



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
SUZANNE ORR MLA (CHAIR), CANDICE BURCH MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), JAMES MILLIGAN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2017–18 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
13 November 2018

Asked by ELIZABETH LEE:

In relation to: Results of trial of glamping accommodation in National Park

MS LEE: And in terms of—obviously there has been a little bit of a push from the national parks to encourage glamping and, you know, the accommodation bookings in Tidbinbilla and Namadgi, how long was the trial conducted? And I noticed that the annual report reported 120 per cent increase in revenue. And I am just wondering what that was actually measured against, given it was a trial?

Mr Gentleman: Sure. So, one of the champions of this has been Daniel Iglesias. He is our ranger—head ranger. And we have looked at some of the opportunities that other jurisdictions have used. And I think Victoria and the Grampians has been a really good example of how you can provide that level of glamping, if you like, to eco-tourism.

And what it does, is it provides the opportunity of actually being in the space for a couple of nights, if you like, and stay there with a ranger, so that they can explain to you the history of the place and the environmental significance as well.

In regard to visitor numbers.

Mr Walker: I will take that on notice and come back to you with some specific numbers—

MS LEE: And also how long the trial was, yes? And the specific question that I had was also, the annual report specifically stated that it was 120 per cent increase. And I just wanted to know what that was sort of—there must have been a target and something that exceeded or—

Mr Walker: Can do, thank you.

MS LEE: Yes, no worries.

Mr Walker: I will respond—we have been engaging an organisation called WILDfest.

MS LEE: Yes.

Mr Walker: And that organisation is providing the glamping opportunities at Tidbinbilla. So that is an example of where we are partnering with a true operator and jointly delivering products on the ground. So that the glamping experience, as the minister highlighted, occurs in the Victoria, in New South Wales, so we are building on the knowledge from those other jurisdictions to enable the glamping opportunities at Tidbinbilla.

The discussions around that space are also, well what does that look like going forward? And how do we sustain a model of supporting the community, access to the natural environment to appreciate it, to enjoy it, while not impacting on the environment itself? So getting that balance right is pivotal in terms of how we are delivering this product.

Importantly the feedback from the community about the glamping experience has been overwhelmingly positive. It has highlighted that the standout story there has been the interaction community have had with rangers. So because it is a joint partnership with WILDfest and the Parks and Conservation Service, it has been the rangers that have been the glue that have held that story together. Because they can provide the cultural connection.

So, going back to the previous commentary about Indigenous rangers. And Indigenous rangers have been able to tell the story about connection to country for visitors and guests into ACT at our WILDfest sites. They have been also able to then tell the story linking to the wildlife, so thinking about Corroboree frogs and thinking about a range of wildlife that most people would not necessarily know.

And the feedback from the community has been one of astonishment that, we did not know that those things existed within the ACT context. So it has really been quite an eye-opening experience, not just for people coming to ACT but also for ACT residents.

Our experience with the program at Tidbinbilla is that the facility, the glamping tents, we have good occupants in those in the last year and we are looking to build new opportunities into next year outside of the summer fire season.

MS LEE: And, because I think the report says that the WILDfest at Tidbinbilla, Wild Night Out, that was due to take place in Spring 2018 school holidays, which has now passed. Do you have any feedback from that?

Mr Walker: I guess that is the feedback I have just brought up.

MS LEE: That was the specific one, that one that you were talking about?—

Mr Walker: Yes.

MS LEE: Okay. And in terms—are you able to get those specific number as well on notice?

Mr Walker: Yes.

MS LEE: And in terms of the two properties, the Nil Desperandum and Ready-Cut Cottage, are they marketed throughout Australia or just internationally.

Mr Gentleman: They are on the EPSD website, which goes nationally and internationally, I suppose. But when we market, in advertising, I do not think we do. But we could learn from what we have been doing with WILDfest to see whether we could engage a different community. And also with our Visit Canberra people to see how they do that when they do their international communications, if you like.

MS LEE: Okay. Because I think it mentions also Air BNB. So I am just wondering whether—was that the first time that it was advertised on Air BNB? Yes. Okay. And so—you give us—did that go well? Was that successful?

Mr Walker: Yes. So, I guess, it was a trial to test whether products like Air BNB are useful in the context of a park manager. I guess the advantage of using tools, and Air BNB is a tool, is that it does have good market reach already. And we have been working with—centred around the nature-based tourism work and ensuring that we are partnering well across government to deliver nature-based tourism opportunities within the parks and reserves they stay.

So using Air BNB is a good example of innovative approaches to enable international reach as well as domestic reach for common product development. One of the opportunities to explore with Air BNB is a new product they are releasing called Air BNB experiences. So it is an opportunity to go from typically Air BNB scenario of a place to stay to actually a place to go and experience the environment.

So very much the focus of the work that the Parks and Conservation Service have done. And more broadly about the environment, the vision and EPSD, is about how we connect with more people, more diverse people, so that they can experience the environment that we have, so that they can value the environment we have and ultimately how they can care for the environment we have.

And the opportunity in ACT, because of such a, I guess a well-educated community, a large intact natural environment in the ACT, gives us the ability to really reach out to those sectors, and we spoke about volunteers, to really enhance the experience that is given within the parks environment.

MS LEE: And just, while you are taking the numbers of visitors on notice, are you able to provide, in those numbers, the breakdown of visitors that were from ACT and beyond ACT?

Mr Walker: Yes.

MINISTER GENTLEMAN: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

1. The increase in revenue for Nil Desperandum Cottage in Tidbinbilla and the Ready Cut Cottage at Namadgi was calculated by comparing the revenue collected in the 2017-18 financial year prior to the AirBNB trial commencing. A total of \$6,714 of revenue was collected prior to February 2018, with the remaining \$8,110 collected between February and June 2018 following the commencement of the use of AirBNB. An increase of 20%, not 120% as was incorrectly stated in the Annual Report.
2. The AirBNB trial was launched in February 2018 to run for a period of one year.
3. In relation to Wildfest, 79 adults and 66 Children participated in the experience held from 28 September to 13 October 2018.

4. The Wildfest organiser advised that approximately 80% of the participants were from the ACT and 20% were from interstate. Airbnb's privacy arrangements prevent the ACT Government from analysing the addresses of clients for Nil Desperandum in Tidbinbilla and Ready Cut Cottage at Namadgi.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services

Signature: 

Date: 26/11/18

By the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Mick Gentleman MLA