

Developing Resilience in Residents

A reflective approach to human/wildlife conflict

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Background

- For decades ‘traditional’ flying-fox management has been reactive and focused on removal of habitat or animals – which simply shifts the issue to other communities and has unpredictable outcomes
- Individual experiences and tolerances of the issue are based on competing values of the individual and the animal
- “I don’t care where they go, so long as they are not here anymore”
- Like any relationship, co-existence relies on compromise and tolerance
- And, like any issue in a relationship, there are three options:
 1. Accept differences
 2. Compromise by trying to change ‘unfavourable’ qualities
 3. Leave

Background

- Traditional flying-fox management aims at compromise on only one-side of the relationship
- **In late 2019, droughts, food shortage and bushfires led to the emergence of many ‘pop-up camps’ across the Sunshine Coast region – 13 new over one season**
- Applying traditional management of an ever-growing issue would only serve to exacerbate the issue further and set an expensive precedent
- Many residents at previous community meetings had raised the issue of psychological impacts of living nearby flying-foxes and supported the concept that a support group or counselling would be beneficial

What's in a year – 2018/19 v 2019/20

- Number of flying-fox – \uparrow 200%
- Number of roosts – \uparrow 50% (24 \uparrow 37)
- Number of complaints – \uparrow >300%
- Budget – No change
- Number of flying-fox officers – No change
- Number of magic wands – No change

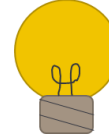


So how else can we manage this?

- Find the flying-fox pied piper?
- Budget cannot stretch to perform the same sort of management across more sites

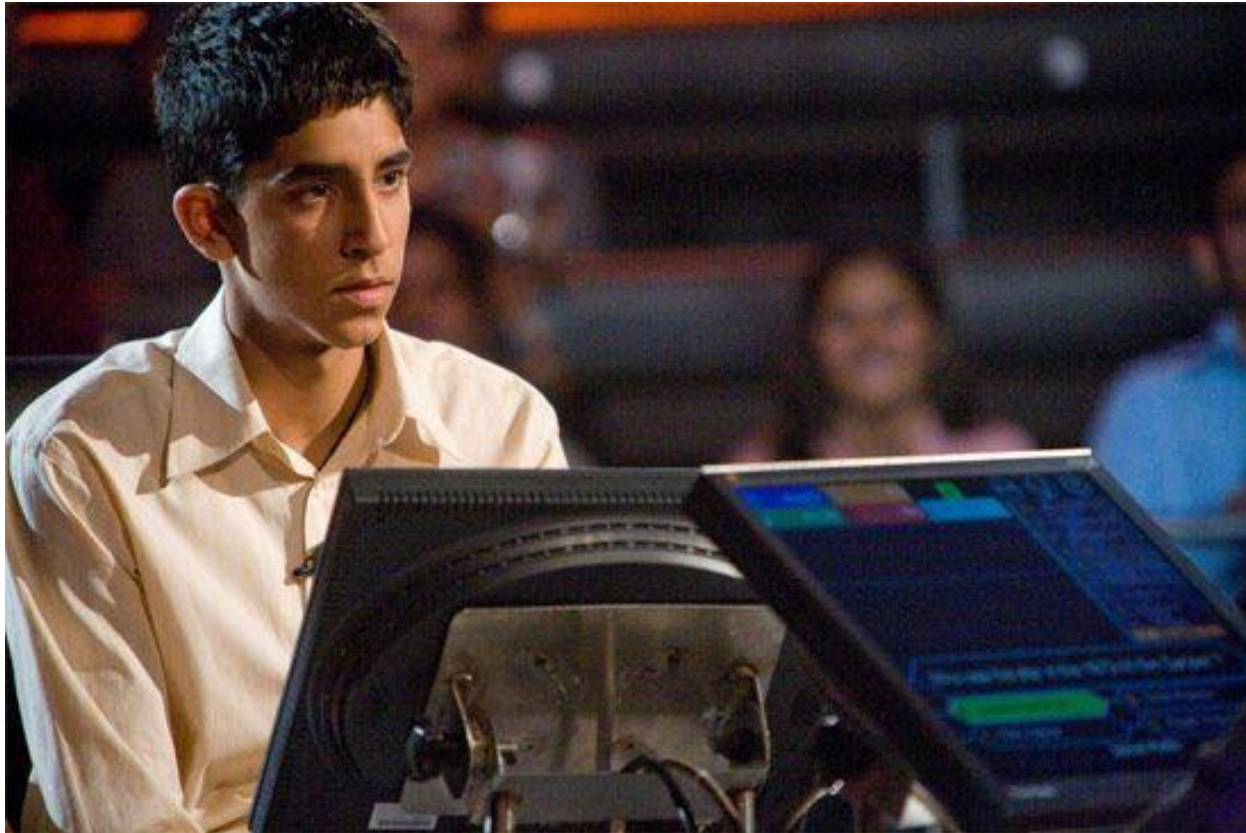
Start looking at addressing issues on the other side of the relationship

