



Katy Gallagher MLA

CHIEF MINISTER

MINISTER FOR HEALTH
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO



Mr Jeremy Hanson CSC MLA
Chair
Select Committee on Estimates
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Dear Mr Hanson

I am writing to you to follow-up a matter that arose during the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate appearance before the Select Committee on Estimates hearing on 25 June 2013.

At this hearing the Committee sought information about the operation of the Skywhale balloon.

Following questioning from Mr Smyth, Mr Jeremy Lasek of the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, provided some further information about one interstate balloon operator who was not contacted in relation to the operation of the Skywhale balloon.

During the hearing, Mr Lasek recalled an incident reported in the media where a balloon, piloted by this operator, had come down in Port Phillip Bay in Melbourne (see Attachment A). He suggested safety concerns may have been a factor in identifying which companies would be approached.

On checking the procurement process after the hearing, I can advise the Committee that this was not considered when identifying operators from which to request quotes.

I would like to confirm that all appropriate procurement regulations were followed in seeking an operator for the Skywhale balloon. Under the ACT Government procurement regulations there is a requirement to seek a minimum of three quotes for contracts under the value of \$200,000.

Yours sincerely

Katy Gallagher MLA
Chief Minister
16 JUL 2013

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CANBERRA

Hot-air balloon comes down in Port Phil

January 20, 2011

Thomas Hunter

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Splash landing: Balloon takes dip in bay

A hot-air balloon carrying 10 people has touched down in Port Phillip Bay.

Ten passengers and a pilot have been rescued from a hot-air balloon that came down in Port Phillip Bay.

The balloon landed on South Melbourne beach but a sea breeze dragged it out into the water.

As the basket filled with water, the pilot managed to lift the balloon off the water but it kept drifting into the bay.

The hot air balloon over Port Melbourne this morning.

Marine units and a police helicopter rushed to the scene after being alerted that the balloon was in trouble.



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As the balloon hovered over the bay, it was pulled down by the wind and landed in the water near the dinghies.



View photo

The passengers were transferred to a police launch and taken safely back to shore.

Police boarded the runaway balloon with its operator and carried it towards Point Gellibrand at Williamstown, Victoria Police spokeswoman said.

Passenger Wayne Owen told [radio 3AW](#) how the wind grabbed the balloon and dragged it out into the bay. "The breeze got a bit stronger or something and dragged us into the water," he said.

"It just kept taking us out into the bay. It got a bit dicey there at one stage because we thought we might be stuck there for good."

"The basket was filling with water. Then the balloonist managed to lift us off the water again but we kept bobbing up and down."

A line was thrown to the police boat which tried to drag the balloon ashore, a plan Mr Owen described as "a bit dicey".

"They sent out a couple more police rubber duckies and we offloaded from the basket into the boats," said.

Mr Owen said as the balloon was getting dragged towards a channel marker, the operator was forced to the marker.

"We were all sort of relying on the balloonist to look after us. Most of us were taking photos of the whole thing,"

"They sent out a couple more police rubber duckies and we offloaded from the basket into the boats," said.

Two police climbed into the basket with the balloon pilot in an attempt to refloat the device, but it continued to drift.

Mr Owen said his early-morning adventure would "certainly stick in the memory for quite a while".

Situation 'under control'

Damian Crock, director of Picture This Ballooning, said the situation was "all under control".

"This morning we did have an small issue ... We actually missed Albert Park. It was a very, very light breeze,"

Mr Crock said the situation had been "totally under control."

"The preference is to not get people's feet wet. Certainly it was an unusual situation and it was all about the wind,"

Mr Crock said the hot-air balloon did not carry life jackets because they were not a required part of the equipment.

Cyclist 'heard screams'

St Kilda resident Monica Callinan was riding her bicycle to work along Beaconsfield Parade with her two children when she saw the balloon descend and narrowly avoid hitting cars parked in the street.

"We were kind of saying, 'I wonder where they're going to land?' and then this one kept drifting over the beach,"

"It landed really hard on the beach, and I mean with a thud, and then it bounced into the water.

"It kind of tipped, so I think they got some water in then, and the girls were kind of screaming a little bit. I would think that if they were panicked they would have jumped out."

She said she saw the balloon's gas flame light up regularly, resulting in the balloon skipping across the beach.

"The whole time we were watching and it would go up, at one time it went up pretty high and all the while the balloonist was shouting," Callinan said.

"It didn't look very fun. I've always wanted to go, but now I don't think I do."

She said there were about six balloons over the beach area this morning, which was unusual.

One of the balloons landed safely on a bluff on a beach not far away, she said.

Difficult weather conditions

Bureau of Meteorology duty forecaster Geoff Feren said there were very light, variable winds over Port Phillip Bay that made it difficult to steer the hot-air balloon.

"The winds were generally no more than about five knots and variable," he said.

"know it's not the easiest situation to be steering when you've got no clear current. The winds are just conditions. They obviously don't want a lot of wind, but no wind is not ideal either."

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