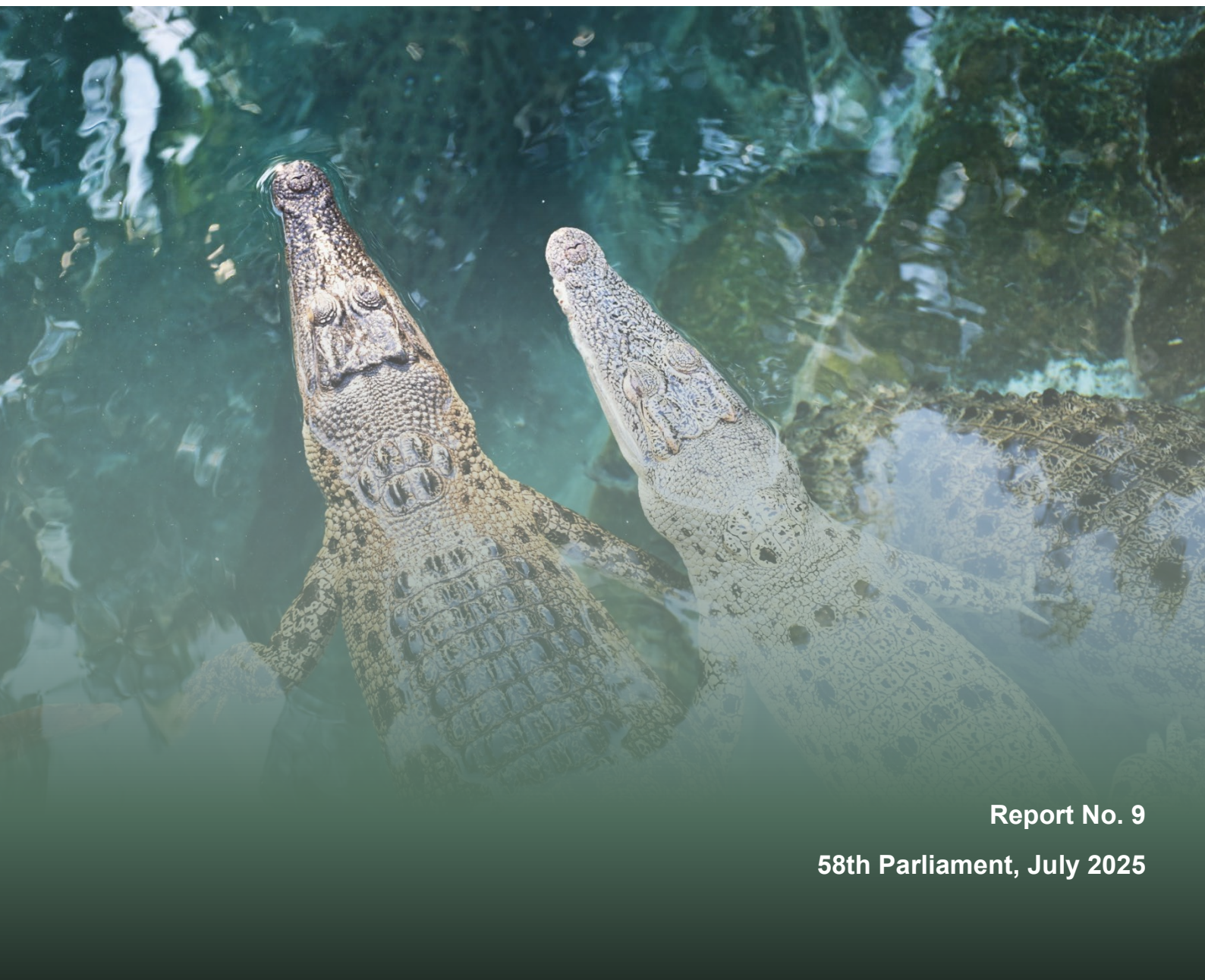




QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT **COMMITTEES**

Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025

Health, Environment and Innovation Committee



Report No. 9

58th Parliament, July 2025

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Health, Environment and Innovation Committee

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The committee also acknowledges and thanks Mr Marc Harbrow for providing a Welcome to Country at the committee's proceedings in Cairns. The committee acknowledges and thanks those Traditional Owners who appeared at its hearings in Cairns and in Brisbane, and who took the time to submit to the inquiry. The committee appreciates your time and effort to share culture and country.

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Chair’s Foreword

This report presents a summary of the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee’s examination of the Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025.

The committee’s task was to consider the policy to be achieved by the legislation and the application of fundamental legislative principles – that is, to consider whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, and to the institution of Parliament. The committee also examined the Bill for compatibility with human rights in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

Each year, more Australians are injured or killed by everyday incidents like accidental falls, choking, drowning or homicide than by crocodiles. Data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics in relation to deaths in Australia in 2023 illustrates the rarity of deaths from crocodiles:

Cause	Number of Deaths in Australia (2023) ¹
Accidental Fall	4105
Choking	1427
Drowning	204
Homicide	236
Dogs	6
Sharks	5
Snakes	2
Saltwater Crocodiles	1

When compared against instances of other animal related deaths, crocodile attacks are exceedingly rare. For example, mosquitos are considered the deadliest animal in the world, causing around 725,000 deaths per year through the carriage of disease.

While crocodile encounters often attract significant media attention, they represent a fraction of the overall risk profile for those who live in or visit North Queensland. In 2020, there were 7 recorded human-shark conflicts in Queensland, resulting in 3 fatalities. In that same year, there were 2 recorded human-crocodile conflicts resulting in injury in Queensland, with no fatalities.

Simon Booth from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service aptly noted that even if we were to remove every crocodile from Queensland’s waterways, we would still need to deal with ongoing risks posed by animals migrating from neighbouring jurisdictions, through the Torres Strait, from Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Northern Territory. He stated:

Even if you left a handful of crocodiles or a small percentage there, at no point would we be suggesting or recommending people enter the water to swim. It is crocodile habitat. Crocodiles can move into areas undetected. They are very good at being ambush predators. I do not think there is a point at which the state

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Causes of Death, Australia, 2023’ (Dataset, 2024) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#data-downloads>>. See also, Submission 60.

could say a waterway is safe. If people chose to swim in crocodile habitat, that would be on them.²

To that end, the notion of creating ‘crocodile-free zones’ is neither practical nor sustainable. As representatives from C.R.O.C. Queensland and conservationists such as Bob Irwin Sr stated, *“You’re never going to be able to say it’s absolutely safe to swim anyway.”*

Short of building a biosecurity fence around the state borders and down the coastline of the Great Barrier Reef, which Charlie Manolis—Co-Chair of the International Union on the Conservation of Nature’s Specialist Crocodile Committee—remarked would be the only way to guarantee the absence of crocodiles, we must instead focus on living smarter with nature, not pretending we can eliminate its risks entirely:

If you want to make waterways safe in Queensland, it is simple: you have to make crocodiles extinct entirely — remove every single one of them — and then put a fence up between the Northern Territory and Queensland, to stop them swimming across, put up another fence between Papua New Guinea and us to stop them coming down, and then you will be able to guarantee safety.³

The Bill implies that there are insufficient frontline staff in the regions to address the issue, but in reality, the vast majority of frontline staff are already stationed in regional Queensland, where crocodile management is most needed.

Similar legislation with nearly identical policy objectives was introduced to the Parliament in 2018. At that time, the responsible committee commented on the need for improvements to crocodile management through enhanced scientific research, expanded public education, and stronger community engagement.

The Bill raises questions about consistency with existing Commonwealth legislation, particularly the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth), which implements Australia’s obligations under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Any legislative framework that permits the taking of crocodiles from the wild, whether for destruction or harvest, must align with an approved Wildlife Trade Management Plan under federal law. Without such alignment, the Bill presents a risk of constitutional inconsistency and potential invalidity under section 109 of the *Australian Constitution*, which provides that Commonwealth law prevails over incompatible State law.

On behalf of the committee, I extend my thanks to the individuals and organisations who made written submissions on the Bill. I also thank the Parliamentary Service staff and departmental officers who supported the inquiry process. In particular, I want to place on record my sincere gratitude to Dr Jodhi Rutherford and Alana Bonenfant from the committee secretariat who diligently and efficiently ensured the committee were well - briefed on the issues and assisted with the writing of this comprehensive report.

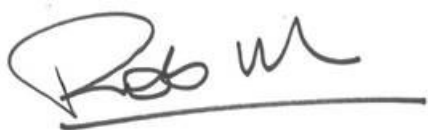
² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 14.

The committee acknowledges community concern, especially in high-traffic areas where crocodile sightings are increasing. However, the answer is not blanket removals or the imposition of widespread lethal controls. Instead, the committee supports a more balanced approach: improved public education, faster and better coordinated management responses, and continued investment in awareness campaigns and risk mitigation strategies that reflect the actual data and science.

Throughout this inquiry, many submitters told the committee that fundamentally Queensland does not have a crocodile problem; Queensland has a people problem.

I commend this report to the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob M', with a horizontal line underneath.

Rob Molhoek MP

Chair

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Executive Summary

The Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill (Bill) was introduced by Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill, on 19 February 2025 and was referred to the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee (the committee) for examination and report by 20 August 2025.

The Bill proposes an overhaul of the crocodile management framework in Queensland, with the primary objective of the Bill being to lower the risk of encountering a crocodile in North Queensland back down to an ‘acceptable risk’. The Member for Hill has publicly asserted that Queensland’s crocodile population is out of control, that fatal human-crocodile conflict is increasing, and that the current crocodile management framework is broken.⁴ It is said that North Queenslanders are suffering as a result and are calling for crocodiles to be removed from ‘populated waterways’.

This is the fifth time that the Member for Hill has introduced a Bill to address crocodile management in Queensland since 2017. The contents of each of the Bills have been largely the same, bar some renumbering of clauses and adjustments to the proposed membership of oversight bodies.

The Safer Waterways Bill 2018 was considered in detail by the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee (ITDEC), who produced a 78-page report in September 2018 and recommended that the Bill not be passed.

The committee, in its consideration of the Bill, has reached the same conclusion.

Recommendation 1 of this report is that the Bill not be passed.

