

# Statement of Management Intent for flying-fox in Brisbane

## 1. Authority

Under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, local governments in Queensland have an as-of-right authority to undertake camp management at flying-fox camps in designated Urban Flying-Fox Management Areas (UFFMAs) provided they comply with the 'Code of Practice – Ecologically sustainable management of flying-fox roosts'. An UFFMA for a local government is defined by maps available from the website of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP).

Outside an UFFMA, a local government requires a flying-fox camp management permit (FFRMP), available from EHP. A local government also has the option to apply for a FFRMP should it wish to trial camp management techniques that are outside the *Code of Practice*. A non-council applicant requires a FFRMP irrespective of the location of the camp. Further information on the Queensland Government's camp management framework is available at the following webpage:

[www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/livingwith/flyingfoxes/camp-management.html](http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/livingwith/flyingfoxes/camp-management.html) .

Statements of Management Intent (SOMI) articulate the approach the council intends to take with respect to camp management across the UFFMA, any rationale the council considers appropriate to declare and any specific plans council has in relation to camp management.

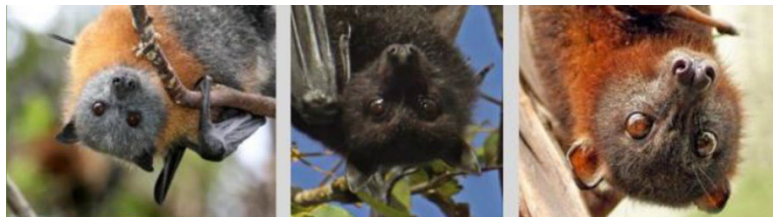
## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this SoMI is to articulate the approach that Brisbane City Council will take to the management of flying-fox camps in Brisbane. Brisbane City Council recognises the ecological importance of flying-foxes and their valuable contribution to sustaining Brisbane's unique biodiversity. Council balances the protection of these animals and habitat with community needs and expectations.

