

Deb Foskey MLA

Member for Molonglo
Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory
GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601 Australia
Phone 61 (02) 6205 0161 Fax 6205 0007
www.debfoskey.com



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Politics costing endangered species

ACT Greens MLA Deb Foskey today expressed her deep concern that the politics of the issue of the kangaroos on the Lawson Defence site has overtaken good science.

"Let's go back to first base: In May last year we were told that as a matter of urgency, the captive kangaroos reproduced beyond sustainable numbers, threatening an endangered grassland and its dependent species," said Dr Foskey today.

"That was an election year, so the decision was deferred, worsening the situation for kangaroos, grasslands and the endangered species."

"So the situation this year is even more urgent."

"These are difficult issues, but they cannot be shirked. It seems to me that Defence is putting off the hard decisions that a responsible land manager must make."

"And the apparent refusal of the Chief Minister to contact his federal colleague to put the ACT's case is unhelpful, to say the least."

"The primary concern must be protection of the grasslands and the endangered species because nothing returns from extinction."

"The endangered species at Lawson apparently don't have the emotional pulling power of the fortunately abundant Eastern Grey kangaroo, but they are part of the ecological fabric."

"While a research project looking at the ecological and animal welfare consequences of translocation of kangaroos from Lawson would be useful if this horrendous situation arises again, funding for the project must not come at the expense of protecting endangered species on Defence land."

"When the Commissioner for the Environment's report first appeared, I commented on the paucity of information behind her dismissal of the translocation option. That lack of scientific rigour has come back to bite the ACT Government."

"Since then I have sought detailed information about the impacts of translocation and have been surprised that there is no systematic scientific data."

"All the evidence to date suggests that it is not a humane or effective solution to the problem, although Defence apparently finds it politically expedient."

"If it is to go ahead, I urge Defence to restrict the scientific translocation exercise to about 100 animals and proceed with the cull immediately in order to protect the grasslands. The research must be pursued with scientific rigour and documented, because if Defence continues to manage its land so poorly, it will be faced with the same situation again - perhaps at Majura in the very near future" said Dr Foskey.

MEDIA CONTACT Roland Manderson 62050551 or 0412241379

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