



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**5 May 2022**

### **Nudging is not the solution**

Wildlife Victoria, the state's leading emergency wildlife rescue service, has called on Colac Otway Shire to halt its 'nudging' program which aims to prioritise and protect non-indigenous trees over and above Grey-headed Flying Foxes - a threatened native species.

The Shire has a permit from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to undertake the nudging program which uses loud noise, lighting effects and wind dancers to frighten the Grey-headed Flying Foxes away from their roosting site in Colac's Botanic Gardens.

This is the third year the nudging program has been used in the Gardens.

Wildlife Victoria CEO, Ms Lisa Palma, questioned the Shire's priorities. "We really should be asking why a threatened species, so important to our native ecosystem, is being treated like a rogue squatter in a heritage listed property."

Wildlife Victoria understands that some of the non-indigenous trees, situated in the gardens, have already surpassed their naturally expected lifespan.

"Our Flying Foxes are already threatened and in decline due to loss of habitat and disruptions to their roosting sites. We must act now to protect them from further devastation."

Ms Palma said we have this vital species to thank for seeding of our beautiful hardwood forests and eucalypt trees and creating habitat for other native animals throughout the state.

A single flying fox can disperse up to 60,000 seeds in one night. Their nightly feeding range is anything from 20-50km from camp.

"There is no proof that nudging works to relocate Flying Foxes. In the three years that this program has been operating at the Colac Botanic Gardens, the Flying Fox colony has continued to return to the same location after each nudging exercise," Ms Palma said.

"The only thing that nudging achieves is to cause distress and disruption to exhausted Flying Foxes who are simply trying to return home for a rest after flying all night, possibly from far away."

The DELWP permit states that works such as these cannot take place when Flying Foxes are heavily pregnant.

Conception of Flying Foxes occurs in April/May and gestation lasts several months.

"Unfortunately, due to the stress caused by the nudging process, many of the pregnant adult females in this colony are likely to lose their young. Our view is that the nudging program interrupts the reproductive process of Flying Foxes," Ms Palma said.

"Wildlife Victoria is not satisfied that enough has been done to consider other options to manage the colony's presence in the Botanic Gardens. We should be doing everything we can to protect this threatened species."

“My preference would be that we work together with representatives of the Colac Otway Shire to find more ecologically sustainable solutions that will both support the Flying Fox colony at the Botanic Gardens and meet community expectations,” she concluded.

Some years ago, funding was provided to the Colac Otway Shire to implement a misting system to support the Grey-headed Flying Fox colony on days of extreme heat. This system has not yet been introduced to the colony.

#### **Quick Grey-headed Flying Fox Facts**

- They are listed as a threatened species.
- They make a significant contribution to our ecosystem by pollinating native plants and spreading seeds.
- The males do not become sexually mature until approximately 30 months of age.
- They have a slow reproductive rate (one young per year).
- They have high rates of infant mortality.
- They are susceptible to heat stress.

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For further information contact: Wildlife Victoria’s media team on 0447 193 121 or [media@wildlifevictoria.org.au](mailto:media@wildlifevictoria.org.au)

#### **About Wildlife Victoria**

- Wildlife Victoria is a not for profit wildlife Emergency Response Service that has been operating for more than 35 years as an independent, not-for-profit organisation focussed on the welfare of Australia's unique wildlife.
- In 2021, Wildlife Victoria’s Emergency Response Service received more than 100,000 requests for assistance and supported almost 90,000 sick, injured or orphaned animals.
- Wildlife Victoria educates the community about wildlife, and helps the community manage wildlife incidents.
- Wildlife Victoria advocates for wildlife whenever their welfare is under threat or compromised.