



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Minister for City and Government Services

Redirected to: Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water

Reference: Environment 9:40am-10:40am Ms Cheyne, Minister for City and Government Services

Hearing: 14 February 2025

In relation to: Land Management and Conservation

Question received: 17 February 2025

Answer Due: 26 February 2025

- Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) were first established in 1997 - these are areas of country managed by First Nations groups in accordance with Traditional Owners' objectives. IPAs deliver biodiversity conservation outcomes for the benefit of all Australians, through voluntary agreements with the Australian Government.
 - 85 IPAs have been established with every other state and territory successfully establishing *multiple* Indigenous Protected Areas — why has the ACT not followed suit?
- Given the state of the Territory Budget, and given that the current phase of the IPA program includes federal funding of \$231.5 million from 2023 to 2028, do any plans exist to pursue the establishment of an IPA in the ACT?
- Has the government engaged in discussions with Traditional Custodians about the potential for an IPA? If so, what has been the outcome?
- Would the government support an IPA if Traditional Custodians proposed one? If so, what resources from within ACT Government would be made available to support the project?

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

No discussions have been held with ACT Traditional Custodians about the establishment of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) in the ACT.

Approximately 70 per cent of the ACT is already protected and managed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service pursuant to the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. The establishment of an IPA is a

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matter that would require careful consideration by the Traditional Custodians for the ACT and the government noting the complexities, capacity, and resourcing considerations.

The eligibility requirements for IPA funding include having an established Traditional Custodian First Nations entity to apply and take on responsibilities in the management of the identified protected area. Unlike other jurisdictions, there is no current native title rights held by the Traditional Custodians of the ACT for the lands and waters within the boundaries of the ACT.

The ACT Government will continue to support Traditional Custodians to maintain their engagement in environmental and land management to further develop community led delivery of land management in the ACT.

Notably, the ACT has established a Ngunnawal Works Crew Program, with the assistance of funding under the Australian Government's Regional Partnerships Program. The program has engaged a First Nations-owned business to employ four Ngunnawal participants to assist in the delivery of a range of biodiversity restoration projects. The program also aims to enhance the capacity of the Ngunnawal Community to care for Country through the provision of practical experience and a pathway for obtaining recognised qualifications.

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

Signature:

Date:

26/02/25

By the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Suzanne Orr MLA