



Flying-Fox Camp Management Policy

MSC045E

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Community Strategic Plan Goal	3. An environmentally sensitive and sustainable community		
Community Strategic Plan Strategy	3.4 Support initiatives which reduce the community's impact on the environment		

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1 Policy Objective

To identify the actions that Council and others may take to manage Flying-fox habitat and the amenity impacts of Flying-fox Camps in Muswellbrook Shire to reduce human/bat conflict.

2 Risks being addressed

Grey-headed flying-foxes are listed as threatened species under both NSW and Commonwealth legislation, and disturbance to flying-foxes and their habitat is limited by legislation. This species is highly mobile and camp populations vary widely over time due to food resource availability.

In 2005, flying-foxes established a camp at the confluence of Muscle Creek and the Hunter River. Historically the camp has been occupied by the threatened grey-headed flying-fox (GHFF) with the population varying seasonally over time. In recent years, Little Red Flying-foxes (LRF) have also been occupying the site, intermittently. The land occupied by the main camp area is owned by Muswellbrook Shire Council, Department of Infrastructure – Lands, and the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).

The Muswellbrook flying-fox Camp is located close to residential and business areas. The Camp's proximity to motels, a caravan park and public facilities including walkways, recreational areas, sporting fields, and registered clubs are of concern for the community and conflict increases when the number of flying-foxes increase.

In December of 2022, a small camp of Grey Headed Flying-foxes was noted in the Denman Van Village. The NSW Department of Planning and Environment was notified. This population will be monitored by Council, along with Muswellbrook camps.

Experience in other locations has shown that attempts to move camps are generally unsuccessful, expensive, and moves the problems to neighbouring areas. Management actions proposed in the Plan aim to reduce the impact of flying-foxes roosting close to residential dwellings and to reduce the risk of disease transmission to the local equine industry.

The Muswellbrook Flying-Fox Camp Management Plan (the Plan), as updated from time to time, provides a tool to ensure appropriate management of the camp.

Given the mobility of flying-foxes and the expected variability of the population of the camp over time, the focus of implementation actions is on:

- Providing residents with car covers and/or pool covers and/or clothesline covers, where they are directly affected by roosting Flying-foxes.
- Providing residents with access to a high-powered water gurney where they are directly impacted by roosting flying-foxes.
- Education and awareness programs.

3 Scope

When approved by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (in combination with other relevant licence applications and legislative requirements), the revised Muswellbrook flying-fox Camp Management Plan will enable management of the Flying-fox habitat to reduce human/bat conflict and some of the amenity issues that arise from a resident bat population. The Policy applies to:

- Council activities and staff;
- Various government agencies; and
- Residents and ratepayers.

4 Policy Statement

The planned management approach for Flying-foxes is included in Roles, Responsibilities and Delegations

Responsibility for the implementation of these actions is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. The actions have been determined after consideration of community views, ecological requirements, and legislative/policy controls. The Actions have been grouped into the major thematic areas of:

- Governance
- Routine Management
- Infrastructure
- Restoration & Rehabilitation
- Monitoring
- Flying-fox Species Management
- Resident Assistance
- Community Education

5 Roles, Responsibilities and Delegations

Responsibility for the implementation of these actions is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Management Actions

Action ID	Issue	Actions & guidelines	Responsibility	Trigger / Catalyst for commencement
1.1	Car / Clothes-line / swimming pool covers	Provision of these items based upon selection criteria during times of high population occupancy.	Council	Items available on request from Council within available budget. Preference given to but not limited to those who live within a 300 metre radius of the camp.
1.2	Assistance with costs for tree removal.	Will only assist with the removal of Privet or Cocos Palms. Preference given to those living near a camp but all properties within the LGA will be considered.	Council	Will be offered once a year with a limited budget.
1.3	Financial assistance with Biodiversity Conservation Licence.	Resident / business responsible for licence application, and required to ensure it complies with the intent of the CMP.	Council	Only applicable to properties within 300m of Camp boundary. Council will pay the application cost.
1.4	Access to gurney / water cleaners to remove bat excrement	Actioned upon request from residents with affected properties. Whilst preference is given to residents within a 300 m radius of a camp, it is not limited to them. Any resident in the shire can access the gurney. There is yet to be an occasion when the gurney cannot be loaned.	Council	A phone call from an affected resident. Residents within a 300 metre radius from the boundary of a camp have received a letter from Council informing them of this access. However, gurney available to all residents in the shire, with preference given to those who live within a 300 metre radius of the camp.

