



Media release

From the Minister for Environment

Wednesday April 28, 2004.

FLYING-FOXES CALL YARRA BEND PARK HOME

The Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, today announced that a small area of Yarra Bend Park on the outskirts of the city would remain the home for Melbourne's Grey-headed Flying-fox colony.

A five-year \$1.7 million management plan will involve revegetation and weed control, the creation of artificial roost structures and wetlands and the installation of viewing platforms, paths and signage.

The Minister said that the flying-fox relocation program had achieved its primary goal of protecting the Royal Botanic Gardens and helping the flying-foxes find a habitat where they could flourish.

"The relocation trial has been a fantastic success," Mr Thwaites said.

"The heritage-listed Royal Botanic Gardens have been preserved and the nationally endangered flying-foxes have a site where they can thrive and coexist with the local community.

"No flying-foxes have roosted in the Gardens for over twelve months and Fern Gully is recovering well," he said.

The Minister said that Yarra Bend Park had met the habitat needs of the flying foxes and any negative impact on local residents would be minimised through the management plan that would be put in place.

"This site on the banks of the Yarra River is ideal for establishing and maintaining a sustainable campsite in an urban environment and we hope the animals stay here long-term.

The Minister said the environmental and social benefits related to this particular site make the risk of trying to move the colony elsewhere unacceptable.

"Further attempts to relocate the colony could result in its dispersal to nearby residential areas or back into inner-city parks and gardens," he said.

Mr Thwaites said that funding for the plan would benefit wildlife in the area and visitors.

"This funding represents a unique opportunity to sustain a colony of amazing wild animals right on the fringe of the city.

"People can now start to appreciate this spectacular endangered species, rather than focussing on the problems previously associated with the Royal Botanic Gardens," he said.

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The Minister said that as part of the management plan, funding would also be provided for habitat and visitor improvements at Eastern Park in Geelong where a smaller colony of flying-foxes had also established itself.

“There will be broad community consultation over the development and implementation of the management plan and the community will be kept informed of the progress of the project throughout,” Mr Thwaites said.