In putting forward this fifth version of the Bill, there has been inadequate consideration of the significant work and research undertaken since the first version of the Bill was introduced. In 2018, when ITDEC tabled their report, the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan (QCMP) was in its infancy. It has now been operating for approximately 8 years and was the subject of an independent review in 2021. That review, authored by the Queensland Chief Scientist and a panel of experts in crocodilian behaviour and management, found the QCMP ‘was world-class, fit for purpose and highly effective in reducing the risks to public safety while conserving crocodile populations in the wild’.⁵ It also made 22 recommendations to improve Queensland’s crocodile management framework, including the QCMP, and accompanying education, and research and monitoring programs. Those recommendations were supported by government and have been implemented,⁶ with a number of recommendations forming ongoing processes in Queensland’s Crocodile Management.

The QCMP is also currently under review by the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) and the committee understands that the Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation (Minister) has

⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, First Session of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament - 19 February 2025*, p 134.

⁵ Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist, *Findings from an Independent Evaluation of the Queensland Estuarine Crocodile Management Program* (Report, 2021).

⁶ Department of Environment and Science, *Response to the Independent Evaluation of the Queensland Estuarine Crocodile Management Plan* (Report, July 2022) (DES 2022 Response).

undertaken roundtable consultation sessions with a range of stakeholders concurrently to this inquiry.

In considering the Bill, the committee consulted broadly and sought to understand the unique challenges faced by those living in, and visiting, Croc Country. The committee heard from North Queenslanders, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Traditional Owners, tourism operators, crocodile farmers (commercial operators), academics, conservationists and other members of the community.

It is beyond question that crocodiles are dangerous and do pose a threat to those living in and around known crocodile habitats. This is particularly given crocodile population recovery over the last 50 years, following the commercial extinction of saltwater crocodiles in the 1970's after culling and commercial hunting in the decades prior. Presumably, the 'good old days', when the risk posed by crocodiles to members of the public was considered 'an acceptable risk',⁷ refers to a time when crocodiles were almost extinct, and when public education surrounding the risk posed by crocodiles was negligible when compared with today's standards.

It is not possible, nor desirable, to return to such a time. The committee agrees that public safety should always be a paramount consideration but ultimately concluded that no amount of culling or management will ever fully erase the danger posed by crocodiles. The public must always be alert to the risks posed by crocodiles, which are inherent to Croc Country, and this is best achieved through education and current management practices. The futility of culling as a means of protecting the public was captured by a comment made at the public hearing on 11 June 2025 by leading crocodile expert, Charlie Manolis, who told the committee:

If you want to make waterways safe in Queensland, it is simple: you have to make crocodiles extinct entirely — remove every single one of them — and then put up a fence between the Northern Territory and Queensland to stop them swimming across, put up another fence between Papua New Guinea and us to stop them coming down, and then you will be able to guarantee safety.⁸

The measures proposed in the Bill do not, in the opinion of the committee, address the risks posed by crocodiles, nor economic opportunities relating to crocodile farming and egg-harvesting, in a manner that considers the complex legal and regulatory frameworks associated with crocodile management at a State, Commonwealth and International level, which Queensland is required to comply with.

Recommendations

The committee made 8 recommendations, found at page xiii of this report.

The committee's first recommendation, that the Bill should not be passed, finds support from a majority of submitters to this inquiry. The committee accepted 190 written submissions to the Bill and conducted public hearings and briefings in Cairns and

⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 11.

⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 14.

Brisbane. The committee was briefed by the Member for Hill, and DETSI, including members of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's crocodile management team (QPWS).

The evidence provided to the committee refutes the underlying premise of the Bill. In stark contrast to the public statements made by the Member for Hill, the committee heard that Queensland's crocodile population is relatively stable. Also, the evidence refutes any suggestion of an increase in fatal human-crocodile conflict, with the average rate remaining steady at 0.4 fatalities per year over the last 40 years. Further, in recent years, where fatal human-crocodile conflict has occurred, there is evidence that in some cases human recklessness has contributed to fatalities. The evidence received by the committee regarding Queensland's 'crocodile problem' is addressed in section 2 of this report.

In addition to Recommendation 1, the committee has made a number of comments and recommendations around the existing approach to crocodile management. The evidence heard by the committee during this inquiry demonstrates that there is scope for improvement. In particular, building on the evidence heard about the importance of zone management and education, there is scope for:

- modification to existing zone boundaries to address atypical crocodile populations
- improved 'Be Crocwise' signage in certain areas where risk is higher, like boat ramps; and,
- better utilisation of the QWildlife application as a means of providing up to date information to the public about crocodile sightings and the departmental response.

These areas for improvement, and others, are captured by recommendations 2 to 8 and various committee comments throughout this report.

While there is room for improvement in how crocodiles are managed in Queensland, the evidence received by the committee during this inquiry has not suggested that the current framework is broken. The committee repeatedly heard from submitters that Queensland's Crocodile Management Framework appropriately balances zone management and removal of problem crocodiles, public education and research and monitoring. The existing regulatory and operational framework for crocodile management in Queensland is addressed in section 3 of this report.

Section 4 of this report examines the proposals in the Bill in detail and stakeholder feedback on the measures proposed. The main themes considered by the committee included the proposal to establish the Queensland Crocodile Authority (QCA), the introduction of annual culling, the creation of zero-tolerance zones, the impact of the Bill's proposals on commercial trade and farming, and the purported 'special provisions' for traditional owners and how those proposals interact with native title and Indigenous Land Management frameworks.

Human rights and fundamental legislative principles

The committee examined whether the Bill complied with the *Legislative Standards Act 1992* and the *Human Rights Act 2019*. This is addressed section 1 of the report and in detail in section 4.

The committee concluded:

- the explanatory notes tabled with the Bill contained sufficient detail to allow consideration of the Bill's compliance with the *Legislative Standards Act 1992*
- the Bill does not have sufficient regard to the fundamental legislative principle regarding the delegation of legislative power
- the statement of compatibility tabled with the Bill is insufficient in its examination of the rights engaged by the operation of the proposed Bill, given that it did not contain any information for the committee to consider about the Bill's interaction with the *Human Rights Act 2019*; and
- absent proper consideration of those rights, and justifications for any potential limitations, the Bill is not compatible with the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 6
The committee recommends that the Bill not be passed.

Recommendation 2 46
The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation expand 'Zone F' (atypical habitat with automatic removal) in the Mareeba Shire and engage with Mareeba Shire Council to determine appropriate boundaries of the same.

Recommendation 3 51
The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation include real-time reporting data of crocodile sightings and removals on the QWildlife application, with support from the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small Business in developing an improved interface.

Recommendation 4 55
The committee recommends that permanent educational signage be placed at boat ramps in North Queensland, with specific instructions for visitors to the area relating to avoiding human-crocodile conflict around the water.

Recommendation 5 55
The committee recommends that permanent educational signage be placed at locations with high tourist activity, like the Airlie Beach Marina and Palm Cove, and areas with consistent, verified sightings, like Lake Placid and Babinda.

Recommendation 6 55
The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation develop a marketing campaign to be deployed in Croc Country to ensure that all persons living in, or arriving to, the area are aware of the risks posed by crocodiles.

Recommendation 7 55
The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation produce educational materials (including, but not limited to, print, digital and social media materials) in traditional languages used in Far North Queensland, as well as the most common languages amongst tourist populations.

Recommendation 8 74
The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation develop a more fulsome engagement process with Indigenous communities to ensure that the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan operates in tandem with traditional knowledge, without compromising the timeliness of removals.

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Glossary

2018 Bill	Safer Waterways Bill 2018
2019 Technical Report	Laurence Taplin et al., <i>Estuarine Crocodile Population Monitoring in Queensland (1979-2019) Technical Report</i> (Report, 2022)
2021 Independent Review	Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist, <i>Findings from an Independent Evaluation of the Queensland Estuarine Crocodile Management Program</i> (Report, 2021)
Animals Regulation	Nature Conservation (Animals Regulation) 2020
Apex Predator	means – <i>a predator at the top of a food chain, without natural predators of its own</i>
Australian Code of Practice	Code of practice on the human treatment of wild and farmed Australian Crocodiles'
Australian Constitution	<i>Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia 1901</i>
Bill	Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025
C.R.O.C. Qld	Community Representation of Crocodiles Qld
CITES	<i>Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna</i>
CLCAC	Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
CMS	<i>Convention on Migratory Species</i>
Committee	Health, Environment and Innovation Committee
DES 2022 Response	Department of Environment and Science, <i>Response to the Independent Evaluation of the Queensland Estuarine Crocodile Management Plan</i> (Report, July 2022)
DETSI	Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation
EDO	Environmental Defenders Office
EPBC Act	<i>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth)
FLP	Fundamental Legislative Principles

Freshwater Crocodile	means – <i>Crocodylus johnstoni</i>
Hartley’s	Hartley’s Crocodile Adventures
HRA	<i>Human Rights Act 2019</i>
ITDEC	Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee
LSA	<i>Legislative Standards Act 1992</i>
NC Act	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>
NC Plan	Nature Conservation (Estuarine Crocodile) Conservation Plan 2018
NC Regulation	Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Regulation 2024
NTCMP	Northern Territory Government, <i>Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile (Crocodylus porosus) in the Northern Territory of Australia 2024-2034</i>
QCA	Queensland Crocodile Authority
QCMF	Queensland Crocodile Management Framework
QCMP	Queensland Crocodile Management Plan
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
Ramsar Convention	<i>Convention on Wetlands of International Importance</i>
Rio Convention	<i>Convention on Biological Diversity</i>
Saltwater Crocodile	means – <i>Estuarine crocodile</i> ; or <i>Crocodylus porosus</i>
WTMP	Wildlife Trade Management Plan

1. Overview of the Bill

The Bill was introduced by Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill and was referred to the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee (the committee) by the Legislative Assembly on 19 February 2025.

1.1. Aims of the Bill

The objectives of the Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025 (the Bill) are to:

- prioritise human life by responsibly reducing the risk of crocodile attacks as much as possible, by eliminating from ‘populated waterways’ any crocodiles that pose a threat to human life
- create the Queensland Crocodile Authority (QCA), to be based in Cairns, and vest the power to manage and oversee all aspects of crocodile management in Queensland in the QCA
- create a ‘significant and sustainable’ crocodile industry in Queensland
- give Indigenous landowners additional powers to apply to manage crocodiles on their land; and
- continue to protect crocodiles from becoming extinct as a species.⁹

Throughout the inquiry, the Member for Hill stated that the Bill aims to lower the risk of encountering a crocodile in North Queensland back down to an ‘acceptable risk’.¹⁰

1.2. Context of the Bill

The Bill falls to be considered in the context of Queensland’s current crocodile management framework (QCMF), which is examined in detail in Section 3 and 4 of this Report, and against a background of similar Bills having been introduced by the Member for Hill on 4 other occasions since 2017.