Action ID	Issue	Actions & guidelines	Responsibility	Trigger / Catalyst for commencement
2.1	Advice on backyard vegetation management	<p>Advice related to trees residents may wish to remove (introduced or naturalised foraging species such as Cocos Palms, Poplars and Silky Oaks)</p> <p>Advice on trees to plant if residents want to encourage bats to forage in their properties.</p> <p>Advice on native fragrant trees that will assist to screen smells from Camp</p>	Council – Sustainability Officers or Ecologist.	Enquiry.
2.2	Health and disease management	<p>Website on health and disease management.</p> <p>“Little Aussie Battlers”: https://littleaussiebat.com.au/</p>	<p>Council</p> <p>Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils</p> <p>Department of Planning and Environment</p> <p>Hunter Local Land Services</p>	Enquiry.
2.3	Regional Flying-fox educational kit	Community education kit was developed to assist residents to understand Flying-fox movement patterns and reduce conflicts with Camps	<p>Council</p> <p>Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils</p> <p>Department of Planning and Environment</p> <p>Hunter Local Land Services</p>	Enquiry

Action ID	Issue	Actions & guidelines	Responsibility	Trigger / Catalyst for commencement
2.4	Advice on how to manage dead or injured Flying-foxes	Information on who to call when sick, injured or dead Flying-foxes are seen	In the first instance contact WIRES – 1300 094 737 Council Department of Planning and Environment	Enquiry.
3.1	Encourage Core of camps away from homes and businesses.	Improve vegetation condition in core of camp sites, to make boundaries less attractive for roosting.	Council	With available funds
3.2	Rehabilitation of damaged areas (due to Flying-fox occupation)	Removal of damaged vegetation and establishment of replacement vegetation.	Council	With available funds when 30000 or more animals arrive and then depart the area.
3.3	Plant appropriate foraging species in areas of the Camp away from residential properties	Strategically plant endemic foraging habitat trees away from residential and employment areas.	Council	With available funds
3.4	Manage buffer zone to reduce conflict between residents and Flying-foxes	Planting of native fragrant trees and shrubs adjacent to dwellings to reduce the noise and smell directly behind	Council	With available funds
3.5	Weed Control	Environmental weed control throughout the Camp area - targeting exotic tree species known to act as potential roosting and foraging habitat (e.g. Camphor Laurel as most on site are immature or have not reached maximum height)	Council	With available funds

Action ID	Issue	Actions & guidelines	Responsibility	Trigger / Catalyst for commencement
3.6	Dangerous Trees on Council owned or managed land	Assessments for potentially dangerous trees	Council	A minimum of yearly or when 30000 or more animals arrive and then depart the area.
3.7	Buffer (Asset Protection) Maintenance	Create buffer around Assets	Council	With available funds
4.1	Flying-fox rehabilitation	Respond to calls of injured or dead Flying-foxes	WIRES will coordinate efforts – 1300 094 737. Department of Planning and Environment	As required
4.2	Alerts (notification of upcoming events, e.g. management activities, heat stress, etc.)	Notification to rehabilitators of any events that will impact on Camp Site or Flying-fox population.	WIRES should be first point of contact and they will coordinate with Department of Planning and Environment and Council.	As required
5.1	Flying-fox Census	Quarterly Flying-fox animal counts to assist with determining likely national population	CSIRO DPE Council	Quarterly monitoring Monthly monitoring in the Hunter/Central Coast region.
5.2	Wildlife / Rehabilitation rehabilitators data collection	Collection and provision of count information, and other data collected when responding to calls	WIRES maintain a database of this information 1300 094 737.	As reported
5.3	Hunter Bird Observers data collection	Collection and provision of count information, and other data collected	Hunter Bird Observers	As reported

Action ID	Issue	Actions & guidelines	Responsibility	Trigger / Catalyst for commencement
5.4	Muswellbrook Shire Council management data	Collection and dissemination of data related to Flying-foxes, and vegetation that may impact on local or regional Flying-fox populations.	Council	Quarterly monitoring as part of CSIRO monitoring plus extra monitoring if numbers increase to more than 30000.
6.1	Camp Management Plan review	Review currency and suitability of CMP	Council	Review in 5 years unless Flying-fox numbers increase considerably for more than 12 months

6 Dispute Resolution

The Director Environment and Planning is the interpreter of this Policy.

7 Related Documents

7.1 Legislation and Guidelines

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act, 2016

7.2 Policies and Procedures

N/A

7.3 Other Supporting Documents

The Muswellbrook Flying-Fox Camp Management Plan

8 Version History

This section identifies authors who reviewed the Policy and the date that it became effective.

Version No.	Date changed	Modified by	Amendments/Previous adoption details
1	8/06/2023	Director Environment and Planning	Draft version placed on Public Exhibition from 29/06/2023 to 27/07/2023.
2	22/8/2023	Director Environment and Planning	Adopted by Council 22 August 2023, minute number 46.