LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QTON No. 5

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
MARISA PATERSON MLA (CHAIR), ANDREW BRADDOCK MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), LEANNE CASTLEY MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
2 March 2021

Asked by MS CASTLEY:

In relation to: Money spent on Bettongs

MS CASTLEY: And how much was—how much have we spent so far on the bettongs?

Mr Walker: I will have to take the question of money on notice, given that it has been a program over a number of years and with different funding streams going into it.

MINISTER VASSAROTTI: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

In relation to the trial release of Bettongs into the Lower Cotter Catchment, approximately $600,000 was spent by the ACT Government.

The objective of this experimental release was to assess under what conditions Eastern Bettongs could persist in an unfenced environment, in order to inform possible attempts at a full-scale reintroduction in the future. Australia has the worst rate of mammal extinctions globally: increasing knowledge of how small mammals can be reintroduced into areas from which they have been extirpated in order to play their essential ecosystem roles is a critical conservation research priority. ACT is a research leader in reintroduction science, based on work in Mulligans Flat.

In 2015-18, following intensive fox control efforts, bettongs from Tidbinbilla and Mulligans Flat were released from 2015-2018 at an unfenced site in the Lower Cotter Catchment in the ACT.

The experiment was successful in achieving its objectives. Under the fox control regime implemented, extensive and sustained monitoring indicated that some bettongs persisted in the landscape for more than 450 days – four times longer than similar trials of related species. Further, it found that those that had a greater body mass tended to survive longer (Evans et al. in review).

The results from this experiment provide valuable insight into the level of fox control that is required for bettongs to persist in this environment, and what traits could be selected for to increase bettong survival, potentially allowing for the establishment of viable populations in the presence of low numbers of introduced predators.

This work will inform tactics to enhance chances of success of any future full reintroduction efforts in Australia. Full results from this work are currently in review with a leading international conservation scientific journal, and will inform reintroduction efforts globally.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Signature: 

Date: 11/3/2021

By the Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Vassarotti MLA