The following key issues were raised during the committee’s examination of the Bill:¹¹

- public consultation undertaken by the Member for Hill in the development of the Bill and the ‘evidence’ used to justify its objectives
- the current Queensland Crocodile Management Plan (QCMP) and potential areas for improvement
- whether Queensland should cull crocodiles to manage the risks associated with human-crocodile interactions
- the need for public education to manage the risk posed by crocodiles
- potential economic opportunities arising from crocodile farming, crocodile egg-harvesting, a limited commercial hunting led by traditional owners on country; and

⁹ Explanatory Notes, p 1-3.

¹⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 11.

¹¹ Note: the report does not discuss all consequential, minor, or technical amendments.

- the Bill's interactions with Commonwealth and International legal frameworks in areas of biodiversity, environmental management, and trade.

1.2.1. The history of the 'Safer Waterways' Bills

Similar Bills have been introduced by the Member for Hill on four other occasions since 2017.

- The Safer Waterways Bill 2017 was introduced on 25 May 2017 and was referred to the former Agriculture and Environment Committee. The Bill lapsed at the dissolution of the 55th Parliament on 29 October 2017, and the committee's inquiry lapsed.
- The Safer Waterways Bill 2018 (2018 Bill) was introduced on 21 March 2018 and was referred to ITDEC which examined the Bill and reported on 21 September 2018. ITDEC concluded the Bill should not be passed.¹²
- The Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2024 was introduced on 22 May 2024 and was referred to the former Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee. It was subsequently ruled out of order by the Speaker on 24 July 2024 as the Bill contained a budgetary appropriation in the absence of a message from the Governor pursuant to section 68 of the *Constitution of Queensland 2001*.¹³ In light of the Speaker's ruling, the former committee resolved not to inquire into the Bill.¹⁴
- The Crocodile Control, Conservation and Safety Bill 2024 was introduced on 21 August 2024 and was referred to the former Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee. The Bill lapsed at the dissolution of the 57th Parliament on 1 October 2024, and the committee's inquiry lapsed.

When the 2018 Bill was considered by ITDEC, the current iteration of the QCMP had been operating for less than 12 months. ITDEC recommended that the 2018 Bill not be passed.¹⁵

The QCMP has now been in place for approximately 8 years. In 2021, the QCMP was reviewed by an Independent Committee.¹⁶ It is currently undergoing a further review and is considering recommendations made by the independent expert committee and other evidence from key monitoring and research work which has taken place since its introduction.

¹² Innovation, Tourism, Development and Environment Committee, *Report No. 7, 56th Parliament – Safer Waterways Bill 2018* <<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-Committees/Committees/Committee-Details?cid=196&id=3540>>.

¹³ Hon Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, *Ruling on the Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2024* (1 July 2024). See also: Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly, Standing Order 174.

¹⁴ Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee, Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2024 (Withdrawn) <<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-Committees/Committees/Committee-Details?cid=238&id=4425>>.

¹⁵ Innovation, Tourism, Development and Environment Committee, *Report No. 7, 56th Parliament – Safer Waterways Bill 2018* <<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-Committees/Committees/Committee-Details?cid=196&id=3540>>.

¹⁶ See Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist, *Findings from an Independent Evaluation of the Queensland Estuarine Crocodile Management Program* (Report, 2021) (2021 Independent Review).

Despite the significant work undertaken by DETSI since 2017, and which is ongoing, the Bill has been tabled in essentially the same form as previous versions, bar some renumbering and adjustments to the proposed membership of oversight bodies. The explanatory notes do not acknowledge the progress or amendments to the existing QCMP.

A chronology outlining the history of crocodile management in Queensland, including dates of significant legislation (state, commonwealth and international conventions), reviews, education programs and the timing of the Member for Hill's various bill introductions, is contained in Appendix F – Chronology of Crocodile Management.

1.3. Inquiry process

The committee opened submissions on 26 February 2025. The committee accepted 190 submissions, many of which originated from a substantive letter writing campaign coordinated by Community Representation of Crocodiles (C.R.O.C. Qld) and the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO). This total number of submissions include 13 form submissions which were associated with submission 47 from C.R.O.C. Qld.

The committee held 4 public sessions and travelled to Cairns to gather evidence as a part of its inquiry.

On Wednesday 2 April 2025, the committee held a public briefing with the Member for Hill to examine the contents of the Bill and discuss his consultation process in developing the Bill.¹⁷

On Thursday 8 May 2025, the committee held a hearing in Cairns, which was well attended by the public and featured a dedicated consultation session with Traditional Owners and Indigenous leaders from surrounding areas.¹⁸ The committee observed that the prevailing public sentiment from those in the public gallery, in addition to witnesses, was in opposition of the Bill.

While in Cairns, the committee visited Hartley's Crocodile Adventures (Hartley's), which included a tour of their commercial crocodile farm and tourist park. The committee also met with representatives from DETSI, who escorted the committee to Lake Placid where it meets the Barron River, and other surrounding areas with known crocodile activity. The committee learned about the 'Be Crocwise' education program and the current operation of the QCMP.

¹⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane.

¹⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club.



Figure 1. The Committee with Thomas Freeman, Peter Freeman and Angela Freeman at Hartley's, 7 May 2025

On 11 June 2025, the committee held two sessions in Brisbane and heard from a range of stakeholders, including DETSI and the Member for Hill.

During the inquiry, the committee received evidence of some limited support for the underlying objectives of the Bill. However, the evidence provided by industry stakeholders, leading scientists and conservationists was persuasive, direct and comprehensive. That evidence suggests that the current QCMP is world-leading, and that the weight of evidence about population density of crocodiles in Queensland and rate of attack is contrary to statements made by the Member for Hill to justify the proposals in the Bill.

1.4. Legislative compliance

The committee's deliberations included assessing whether the Bill complies with the requirements for legislation as contained in the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*,¹⁹ the *Legislative Standards Act 1992* (the LSA),²⁰ and the *Human Rights Act 2019* (the HRA).²¹

¹⁹ Section 93(1)(b) of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* provides that a portfolio committee is responsible for examining each Bill and item of subordinate legislation in its portfolio area to consider the application of fundamental legislative principles to the legislation.

²⁰ *Legislative Standards Act 1992* (LSA).

²¹ *Human Rights Act 2019* (HRA).



1.4.1. Legislative Standards Act 1992

Fundamental legislative principles are the principles relating to legislation that underlie a parliamentary democracy based on the rule of law.²² These principles include requiring that legislation has sufficient regard to rights and liberties of individuals and the institution of Parliament.²³ Part 4 of the LSA requires that explanatory notes are circulated when the Bill is tabled which sets out the information required to understand the policy objectives of the Bill, and consideration of the Bill's consistency with fundamental legislative principle.²⁴

Explanatory notes were tabled with the Bill on 19 February 2025 and do not identify inconsistencies with any fundamental legislative principles. In contrast, the committee's assessment of the Bill's compliance with the LSA identified issues listed below which are analysed in Section 4 of this Report:

- Administrative power; and
- Delegation of legislative power.

Committee comment



The committee considers that, in the context of a Private Member's Bill, the explanatory notes contain the information required by Part 4 of the LSA, including a sufficient level of background information and commentary to facilitate understanding of the Bill's aims and origins.



1.4.2. Human Rights Act 2019

Assessment of the Bill's compatibility with the HRA identified issues with the following, which are analysed further in Section 4 of this Report:

- the right to take part in public life;²⁵ and
- the freedom of movement.²⁶

Many submitters also raised concerns with the Bill's interaction with the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in both legislation and common law.²⁷

A statement of compatibility was tabled with the introduction of the Bill pursuant to section 38 of the HRA. The statement is required to contain information to facilitate understanding of the Bill in relation to its compatibility with human rights.

²² LSA, s 4.

²³ LSA, s 4.

²⁴ LSA, Part 4.

²⁵ HRA, s 23.

²⁶ HRA, s 19.

²⁷ HRA, s 28. See, for example, Submission 28, Submission 103, Submission 166, Submission 60.

Contrary to the committee's assessment of human rights limited by the Bill, the statement of compatibility noted:

In my opinion, the Bill does not contravene any human right listed under Part 2, Division 2 and 3 [of the] Human Rights Act 2019.

It does not restrict an individual's civil and political rights, such as freedom of movement, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, property rights, privacy and reputation or recognition and equality before the law.²⁸

Any deficiencies in the level of information are examined in Section 4 of this Report.

Committee comment



The committee considers that, in the context of a Private Member's Bill, the statement of compatibility is insufficient in its examination of rights engaged by the operation of the proposed Bill.

The committee found that the Bill is not compatible with human rights. The incompatibility does not appear justified. The insufficiency of the statement of compatibility tabled with the Bill made assessment of compatibility difficult.

1.5. Should the Bill be passed?

The committee is required to determine whether or not to recommend that the Bill be passed.²⁹



Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Bill not be passed.

²⁸ Statement of Compatibility, p 1.

²⁹ Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly, SO 132.

2. Queensland's 'crocodile problem'

The Bill is built on a policy 'of prioritising human life over that of crocodiles' and in response to 'calls from North Queenslanders for action in response to an increasing crocodile population, increased sightings in populated communities and increased crocodiles attacks'.³⁰

The Bill, and its predecessors, are said to have been developed in response to significant consultation undertaken across several years, 'including detailed engagement with affected communities through public forums and private engagement, along with recent studies'.³¹ The explanatory notes state:

*Based on extensive consultation and recent studies it is clear that a combination of killing and relocation to farms or sanctuaries is the best way to achieve the policy objective.*³²

To understand the scope of consultation undertaken by the Member for Hill in the development of the Bill (and its previous iterations), the committee requested a list of stakeholders from the Member for Hill. In response, a list of 7 names was provided. The committee was advised that this list represented persons the Member had consulted since the introduction of the 2017 Bill.

During this inquiry, the committee considered whether the premise of the Bill – increased population, increased sightings, and increased attacks – was supported by evidence.

