

Rainbow Bee-eaters | Community Conversation

Agnes Water | 26 September 2025

Thank you for attending Gladstone Regional Council's Community Conversation focussed on the Rainbow Bee-eaters and their breeding grounds at the Seventeen Seventy SES Grounds.

We are here to listen to the community on how we can appropriately balance community needs and environmental values.

What is the current situation?

Council has a Temporary Entertainment Event Hire Agreement with Gidarjil Development Corporation which runs from 2024-2029 for the *1770 Cultural Connections Immersion Festival* at the Seventeen Seventy SES Grounds in October each year.

Council recognises that the area is a known breeding site for Rainbow Bee-eaters, which nest underground during their August to January breeding season. As a result, the agreement includes a condition requiring the hirer to obtain an approved Species Management Plan (SMP) from the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), excepting where the Department advises that an SMP is not required.

In the lead up to the 2025 festival, DETSI had advised the hirer that an SMP was not required for the action of placing mesh on the ground, prior to the establishment of active nests. A previous SMP was approved in 2022.

With recent and significant escalation in nesting activity, as confirmed by DETSI and GRC on the 24 September, the advice from DETSI to the hirer changed. DETSI made additional suggestions to the hirer including, but not limited to:

- **Seeking to actively exclude the establishment of nests** from areas where festival activities are proposed to occur using an appropriate gauge of mesh netting.
- **Limiting festival activities to only areas on the grounds where there are no active nests** and placing exclusion fencing in other areas to limit access and activities in the areas containing active nests.
- **Relocating the festival** to an alternative location in the local area.

Council is aware that, as of Thursday 25 September, the hirer has an approved SMP with strict conditions and Council is actively working with Gidarjil and DETSI to ensure compliance.

What are the next steps?

Council has been actively engaging with Gidarjil to understand how their actions comply with the newly approved SMP.



What steps have Council taken to protect Rainbow Bee-eaters and what will be done in the future?

Following the first *Cultural Connection Immersion Festival* in 2021, Council became aware that Rainbow Bee-eaters were increasingly using the SES Grounds as a nesting area.

When Council was approached to make a multi-year hire agreement for the SES Grounds, an additional requirement for a Species Management Plan approved by DETSI was added. This SMP was approved in 2022. While Council is Trustee of the SES Grounds, it relies on DETSI to provide assurance of the suitability of any SMP it approves.

Since 2021, Council has taken additional actions to further protect the Rainbow Bee-eaters including:

- Installing permanent bollards to prevent vehicle access to the field.
- Limit event bookings during the August-January breeding season.
- Change local laws to designate the SES Grounds as a dogs-on-leash area during breeding season.
- Installing educational signage.
- Initially reducing our mowing schedule to limit perceived disruption to the birds. However, monitoring showed the reduced schedule was deterring Rainbow Bee-eaters. Council has returned to its previous schedule.

Council acknowledges our environmental responsibility and will continue to:

- **Actively monitor nesting activity** to ensure accurate and up-to-date information guides decisions.
- **Provide monitoring information and seeking updated advice** from (DETSI).
- **Work within environmental legislation** to minimise disturbance while supporting cultural and community events.
- **Commit to long-term stewardship** of the breeding grounds, recognising its value to local wildlife and community.
- **Be open to hearing community voices and perspectives** which will factor into ongoing discussions.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to our Community Conversation.

Council remains committed to keeping the community updated as this situation progresses.

If you have any further enquiries, please contact Council on (07) 4970 0700 or info@gladstone.qld.gov.au.
