

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

January 24, 2019

BAT VACCINES MUST ACCOMPANY BATS: KATTER

State KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter has implored for human health and safety to be prioritised, calling for the potentially life-saving treatments given to anyone scratched or bitten by a flying fox to be readily available in flying fox hotspots.

Mr Katter wrote to Townsville Hospital Health Service chief executive Kieran Keyes after a concerning incident on December 26, 2018, whereby a 12-year-old Charters Towers boy was scratched in a local park.

The boy was initially seen at the Charters Towers Hospital but was later sent to Townsville where he was treated with rabies immuno-globulin and a course of rabies vaccine in order to prevent the Australian Bat Lyssavirus.

Following this media reports were circulated that the boy had to travel to Townsville because the treatments were not readily available at the Charters Towers Hospital.

The THHS released a social media statement saying rural hospitals like Charters Towers had the rabies vaccine, while the rabies immunoglobulin was stored at the Townsville Hospital and could be couriered out within 48 hours, or the patient could go and get it in Townsville.

Mr Katter said this just wasn't good enough.

"Charters Towers' issues with flying foxes are long and documented," he said.

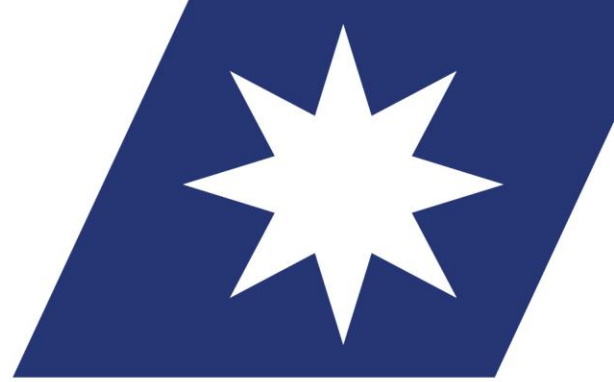
"For a long time the State Government's attitude to helping us deal with the flying foxes has been to create awareness of any of the health risk they pose.

"I am very aware of how dangerous the Australian Bat Lyssavirus can be and also know that following a scratch or bite, every hour delay in getting those vaccines administered is a risk."

Mr Katter said while it was estimated only around 1 per cent of flying foxes carried the virus, this was large number when you considered the plague proportions they were in at times in Charters Towers.

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“Just over a year ago we had 200,000 bats in the centre and across the town – that could be 20,000 bats carrying a deadly virus in extremely close proximity to people and their homes,” he said.

“I don’t intend to be alarmist, but it is common sense to me that, in rural places like Charters Towers and Ingham where bat populations are high, these vaccines should be available on the ground.

“If it is a matter of budget, then the State Government needs to make sure it is providing enough funding to cover any costs that the hospitals accumulate to ensure these treatments are available when and where they are needed.”

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