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## **Tragic Lyssavirus Death Highlights Importance of Environmental Health Awareness and Bat Safety**

*“We protect people from hazards in their environment!”*

**BRISBANE, QLD, 9th July 2025**

Environmental Health Australia (EHA) extends its deepest sympathies to the family and community affected by the tragic death of a NSW man from Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV), following a bite from a flying fox.

This heartbreaking incident underscores the vital role of environmental health awareness in protecting communities from zoonotic diseases—those that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

“While bats are an essential part of our ecosystems—pollinating plants and controlling insect populations — but it's crucial that the community understands the serious health risks of handling them,” said Melissa Burn, EHA National President.

Australian Bat Lyssavirus is rare, but always fatal once symptoms develop. It is closely related to the rabies virus, and can be prevented with timely medical intervention. This is why environmental health officers, local councils and public health authorities work tirelessly to educate communities on wildlife risks and safe practices.

EHA urges the public to follow these key precautions:

- **Never handle or attempt to rescue injured bats.**
- If you find a bat in distress, contact a licensed wildlife carer or local council for assistance.
- If bitten or scratched, **immediately wash the wound with soap and water for at least 15 minutes and seek urgent medical care**, including post-exposure vaccination.

“This case is a stark reminder of how closely human health is tied to our interactions with the environment,” Ms Burn said. “Environmental health officers are on the frontline—monitoring disease risks, supporting local governments, and educating communities to keep both people and wildlife safe.”

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