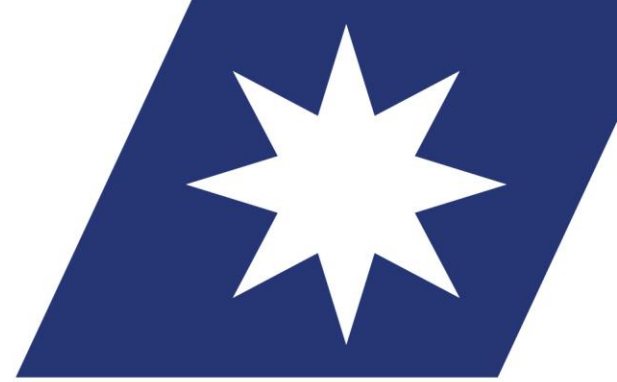


**NICK DAMETTO**

**Member for Hinchinbrook**

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## MEDIA RELEASE

3/12/2018

### Labor's refusal to act on bats a disgrace

HINCHINBROOK MP Nick Dametto has accused the State Labor Government of putting the lives of disease-ridden bats ahead of people as Ingham's bat problem reaches crisis point.

Mr Dametto lent his support to a group of concerned Ingham residents who plan to blockade the Bruce Highway unless the State Government agrees to change its flying fox management policies.

The blockade threat follows events last week when hundreds of bats (flying foxes) dropped dead from trees across Cairns, Ingham and Townsville due to heat stress.

"If you back people into a corner, these are the consequences," Mr Dametto said of blockade threat.

"No-one wants to see anarchy on the highway and have businesses, truck drivers or travellers disadvantaged. But unfortunately, these residents feel they have no other option and I will stand by them if it means the government takes some real action on bats."

Mr Dametto said it took two days to get a response from the Department of Environment and Science when he made enquires last week over how to deal with the masses of dead bats falling from trees.

"The response basically said nothing, other than to call the RSCPA to report cases of sick or injured flying foxes," he said.

"I think this shows a complete lack of planning by the State Labor Government and the Department of Environment and Science when it comes to dealing with a contingency like this. They were caught completely off guard by the heatwave that has left hundreds of dead bats rotting across the North.

"It was the former LNP State Government who lumped councils with managing flying fox roosts and it seems Labor have taken full advantage of that policy, washing their hands of anything to do with it.

"The State is not providing any meaningful assistance to councils or residents to dispose of these filthy animals, which should never have been allowed to roost in populated areas in the first place."

The current State Government 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.

However, no roost tree "may be destroyed or modified when there are flying-foxes in the tree, or when flying-foxes are near the tree and likely to be harmed as a result of the destruction or modification".

Mr Dametto suggested "more invasive and proven methods" should be used to encourage the bats to move on if the prescribed methods under the Code were ineffective.

**NICK DAMETTO**

**Member for Hinchinbrook**

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## MEDIA RELEASE



“We don’t need another study, we don’t need another survey, we need action,” he said.

“The bat colony at Ingham’s Botanical Gardens is close to Ingham State School, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School and Hinchinbrook Aquatic Centre. We know these things have the capacity to carry Australian bat lyssavirus and I fear for the safety of our school children. Ingham State School has already had to get council to clean up dead bats on school grounds.

“It’s time for Labor to stand up and take some responsibility for this mess.”

—ENDS—

*Photo caption:*

*Dead bats at Ingham Botanical Gardens last Tuesday afternoon.*

**Media Enquiries**

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