2.1. Location of crocodiles

In Queensland, crocodiles are found throughout the Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York Peninsula, Torres Strait, and along the east coast. They are regularly seen as far south as the Boyne River near Gladstone and occasionally as far south as the Mary River. Saltwater crocodiles typically inhabit tidal rivers, inlets, and wetlands but can also be found in and around beaches, offshore islands, freshwater lagoons, rivers, and swamps, even hundreds of kilometres inland.³³

This means that in Queensland, crocodiles may be present in or near almost any body of water north of Gladstone and west to the Northern Territory border. This area is colloquially known as 'Croc Country'.

³⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, First Session of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament - 19 February 2025*, p 134.

³¹ Explanatory Notes, p 4. See also, Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill, *Response to Question on Notice*, 19 June 2025.

³² Explanatory Notes, p 4.

³³ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 1.

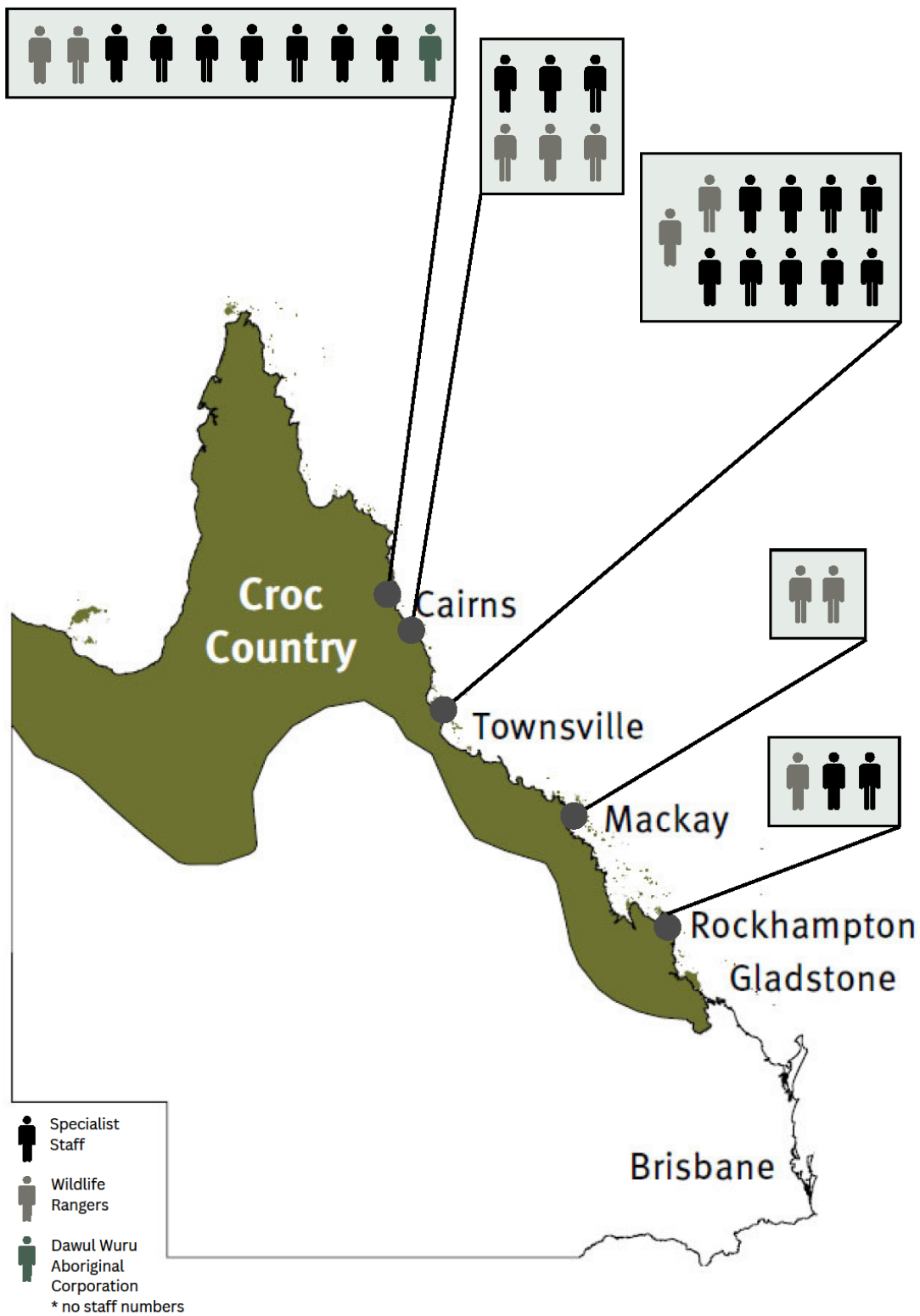


Figure 2. Map showing Croc Country and distribution of existing QPWS staff, DETSI, 2025

2.2. Population of crocodiles

Queensland has both saltwater crocodiles (also called estuarine crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*)) and freshwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus johnstoni*). The Bill's focus is saltwater crocodiles which pose the greater threat to humans.

The unregulated hunting of crocodiles pre-1970's led to their effective commercial extinction.³⁴ Saltwater crocodiles are currently listed as 'vulnerable' under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NC Act) and have been protected in Queensland since 1974.³⁵ They are also protected nationally under Commonwealth Legislation and internationally under the *Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna* (CITES).³⁶ Australia became a signatory in 1976.³⁷

The Department advised the committee that the current crocodile population in Queensland is between 20,000 and 30,000.³⁸ These numbers are based on a comprehensive monitoring programs to assess saltwater crocodile populations completed in 2019, which was headed by Dr Laurence Taplin.³⁹

Crocodile numbers have increased relatively slowly along Queensland's east coast from a low base following the cessation of commercial hunting and the introduction of protections in the 1970's. The population recovery is highly variable depending on location.⁴⁰ For example, some populations stabilised in the mid 1980's (i.e. the Wenlock River, Cape York), whereas others continue to increase (i.e. Norman River, Gulf of Carpentaria).⁴¹ The average rate of population growth across the species' range is 2.2% per annum and is slowing.⁴²

Crocodile density is measured in number of crocodiles per kilometre of river or other waterway. Crocodile density is highly variable across Queensland, averaging 1.7 crocodiles per kilometre, and reaching its highest concentration in Cape York Peninsula, with 3 crocodiles per kilometre.⁴³ This reduces to 0.2 crocodiles per kilometre in the Fitzroy River at Rockhampton.⁴⁴ In contrast, Northern Territory riverine population density has reached 5.3 crocodiles per kilometre. Due to the lack of suitable nesting habitat,

³⁴ Laurence Taplin et al., *Estuarine Crocodile Population Monitoring in Queensland (1979-2019) Technical Report* (Report, 2022) p 9 (2019 Technical Report).

³⁵ Queensland Government, 'Threatened species conservation classes' (Webpage, accessed 26 June 2025) <<https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/conservation/threatened-species/classes/conservation-classes#vulnerable>>.

³⁶ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 1.

³⁷ *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna*, opened for signature 3 March 1973, 993 UNTS 243 (entered into force 28 January 1986) art 2(3) (CITES); UN Treaty Depository, *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna* (Webpage, accessed 24 June 2025) <https://treaties.un.org/pages/show_Details.aspx?objid=0800000280105383>.

³⁸ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 4. See also, 2019 Technical Report, p 6.

³⁹ See generally, 2019 Technical Report.

⁴⁰ 2021 Independent Evaluation, p 54.

⁴¹ 2021 Independent Evaluation, p 54.







⁴² DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 1.

⁴³ 2019 Technical Report, p 6.

⁴⁴ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 1.

Queensland’s crocodile population cannot reach the size or density of the Northern Territory.⁴⁵

Dr Taplin’s research concluded that there has been no significant change in the overall distribution of crocodiles across Queensland since their protection and there is no evidence that the population has expanded to the south.⁴⁶

Population Size	
QLD	Northern Territory
 20,000-30,000	 100,000
Density	
QLD	Northern Territory
 1.7 per kilometre	 5.3 per kilometre
Biomass	
QLD	Northern Territory
 36 kilograms per kilometre	 388 kilograms per kilometre

Source 1. *Queensland Estuarine Crocodile Monitoring Program 2016 - 2019 - Key Findings Report*, DETSI, 2022

For both species of crocodile present in Queensland, hatchling populations are significantly impacted by environmental factors such as flooding or adverse weather events, and predatory behaviour of other animals.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 1.

⁴⁶ 2019 Technical Report, p 7.

⁴⁷ Cameron Baker et al., ‘Ontogenetic shifts in the nesting behaviour of female crocodiles’ (2019) 189 *Oecologia* 891, 901. See also Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 18; 2019 Technical Report, p 7.

2.3. Crocodile attacks in Queensland

Since 1985, there have been 50 crocodile attacks against humans in Queensland, 16 of which have been fatal (See Appendix G – Crocodile Attacks in Queensland (1985 – 2025)). This frequency works out to be approximately 0.4 fatal attacks per year in Queensland.

The rate of fatal attacks in Queensland, when compared against rates internationally, is very low. As C.R.O.C. Qld noted in their opening address at the public hearing in Brisbane:

...Australia had just 11 crocodile fatalities over the past decade, seven in Queensland. By contrast, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, where crocodiles are also abundant, had significantly higher attacks, with Papua New Guinea having 369 fatalities and Indonesia having 556. Importantly, nearly a third of those attacks were in regions where with [sic] people use waterways for basic water needs such as washing or collecting water. In Australia, where water use is mostly recreational, zero attacks have occurred under those circumstances.⁴⁸

When compared against instances of other animal related deaths, fatal crocodile attacks are exceedingly rare. For example, mosquitos are the deadliest animal in the world, causing around 725,000 deaths per year as ‘disease vectors’.⁴⁹ In 2020, there were 7 recorded human-shark conflicts in Queensland, resulting in 3 fatalities.⁵⁰ In that same year, there were 2 recorded human-crocodile conflicts resulting in injury in Queensland, with no fatalities.⁵¹ Additionally, the rate of death from some other accidental event is thousands of times more likely than fatal crocodile attack.

Cause	Number of Deaths in Australia (2023) ⁵²
Accidental Fall	4105
Choking	1427
Drowning	204
Homicide	236
Dogs	6
Sharks	5
Snakes	2
Saltwater Crocodiles	1

Table 1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023 Causes of Death

⁴⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

⁴⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 20. See also, Meng Li et al., ‘Deadliest animals with the Thinnest Wings: Near-Infrared Properties of Tropical Mosquitos’ (2025) *Applied Spectroscopy* <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00037028251341317>>.

