



SYDNEY COASTAL COUNCILS GROUP INC.

councils caring for the coastal and estuarine environment

SUBMISSION

Draft Code of Practice Authorising Flying-Fox Camp Management Actions

May 2018

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Flying-fox Code of Practice Review
PO Box A290
Sydney South NSW 1232

Submitted online

Re: Submission on the Draft Flying-fox Code of Practice

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Draft Code of Practice Authorising Flying-fox Camp Management Actions 2018*.

Established in 1989, the SCCG is a Regional Organisation of Councils with twenty-nine years' experience in leading sustainable coastal management. The SCCG comprises ten Member Councils who represent approximately 1.3 million Sydneysiders.

The SCCG Strategic Plan 2015 – 2019 sets out three guiding principles which encapsulate the core vision, mission and goals of the SCCG, namely to:

1. Restore, protect and enhance the coastal environment, its associated ecosystems, ecological and physical processes and biodiversity
2. Facilitate the sustainable use of coastal resources, now and in the future
3. Promote adaptive, integrated and participatory management of the coast.

As camp managers with responsibility for managing flying fox camps on public land within their local government area, our relevant Member Councils share an interest in ensuring that Flying-fox camps on public land are managed appropriately and sustainably, resulting in continued conservation of Flying-fox species and its habitat as well as minimising human health impacts and conflicts with neighbouring residents.

General comments on the *Draft Code of Practice Authorising Flying-fox Camp Management Actions 2018*, are provided below:

- SCCG welcomes a Code of Practice applicable to public land managers including local councils, to provide practical and standardised guidance and authority on implementation of camp management actions.
- The removal of a licencing system in place of a Code of Practice reduces red tape and enables actions to be implemented in a more timely manner, however, there needs to be assurance that camp managers of public land will implement camp management actions in accordance with the Code of Practice.

- With reference to *Part 2 (6 (5))* which states that *'the camp manager must carry out camp management actions generally in a manner....'*. The use of the word 'generally' weakens the statement and intent, and as such must be removed.
- With reference to *Part 2 (7,8,9)* which states the camp management actions authorised by the code including routine and high impact camp management actions.

The Flying-fox Camp Management Policy 2015 provides for a management approach based on the hierarchy of options, firstly opting for the lowest form of intervention required, with camp dispersal (a level 3 - high impact action) to be used as an option where other level 1 and 2 (routine) options have been applied with no results. It is a concern that there is no reference to the hierarchy of options in this draft Code of Practice.

It is recommended that reference to the hierarchy of options approach be included within section 7 of the Code of Practice.

- With reference to *Part 3 (11 (4))* which states *'the camp manager must notify all local councils within a 20 km radius of a camp at least five business days before carrying out high impact actions'*.

Given that there is still minimal data on where flying-foxes may go when dispersed, and it is not guaranteed that they will move to another existing camp close by, it would be prudent, and recommended, for camp managers to notify all councils within NSW, as a minimum, and other relevant councils in other states where the NSW council is close to a state border.

- With reference to *Part 3* above, it is also recommended that a camp manager must notify and consult with an airport, located as a minimum within a 30km radius of a camp, at least 28 days prior to actions being implemented that are likely to result in the increased movement of flying foxes.
- With reference to *Part 3 (15 (7))* which states *'camp management actions must not result in the removal of more than 50% of the area of vegetation....'*. The level of vegetation removal provided in this clause (more than 50%) is far too high. This is unacceptable. The figure provided as a guide in the Code of Practice should be 'no greater than 30%' with the caveat that an environmental impact assessment must be undertaken on site prior to any vegetation removal.
- With reference to *Part 3 (16)*. Clause 4 should be ordered as Clause 2.

Section 16 (1) must state quite clearly that councils must proactively engage and consult with their community around a camp, and LGA wide as required, during the planning stage of management actions, and at least one month prior to management actions being implemented to enable an appropriate amount of time for community engagement, consultation and decision-making.

The existing Clause 2 states that *'as a minimum, the camp manager must notify residents of properties at least three days prior to high impact actions being carried out'*. This clause is inadequate as it does not provide a sufficient notification timeframe for the community to react, plan or to enable the community to contact council with concerns to be addressed. It is recommended that the timeframe for notification should be at least 7 days.

The wording *'at a minimum'* implies that this is all a council is required to do in engaging with the community on high impact management actions.

It is recommended that this wording be removed with Clause 2 stating 'In addition to (1) the camp manager must notify residents of properties within 300 metres of a camp, and other residents as relevant, at least 7 business days prior to any high impact camp management actions being carried out in relation to that camp'.

- With reference to *Part 3 (17)*, SCCG supports both Clause (1) and (2).

With respect to Clause (1) record keeping is extremely important in ensuring that all camp management plan actions and outcomes are recorded and reported. The utilisation by councils of a standard template for record keeping / reporting is recommended to ensure consistency across the state. Flying-fox camp monitoring templates are stated as being available in the notes on page 11 of the Code, however, given the notes do not form part of the Code of Practice, it is recommended that text around the use of a standard recording/reporting template be included within Clause (1).

Whilst it is understood from Clause (2) that camp managers will submit a copy of their records to the Environment Agency Head within six months of actions being carried out, is there a monitoring/auditing program in place within the Office of Environment and Heritage to ensure that these records will be adequately assessed and audited with regards to compliance with the Code?. If this is not the case, then it is recommended that an assessment/auditing program be developed by the Office of Environment and Heritage to management actions recorded are being carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice.

If you have any queries regarding this submission, please contact Belinda Atkins, Manager Projects and Programs at belinda@sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au or 02 9246 7326.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Withycombe
Executive Officer

