LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE

# AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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# NOTICE OF MOTION

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Dr Marisa Paterson MLA: I give notice that I shall move - That this Assembly:

1. Notes that:
   1. The ACT has an abundance of native wildlife, this includes eight different species of snakes of which five are regarded venomous to humans.
   2. Snakes are important in maintaining a healthy biodiversity in maintaining our environment. Snakes are important to our ecosystem in Canberra, where along with other reptiles, they make up a significant proportion of the middle-order predators that keep natural ecosystems working. Without them, the numbers of prey species would increase to unnatural levels and the predators that eat snakes would struggle to find food.
   3. Snakes are protected under the Nature Conservation Act 2014, and it is an offence to kill, injure or take snakes from the wild.
   4. In the ACT, snakes are most active from September to April when they sun themselves or when they move in search of food or water. Sometimes in their pursuit of food or water, they can enter suburban gardens and houses.
   5. Snakes are stigmatised in the community, which means many people are fearful of them and they are prone to being injured or attacked by people when contact occurs.
   6. Education is an important part of ensuring the community can safely live alongside snakes, something that we will increasingly need to do as our urban environment encroaches on their natural habitats.
   7. In the ACT there are four licensed snake catchers ACT Snake Removals, Canberra Snake Catcher and Reptile Removals, Canberra Reptile Zoo, and Canberra Snake Rescue and Relocation.
   8. These licensed operators respond to calls from the community to safely remove snakes from people’s homes and businesses and release them back into the wild if they are not injured.
   9. Under current regulations if a snake is injured, licensed snake catchers are only allowed to keep them for veterinary care and treatment for 48-hours. When a snake requires further care, this means that the snakes have to then be moved to a veterinary clinic or euthanised. This puts extra unnecessary pressure on veterinary clinics, when a licensed and trained snake catcher could continue care through to release.
   10. The licensed snake catchers also run programs in the community to educate about snake behaviour and reduce fear of snakes. Currently in the ACT the Canberra Reptile Zoo and the National Zoo and Aquarium are the only places where venomous snakes can be kept which presents a range of challenges for snake handling and education.
2. Calls on the ACT Government to:
   1. Explore the possibility of extending the 48-hr window that licensed snake catchers can care for an injured snake that has been caught for as long as they need veterinary supervision.
   2. Explore the potential for allowing licensed snake catchers to register ownership of venomous snakes for education purposes, in line with other jurisdictions
   3. Support snake education programs run in the ACT, including education programs for new migrants and refugees that experience heightened fear from snakes
   4. Report back to this Assembly by 30 November 2023.



Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

28 March 2023