⁵⁰ See Taronga Conservation Society, ‘Australian Shark Incident Database’ (Webpage, accessed 27 June 2025) <<https://taronga.org.au/conservation-and-science/australian-shark-incident-database>>.

⁵¹ See Appendix G – Crocodile Attacks in Queensland (1985 – 2025).

⁵² Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Causes of Death, Australia, 2023’ (Dataset, 2024) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#data-downloads>>. See also, Submission 60.

2.4. Stakeholder submissions

While there are some conflicting anecdotal opinions about Queensland's crocodile population, the evidence heard by the committee suggests that most stakeholders agree with the population estimate of 20,000 to 30,000, from the Estuarine Crocodile Monitoring Program, completed in 2019.

Australia Zoo noted in their submission:

The Bill's authors put a heavy emphasis on the number of crocodile sightings recorded on the Department's app as reliable evidence that crocodiles had 'infested' our rivers when these figures often include a large number of sightings of a single animal, thus inflating the overall number.

The authors have deliberately ignored the results of the Queensland Estuarine Crocodile Monitoring Program which has shown a very modest increase in the state's crocodile numbers.⁵³

At the public hearing on 11 June 2025, Murrandoo Yanner, a Gangalidda man who appeared for the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC), suggested the population could be as high as 100,000 but conceded this was anecdotal evidence only.⁵⁴

Charlie Manolis, a leading crocodile expert and co-author of the Northern Territory Crocodile Management Plan (NTCMP) noted that Queensland riverine systems are incapable of supporting a population density comparable to the Northern Territory (where the population estimate is 100,000) because most of Queensland's crocodile habitat does not owe itself to an optimal ecological system for crocodiles to exist and reproduce.⁵⁵

At the public briefing on 2 April 2025, the Member for Hill disputed the estimated population, and while he noted that he accepts the count, he suggests it is inaccurate.⁵⁶ There was some evidence put to the committee which suggested that crocodile numbers and sightings had increased, which was said to be a threat to tourism. The Whitsundays Charter Boat Industry Association noted:

Until recently crocodile sightings were rare ... The net result of which could be severe injury or death, the impact of which and the resulting Media storm could undermine the ongoing viability of Marine Tourism in the Whitsundays. Marine Tourism introduces nearly a million people a year to the Whitsundays region of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Whitsundays represents approximately 44% of the \$6.3 billion GBR market.⁵⁷

Dr Timothy Coyle stated that some tourist operators around Cairns have been forced to stop water-based activities because of the incursion of crocodiles in the Mulgrave River.⁵⁸

⁵³ Submission 166, p 5.

⁵⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 12.

⁵⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 18. See also, 2019 Technical Report, p 7.

⁵⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 6-7.

⁵⁷ Submission 59, p 1.

⁵⁸ Submission 2, p 1. See also, Submission 1, p 1; Submission 78, p 1; Submission 93, p 1.

Steven Diehm pointed out that members of the Rockhampton Waterski Club won't enter the water in the Fitzroy River because of the risk.⁵⁹

Increased crocodile sightings were relied upon by the Member for Hill in the explanatory notes:

According to data from the Queensland Department of Environment, Science, Tourism and Innovation, there were 1,216 saltwater or estuarine crocodile sightings reported in 2023, beating the previous high of 1,185 set in 2021.

*This is a huge increase from 2010, when there were just 176 sightings reported to the department.*⁶⁰

At the public briefing on 11 June, the Member for Hill provided more context when asked if people are reporting sightings:

*They have. They have tried, but to them it is a complete waste of time. ... Because it just does not happen. The department might say they come out. With regard to people seeing crocodiles and reporting crocodiles, they know it is a complete waste of time so people are not reporting crocodile sightings anymore. Back in 2010 there were 176 reported croc sightings in Queensland and there was a massive uproar. When people saw crocs then, because they were fearful that they are going to come back in our waterways, they reported them. Those figures showed the 176 croc sightings. The figure in the last two years has been around 1,200 croc sightings, but people are not reporting those croc sightings. They are not even reporting crocs that are launching at them or showing aggression towards them while they are in their boat or fishing because they know it is a complete waste of time.*⁶¹

The circumstances surrounding increased reporting were addressed by the Department, who advised that the increase in reported sightings was likely due to:

- the greater ease of reporting through the QWildlife App, which was introduced in 2020
- increased public awareness through the department's education program; and
- human population growth.⁶²

The committee also raised with the Member for Hill that there are other environmental threats in the water in Far North Queensland, including sharks, as well as Irukandji and Box jellyfish; crocodiles are not the sole risk for humans, or other animals, in the water.⁶³ The Member noted that jellyfish aren't going to jump out of the water at a tourist the way a crocodile can.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Submission 11, p 1. See also, Submission 167, p 2.

⁶⁰ Explanatory Notes, p 1.

⁶¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 11-12.

⁶² DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 2.

⁶³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

⁶⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 4; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 10.

In contrast, Mr Ferguson from Australia Zoo stated:

*The number of people affected by crocodile attacks is similar to those who are killed by jellyfish in the same sort of regions that we are talking about in Far North Queensland. There is no move to cull jellyfish, if that was even possible. They certainly set up enclosures, warn people they have to be safe in those areas, wear stinger suits et cetera. We are just saying the same thing. A very good education program, signage that is clear and educating people in those areas when they are young, and doing it constantly, will have a dramatic effect on the number of these incidents occurring. It is the best way forward.*⁶⁵

Committee comment



The evidence heard by the committee does not support the conclusion that Queensland's crocodile population has significantly increased nor that there has been any increase in the rate of fatal crocodile attacks.

An increase of reported crocodile sightings is likely driven by increased reporting using the department's QWildlife App and does not support a finding of a significant increase in Queensland's crocodile population and does not take into account the potential for multiple sightings of the same animal. The committee notes that 2017 marked the introduction of reporting through websites, facilitating easier reporting by members of the public. Statistics collected before this time cannot be unilaterally compared to recent reporting statistics to demonstrate a population increase when data collected does not support the same conclusion.

⁶⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 20.

3. Queensland's Crocodile Management Framework

The Bill is premised on the inadequacy of the current crocodile management framework and the need for reform. The Bill proposes to address the risk posed by crocodiles by establishing the Queensland Crocodile Authority (QCA) who would have responsibility for all crocodile management in Queensland.

The Bill also introduces new measures relating to crocodile management including annual culling, changes to existing zone management, the introduction of limited commercial hunting, and increased crocodile egg harvesting and crocodile farming. The introduction of culling as a measure to reduce risk represents a significant change from the current approach under Queensland's existing crocodile management framework.

Queensland's crocodile management framework (QCMF) consists of the following components:

- a legislative framework – consisting of various pieces of legislation which provide the legal foundation for how Queensland's current approach to crocodile management is operationalised; and
- an operational framework – which includes Queensland's Crocodile Management Plan (QCMP), a broad-ranging education program, and a research and monitoring program.⁶⁶

The aim of the QCMF is to promote the highest possible levels of public safety and safe behaviour by people, while conserving viable populations of crocodiles in the wild.⁶⁷ The existing framework does not allow commercial hunting of crocodiles in Queensland.

It is intended for these components work together, as illustrated in Figure 3.

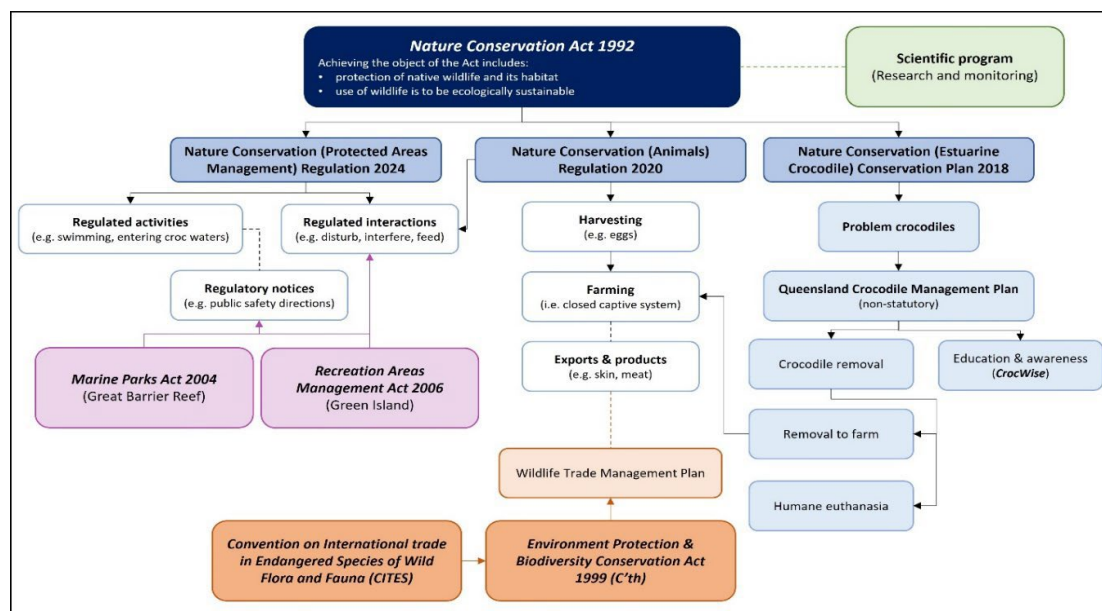


Figure 3. Queensland's Crocodile Management Framework, 2025, DETSI

⁶⁶ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 3-7.

⁶⁷ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 5.

3.1. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

In Queensland, the regulatory framework for crocodiles is established through the:

- Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NC Act)
- Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Regulation 2024 (NC Regulation)
- Nature Conservation (Animals Regulation) 2020 (Animals Regulation); and
- Nature Conservation (Estuarine Crocodile) Plan 2018 (NC Plan).