- **Build long-term resilience in the community to increase tolerance and strive towards co-existence**



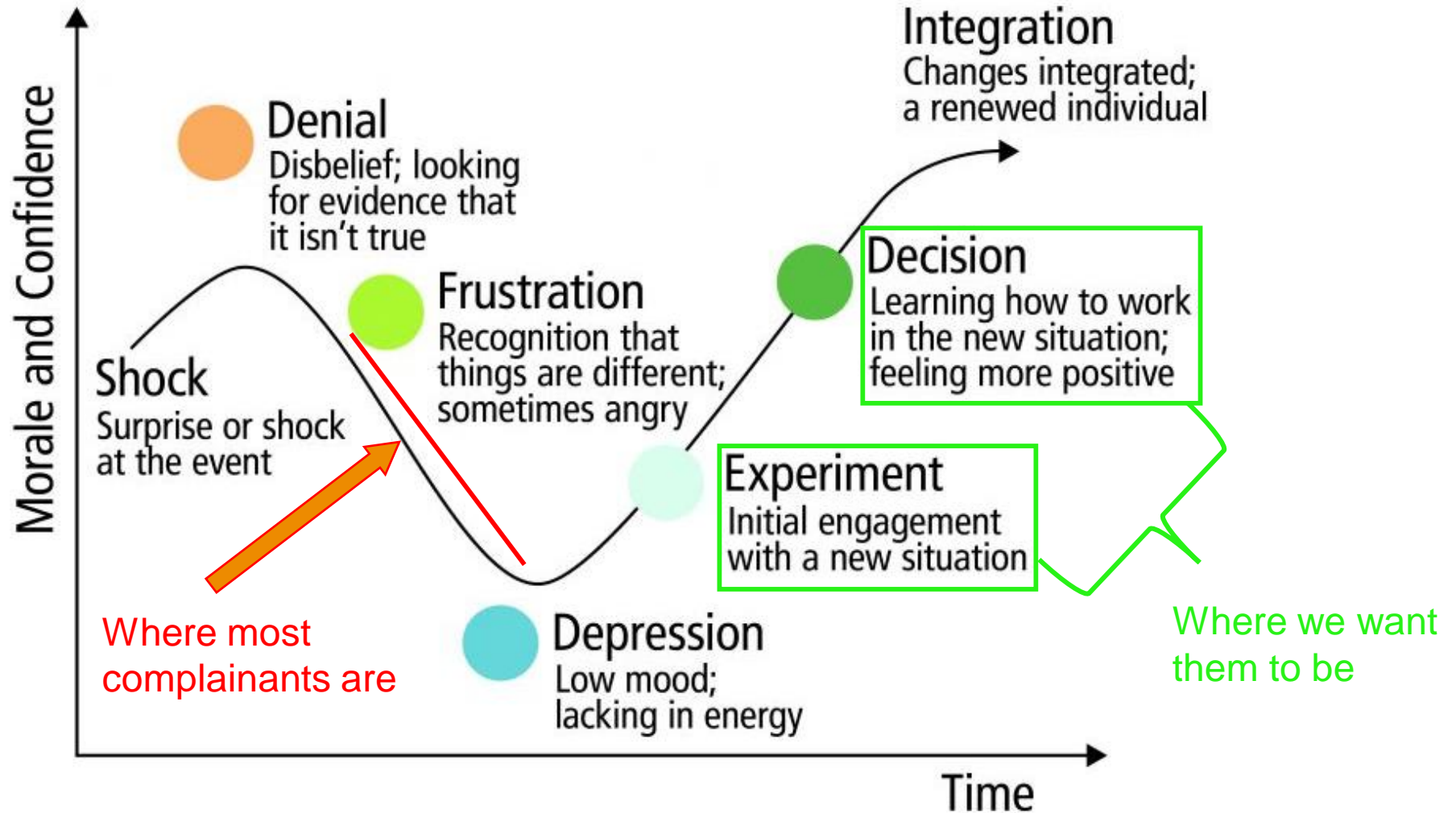
Artist's impression of flying-fox manager

Who wants be a flying-fox manager?



So the question again: Why are some residents more tolerant of noise and smell than others and why does a vocal minority remain disgruntled even after all options have been applied, while other residents move on?

The psychology – stages of change



Why are they stuck in these stages?

- **Ambiguous Loss**

- A loss that occurs without a sense of closure or understanding
- Leaves a person searching for answers
- Complicates and delays the process of grieving
- Often results in unresolved grief, frozenness and living in limbo

- What is the goal?

- Learn to live with the emotional tidal wave
- Learn to live with and adapt to the changes that come with the loss AND learn to live with the ambiguity of developing meaning

The proposal

- **Offer a series of resilience workshops for impacted residents, facilitated by a professional**
- Intention:
 - Provide residents with skills in resilience building that can be used as a coping strategy in response to flying-fox (or other)
 - Establish a community of impacted residents with different levels of exposure/experience to share ideas and empathise with one another
 - Get broader appreciation of the issue and have the ability to explore a different personal response to flying-fox



Reflecting on the issue and claiming humans have shared responsibility and should look at how they can be empowered to improve their own circumstances.



