforests and the reef – and we can already directly see the impact of the declining populations of flying-foxes on the rainforests."*

In the same moment that this [landmark report](#) was released, the Federal government released a proposal to axe 184 recovery plans from the federal legislature which would mean there is no requirement to recover the populations of threatened species, effectively walking away from their legal responsibilities to prevent extinction and biodiversity loss. Included in this is the Recovery Plan for the Spectacled Flying-Fox, an Endangered Species that is a keystone pollinator and seed disperser for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

First Nations People, Conservation Groups, Animal Rights Groups, and land managers have gathered across Queensland to call for change.

"We are calling for the Queensland Government to have implemented a new framework for roost management and have it operational by December 2022. Additionally we are calling for the federal government to keep all Recovery Plans and properly fund the recovery of threatened species to reverse the current extinction trend."

[The report](#) by the Environmental Defenders Office and Cairns and Far North Environment Centre provides key recommendations to the State Government to establish a modern framework. With case studies from First Nations, scientists, conservationists and animal carers, the report demonstrates the impact of the laws on the now thought to be Critically Endangered Spectacled Flying-Fox. The species is on an extinction pathway and the current laws are increasing the stress to the species, rather than acting for its recovery.

Dominique Thiriet says:

*“North Queensland has had its share of flying-fox colony dispersals in the past decade. Local governments in Townsville, Charters Towers, Home Hill and Ingham have all attempted to relocate colonies... Techniques which have been used include noise, fogging, fires, water cannons, paint guns, fireworks, sprinklers, whips and helicopters.*

*So what has this achieved? In some locations, the colony moved on... In most cases, the flying-foxes came back. In all cases, colonies have ended up more fragmented. Dispersals can be very expensive for local governments and is a cost that is eventually borne by ratepayers... even though in most cases, the dispersals fail.*

*The dispersals have not been kind on the flying-foxes either. Some are injured during the dispersals, and some are lucky to be taken into care. But for most, the result is a state of constant stress, abortions, separations of babies and mothers - all impacts which are harder to see and evaluate. What is clear though, is that the relentless harassment of native wildlife by local governments authorised to do so under the Nature Conservation Act sends the dreadful message that native animals are not welcome in our towns. It is time to give up on dispersals and instead spend precious resources on public education programs.”*

Flying-foxes play an essential role in ensuring biodiversity and regeneration of our forests by pollinating plants and dispersing their seeds. Places like the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and Gondwana Rainforests rely on flying-foxes for these services. Groups across the state are working for the recovery of flying-foxes that are threatened and are calling for the state to return to a modern framework of roost management to ensure that pressure is not increased on these already vulnerable animals.

Phillip England from Stonedeaf Wildlife says:

*“People need to care about these species, they are NOT 'rats of the sky' which is antiquated thinking. They are a keystone species which is not a term given lightly. These intelligent creatures are our forest builders, they are critical to our local ecosystems. Some of our rainforest species can only be pollinated by the flying-foxes in the early hours of the morning when the other nocturnal pollinators are already asleep.*

*We end up with a lot of orphan babies because a lot of councils keep moving the parents in inhumane ways, [such as] using smoke at dawn to deter the returning mums from reaching their creche trees, which puts the babies at risk of sun, dehydration or predators. By the time we reach the area that same morning, the babies are on the ground in distress. **We want councils to show more compassion for how they manage the flying-foxes and listen to the experts in how to manage them.** We need this to be done in a humane way and find a balance of managing the needs of the wildlife and of the people.”*

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# North Queensland Conservation Council

... the voice for the environment in North Queensland

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