The NC plan provides circumstances under which a crocodile may be considered a 'problem crocodile' and targeted for removal.⁶⁸ The circumstances include public safety. The NC Plan provides specific standards for removal of crocodiles present in specific agricultural settings. The NC Plan is administered through the QCMP.⁶⁹

The operation of the QCMP at a state level is subject to compliance with various Commonwealth and International legal frameworks. The QCMP must operate under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act) and its associated regulations.⁷⁰

The EPBC Act regulates movement of crocodile products (skins, eggs etc) both within Australia and beyond our borders. The EPBC Act and other legislation must comply with Australia's obligations under international conventions. This includes a requirement for export provisions to be consistent with CITES.⁷¹ Export provisions must also be compliant with the state level Wildlife Trade Management Plan (WTMP), which is established under the EPBC Act.⁷²

CITES is a multilateral convention which aims to ensure sustainability in the pursuit of trade in specimens of wild flora and fauna.⁷³ Australia became a signatory in 1976.⁷⁴ Appendix II of CITES includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilisation of an animal incompatible with survival of the species.⁷⁵ Saltwater crocodiles are currently listed in Appendix II. An Appendix I listing would prevent Australia from exporting crocodile skins, effectively shuttering the crocodile industry in Queensland.⁷⁶ CITES requires all imports, exports and re-exports of

⁶⁸ Nature Conservation (Estuarine Crocodile) Conservation Plan 2018 s 5 (NC Plan 2018).

⁶⁹ NC Plan 2018, s 5.

⁷⁰ *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) s 248(2)(e) (EPBC Act). See, for example, DCCEEW, 'What is protected under the EPBC Act' (Webpage, 3 February 2025, accessed on 23 June 2025) <<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/our-role/what-is-protected>>.

⁷¹ EPBC Act, s 248(2)(e) and 209.

⁷² *Declaration of an Approved Wildlife Trade Management Plan – Queensland Crocodile Farming and Crocodile Egg Harvesting (2023-2028)*, DCCEEW (19 December 2023).

⁷³ *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna*, opened for signature 3 March 1973, 993 UNTS 243 (entered into force 28 January 1986) preamble (CITES).

⁷⁴ CITES art 2(3); UN Treaty Depository, *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna* (Webpage, accessed 24 June 2025) <<https://treaties.un.org/pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=0800000280105383>>.

⁷⁵ CITES, 'How CITES Works' (Webpage, accessed 24 June 2025) <<https://cites.org/eng/disc/how.php?>>.

⁷⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 15.

species included in the appendices through a controlled system of permits and certificates.⁷⁷

3.2. Operational Management Framework

The regulatory framework discussed above is operationalised by DETSI and QPWS through:

- the QCMP – which sets out how crocodiles are managed through Queensland based on a series of zones
- a public safety education program; and
- a scientific research and monitoring program, which includes population management data collection and oversight, improved alert systems for use in Croc Country, and the QWildlife application for reporting.

3.3. Who is responsible for crocodile management?

Removal of problem crocodiles is generally undertaken by DETSI's Wildlife Operations teams.⁷⁸ DETSI employ 21 specialist staff in the Northern Wildlife Operations Team to respond to crocodile sightings, capture problem crocodiles, deliver safety education, and undertake research and monitoring to inform adaptive management, including through the introduction of new technology. These staff are spread across Cairns (7 staff), Innisfail (3 staff), Townsville (9 staff), and Rockhampton (2 staff).⁷⁹ An additional 10 QPWS staff, spread throughout Cairns, Innisfail Townsville, Rockhampton and Mackay, are involved in the implementation of the QCMP but also undertake responsibilities relating to other threatened species.⁸⁰ DETSI also contracts with the Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation to remove problem crocodiles in the Cairns area.⁸¹

Under the current NC Plan, where the Chief Executive has given the holder of the crocodile management authority a written notice identifying a 'problem crocodile', that person must commence activities to capture the crocodile within 72 hours of receipt of the notice.⁸² While the NC Plan does not expressly grant a landowner the right to request removal, it is implied that where a landowner believes a 'problem crocodile' is present on their land, they would report it to DETSI. Further, the NC Plan does not require that the crocodile is caught within a defined time period, owing to the elusive nature of crocodiles in the wild.

⁷⁷ European Commission, 'Wildlife Trade' (Webpage, accessed 24 June 2025) <https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/wildlife-trade_en>.

⁷⁸ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 5.

⁷⁹ DETSI, *Correspondence* (17 April 2025) p 2.

⁸⁰ DETSI, *Correspondence* (17 April 2025) p 2.

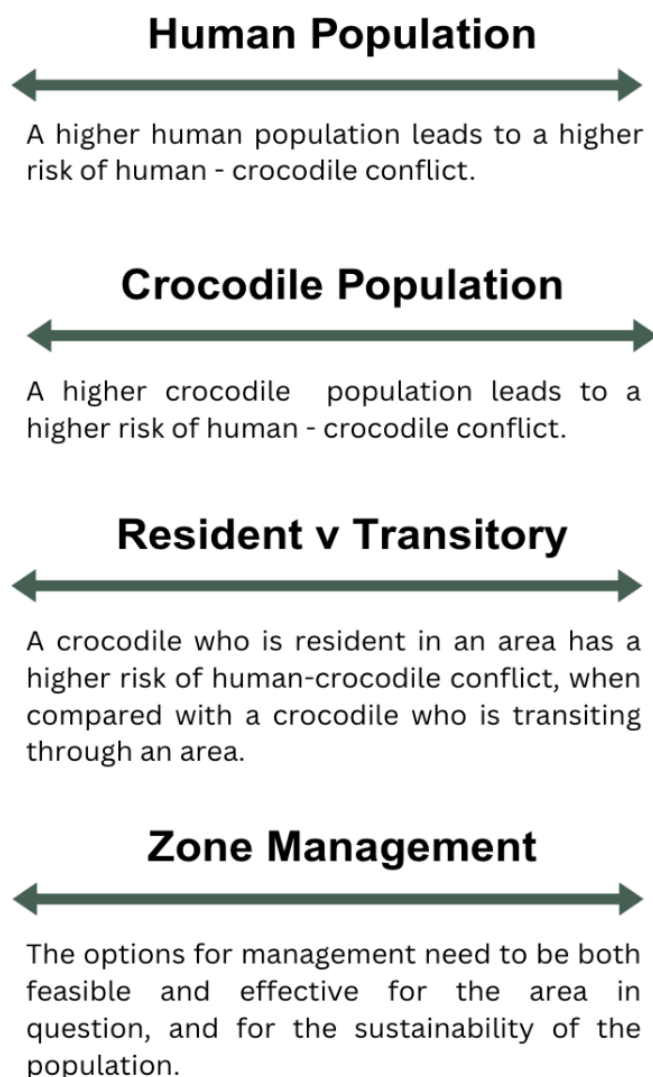
⁸¹ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 5.

⁸² NC Plan 2018, s 15.

3.4. Queensland's Crocodile Management Plan

The current QCMP was developed by the former Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and was drafted in consultation with leading crocodile experts.⁸³ It has been in place since 2017. The QCMP is not a statutory instrument but an accompanying guideline under the NC Act. It sets out how crocodiles are managed throughout Queensland based on a series of zones.

In assessing the risk posed by a crocodile that is reported through QWildlife, the QPWS employs the below assessment, which is identical to that utilised in the Northern Territory:



In 2021, an independent expert committee reviewed the QCMP and determined it 'highly effective in reducing the risks to public safety while conserving crocodile populations in the wild'.⁸⁴

⁸³ *Queensland Crocodile Management Plan* (26 June 2017) p 7 (QCMP).

⁸⁴ See 2021 Independent Review.

Committee comment

Of the total 22 recommendations made, the independent expert committee made 8 recommendations to further strengthen and improve the QCMP.⁸⁵

The committee understands these recommendations were adopted by the government at the time. The committee notes that the QCMP is under review at the time of writing this Report and that the Minister for the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation recently hosted roundtable meetings and has engaged in further consultation with various stakeholders.

3.5. Zone Management

The current QCMP contains a zone management system modelled after the NTCMP.⁸⁶ There are currently 6 different zones (outlined in Table 2 below)⁸⁷ which provide differentiated criteria for determining whether a crocodile is a ‘problem crocodile’.

In determining ‘Crocodile Management Zones’, the Chief Executive makes maps and may amend them from time to time.⁸⁸ In determining whether a map should be amended, the Chief Executive can take into account:

- matters relevant to the conservation of crocodiles
- matters relevant to overall public safety
- zone rationale, and
- any other matter the Chief Executive considers appropriate.⁸⁹

Crocodiles are targeted for removal across the state where they have displayed certain dangerous behaviours around, or towards, humans.⁹⁰ The QCMP specifies that dangerous behaviour is not limited in interpretation and can include presence at high traffic, urban areas, like a boat ramp.⁹¹ Importantly, the QCMP emphasises that all crocodiles are a danger to humans.⁹²

The current QCMP allows euthanasia where all other available options have been exercised in managing a ‘problem crocodile’.⁹³ However, where an animal is euthanised, there are specific and rigorous guidelines which apply, and are contained in the Commonwealth’s ‘Code of practice on the human treatment of wild and farmed Australian Crocodiles’ (Australian Code of Practice).

⁸⁵ See DES 2022 Response.

⁸⁶ Northern Territory Government, *Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile (Crocodylus porosus) in the Northern Territory of Australia 2024-2034* (Report, 18 April 2024) (NTCMP).

⁸⁷ The committee notes that the review of the QCMP proposes to combine certain zones under the existing management plan to improve clarity.

⁸⁸ QCMP, p 10.

⁸⁹ QCMP, p 10.

⁹⁰ QCMP, p 9.

⁹¹ QCMP, p 9.

⁹² QCMP, p 9.

⁹³ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 5.

DETSI advised the committee:

Regardless of location, size, or zoning in the QCMP, any crocodile displaying dangerous behaviours around or towards humans is targeted for removal. Most problem crocodiles removed from the wild are placed in crocodile farms or zoos – euthanasia of crocodiles is only conducted where other options have been exhausted, on ethical and animal welfare grounds, or at the request of Traditional Owners on country.⁹⁴

QCMP Zone	Description
A – Barrier and Removal	Areas where there are physical barriers that are generally effective in preventing crocodiles from entering the area. Any crocodile in this area is targeted for removal.
B – Active Removal	Areas of rivers, creeks and wetlands where crocodiles are frequently in close proximity to large urban populations. All crocodiles, regardless of size or behaviour are targeted for removal.
C – Targeted Management	Areas that are frequented by large numbers of people, due to being near an urban centre or popular swimming areas and are also frequented by crocodiles. Crocodiles 2 metres or greater in length and crocodiles displaying dangerous behaviour are targeted for removal.
D – Transitory	Areas where crocodiles are often seen passing through but are not core habitat, such as beaches. Crocodiles 2 metres or greater in length and any crocodiles displaying dangerous behaviour are targeted for removal, noting that it is generally very difficult to remove crocodiles from open water.
E – General Management	Areas that are typical habitat for crocodiles but are not near a large urban centre, as well as other areas with varied crocodile numbers that are not otherwise zoned. Crocodiles displaying dangerous behaviour are targeted for removal.
F – Atypical Habitat	Areas that are not typical habitat for crocodiles. Any crocodile found in Zone F is automatically targeted for removal after a sighting has been confirmed, regardless of size of behaviour.

