



Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023 ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Ed Cocks MLA on 17 November 2023: Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA took on notice the following question(s):

Reference: Hansard [uncorrected] proof transcript 17 November 2023, page 7

In relation to: Wombats in Denman Prospect

MR COCKS: If it is a yes that is fine, because I want to get onto kind of the meat of the question which is, have there been any ACT government activities reported to damage wombat burrows?

Ms Vassarotti: In terms of the impact on wombat burrows, that is something—or wombats, I would have to take that on notice in terms of the—so, you know, in terms of the role of the conservator, to the conservator has responsibilities around under the Nature Conservation Act in terms of the protection of wildlife, so if there were breaches the conservator would be notified.

Mr Burkevics: Thanks, minister. Mr Cocks, if my memory serves me correct, it was actually indeed this committee last year that brought to our attention some impacts on wombat burrows in areas that were part of suburban development, and as we have discussed since then, we responded quickly to those reports and had a look at what was going on. Any development that is causing, or impact that is causing whether government or not, that is causing an impact to native wildlife that may be contrary to the act or guidelines needs to be reviewed and investigated.

I think as a result of those reports last year we are actually on a really good pathway to developing stronger avoidance frameworks and relationships and actions that will mitigate the risk. I would never say that you can—a bit like crime, you can ever completely eliminate the risk. The risk is always going to be there, but with good frameworks, with good legislation, with good relationships we hope we can mitigate that risk as far as possible.

MR COCKS: The question was specifically about ACT government activities and whether you have any records or reports of damage from those. If you do not have the information there, I am happy for you to take it on notice.

Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

A report of damage to wombat burrows from ACT Government activities was received by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in late 2022.

In September 2022, two disused wombat burrows were partially filled in as part of track maintenance works undertaken by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) at the Casuarina Sands Recreation area. Prior to the works PCS staff undertook checks to make sure animals were not actively using the burrows. This included checking for fresh scats, footprints and diggings, and checks for the depth of burrows which is an indicator of nesting/sleeping chambers.

A few weeks later there were allegations from a member of the public that this action resulted in the deaths of wombats. The PCS District Manager met with the concerned individual and representatives from ACT Wildlife and Wombat Rescue on site. There was no evidence to support the allegations and both organisations were satisfied with the communications provided by EPSDD.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Signature: 

Date: 22/11/2023

By the Minister for the Environment, Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA