



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Asked by Dr Marisa Paterson on 2 September 2022: Mr Bren Burkevics took on notice the following question(s):

Ref: Uncorrected Proof Transcript 2 September 2022

In relation to Wombats in the Molonglo Valley:

DR PATERSON: But minister, while everyone is looking at all these things, there are wombats in burrows that are being crushed by machinery on Molonglo—

Ms Vassarotti: I have to say, Dr Paterson, that has not been to me up until today. I have not had a representation that there are wombats being crushed through development activities in the Molonglo Valley. That is the first time that has been put to me.

I will certainly take advice from the conservator in terms of obligations under the conservation act to see if there are, you know, one, an investigation around that issue, and two, if there are, you know, levers and offenses. But, you know, I would put to you that is the first time that has—that proposition has been put to me. And I am very happy to work with your office in terms of allegations of that activity and work with conservator in terms of responding to that issue.

Mr Ponton: Minister, the conservator is comfortable to make a few comments about that.

Ms Vassarotti: That would be great. Thank you.

Mr Burkevics: Yes thanks, minister.

Thanks, Dr Paterson.

As reiterated by the minister, that matter has not been brought to my attention as the conservator either. That would be of a serious concern if that was occurring.

What I can confirm, based on the advice that I have been given, is that—and it is only in the last couple of days, that wombats actually have multiple burrows. And the matter that has caught my eye recently is the threat of wombats from road traffic accidents in recent days. And we work closely with ACT Wildlife. And they receive funding under a program of the ACT government to assist and respond to care for injured wombats or those that have been displaced.

So very happy to—as the minister’s remarks, support assistance into that matter. But certainly, yes, no information. But yes, there is a very, very, strong program and engagement between officers of conservation research and ACT Wildlife in relation to the number of wombat matters, mange, and I think other care and protection measures that are necessary.

DR PATERSON: And in terms of—has there been any consideration of how wombats get themselves out of these development areas? Because, you know, they are burrows during the day. And, you know, every other animal can hop off or fly off or crawl off. But wombats—like, you know—I guess, what consideration—and if people had concerns about this, they can raise them directly to you?

Mr Burkevics: I would be very happy to take that question on notice—

DR PATERSON: Yes.

Mr Burkevics: —and seek advice in what measures are undertaken to survey the sites and so on—

DR PATERSON: Yes.

REBECCA VASSAROTTI MLA: The answer to the Member’s question is as follows: –

During the process of assessing a proposed development, consideration is given to impacts to fauna, including wombats, including from construction, vehicles and general disturbance. Mitigation measures can include design features such as barriers, wildlife fencing, fauna crossings, additional signage and having a fauna spotter on site to safely retrieve and relocate animals. Where wombat burrows have been identified specific conditions around ensuring burrows are vacant prior to commencement of works may also be applied.

Usually, these mitigation measures are monitored for a period during the construction and operational stages to ensure they are effective, and that appropriate protection is given to local fauna.

No incidents of wombat deaths during construction have been reported to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. Under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, it is an offence to injure, endanger or kill a native animal with limited exceptions.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023

Signature: 

Date: 9/9/2022

By the Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Vassarotti MLA