Table 2. QCMP Zones

⁹⁴ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 5.

3.6. Commercial Trade, Farming and Egg Harvesting

A crocodile farm is a facility that breeds or grows crocodiles for a commercial purpose.⁹⁵ Crocodile farms in Queensland are predominantly closed-cycle captive breeding facilities, with some augmentation from wild populations through egg harvesting and live crocodile imports from the Northern Territory.⁹⁶

Crocodiles are farmed primarily for their skin. However, other crocodile by-products such as meat (particularly tails), skulls / teeth, feet, may have commercial value. In Queensland, crocodile farming is an industry with a value of approximately \$100 million per annum. There are only a handful of operators with many farms being owned by overseas investors. Under the current QCMP, problem crocodiles removed from the wild may be rehomed to crocodile farms.

Under the EBPC Act, every state with a CMP is required to have an accompanying WTMP which outlines the approach to crocodile husbandry at a State-level, which involves captive breeding, limited harvest of wild crocodile eggs, and the import of eggs and young that have been legally harvested.⁹⁷

Crocodile farming in Queensland is governed by the Wildlife Trade Management Plan – Queensland Crocodile Farming and Crocodile Egg Harvesting (2023-2028) (Qld WTMP). WTMPs are granted under the EPBC Act with a primary objective being conservation. The Qld WTMP regulates activities in Queensland that involve the take, keep, use or movement of wild crocodiles associated with trade and provides safeguard to ensure such activities have no detrimental impact on wild crocodile populations.⁹⁸

The NC Plan 2018 subjects the grant of an authority to harvest crocodile eggs under the NC Plan 2018 to the Animals Regulation.⁹⁹ DETSI explained that the current WTMP supports and enables crocodile farming and export in Queensland, including egg harvesting.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ See Animal Regulation, Part 9.

⁹⁶ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 4.

⁹⁷ Department of Environment and Science, *Wildlife Trade Management Plan – Queensland Crocodile Farming and Crocodile Egg Harvesting (2023-2028)* (Report, 2023) <<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/qld-wildlife-trade-management-plan-crocodile-2023.pdf>>.

⁹⁸ WTMP, p 1.

⁹⁹ NC Plan 2018, s 35A.

¹⁰⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 2.

3.7. Public Education – ‘Be Crocwise’

Public education is an essential pillar of the QCMF. The ‘Be Crocwise’ program is modelled off of the NTCMP.¹⁰¹ ‘Be Crocwise’ aims to increase public safety by making people aware of the risks posed by crocodiles and is intended to empower individuals to stay safe when they are around waterways inhabited by crocodiles.¹⁰²



Figure 4. A temporary Crocwise sign at Lake Placid, Cairns, 7 May 2025

DETSI utilises education strategies based on leading edge approaches to public communication and human behavioural change, including working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, local governments, and the tourism sector to promote education and safety behaviour.¹⁰³

3.8. Reporting, Research and Monitoring Programs

DETSI maintains a public reporting tool, the QWildlife application, which allows members of the public, including those who are on private land, to report sightings of crocodiles.¹⁰⁴ Members of the public may also report crocodile sightings through DETSI’s website and over the phone. DETSI advised the committee that so far in 2025, they had received 299

¹⁰¹ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 6.

¹⁰² DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 6.

¹⁰³ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 6.

¹⁰⁴ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 5.

crocodile sighting reports, and 12 problem crocodiles had been removed.¹⁰⁵ In response to reports, investigations are undertaken and the crocodile may be removed.

Under the current NC Plan, once written notice identifying a ‘problem crocodile’ is received by a permit holder, that person must commence activities to capture the crocodile within 72 hours of receipt of the notice.¹⁰⁶ DETSI explained that the median time to remove a crocodile that has been assessed as a ‘problem crocodile’ is 3 days and that instances where removal has taken longer than the median are caused by particularly elusive animals.¹⁰⁷ The 2025-26 Service Delivery Statement notes that DETSI has a target of ≤7 days to ‘resolve a declared problem crocodile’, with an actual average time of 1 day to resolve a problem crocodile, once it has been assessed by QPWS officers.¹⁰⁸ Figure 5 illustrates how reports are managed by DETSI.

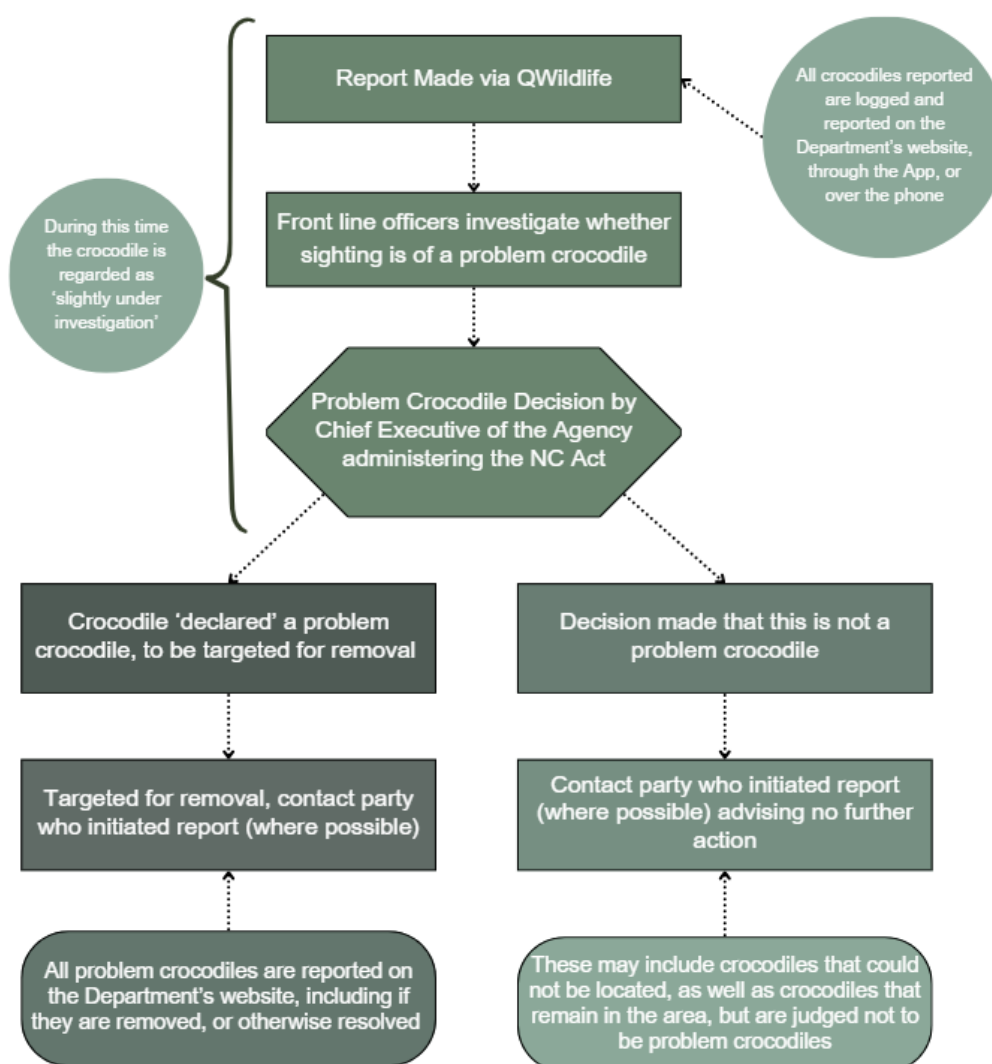


Figure 5. Process of Reporting a Crocodile Sighting

¹⁰⁵ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 2.

¹⁰⁶ NC Plan 2018, s 15.

¹⁰⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 3.

¹⁰⁸ Queensland Government, *Queensland Budget 2025-26: Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation – Service Delivery Statements* (Report, June 2025) p 5.

DETSI also undertakes significant research for population management, which resulted in the 2019 Technical Report. This population monitoring allows the QPWS to assist DETSI in evaluating and determining zones. Population data is supplemented with river surveys by boat and helicopter.¹⁰⁹

DETSI is also undertaking research with external partners to develop devices that would reliably detect a crocodile in the water.¹¹⁰ DETSI hopes to deploy devices in high-risk areas of Croc Country with multiple sightings to allow the public to learn when they have come in close contact with a crocodile, for example, at boat ramps.¹¹¹

In addition to DETSI's research, Australia Zoo and the University of Queensland have conducted the world's longest running study into saltwater crocodiles. This research has pioneered the use of tracking and satellite telemetry to learn about migration and nesting patterns of saltwater crocodiles.¹¹² The committee heard that the team travel to the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve in Cape York each August to undertake monitoring of 278 animals which have been tagged for research.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 6.

¹¹⁰ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 7; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 6.

¹¹¹ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025) p 7.

¹¹² Submission 57, p 3; Submission 166, p 3, 4, 15.

¹¹³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 22; See also Submission 166, p 3, 15.

4. The Bill's Proposed Approach

The primary proposal of the Bill is creation of the Queensland Crocodile Authority (QCA), to be based in Cairns.¹¹⁴ The QCA would be solely responsible for all aspects of crocodile management. However, it is not clear from the committee's examination of the Bill's various proposals how it would operate within the existing complex legal framework, which draws from state, commonwealth and international laws. An infographic providing an overview of the various international conventions, state and commonwealth legislation, and other regulatory instruments that are connected to crocodile management in Queensland is provided in Appendix H – Legislative and Regulatory Framework.