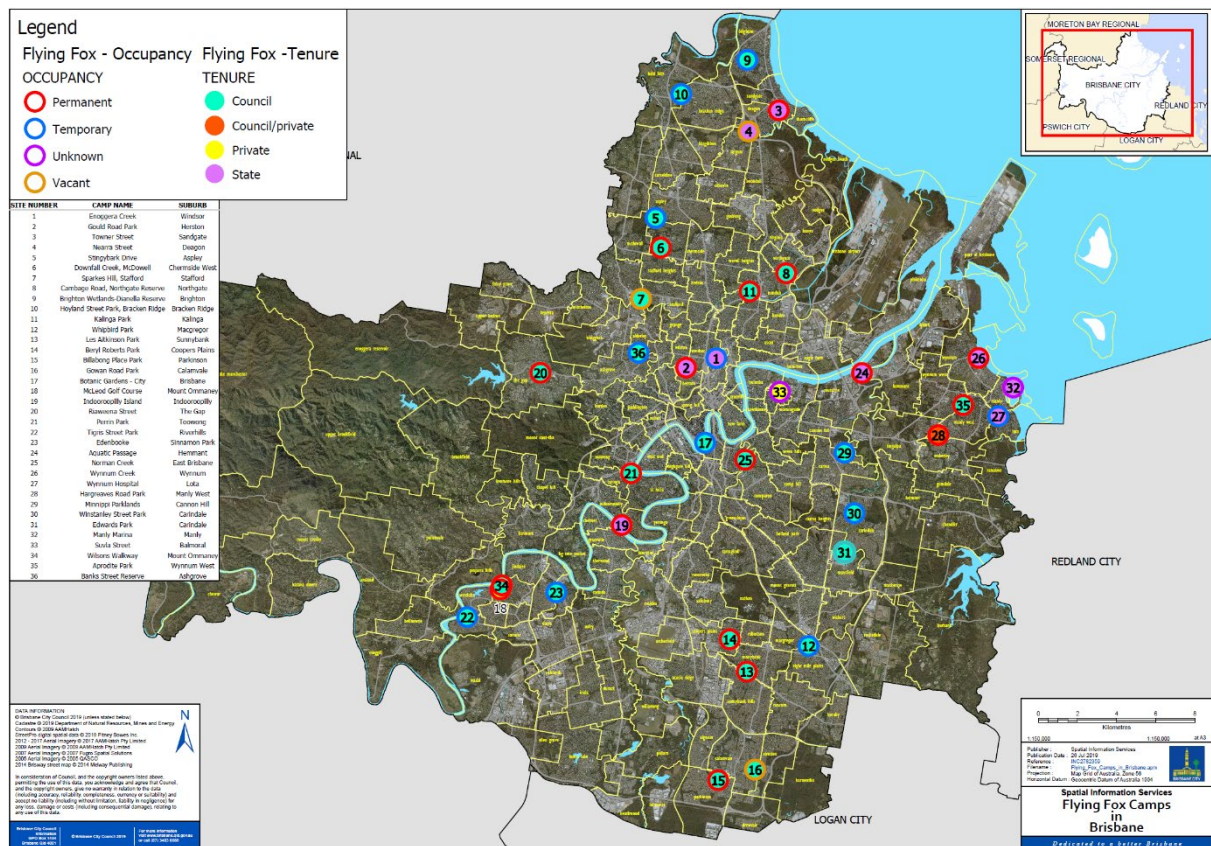
## 3. Location of the UFFMA in Brisbane

Flying-fox are native nocturnal mammals that play a significant ecological role as long range pollinators and seed dispersers of native vegetation. There are three species of flying-fox that reside in these camps. These include the:

- grey-headed flying-fox (*Pteropus. poliocephalus*)
- black flying-fox (*Pteropus. alecto*)
- little red flying-fox (*Pteropus scapulatus*).



During the day, flying-foxes congregate in groups in areas known as camps. Across Brisbane there are more than 30 permanent flying-fox camps (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Map of location of flying-fox camps in Brisbane**

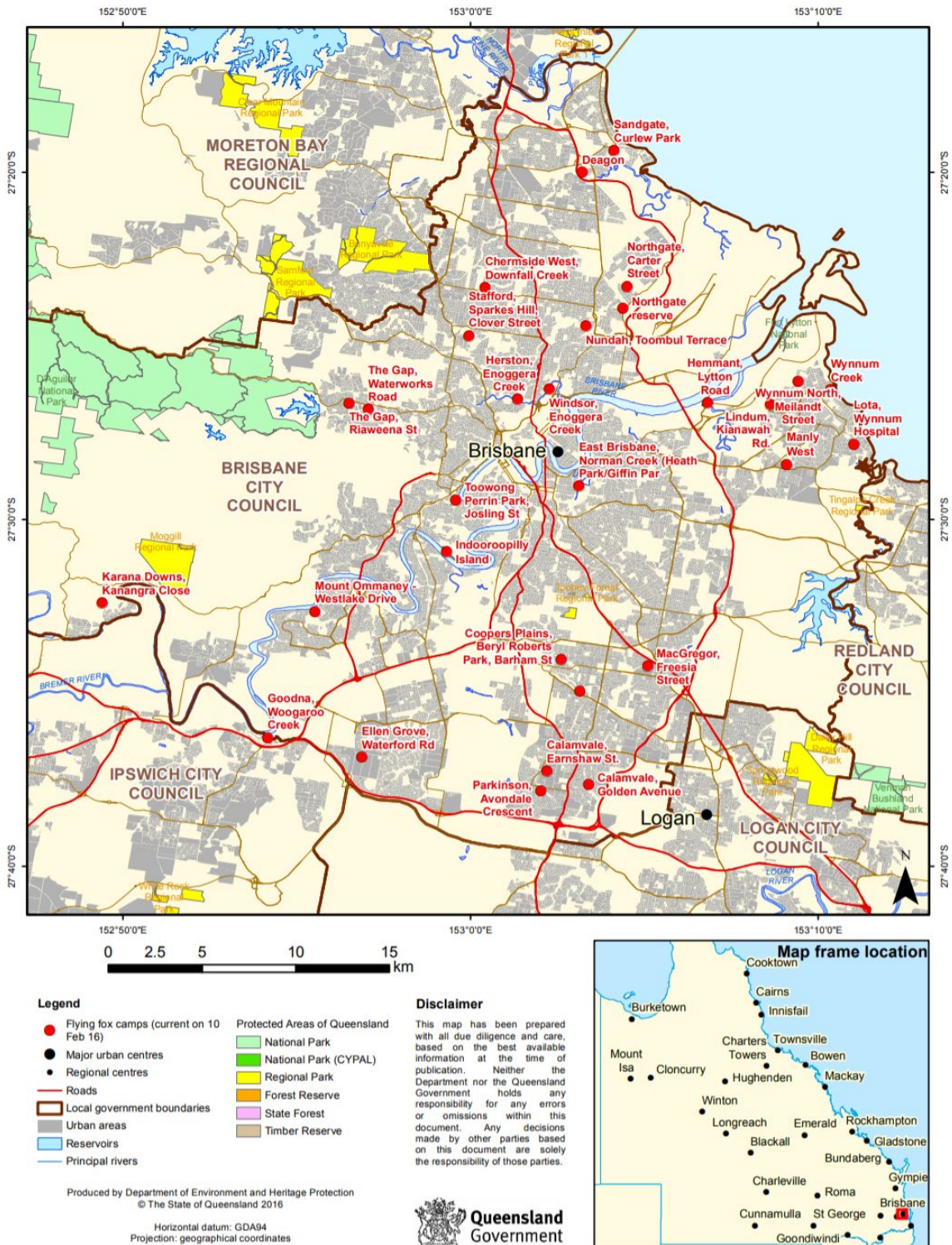
These sites are recognised and protected by the Queensland Government, and in some cases, the Commonwealth Government (Figure 2).

