



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Asked by Dr Marisa Paterson MLA on 2 September 2022: Ms Yvette Berry MLA took on notice the following question(s):

Ref: Hansard Transcript 2 September 2022 Page 1232

In relation to: Wombats in Molonglo

DR PATERSON: And so has any wombats been located in the Molonglo Valley through any of the suburbs that have developed there?

Mr Tennent: I can only speak for Whitlam only because that coincides with my time in the role. There were not any wombat burrows in Whitlam. There are some wombat burrows in the Molonglo Group Centre as well Coombes Furniture. So, we do know where they are and we do know, and very carefully with our Parks and Conservation colleagues, to know exactly where the wildlife is prior to us getting onsite.

Ms Berry: I might just add to that, and I understand there is concern from the group Wombat Rescue about the possibility that there may have been wombats living on that site prior to its development. I have not been aware of that but, as I said, the Suburban Land Agency and the contractors do check very carefully to ensure that there is no, you know, that if wildlife is found is found that they are relocated.

Nobody wants to see wildlife being injured or dying as a result of development. We know that development does impact on the environment, and I guess that is that kind of conflict that we have to try and manage in making sure that we have homes for people but also making sure that we retain as much as we can of our environmental and culturally significant places across the city. I might take part of that question on notice, Mr Tennent, just to see if we can have clearer information. If it is not us, then it is another directorate, around where wombats are living, and, if we know about them, what we are doing to manage their cohabitation with humans.

Ms Yvette Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

New development assessment

Various stages of Denman Prospect within the Molonglo Valley have been and are currently being considered under the Impact Track. An impact track development application (DA) is required if the development triggers schedule 4 of the *Planning and Development Act 2007*. Triggers include matters such as impacts on certain threatened or endangered species and when there is likely to be an impact on native vegetation.

As part of the impact track, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or EIS exemption is required to address the triggers. Any other impacted known native species, such as impacts on wombats, are also considered as part of the DA assessment process.

Officers from EPSDD and the Office of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna work closely with developers during the assessment and pre-construction phase in identifying what types of wildlife may be present on site and may be impacted by development activities. Actions to mitigate any impacts are captured in either the Construction Environmental Management Plans or as conditions in the EIS or DA approvals. These controls provide for the balance required between development and protection of our native species.

During construction

During the assessment process, consideration is given to loss of fauna, including wombats, from vehicle strikes and appropriate mitigation measures are adopted to reduce the impacts. Mitigation measures can include design features such as barriers, wildlife fencing, fauna crossings, and additional signage.

Usually, these mitigation measures are monitored for a period during the construction and operational stages to ensure they are effective, and that appropriate protection is given to local fauna.

Ongoing Engagement:

In 2021, a joint community and government wombat sighting portal was launched on the ACT's Environment website to better assess wombat locations and health conditions via EPSDD's website.

The portal allows for community input on wombat sightings which can include information on habitat or injured wildlife. This assists ACT Wildlife and Wombat Rescue to map wombat populations and distribution in the ACT. The portal is monitored, and investigations are reported on regularly by volunteers from Wombat Rescue and ACT Wildlife carer groups.

There has been funding put aside within an Environmental Grant for the development of an ACT wombat management strategy in 2023, which will aim to maintain healthy and sustainable populations of wombats as part of our native and iconic biodiversity of this region. This strategy will address key issues of wombat mangle and of human-wildlife conflict involving wombats.

A Wombat Stakeholder Working Group is planned to be convened in 2023, which will include internal government staff, community groups, external researchers, rural leaseholders and Ngunnawal representatives. This group will help inform the development of the ACT wombat management strategy and will work collaboratively to ensure stakeholders interests are considered while conserving viable populations of wombats as part of our native biodiversity.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023

Signature:



Date:

12/09/22

By the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Ms Yvette Berry MLA

