

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

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KATTER CALLS TIME ON TOWERS BAT CRISIS

State KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter has called for the State Government to initiate an emergency response to Charters Towers' worsening bat crisis.

Mr Katter said the State Government urgently needed to fund and approve a dispersal plan, to be carried out by a professional environmental contractor, to disperse the mass influx before Christmas.

"Dispersals like this are complex but I have personally spoken to professional contractors who could get on the ground now with a reasonable expectation of success," he said.

"This sort of thing is simply beyond the scope of a local council and delegating dispersal works to them would be, in my opinion, a recipe for failure.

"It is unfair of the State Government to say this is all just a council problem – just like in Mount Isa, the Charters Towers Regional Council is not equipped to deal with a problem of this magnitude.

"It is shameful that the Minister is presiding over this ecological crisis – if this was in the Botanical Gardens in Brisbane or along Southbank, the matter would have been addressed yesterday."

For the second time in three years, an 150,000-plus strong influx of little red flying foxes have in recent weeks descended on the city, shutting down two public parks, limiting hours at the local pool and establishing large roosts in schools, an aged care home and private residences.

A long-awaited dispersal and relocation plan is being prepared for April next year, but Mr Katter said it was unacceptable Charters Towers residents were being forced to live with such terrible conditions in the meantime.

The plan is being directed by the Charters Towers Flying Fox Advisory Committee, of which the Traeger MP is a member, and is being funded by State Government money that was secured by the KAP in 2016.

A total of \$2.7 million was promised to the former KAP Member for Dalrymple Shane Knuth, but \$1.8 million was given to research and only \$900,000 allotted to on-the-ground dispersal works in Charters Towers. Of this \$900,000 there is \$700,000 left.

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The rest of the money has been spent on “activities including community engagement in partnership with Charters Towers Regional Council, on-ground trials and project management costs since 2016”, according to Minister for Environment and Science Leanne Enoch.

“I have done my best to work with the State Government through the CTFFAC but the fact is the state has slowed the whole process down,” Mr Katter said.

“The reality is councils don’t have the resources to properly handle issues of this magnitude fast and effectively and so we need the state to step up and at least provide the necessary money needed.”

Mr Katter said the Minister needed to provide emergency funding above and beyond that pledged in 2016 to address the current issues.

He said the KAP also had plans in the New Year to introduce a new version of its Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012, in response to ongoing issues with the application of state legislation impeding on the management of flying fox roosts.

The KAP Bill would amend the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and would empower landowners (including state and local governments) to remove flying fox roosts more practically, including the option of culling.

You can see the 2012 version of the Bill here:

<https://www.cabinet.qld.gov.au/documents/2013/Feb/Flyfox%20Bill/Attachments/Bill.pdf>

Charters Towers is home to a permanent black flying fox population and also, seasonally, masses of little red flying foxes.

Both species are native to Australia, however neither are endangered or vulnerable as is the case with a number of other bats such as the spectacled flying fox and the grey-headed flying fox.

All flying fox species are currently heavily protected by the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992, and this hugely impedes on the management of their roosts in urban locations.

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