

Flying-fox Camp Managers' Forum Summary Outcomes

Overview

On the 26 October 2017 the NSW Local Government Flying-fox Forum was held in Sydney supported by the NSW Flying-fox grant program. Established by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and delivered by Local Government NSW (LGNSW), the NSW Flying-fox grant program aims to assist councils manage flying-foxes. Stakeholder engagement and networking was a valuable outcome of the forum, providing a strong foundation for collaboration to drive implementation. The next challenge is for LGNSW, OEH, Councils and other stakeholders to work together in 2018 to determine how to best achieve stated aims.

The following provides a summary of the key issues explored by participants to start this process. Note that a companion document accompanies this summary, which provides a detailed description of workshop observations and workshop participants.

Key Issues Identified

Habitat and Bushland Enhancement for Flying-foxes

Aim: Guidance for land managers on habitat management and sustainable flying-fox camp management.
Action: Send out surveys to land managers with flying-fox habitat management and restoration experience. Collate and publish online case studies to provide best practice guidance to land managers on restoring and managing flying-fox habitat.

Flying-fox Camp Management Information Portal

Aim: Camp managers learning from camp managers – 'One Stop Shop' for resources.
Action: Draft a project plan and scope as an online resource for flying-fox camp managers. Make sure it is 'user designed'. Monitoring and reporting of camp management actions. Share and access data about camp attributes. Identify host and manager. Develop case studies.

Real-time Monitoring

Aim: Platform for real time information/data gathering about flying-fox movements and food resources from the community – e.g. an app to monitor camp size and food resources such as flowering events and when flying-foxes might arrive in numbers (like the RFS Fires Near Me app). Improve ecological knowledge and enable more responsive management. Document new camps.
Action: Decide monitoring parameters. Explore funding sources. Develop project plan. Liaise with camp managers. Decide on technology. Develop a prototype.

Political Engagement

Aim: To educate/re-educate councillors on the importance of flying-foxes, the challenges involved in managing flying-fox camps, and appropriate messaging for communities about health, camp management and conservation.
Action: Develop standard information for councillors in affected areas and incorporate into induction.

National Strategy

Aim: Agreed national framework to coordinate effort, resources, actions and communications for strategic outcomes for flying-foxes and communities.
Action: Review stakeholder support of 2016 flying-fox forum vision statement and identify stakeholders who can/will take responsibility to develop and implement. Seek clarity from Commonwealth Government on response to Standing Committee inquiry report.

Better Planning for Flying-foxes

Aim: Better planning outcomes for protection and management of flying-foxes and their habitat.

Action: Provide guidelines on what constitutes a flying-fox camp to have standard Department of Planning and Environment instrument (e.g. listing of a camp on Section 149 certificate). Develop better maps of existing flying-fox foraging and roost habitat. Identify areas for potential future foraging and roost habitat. Identify potential sites for future contentious roosts and build that into planning decisions. Develop guidelines on conditions of consent for developments near flying-fox camps - e.g. double-glazing and air conditioning.

Other issues that were identified during the forum but were not developed into action plans include:

Community Education and Awareness

- Need centralised and dedicated resources
- Marketing campaign to normalise flying-fox issues and dispel myths
- Education packages for landholders and camp managers
- Professional social and psychological support

Heat Stress

- Councils need access to guidelines on how to deal with heat stress and need summer reminders from OEH
- Heat stress forecasting: list of camp owners; automate 'early warning' SMS to these camp managers; information sharing
- Create a contact list to share information and heat stress warnings and lead delivery

Consistency

- Local actions have regional consequences
- Camps are 'dealt with' differently by different states (different legislation)
- Regional training is needed to make sure there is consistent monitoring
- Consistency with dispersal approvals (equity). Communities look at what other councils are doing and wonder why they can't have that done in their area
- Messaging/education/marketing – need state and national consistency
- Confusion between state camp management plans and federal guidelines

Funding and Reporting

- Timing of and duration of funds (so as to enable works to avoid sensitive periods of the year such as crèche and extreme heat events)
- Need greater flexibility and more than one year (e.g. three years)
- Need flexible funding options for management plans and actions
- Worth looking at better reporting systems

Subsidised Services

- Are subsidised services to community working? Follow up with Eurobodalla (or other councils) – what worked, what didn't? Any survey or follow up with recipients?
- Where should money come from? Sources other than grants?

How do we improve management plans?

- Increase or improve delegation for councils within approved management plans: Can we review federal and state dispersal guidelines to be a Level 1 Action if in accordance with code of practice?
- Note template review pending – consider structure and opportunities to refine (including consultation with councils and to tell the story better)
- Effective integration within councils (e.g. Port Stephens example)
- Consider future of funding support for implementing plans – need long-term investment

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