

CULLING OF RAVENS, MOSMAN PARK

6090. Hon Giz Watson to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to the issuing of a licence to cull ravens in the Town of Mosman Park, and I ask —

- (1) What advice was provided by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to the Town of Mosman Park with regards to culling ravens?
- (2) On what date or dates was that advice given?
- (3) Was that advice oral or written, and to whom was it provided?
- (4) What evidence was provided to the Town of Mosman Park to justify culling of ravens?
- (5) What information was provided to the Town of Mosman Park indicating that a licence could be (or has been) issued?
- (6) Was a written report provided by the DEC to the Town of Mosman Park or any other party on the possible culling of ravens in the Town of Mosman Park?
- (7) If yes to (6), please provide a copy of the report.
- (8) What field assessment did the staff of the DEC conduct to evaluate the numbers of ravens in the Town of Mosman Park and/or the Western suburbs more generally?
- (9) If an assessment was carried out, what methodology was used by the DEC for that assessment, including —
 - (a) how many times did the Department visit the area;
 - (b) how long;
 - (c) how was the data analysed;
 - (d) which staff visited the area, when and what were their qualifications;
 - (e) can the DEC provide the report that resulted from that assessment;
 - (f) how did the DEC come to the conclusion that numbers of ravens in Town of Mosman Park were higher than average; and
 - (g) which area did the DEC use as ‘control’ in comparing the raven numbers in the Town of Mosman Park with the general raven population?
- (10) If no field assessment was carried out, on what basis did the DEC suggest that raven numbers were high and that culling was required?
- (11) Was a field assessment carried out by the DEC on the alleged nuisance that the ravens are claimed to cause to residents of the Town of Mosman Park with regard to, —
 - (a) noise; and
 - (b) spreading of rubbish?
- (12) Has the DEC demonstrated the likely effectiveness of shooting ravens to control their population and that culling ravens will significantly and lastingly reduce the raven population?
- (13) Before considering the issuing of a licence to the Town of Mosman Park for the shooting of ravens, did the DEC take into consideration alternative options including, —
 - (a) non-lethal means of controlling the raven population;
 - (b) if yes to (a), which ones and why weren’t these methods adopted in preference to the killing of native birds; and
 - (c) damage mitigation by requiring that the Town of Mosman Park implement a policy of, —
 - (i) emptying public bins more often so they do not overflow;
 - (ii) enclosing rubbish into containers not accessible to ravens;
 - (iii) requiring that ratepayers do not overfill their bins; and
 - (iv) other means?
- (14) Did the DEC take into consideration the risks to public safety of the shooting operations in public ‘A-Class’ reserves, ie. that members of the public could be injured or killed by stray bullets?
- (15) Has the DEC submitted its proposal to shoot ravens to an ethics committee independent from the Department for assessment?

- (16) Has the DEC received other requests to issue a license to cull ravens by other Local Government authorities in the Perth Metropolitan Region?
- (17) If yes to (16), which ones?
- (18) Did the DEC consult with the local Nyungah people before making a decision?
- (19) If yes to (18), how were the views of the Nyungah people taken into account in the decision?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1) The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) advised the Town of Mosman Park that:
- (i) ravens are protected fauna and culling them may only be conducted under licence issued by DEC;
 - (ii) approved culling methods include shooting and trapping and exclude the use of drugs and poison;
 - (iii) a licence would only be considered after non-lethal control measures have been taken, including ratepayer education on ways to reduce available food sources;
 - (iv) culling is considered as a short-term solution to gain some control over numbers;
- (2) Advice was given to representatives from the Town of Mosman Park and to ratepayers on the following dates:
- 21 August 2006 — DEC met with the Town of Mosman Park Manager Environmental Health Services on site. Also met with Deputy CEO and provided fauna notes, which contain information on controlling ravens.
 - DEC met with ratepayers complaining of raven noise and health issues on 16th October 2006, 23 November 2006, 14 December 2007 and 20 December 2007.
 - During 2007 DEC also responded to various emails and telephone calls to the Town of Mosman Park staff and Ratepayers.
 - DEC received the proposed control plan from Town of Mosman Park on 25 January 2007 and responded in writing on the 6th March 2007 seeking modifications.
 - 10 March 2008 — following phone liaison with DEC, Town of Mosman Park applied for a licence to take ravens utilising an approved control method
- (3) Both oral and written advice were provided to several ratepayers, the Town of Mosman Park Manager Environmental Health Services and the CEO and Deputy CEO. Information on prevention and control of damage caused by ravens is also available on DEC's website and copies were provided.
- (4) The Town of Mosman Park justified culling to DEC by demonstrating the level of ratepayer concerns, the damage and the high raven population, and that they had carried out the required local education campaign.
- (5) The Town of Mosman Park was advised in writing in 2007 that an application to take ravens either by trapping or shooting would be supported, subject to completion of a ratepayer education program about waste management. A licence was issued to take ravens on 28 March 2008.
- (6) No.
- (7) Not applicable.
- (8) DEC conducted field investigations in response to complaints of ravens distributing rubbish, causing a health risk and causing noise on numerous occasions. The high number of ravens in the western suburbs, including the Town of Mosman Park, is also well known from local observations conducted by DEC wildlife officers and its Principal Zoologist in the metropolitan area and country areas over many years. These observations are supported by Johnstone and Storr in their 2004 WA Museum publication "Handbook of Western Australian Birds, Volume II Passerines" in which they say that raven numbers have greatly increased in numbers and breeding in Perth and suburbs since the 1960s.
- A 1997 research paper titled "Some aspects of the ecology of an urban corvid: the Australian raven (*Corvus coronoides*) in metropolitan Perth" by P.J. Stewart found that raven numbers in the Perth metropolitan area had increased significantly since 1977. Birds were found in higher densities in older suburbs that had high numbers of tall trees. He found that increased availability of food sources is ultimately the cause of the increased raven population.

- (9) (a)-(g) See the answer to (8).
- (10) See the answer to (8).
- (11) (a)-(b) Yes. DEC conducted field investigations in response to complaints of ravens distributing rubbish, causing a health risk and causing noise on numerous occasions.
- (12) Shooting and trapping ravens has been demonstrated to be an effective means of reducing the raven population in the short-term. Long-term management of ravens requires a focus on local control of their access to food.
- (13) (a)-(c) Yes. DEC declined to issue a licence to cull ravens until non-lethal control measures had been tried. The Town of Mosman Park was provided written and verbal information on non-lethal control methods. The Town implemented a three-month ratepayer education program which sought to ensure that all bins were closed and were not overflowing.
- After the implementation of waste control measures, high raven numbers can persist for some time resulting in ongoing damage and nuisance. Culling ravens is a short-term measure to reduce the population quickly to more manageable numbers and reduce the impact they have.
- (14) Public safety is paramount to DEC. An experienced and competent animal control group is authorised under this licence to conduct the shooting, which is undertaken using road signs, marked safety vests and appropriate firearms. Police are notified prior to any shooting. Under these circumstances the operation is considered to be safe for the community.
- (15) No. Shooting as a means of destroying animals is humane and is an accepted control method when conducted by appropriately skilled operators using the appropriate calibre firearm to render an instantaneous death. Referral of such activities to an external or internal Animal Ethics Committee is not required or necessary.
- (16) Yes.
- (17) The Town of Peppermint Grove, City of South Perth, City of Joondalup and City of Nedlands.
- (18)-(19) DEC determined that no such consultation would be necessary given its legal responsibilities for managing wildlife under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950.