Blame a wild animal and chase it somewhere else.

How was it done?

- Initially identified top 17 complainants – across six **high-conflict** sites, with varying levels of experience
- All had previously raised concerns about impact on mental health and relationships (including suicide, social exclusion and divorce) and had identified counselling or similar support would be beneficial
- Invited them to a series of three free resilience workshops as a pilot group

How did that go?

- One resident attended and two negative email complaints
- Attendee was positive and supportive of the session, suggested that more people should be invited and still “just wanted the flying-foxes gone”

Round 2

- Mail out to all residents within 100m of seven high-conflict roosts – 350+ properties
- Invited them to a series of three free face-to-face resilience workshops

How did that go?

- Four registered, one resident attended and one negative email suggesting online instead due to distance

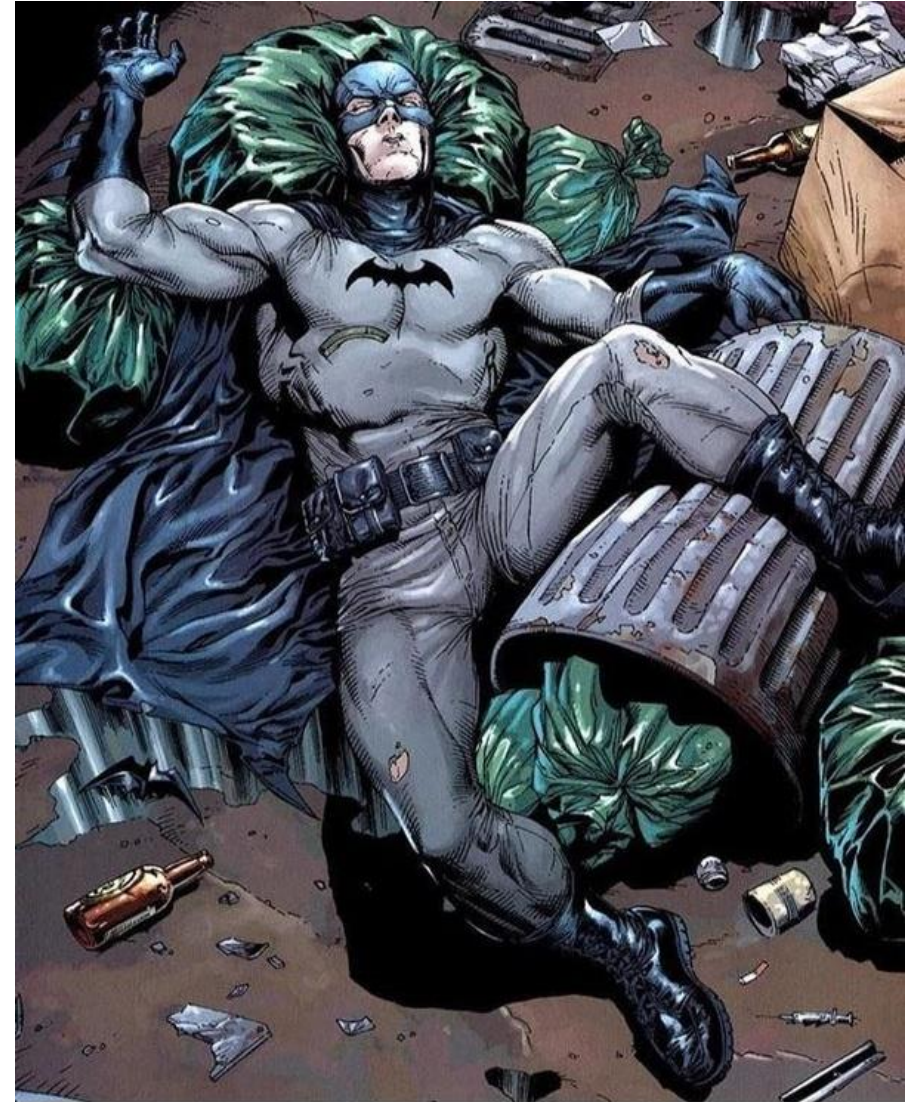


Round 3

- Contacted the same residents and offered online session via Zoom instead
- Invited them to a series of two free resilience workshops

How did that go?

- **First session** – Five residents registered, two attended (pro-bat) and two negative email complaints (from first group of 17)
- Attendees were very positive and supportive of the session
- Complaints asked to “focus on getting rid of them instead”
- **Second session** – Three registered, 0 attended



Learnings – Where to now?

- This has been repeatedly asked for by the community during the birthing and mating season
- These sessions would provide the most benefit to residents before the season begins, however flying-fox impacts appear to be an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ issue
- The invitations did not select the right target audience – it is more suited to residents further along the stages
- Will offer the sessions again at the end of the season when residents are under greater stress



Questions?

See you in the Q+A session



See council's website for further details
www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au