



📷 A female Spectacled Flying Fox. PICTURE: DAVE PINSO

— Cairns —

Cairns trees cleared but “anyone’s guess” where bats will go

Dominic Geiger, The Cairns Post

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HUNDREDS of flying foxes from the Cairns city camp are now searching for a new home after trees were cleared to make way for a \$120 million hotel.

At 5.30am yesterday, the air above the Cairns CBD was filled with the howling of chainsaws and screeching of bats as tree loppers moved on to the site ahead of schedule.

The controversial move, condemned by environmentalists, paves the way for construction on the GA Group’s “twin towers” hotel, set to boost the Far North economy, creating

hundreds of jobs.

Earlier this week, main contractor Prime Group director Andy Taylor told the *Cairns Post* the tree clearing was likely to occur Friday.

But Mr Taylor yesterday said all environmental permits had been complied with and “the plan was always to remove them (the trees) at the end of this week sometime”.

While it’s unlikely any bats were in the five trees when clearing began, video captured by the *Cairns Post* showed the animals circling the area while branches were being cut down.

“Site preparation works were completed ahead of schedule so a decision was made to proceed with the tree felling after all appropriate government departments were notified,” Mr Taylor said.

“We followed all state and federal Department of Environment-approved guidelines during the process as we were obligated to.

“This included having experienced ecologists on site to ensure the flying fox population received minimal impact.”

Multiple environmental permits were required because spectacled flying foxes are listed as vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

A Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) spokeswoman said the developer was granted a permit to remove a small number of roost trees from the site.

“EHP believes the developer has complied with all terms and conditions in the FFRMP (permit),” she said.

Northern Queensland Environmental Defenders Office management committee treasurer Brynn Mathews said the displaced bats could now become someone else’s problem, depending on where they found a new home.

“The other obvious locations are Munro Martin Parklands, which is two blocks away, Shields St or the Esplanade,” he said.

“It’s anyone’s guess.



Simon Vinnicombe, Senior Development Manager for Prime Constructions, Syrian billionaire developer Ghassan Aboud, wife Nahed Nabhan, Mark Davie, GA Group Australia Managing Director and Prime Constructions director Andy Taylor. PICTURE: JUSTIN BRIERTY

“We have got to try and have the legislation changed, to give (the spectacled flying foxes) an adequate level of protection and get a recovery plan implemented.”



📷 Bat supporters Brynn Mathews and Maree Treadwell. PICTURE: ANNA ROGERS
