

November 1, 2014

## Media Release

### NSW government plan is not the solution for Bats and Flying-foxes

The NSW Wildlife Council is alarmed at the State Government's plan to increase local government power, enabling Councils to try and move flying-foxes by harassing them. This is not the solution and could increase the risk of outbreaks of the Hendra virus. Clear, simple education on behaviour around bats will reduce the small health threat associated with them.

The Grey-headed Flying-fox is listed as a threatened species under both federal and state laws. They are regarded as a keystone species due to the crucial environmental role they play in pollination and seed dispersal over long distances. Culling and dispersal actions by Local Government could have a cumulative and dire impact on already declining numbers. Flying-fox populations are currently being assessed by the CSIRO National Flying-fox Monitoring Programme, which is conducting 4 census counts per year until 2015. Until results of this programme are known no actions should be taken to harm the threatened Grey-headed Flying-fox. We urge the Minister to retain his responsibility and not devolve powers to Local Government.

Audrey Koosmen, Chair of the NSW Wildlife Council stated "I urge the government to protect these environmentally-important, but misunderstood animals. What is needed is an annual state-wide awareness program to give the whole community the tools and skills they need to remain safe."

Countries around the world face similar issues with many local species, not just bats infected with rabies, a similar virus to the Australian Bat Lyssavirus. Ms. Koosmen also noted "There is much we can learn from how other nations face these health risks. A simple message can be taught to the whole community, particularly to children – do not touch a bat. If you are bitten or scratched tell an adult"

If a bat or flying fox is injured, the NSW Wildlife Council recommends the public call their local wildlife rescue group. To make it as easy and simple as possible, the NSW Wildlife Council has combined forces with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to create the Wildlife Rescue mobile phone app that will locate the closest wildlife rescue group. It is free, easy and quick to download from:

#### Apple store

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/ifaw-wildlife-rescue/id714566079?mt=8>

#### Android Store

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.com.ifaw.wildlife>

Media Contact

Shona Lorigan: 0404851267