Item 12.6

Notices of Motion

Protecting and Expanding Native Bat Habitat

By Councillor Thompson

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

(i) Bat Appreciation Day will be observed on 17 April;

(ii) the City of Sydney is home to a variety of threatened bat species, including the Grey-Headed Flying Fox (GHFF) and Microbat species such as the Gould's Wattled Bat, Eastern Freetail Bat and Little Forest Bat;

(iii) the Grey-Headed Flying Fox is vital to the health and regeneration of native flora species across Australia, as the migration patterns and dietary requirements of this species provides a consistent and effective means of transportation for pollen and larger seeds across vast distances;

(iv) in Sydney, the Grey-Headed Flying Fox is known to periodically inhabit bushland close by the city, with large camps being observed in mass at the Centennial Park and formerly at the Royal Botanical Garden prior to the State- and Federal-authorised initiative to relocate this species;

(v) current estimates suggest that up to 45,000 Grey-Headed Flying Fox roost at Centennial Park's Lachlan Swamp;

(vi) Grey-Headed Flying Fox are increasingly moving into urban areas in response to changing environmental conditions such as food scarcity and habitat loss;

(vii) Microbats consume 50% of their body weight in insects each night, serving as effective and natural control for insect populations; and

(viii) Microbat population and habitat is threatened by deforestation and urbanisation, as well as the misuse of insecticides that diminish the bats' insect prey;

(B) Council recognise:

(i) Mosman Council supports native species, including Microbats, by transforming dead trees into 'Habitat Stag Trees' to serve as nesting and foraging sites as well as shelter for a variety of wildlife;

(ii) Lake Macquarie City Council have committed to the restoration and enhancement of flying fox habitat to encourage camps to move further away from residential areas; and

(iii) Brisbane City Council regularly inspects the condition of Grey-Headed Flying Fox food availability to ensure that this species is sufficiently supported;

(C) Council further note the findings and targets included in the 2014 Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan:

(i) the Grey-Headed Flying Fox and Microbats are among eight species classified as ‘priority fauna’ species, as they are threatened species generally uncommon in urban areas; and

(ii) limited habitat availability, destruction and fragmentation of habitat, and seasonal food scarcity were identified as key threats to Grey-Headed Flying Fox and Microbat species within the Local Government Area;

(D) Council reaffirm its commitment to protecting and supporting all native species, including the Grey-Headed Flying Fox and Microbats;

(E) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Paul Scully and the Chief Executive of Greater Sydney Parklands, Joshua French to:

(i) reiterate support on behalf of the City for the partial conversion of Moore Park, particularly to further enhance biodiversity, protect native species, and progress the development of habitat linkages; and

(ii) communicate the urgency of protecting and supporting all native species, including but not limited to the Grey-Headed Flying Fox and Microbats, given the current climate emergency; and

(F) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate and report back to Council on the following as soon as practical:

(i) advice from the Council’s Urban Ecology Team as to how the City can support local and transient bat species, including but not limited to:

(a) expanding support for ‘Habitat Stag Trees’ and hollow trees;

(b) expanding biodiversity corridors;

(c) identifying and protecting existing bat camps and roosting areas;

(d) investigating potential sites such as Jubilee Park, Sydney Park, Moore Park, Hyde Park and Victoria Park which could support native bat species with remediation or planting work by the City;

(e) planting more bat-friendly vegetation including fruiting trees;

(f) eliminating pesticide use in bat habitat, particularly through encouraging direct and indirect species interactions to manage pests; and

(g) implementing a system for recording threatened species activity within the City’s parks and urban areas, including visual, acoustic and aerial monitoring, surveying and any other relevant data collections; and

(ii) incorporate advice and findings from the Urban Ecology Coordinator into the new Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan.

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