

# FAQ - Flying-fox Camp Management Policy 2014

## 1. Why do we need a new approach to managing flying-fox camps?

Flying-foxes play an important role in the pollination and seed dispersal of many plants. However, flying-foxes increasingly come into conflict with people, and the Government is concerned about the impact of noise from flying-foxes on human health. This policy will cut red tape, freeing up councils to help their communities.

## 2. How does the new 2014 policy differ from the 2007 policy?

The Flying-fox Camp Management Policy 2014 differs from the old 2007 policy in:

- its focus on minimising the impacts of camps on people
- its longer term approach to camp management and streamlining of licensing
- its acknowledgement that camp dispersal may be a successful way of removing impacts of flying-fox camps on local communities.

## 3. Are powers being handed over to local councils?

The new approach enables councils to plan to resolve local issues with their community. OEH will support councils in developing plans and providing approvals for five years, consistent with the legislation.

## 4. Why is OEH allowing shooting of flying-foxes to continue in peri-urban and rural areas?

Orchardists can apply for licences to shoot flying-foxes where they are damaging their crops. Four million dollars is available for netting orchards, meaning fewer licences will need to be issued. From 1 July 2015, licences will only be issued in special circumstances.

## 5. What special circumstances will apply from 1 July 2015?

From 1 July 2015, orchardists can only apply for a licence where the orchard has been established before 1 July 2011, and:

- there is an unprecedented incursion of flying-foxes impacting on a crop never previously affected in Australia, or
- topographical or physical constraints prevent netting, or
- the local council declines a development application, or
- the flying-fox impact is unanticipated and not regular.

Until 1 July 2020, orchardists will also be able to apply for licences if they had previously been issued a licence between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2014.

## 6. Why not allow shooting of flying-foxes in urban areas?

A range of methods including noise, water, smoke and light are effective dispersal methods. Shooting flying-foxes in urban areas to disturb and disperse camps is not necessary. Human safety is paramount.

## 7. Flying-foxes are protected: why are you allowing them to be affected?

Flying-foxes are still protected under legislation. This new policy provides greater flexibility to land managers and allows them to take a longer term approach to camp management through streamlining of licensing. If councils follow best practice, animals should not be harmed during dispersals.

## **8. What support will be provided by OEH/the State Government?**

OEH will provide expert advice to assist councils in preparing camp management plans and guide them through the necessary processes for licensing. OEH will also ensure that best practice guidance will be available for councils so they can build on their knowledge of previous camp management.

## **9. The Australian Government also has laws: how are these being taken into account?**

The NSW Government has been working closely with the Australian Government. NSW remains committed to a one-stop shop for environmental approvals.

The NSW Government is collaborating with the CSIRO and Australian, Queensland, Victorian, South Australian and ACT governments to assess grey-headed flying-fox numbers and population dynamics.

## **10. How will animal welfare issues be dealt with?**

The policy recognises that animal welfare issues are important. There are some circumstances where dispersal should not occur, for example, when the animals are heavily pregnant or when temperatures are high.

Any dispersal must be well-planned and effectively monitored. If flying-foxes are harmed, stop work triggers need to be applied.

## **11. How will OEH ensure that flying-foxes are conserved?**

Camp management actions still need to be considered for their potential impact. The policy streamlines licensing and allows for upfront approval for low impact actions. The policy also encourages land managers and community groups to establish and protect sufficient food supplies and roosting habitat away from people, so there is habitat available in the long term.

## **12. If I have a problem with flying-foxes who should I contact?**

If you are affected by noise from a nearby flying-fox camp, your local council is your first point of contact.

If you find an injured or dead flying-fox, it is important that you do not handle the animals and that you call for expert assistance from WIRES or an experienced wildlife carer.

## **13. Does the policy allow local councils and landowners to disturb flying-foxes everywhere?**

No. Camp dispersal can be a successful way to remove impacts on local communities but it must be feasible and cost-effective. Councils will need to work with their local communities as well as other councils to minimise impacts on flying-foxes, preferably through preparing a camp management plan. Land managers may apply for a Section 91 licence for disturbance or dispersal while they are still preparing their camp management plan if there is an immediate and significant issue with a camp.

## **14. What is the disease risk to people from disturbing flying-foxes?**

Human health and safety has to come first. While risks are low, OEH strongly recommends that people avoid contact with and handling of any flying-fox. Disturbance of flying-foxes should only occur as part of a camp management plan.