



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QTON No. 23

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
MARISA PATERSON MLA (CHAIR), ANDREW BRADDOCK MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), LEANNE CASTLEY MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
4 March 2021

Asked by MS LAWDER:

In relation to: Funding of Waterwatch program

MS LAWDER: Thank you. And do you have any information on how each body of water—each lake compares—which are the worst or best? How—do you look at it in that way? The number of days closed, or the level of the algae and bacteria, that sort of thing?

Mr Walker: Yes, certainly. So we have a number of criteria we use in assessing lakes. So one is about the recreational use of lakes. So when we have people accessing lakes to paddle, swim, do those sorts of things, there is a monitoring program in place for those lakes. And that is reported on through the websites, both Health and Transport City Services, because they are the bodies entities that are responsible for those particular lakes.

So that water quality monitoring in that case, is done through those websites. And that information is available publicly, routinely, which includes opening and closing those sorts of things. So that is reported on frequently during the course of the year.

The other activity that is undertaken is in relation to our Catchment Health Indicator Program. And our Catchment Health Indicator Program is a citizen science-based program. And it is referred to as Water Watch. And it produces an annual report, that I have in my hand. The Catchment—

MS LAWDER: Here is one we prepared earlier.

Mr Walker: Here is one I prepared earlier.

This Catchment Health Indicator Program, reports were released every year. It is made up of over 232 sites where citizen science take water samples. It includes water quality surveys, across 1800 sites, some 184 water invertebrate samples, and some 219 riparian condition reports. With over 200 volunteers delivering that program of work.

That report gives us the best indication of health of our waterways and reaches. And within that report it clearly defines the good, bad, or otherwise, associated with each of our reaches or those 232 sites. So it provides the foundation of our program of work associated with the various health waterways projects I described earlier.



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That is also being built on with particular additional assessment of which sites would give us the best result if we were able to deploy a gross pollutant trap or other means. And that was part of the work that was presented at the start of the Health Waterways Program to government. And there was a list of prioritised sites across those—across the catchments where the best outcomes could be achieved.

MS LAWDER: How much does the ACT government fund—provide funding to waterways?

Mr Walker: I will take the exact amount upon notice, Ms Lawder. The Catchment and Healthy Waterways Program and the Waterwatch Program is now funded ongoing. So we have been able to secure ongoing investment from the ACT government to ensure this Waterwatch program continues in an ongoing capacity. And we received that last year.

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

The Waterwatch program receives ongoing funding of \$465,000 a year from the ACT Government. This funds the three community Catchment Groups that partner with ACT Government to implement the program, including training volunteers to collect water quality data. The annual report of the Catchment Health Improvement Program represents the outputs of this work across the Territory.

Additional water quality and streamflow monitoring undertaken by ACT Government (TCCS and EPSDD) costs \$500,000 per annum.

In terms of capital works, ACT Healthy Waterways was a \$95M program, delivering new water quality assets across the Territory. This has been supplemented with \$1.0M in December 2019, and an additional \$1.5M in February 2021.

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

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Shane Rattenbury', written over a horizontal line.

Date:

16/3/21

By the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction, Shane Rattenbury MLA