



Speech by

**Glen Elmes**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

Hansard Wednesday, 2 September 2009

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## **MOTION: HENDRA VIRUS**

**Mr ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (6.11 pm): The reason we are here tonight and the reason that this motion has been proposed by the member for Caloundra is that we seek the government's help, and primarily the ministers for health, primary industries and the environment, to save the lives of Queenslanders. Nowhere in anyone's contribution have we suggested that people should go out and start madly culling flying foxes anywhere in the state. We are trying to look at a problem. Every person who has taken the slightest interest in this issue understands that the problems exists. It does not exist right across the state, but it exists in pockets of the state and it needs to be dealt with in individual pockets.

There comes a time when the health of humans has to take precedence over the life or the lifestyle of an animal such as a flying fox. Right across Queensland there are flying fox colonies, mainly in coastal areas of the state. Some of those colonies are permanent and some are not permanent. In my own seat of Noosa there is a permanent flying fox colony, so I have some understanding of the mess that they make as they move about my part of the world twice a day.

We have to understand that in communities such as Charters Towers the flying foxes do not move over the town a couple of times a day; they roost over the top of the town. Also we have to understand what many residents will go through, not just in Charters Towers but also in other areas, firstly because of the noise and secondly because of the danger to health in many ways. I would ask some of those opposite who are scoffing at what we are talking about to think about what happens to people who live on properties that are reliant on rainwater when, twice a day, tens of thousands of flying foxes move across the tops of their roofs. Those roofs capture bat faeces, which is then fed into the water that the people have no option but to drink. We need to be aware of these things.

Flying foxes are the natural carrier of the Hendra virus. The virus has been identified in the placenta and the foetal tissue of flying foxes. As far as we know all infections have come directly from horses, but we also know that when you put a flying fox, a horse and a human being together, you have a potentially severe health problem. The LNP is not calling for the large-scale culling of animals. Indeed, we are asking the hopefully responsible ministers of the Crown to help solve a problem that allows communities to move flying foxes on so that they do not pose a danger to the communities above which they live.

To understand the seriousness of this issue one needs to look at the explanatory notes from the Queensland Chief Health Officer. All the way through the explanatory notes we see lines like 'do not touch the bat without wearing gloves' and 'members of the public should not handle bats'. What are you supposed to do if every night and every morning tens of thousands of bats fly over your home, doing what bats do naturally? Should you allow your children to play in the yard, on the swings and so on, if they can come into contact with what the animals leave behind?

The issue of primary industries has also been touched on. I know that something like 27.5 per cent of all stone fruit grown in the Granite Belt is lost to flying foxes. We are asking the three responsible ministers to please have a look at this motion and work with our members of parliament so that we can do something to help the people of Charters Towers and those in more remote communities so that they can carry on their lives just as all decent ordinary Queenslanders should be allowed to do.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I will not have the House persist in interjecting when I have called order.

**Mrs Sullivan** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Pumicestone, I warn you under standing order 253. I call the member for Morayfield.