

Suzanne Orr MLA

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water
Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services
Minister for Seniors and Veterans

Member for Yerrabi

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No 3****7 March 2025****Question No. 168**

MR CAIN MLA - To ask the Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water:

- (1) Why is there no government-supported snake management service, despite the crucial role of native species like the eastern brown snake in Canberra's ecosystem.
- (2) Has the Government employed or trained rangers in snake management to protect both Canberrans and native wildlife; if not, why not.
- (3) Has a service been established, if public safety is a concern, for the Government to respond to snake encounters, given the clear demand and conservation implications; if not, why not.
- (4) How does the Government justify the lack of action when rates are collected to provide such essential services.
- (5) Does the Government run a public education program to equip residents with the knowledge to handle snake encounters safely and in an environmentally responsible manner.
- (6) Why is there no formal guidance on managing interactions with native snakes, considering its significance for both public safety and conservation.
- (7) What is the role of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in relation to the snake catching program, and who provides advice to ensure informed decisions on these matters, e.g., the Conservator or somebody else.

MINISTER ORR MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) Snake catching services were transitioned from a Government provided service to the private sector in around 2015. This was at the request of local businesses that wanted to undertake

the function as a fee for service arrangement. In 2015, the first private snake catching licences were granted and it has been undertaken by local businesses since then.

The Government recognises the importance of protecting venomous snakes in the ACT under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* and that snakes have an important role in ACT's ecosystem.

- (2) The Government has trained rangers that can handle venomous snakes if required in specific and/or time critical circumstances. However, most requests for snake relocations are referred to the businesses that are licenced to undertake this service. There are five snake catching businesses that currently undertake the role in the ACT. Between those five businesses, there are 17 licenced snake catchers in total.

It is critical for safety of both the animals and people that only those who are appropriately trained or licenced undertake the role of snake relocation. It is an offence for a member of the public to kill or interfere with a venomous snake without a licence.

- (3) Refer question 2.
- (4) As snake relocation is being done by local businesses, there are no plans by the Government to undertake this activity.
- (5) The ACT Government runs seasonal social media campaigns relating to snake safety in the ACT. The Government provides information about snakes online, including what you should do when you encounter a venomous snake, the contact details of licensed snake catchers as well as general information about our local snakes.

The ACT Government has awarded environmental grants in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 period totalling \$70 000 relating to "living with wildlife studies". Information on past projects can be found online at <https://www.act.gov.au/money-and-tax/grants-funding-and-incentives/funding-to-help-protect-enhance-and-promote-the-local-environment>.

Initial outcomes of these studies are showing further evidence that it is not in the snakes best interests to be relocated far from their home range. Education is the priority about what to do when you see a snake instead of having it moved unnecessarily in some circumstances. Living in the Bush Capital means that snakes are a common sighting and the information is provided on living with our wildlife with a healthy respect and awareness is vital for the animals welfare and human safety.

- (6) Formal guidance on what to do if you encounter a snake is available online at <https://www.act.gov.au/environment/animals-and-plants/animals/wildlife-management/snakes>
- (7) The Conservator of Flora and Fauna (Conservator) is the statutory decision maker under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* about matters involving licences and programs for all native animals in the ACT, including venomous snakes. The Conservator makes decisions about the keeping of snakes according to the *Nature Conservation (Licensing Related to Non-exempt Animals) Conservator Guidelines 2024* (Guidelines). These Guidelines were updated in 2024 following feedback.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.

Suzanne Orr MLA

Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water

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