More than one species of flying-fox is often present in a single camp. The size of these camps can range from a few hundred individuals and expanding to a few thousand in response to the flowering of native vegetation and migration events.

Migrations of grey-headed flying-foxes from northern New South Wales and the Queensland central coast each year, swelling the Brisbane population; whilst the Little Red Flying-Foxes travel along the coast from north Queensland, following the flowering of Eucalypts. Migratory events can also occur when a region experiences prolonged drought or cold weather, which can result in animals temporarily visiting in their search for pollen and nectar.

When these migration events occur, the number of flying-foxes in Brisbane can increase very quickly as thousands of animals can arrive together. The surge in numbers associated with this annual migration can temporarily expand flying-fox camps and spread them into new camp areas, but usually only for a short period of time.

Breeding seasons and changes to food availability are also key influences on the movement, size and species diversity within flying-fox camps.



**Figure 2: Map of significant flying-fox camps in Brisbane**

Most flying-fox camps are located on land adjoining open spaces, sporting fields, creek lines and nature reserves. This provides a natural buffer between these sites and residential housing. However, urban encroachment has increased the potential for residents to be living close to those areas that are used by flying-foxes to rest during the day.

In recognition of the suitability of these areas which all have a combination of open space, a water body and tall trees, Council has acquired these areas as wildlife corridors and many of them comprise the recreational and natural sites residents also enjoy.

Through the planting of flowering ornamental plants and palms in gardens across Brisbane, a food source that was not historically available also now exists. This brings flying-foxes closer to residents during the evening, when their arguments over food, chattering and smell can cause concern for those unfamiliar with these native animals.

## 4. Council intentions and considerations

Like all native animals, flying-foxes are protected under Queensland's *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Under this legislation, it is an offence to harm the animals, or to disturb their camps which is enforced by the Queensland Department of Environment and Science. Additional protection is given to wildlife when they have dependent young. In the case of flying-foxes, this protection remains in place until the young can fly and independently feed themselves.

The grey-headed flying-fox is afforded further protection because of their declining numbers. This species is listed as 'vulnerable' in the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* which means that any harm done to these animals is also an offence under Commonwealth law. The Commonwealth protection extends to cover the camp sites and the feed trees relied upon by this species.

The protection given to grey-headed flying-fox and the Commonwealth obligations in relation to their management overrides any State or Local Government law or policy for the management of this species.

In Queensland, Local Governments are also authorised under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* to manage flying-fox camps in areas subject to an urban zoning under a council planning scheme, inclusive of a one-kilometer buffer around such areas. This area of management is known as the Urban Flying-Fox Management Area.

When determining how best to deliver its responsibilities to protect native fauna, and respond to the encroachment concerns of the community, Council deploys five strategies for flying-fox and camp management. These strategies include: monitoring, education and awareness, maintenance and cleansing, buffer management, and camp modifications.

### 4.1 Monitoring for change

All permanent flying-fox camps are inspected by Council officers on a regular basis. Monitoring is also undertaken, and records kept of observed changes to flying-fox biodiversity. This monitoring focuses upon building our understanding of:

- the location of permanent and temporary camp areas;
- the expansion and contraction of numbers associated with migratory events;
- the condition of vegetation;
- triggers for migration events;
- observations of wildlife movement and departure and arrival of migratory animals;
- camp species composition;
- breeding dynamics; and
- population health.

