

Resistance to bats is futile

Coming home to roost despite scare tactics

Kathleen Donaghey

BAT experts have warned that urban councils face a losing battle to evict flying foxes, with a study showing they keep returning to their favourite roosts.

The Griffith University study found colonies gravitated back despite efforts over a decade to scare them away.

The nocturnal native critters also preferred urban areas so were unlikely to relocate to the bush, instead forming new camps only a few hundred metres away.

The warning comes as the Newman Government hands responsibility to councils to deal with urban bats as more people complain of noise, smell and health fears.

Several councils are considering non-lethal ways of dispersing colonies that bother residents in built-up parts of Queensland.

In coming weeks the environmentally conscious Sunshine Coast council will use noise, lighting, smoke and inflatable clowns to frighten two colonies in Maroochydore and Coolumb, at a cost of about \$243,000.

The State Government has also previously approved 17 permits across the state allowing vegetation modification or dispersal.

But Griffith University

Professor Carla Catterall said trying to force bats away was "ill-advised" and a "waste of money".

"It would be like pouring money down the sink," she warned.

Prof Catterall said dispersal would only have temporary results because urban roosting sites were visited by a continual stream of flying foxes.

"That amounts to a very costly effort ... because it just has to be kept up forever," she said.

"If they (State Government) were listening to their advisers they would not be encouraging councils to move flying foxes."

The study examined cases where flying fox colonies had been shooed from urban locations. In one example, a Charters Towers colony of 40,000 was disturbed more than 10 times in nine years but the bats only moved 200m away to another unsuitable location.

In the most extreme case, it took 23 attempts in six years (costing more than \$400,000) to evict a colony at Maclean, NSW, only for the flying foxes to create seven new camps nearby.

In seven of the 10 cases highlighted in the study, the bats continually returned or relocated to an area nearby that was also considered "unsuitable".



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