



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY
Ms Leanne Castley MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021 **ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE** **3 March 2022**

Asked by SUZANNE ORR MLA on 3 MARCH 2022: TARA CHEYNE MLA took on notice the following question(s):

Ref: Hansard Proof Transcript 3 March 2022, Page 130-131

In relation to:

MS ORR: Minister, I was interested to know—and this may be one for the officials—about the environmental studies. I have had a few people ask me how that process is undertaken and if there is anywhere where they can access information about what the studies have found and how the ongoing monitoring is being handled.

Ms Cheyne: I do have that information somewhere, Ms Orr. Wing, as was touched on before, does have an area of ongoing work where they engage regarding the impact on wildlife. You might remember there was quite a bit of media coverage—I believe it was in September last year—where Wing had received reports of birds swooping on drones during nesting season.

I believe that, at the time, Wing engaged with its ornithologist for some specialist advice. At the same time, it temporarily paused its flights around the impacted parts of Harrison so that the behaviour could be observed. I understand that once those chicks had fledged, there was deemed to be no further risk to the birds or the drones. So drone deliveries resumed in December 2021. There may be challenges again. I believe Dr Clapham might have some more information about environmental studies and work that is ongoing there generally.

Dr Clapham: To be honest, there is not a huge amount of extra information to add to what the minister has said. An element that was missing when we went through the recommendations before, I guess, was to acknowledge that there was a fauna study conducted in 2018 by Wing. They continue to build on that through their engagement of an ornithologist as a part of their standard operating procedure for operations and for expansion into new areas.

I guess there is some detail I can add to the impacts on local ravens in Harrison. In September 2021 they advised that they were receiving reports. They undertook an assessment with their ornithologist. They paused flights and re-routed drone flights around

those impacted parts of Harrison to allow the ornithologist to do that assessment and to ensure that there was no impact on that nesting raven. I am not sure if it was one raven or multiple; I assume it was one.

As you said, it resumed in December 2021, well after the raven chicks had fledged and it was deemed there was no further risk to the birds or to the drones. There is an anticipation that as we come into spring 2022, the same challenges may be faced. We continue to engage with Wing on their plans to assess those impacts and to manage them as we head into spring.

MS ORR: I would be particularly interested to know if you have any more information on the initial studies that go on. Obviously, there are ongoing studies in the areas where they are already operating, but in the areas that they are expanding to, what sorts of environmental studies have been undertaken prior to the commencement of services, and how is that monitored? What measures might be put in place if there are any disruptions such as the raven strikes we are well aware of?

Ms Cheyne: Sure, Ms Orr, we will take that on notice. We might just need to engage with Wing on that. Could I just go back to two questions that I kind of took on notice?

MS ORR: While you are taking that on notice, can I also get you to advise the best ways for members of the community to find out about those ongoing environmental studies.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, we can certainly do that, Ms Orr. Ms Castley, I note that the one direct representation—there has just been the one in this period of engagement from Wing with Kaleen and Giralang residents—has been negative. And to Mr Cain’s question about noise requirements, which sit under the commonwealth Air Navigation (Aircraft Noise) Regulations 2018, the federal department has advised us that Wing is compliant with all noise requirements.

TARA CHEYNE MLA: The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:–

The ACT Government has been advised by Wing that it conducted ornithological studies in Giralang and Kaleen prior to commencing operations in those suburbs and will continue to employ professional ornithological services to closely monitor for any impacts on birdlife in those suburbs and across its operating area. The ACT Government will continue to engage with Wing to understand any impacts on birdlife and fauna in Wing’s operating area.

In relation to access to environmental information, Wing has conducted a series of consultation sessions in the suburbs of Kaleen and Giralang, and with community council groups relevant to the expanded operating area. The ACT Government understands engagement will be ongoing and members of the community can pose questions, get information and discuss environmental matters at these consultation sessions. Members of the Legislative Assembly are also able to receive a briefing from Wing on the ornithological studies if desirable.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender Equality

Signature: 

Date: 18/3/22

By the Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Tara Cheyne MLA