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MR16/001 GREY HEADED FLYING FOXES

File Ref: E15.9191

Attachments: Nil

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Grey Headed Flying Foxes are increasing in numbers throughout the Shire and causing serious problems and distress to people living near their camps. Of particular concern is the area surrounding the Water Gardens in Batemans Bay.

I propose to seek a meeting with the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Mark Speakman MP, as a matter of urgency to draw his attention to the problems caused by flying foxes, not only in Eurobodalla but across New South Wales, and to seek a solution to this continuing problem.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT:

1. Council endorse the proposal by the Mayor to lead a delegation of Mayors from areas affected by Grey Headed Flying Foxes, to meet with the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Mark Speakman MP;
2. Council staff seek an urgent meeting with officers from the Department of Environment and Heritage to address the problems caused by Grey Headed Flying Foxes throughout Eurobodalla Shire.

### **REPORT**

The Batemans Bay Water Gardens are currently home to the highest ever population of Grey Headed Flying Foxes and there are camps as far south as Narooma. The high numbers are linked to weather patterns and available food supply, particularly the proliferation of Spotted Gums and other flowering trees in bloom right now. They are a serious problem that is causing great distress to people living nearby. Their faeces droppings cover everything - houses, backyards, clotheslines and cars. The smell is associated with the males marking their territory and is very strong, and the noise they make through the night makes it difficult to sleep.

If you doubt the seriousness of this problem for residents; visit the Water Gardens area and make your own assessment. I'm sure you'll agree that it is a problem none of us would wish to live with.

Unfortunately for many communities that live near large populations, an effective, workable, guaranteed solution is currently non-existent.

Grey Headed Flying Foxes are a threatened species under State and Federal legislation. Councils trying to take action to reduce numbers in a specific area face an extensive and costly approval process. More importantly, there is no way to guarantee if and where flying foxes will relocate to when dispersal methods are used. Some NSW councils have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to disperse flying foxes without success, while others have created a bigger problem in a different area.

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Last year I rallied mayors at the NSW Country Mayors Association to seek more support from the NSW Government to address the issue on behalf of our communities.

I also wrote to every Mayor in New South Wales seeking their support in lobbying the New South Wales and Australian Governments for funds to assist local government in the management of the Grey Headed Flying Foxes.

I received more than forty responses to my letter, many from areas similarly affected by flying foxes and the majority supporting my request.

The purpose of this Mayoral Minute is to advise Council that I will be seeking an urgent meeting with the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Mark Speakman MP, to outline the seriousness of the matter and seek support on how we can address the problems our communities face, and to follow up on the Grey Headed Flying Fox Senate Enquiry, which was proposed by the Federal Opposition Environment spokesperson.

I propose to invite a delegation of Mayors from the most affected areas to join me in the meeting with the Minister for the Environment.

In the meantime, we are doing what we can to help residents by maintaining buffer zones between the Water Gardens and backyards, clearing trees in backyards, and offering eligible residents free car and clothesline covers and the use of high pressure gurneys to clean their properties. We hope that the flying foxes will head north to their camps in Queensland and Northern NSW once the weather starts to cool and provide a reprieve.