



MEDIA RELEASE

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Care group rejects barbaric shooting plan

Bat Care Brisbane President Louise Saunders said the call by Bundaberg MP Rob Messenger for the reintroduction of permits to allow shooting of flying-foxes in commercial orchards was barbaric and shortsighted.

"We should be conserving and not killing these pivotal species that spread the seeds of biodiversity and pollinate our dwindling native forests," Ms Saunders said.

"History proves that shooting has never been a successful tool in crop preservation.

"According to Mr Messenger, farmers can protect their crops by shooting 'a very small number of flying-fox scouts'. However there is no scientific evidence to support the existence of 'scout bats'," Ms Saunders said.

"As the majority of farmers now choose to protect their orchards with netting, it is obvious that shooting a few 'scout bats' has not deterred hungry flying-foxes in the past.

"The call for the reintroduction of shooting permits is merely a smoke screen to mask the inhumane and outdated practice of shooting bats for crop protection," she said.

For several years, responsible farmers have protected their crops with netting, which means they no longer have to resort to killing and maiming wildlife in the name of fruit orchard cultivation.

Ms Saunders said if the community knew of the cruelty that shooting inflicted upon flying-foxes and other wildlife, they would reject fruit produced by the few growers who have not opted to protect their crops with netting.

"The resultant wounds when animals are shot are horrific. Shotgun pellets break bones and render animals incapable of flight. Young orphaned babies are left to die of starvation and dehydration and these animals can take many days to die," she said.

"If the public knew of this cruelty, they would want to be sure that their fruit came from farms that used non-lethal methods of crop protection.

"Mr Messenger says flying-foxes are in plague proportions when, in fact, the reverse is true. Flying-foxes are suffering very high mortality due to the destruction of native forests and uncertain climatic conditions."

Unpredictable flowering patterns, extremes in temperatures, barbed-wire entrapment and illegal killing claim thousands of bats each year. The drought during the winter of 2007 saw entire generations of flying-foxes perish.

"Flying-fox populations cannot sustain these losses and the continuation of shooting would put unsustainable pressure on vulnerable species, Ms Saunders said.

"Flying-foxes are a keystone species and their survival is imperative for continued forest health and species biodiversity. We depend on them to keep creating the forests for future generations and it is a wise farmer who nets for the future."

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Rob Messenger MP

Member for Burnett
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Childers Flying Fox trial fails – Farmer faces ruin

Member for Burnett Rob Messenger is calling on the Premier to personally intervene and ensure that farmers' Damage Mitigation Permits or licenses to shoot a very small number of flying fox scouts are returned in time to save their Christmas crops and also their family's livelihoods.

Mr Messenger's call comes after being made aware of the news that Childers Lychee grower Ivan Philpott is facing financial ruin after the Labor Government's sanctioned trial of the "Eagle Eyes 4" pyramid shaped flying fox scaring unit on his orchard has spectacularly failed.

Along with Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Board Representative Mr John Kawjeski, Mr Messenger inspected Mr Philpott's farm this morning in order to see firsthand the damage caused by flying foxes on a crop of local lychees while the crop was being "protected" by a Labor government approved device.

"While I applaud every effort to stop the unnecessary shooting of flying foxes, the Queensland Government should follow the lead of the NSW Labor Government and allow our farmers the right to their Damage Mitigation Permits in crop protection," Mr Messenger said.

"Quite clearly the NSW Labor Government understands the importance, commonsense and cost effectiveness of Damage Mitigation Permits in the protection of fruit crops.

"What is stopping the Queensland Government standing up for their farmers, horticultural workers, job creation in regional communities and food security?

"Why has the Queensland Government suddenly changed its policy when the flying foxes are in plague numbers and not threatened?

"Unfortunately Premier Bligh is playing politics again and is positioning Labor once again for Green voting preferences. The loony left, extreme green and animal rights activists are calling the shots within the Labor Party and have come up with the excuse that the limited shooting of Flying fox scouts is 'inhuman'," he said.

Mr Messenger said the government is hiding behind the lame "inhuman" excuse and this is setting a dangerous precedent which will threaten people other than farmers. For example the recreational and professional fishing industry in Queensland should be very worried.

"If the Premier allows the loony left, extreme green and animal rights activists to continue to control primary industry policy, the catching of fish will be the next "inhuman killing" activity to be banned," he said.

"Putting a big hook through a poor little fish's lip, pulling it out of the water and watching it die a slow agonising death is inhumane - This is the sort of comment we'll be hearing from Labor's Primary Industry Minister in the near future as he bans fishing.

"Farmers can't afford to spend and throwaway hundreds of thousands of dollars on crop protection that doesn't work. They can't afford to be tied up by more red tape.

"Where will this madness end? We are calling on all Queenslanders of decency and commonsense to support our fruit growers.

"If this green madness continues then the only fresh fruit and food we will be able to eat will be imported from China and other Asian countries.

"Anna Bligh, Tim Mulherin and Kate Jones are behaving in a treacherous manner. "Return the Damage Mitigation Permits," he said.

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