Science and technology is being trialed by Council to find new ways to understand and communicate science and data about flying-fox distribution across the city. Council also works with neighbouring local governments and other stakeholders to understand wildlife movement and ensure preparedness for migratory events.

## **4.2 Education and awareness**

Council is committed to raising awareness of the importance of our city's biodiversity and is proud to be the most mega-diverse capital city in Australia.

However, it is acknowledged that living with wildlife can be a challenge, so information is provided to residents to communicate strategies to reduce the impacts and to understand the behaviours of native wildlife to find a way to coexist. This information is targeted both to those that live with flying-foxes during the day (camp sites) and people who have wildlife visit their properties to feed at night.

The main impacts associated with living near a flying-fox camp are associated with: odour and noise, as well as droppings as animals leave their camps in the evenings to feed. These impacts generally increase during the breeding season, when flying-foxes use scent to attract their mates, and identify their young.

Residents may also be concerned about potential health risks associated with wildlife, so information is also available on risks posed by wildlife, to dispel fears that proximity is dangerous.

## **4.3 Maintenance and cleansing**

Impacts associated with fruit droppings, animal droppings or other mess are managed by Council, particularly during migratory events or when the population has swollen. Additional cleansing activities of footpaths and public spaces can be requested by contacting Council's call centre.

## **4.4 Buffer management**

Council recognises the habitat requirements for flying-fox, and works to retain suitable habitat for wildlife on Council land and in natural reserves to maximise the buffer distance between wildlife and residents in accordance with legal obligations. These activities are not selected as responses for migratory events, as these events are only likely to last for a limited duration.

## **4.5 Camp modifications**

As part of its site management for flying-fox camps, Council may, from time to time, undertake pruning, maintenance or revegetation works. These activities must be undertaken in accordance with State Government regulations, and if a camp is recognised as nationally significant, with approval by the Commonwealth Government.

If activities are authorised, they are undertaken at night when the camp is vacated to avoid disturbing the animals. However, should flightless young be present at a site, these activities will not be authorised to occur.

Camp modifications are generally applied for to manage vegetation that poses a public safety risk, or to maintain buffer distances. Modifications may also be made from the understorey of a flying-fox camp to make an area more or less attractive to wildlife, as a way of encouraging or dissuading animals from choosing an area. This strategy allows Council to ensure the health of its natural areas, whilst ensuring wildlife have a suitable place to live.

## 4.6 Position in relation to dispersal or relocation

When determining how best to manage these flying-fox camps, Council considers the strategies deployed by other Queensland Local Governments, including those that attempt to relocate or move flying-fox colonies.

Whilst provisions are provided for dispersal or relocation of flying-fox camps, as the process of dispersal involves the use of strobe light, gun-shot noise and smoke machines – deployed during the early hours of the morning when animals are attempting to return to their camp site, it can be extremely distressing for residents and domestic animals. These activities are also usually undertaken for several hours each morning before daylight, for a number of weeks, which can be both costly and disturbing to residents.

Where deployed in an urban area, dispersal activities can also result in the relocation of flying-foxes to less suitable locations, or places where they have equal or greater community impacts. This can include back yards of residential properties, playgrounds or schools.

In addition, research undertaken about past dispersals demonstrate that once these activities cease, flying-foxes will usually return to the area they were moved from, providing no measurable benefit for local residents.

Consequently, dispersal options are not deployed in the Brisbane LGA.

The selection of options for the management of flying-foxes considers a range of factors, including:

- the number of years that flying-foxes have used a particular site
- the species present (eg. migratory or local species)
- the time of year and presence of flightless young
- the well-being impacts and concerns that nearby residents are experiencing
- whether impacts are associated with feeding behaviour or camps
- whether the camp is on council land or private land
- whether council considers that there are any risks to human health or well-being from the camp
- the number of flying-foxes present at a site
- potential impacts associated with management actions, including consideration that interventions may result in animals moving to a less desirable location or one where there is likely to be greater conflict with the community
- broader environmental changes, including flowering and drought events
- whether management actions will cause harm to flying-foxes
- whether management actions will be consistent with regulatory frameworks and the Code of Practice.

## 5. Further information

For further information in relation to flying foxes, please contact Council on (07) 3403 8888.