

City of Ipswich

Flying Fox Roost Management

Engagement summary



BACKGROUND

Community engagement sought to understand community perspectives on flying fox roost management.

This provided insight to the review of the Flying Fox Roost Management Plan, initially adopted in 2014.

Methods

A survey and interactive map were on council's Shape Your Ipswich online platform in May 2023.

The engagement was promoted through social media and a letterbox drop to neighbourhoods close to roosts.

Demographics

There were 29 respondents to the survey.

- 63 per cent identified as female and 37 per cent identified as male
- The main suburbs represented were Camira (5), Eastern Heights (4), Bundamba (3), Yamanto, Booval, Redbank Plains, and Raceview each had 2 responses.
- In terms of age range, 31 per cent were 'Baby Boomers' (1946-1965), 34 per cent were 'Generation x' (1966 – 1980), 31 per cent were 'Millennials' (1981-1995), and there was one 'Gen Z' (1996-2010).



RESPONSES: LOCATION AND IMPACTS

The responses to Questions 1-3 in the survey indicated the people who responded were those living near roosts. This was the main intended target audience of the engagement.

83 per cent said they lived in Ipswich near a flying fox roost, with 48 per cent responding that they lived 0-100m from a roost.

Almost two thirds of the respondents said they had lived near a roost for more than 5 years.

- 52 per cent said they had been impacted
- 21 per cent said they had seen flying foxes but were not impacted by them

The times of day and year that people notice, or are impacted by, flying foxes was consistent with the general patterns of flying fox behaviour.

While flying foxes live in Ipswich all year, there is a seasonal influx of 'little red' flying foxes in the warmer months, with roosts increasing by thousands of individuals for a period of time.

Afternoon and evening were the most common times people noticed flying foxes (58 per cent said it was 'daily' at those times), which is consistent with when the species flies out for feeding.

Summer was also predominately the time of year flying foxes were noticed, with afternoon and evening again dominating the results.

RESPONSES: PERSPECTIVES AND IMPACTS

The responses to Questions 6-7 showed polarised personal opinions among respondents about flying foxes. About half had very positive personal feelings towards flying foxes, scoring 5 out of 5. The other half of respondents scored 1-3 out of 5.

Key comments of those who scored 5 out of 5 included:

- Importance to ecosystems and biodiversity, e.g. 'forest makers'
- Humans have created a problem through habitat loss
- Flying foxes are intelligent and misunderstood
- Described with phrases such as 'wonderful', 'beautiful' and 'cute'

Key comments of those who scored 1-3 out of 5 included:

- Negative impact on use of parks, gardens and outdoor areas
- Disruptive noise and smell
- Fear of disease and health risk

- Damage caused by droppings, particularly on houses, cars, pool etc. This was also repeated in other comments sections.

The most frequent impacts listed were:

- Impacts to their property (such as droppings, eating fruit or damaging vegetation) – 20 responses
- Droppings outside of their property (eg parks and gardens) – 20 responses
- Noise from a roost – 17 responses
- Noise when they fly out – 16 responses

In other open comments, Nerima Gardens was named several times as being impacted by flying foxes and unable to be used.

There were nine impacts listed (plus an 'other' option). 41 per cent of respondents listed being affected by five or more impacts.

The open comments either reinforced impacts such as droppings, or were comments from respondents who were grateful for having flying foxes in their local area.

RESPONSES: ACTIONS TO MANAGE IMPACTS

Question 11 asked respondents the actions that would help manage the impact from flying fox roosts. There was no limit to the number of options a respondent could select.

The most popular actions were:

- Habitat enhancements in suitable roost locations away from urban areas (21 responses)
- Regular monitoring of roosts to identify status, movement and issues (14 responses).

Despite numerous comments and responses in the rest of the survey clearly describing the impact of droppings on people's property and public parks and gardens, the related management actions scored relatively low.

- 6 respondents selected canopies on public pathways under roosts
- 6 respondents selected property management options (such as car and washing line covers)

The least popular action was Technical Advice – from government or non-government experts.

RESPONSES: FINAL COMMENTS

The final open comment field continued the trend of the survey.

Those with negative personal feelings towards flying foxes strongly advocated 'getting rid of' flying foxes, whether through relocation, removing trees or even culling. They saw flying foxes as 'invading' and causing damage.

Those with positive personal feelings towards flying foxes advocated towards habitat protection and restrictions on removing trees, as well as greater education and advocacy for flying foxes. The general perspective was that humans needed to learn how to co-exist with wildlife.



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