4.1. The Queensland Crocodile Authority, Director and Advisory committee

The Bill requires the QCA to have a director, who is appointed by resolution of the Legislative Assembly on recommendation of the Minister.¹¹⁵ The Director must have qualifications or experience relevant to the appointment, be of good character and 'reside in Cairns' to be recommended by the Minister for appointment.¹¹⁶

The Bill provides for the 'functions of the director'¹¹⁷ and 'functions of the authority'.¹¹⁸ The functions of the Director are extensive and include:

- to take measures to minimise injuries and deaths caused by crocodiles in the state
- authorise persons to operate crocodile farms or crocodile sanctuaries
- decide the number of crocodile eggs that may be harvested each year
- decide the number of crocodiles that may be culled each year in any part of the state and authorise persons to carry out culling
- to authorise persons to, for the prompt management of crocodiles, kill or relocate crocodiles
- for Aboriginal land or Torres Strait Islander land – to authorise the owner of the land to kill crocodiles, allow other persons to kill crocodiles (including for payment, essentially allowing for a form of commercial hunting), relocate crocodiles to crocodile farms or crocodile sanctuaries, harvest eggs, or otherwise manage crocodiles; and
- for state leasehold land or other land that is not state land – to authorise a person with the consent of the owner to enter land to kill or relocate a crocodile, or to harvest eggs.¹¹⁹

The functions of director are subject to an overriding requirement that the director must not 'do anything the director reasonably believes will cause, or is likely to cause, the

¹¹⁴ Bill, cls 5 – 8.

¹¹⁵ Bill, cl 9(2).

¹¹⁶ Bill, cl 9(3)(a)(b)

¹¹⁷ Bill, cl 10.

¹¹⁸ Bill, cl 7.

¹¹⁹ Bill, cls 7, 10.

population size of crocodiles to decline to such an extent that crocodiles are in danger of extinction'.¹²⁰

The Bill proposes to allow the Director to establish an Advisory Committee, appointed by the Minister, to make recommendations to the Director about the performance of their functions, strategies about the operational and administrative policies of the Director and the QCA, and the goals and objectives of the Director and the QCA.¹²¹

The Advisory Committee must have at least 7 members, with one member appointed as a representative of the Minister.¹²² The Advisory Committee must have at least one person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent with experience with crocodiles, as well as other North Queenslanders with experience in conservation and water-based recreation.¹²³ The Bill also requires that one member of the Advisory Committee 'has worked in the crocodile farming industry'.¹²⁴

The Bill proposes that the QCA's business premises must be located in Cairns.¹²⁵ The Bill restricts geographic eligibility of appointees to the QCA, including the Director, requiring they 'reside in Cairns'.¹²⁶ The explanatory notes justify this limitation because 'ultimately, people who live in Far North Queensland are best placed to manage crocodiles'.¹²⁷

The Bill purports that the QCA would exist within the broader structure of DETSI for the purposes of funding appropriations, staffing and legislative oversight; in effect, oversight of the QCA would be based in Brisbane.¹²⁸

It is proposed that the QCA would be resourced from the existing staff at DETSI and that the introduction of the QCA will be cost neutral. However, this appears inconsistent with the Member for Hill's other statements that the team behind the QCMP are understaffed.

At the public hearing on 2 April 2025, the Member for Hill was unable to provide a clear explanation or justification for the proposed change other than emphasis placed on management being based in Cairns:

Ms DOOLEY: *The explanatory notes state that the costs of the authority 'will be met from within existing departmental allocations.' Does this bill mean that it only serves to take the existing DETSI crocodile workforce?*

Mr Knuth: *Basically, it will be cost neutral. On the other side of it, all of the bills that have been introduced in the parliament by the government say exactly the same thing.*

Ms DOOLEY: *So it would just be giving them a new name?*

¹²⁰ Bill, cl 10(2).

¹²¹ Bill, clauses 14 (establishment and member of advisory committee) and clause 15 (conduct of business)

¹²² Bill, cl 14(2)

¹²³ Bill, cl 14(3)(a)(d)

¹²⁴ Bill, cl 14(3)(b).

¹²⁵ Bill, cl 6(1).

¹²⁶ Bill, cls 6(2), 9(3)(c).

¹²⁷ Explanatory Notes, p 2.

¹²⁸ Bill, cl 9(3), 9(5), 14, 15, 21; Explanatory Notes, p 2, 4; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, First Session of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament - 19 February 2025*, p 134; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public briefing - 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

Mr Knuth: *That is right.*¹²⁹

When asked about resourcing and the distribution of QPWS Officers, the Member for Hill stated he does not believe the QCMP is properly implemented:

*No way in the world. If it were implemented, we would be able to swim in the Johnstone River. We would be able to go spearfishing in the Tully River like they used to. We would be able to feel comfortable to swim in Rollingstone Creek like we used to back in the eighties, the nineties and probably even in the year 2000.*¹³⁰

The committee queried whether the proposal to limit the location of the QCA to Cairns would impact operations throughout Croc Country:

CHAIR: *I will ask the department to update us at some point on the distribution of staff. I am sure when we raised that question in the past there were only a handful of people in Brisbane and the majority of the staff involved in managing crocodiles across the state were fairly well dispersed.*

Mr Knuth: *I do not believe that they are well dispersed because if they were well dispersed then we would not be having the crocodile problems that we have at the moment. We believe that they are understaffed. This is why we need a grassroots crocodile authority that is hands-on and that deals with the issues day in, day out, rather than one that just hears about what is going on 1½ thousand kilometres away.*¹³¹

The Member for Hill and the Member for Traeger both stated that they would not be accepting of improving the status quo and existing framework; rather, in their view, the only acceptable solution is the implementation of the QCA.¹³²

Committee comment



The committee has not been able to ascertain how the QCA would be a marked improvement on the current QCMF. The Member for Hill has not demonstrated how the Bill's proposal would improve operations given it is premised on maintaining existing staffing levels while also limiting their geographic location throughout Croc Country.

¹²⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

¹³⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 3.

¹³¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

¹³² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 12.



4.1.1. FLP Issue – Administrative Power

Legislation should make rights and liberties, or obligations, dependent on administrative power only if the power is sufficiently defined and subject to appropriate review.¹³³ If legislation gives an authorised person discretionary powers to impose conditions on the grant of a licence, the legislation should clearly define this administrative power by outlining the factors that the authorised person must or may take into account in making the decision.¹³⁴

The Bill sets out the functions of the QCA, including ‘to act as necessary to assist the director in carrying out their functions’.¹³⁵ The Bill raises the fundamental legislative principle of administrative power because the functions and powers given to the Director and QCA are relatively wide. Neither the Bill, nor the explanatory notes, provide further clarification as to the intended extent or breadth of powers of the Director, nor does it provide for what would be considered ‘all things necessary or convenient’.¹³⁶

Clause 10 sets out the functions of the Director, including 20 specific duties and functions, despite clause 12 allowing the Director to delegate their powers under the Act to another ‘appropriately qualified member of the authority’s staff’.¹³⁷ The Bill has the potential to vest wide ranging powers with the Director, which may, for example, include the right to enter a property, where such a right has not been explicitly excluded. Further, the Bill does not consider a right of appeal or review of any decision made by the Minister or the Director in the carrying out of their functions.¹³⁸

The explanatory notes do not contemplate the Bill’s consistency with the fundamental legislative principle of administrative power.¹³⁹

Committee comment



The committee notes that the phrase ‘all things necessary and convenient’ is commonly included in Queensland legislation with respect to the appointment of persons and operation of statutory roles.¹⁴⁰ The committee accepts the presumption that the phrase is included in the Bill to ensure that there are no impediments to the Director and the QCA in performing their functions.

The committee considers that, on balance, the relevant clauses are consistent with the fundamental legislative principle of administrative power and that the powers provided to the QCA and the Director are sufficiently defined, including that they sufficiently consider the rights and liberties of individuals.

¹³³ LSA, s 4(3)(a). See also OQPC, *FLP Notebook*, p 15, 18.

¹³⁴ OQPC, *FLP Notebook*, p 15.

¹³⁵ Bill, cl 11.

¹³⁶ See, for example, Bill, cl 11 and 12; Explanatory Notes, p 1-3.

¹³⁷ Bill, cl 10, 12.

¹³⁸ See generally, Bill. Cf OQPC, *FLP Notebook*, p 19.

¹³⁹ Explanatory Notes, p 4.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, *Fire Services Act 1990*, s 8B(2); *Night-Life Economy Commissioner Act 2024*, s 6.



4.1.2. HRA Issue - the right to take part in public life

Every person in Queensland has the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right to vote and be elected, and have access, on general terms of equality, to the public service and to public office.¹⁴¹

The Bill engages section 23 of the HRA because:

- it contains eligibility criteria for appointments including that staff reside in Cairns
- it stipulates that the director must be 'of good character' without providing any criteria for assessment
- provides for appointment of an advisory committee subject to certain limitations.¹⁴²

The purpose of any limitations on the right to take part in public life are not set out in the statement of compatibility, as the statement does not consider that the Bill engages section 23 of the HRA.¹⁴³

Geographical limitation

The introductory speech and explanatory notes indicate that the Member for Hill proposes the geographic limitation on the basis that 'people in North Queensland are best placed to manage crocodiles'.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, restricting geographic eligibility of appointees achieves the purpose of management being primarily carried out in Far North Queensland, despite financial and legislative reliance on DETSI.

The fundamental problem with placing a geographical limit on who may be appointed as Director, lies in the current wording of the Bill, which would place a condition, on the recommendation of appointment, that the persons already reside in Cairns. This may exclude a person from eligibility who may be otherwise the best candidate for the role, in both qualifications and experience, from being eligible for appointment. The wording of the Bill does not allow for a person who would otherwise receive the recommendation from the Minister to move to Cairns once they are appointed. In this way, clause 9(3)(c) of the Bill is unnecessarily restrictive.

Good character requirement

It is usual for appointments at the Director level to be limited to persons with appropriate qualifications and experience relevant to that appointment. However, the use of a criteria of 'good character' is unusual, and the Bill (as well as its accompanying documentation) does not provide guidance on interpretation of that term, nor does it provide examples to assist with interpretation.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ HRA, s 23.

¹⁴² Bill, cl 6, 9 (Director), 14 (Advisory Committee).

¹⁴³ Statement of Compatibility, p 1.

¹⁴⁴ Explanatory Notes, p 2; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, First Session of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament - 19 February 2025*, p 134.

¹⁴⁵ See for example, *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) s 501; *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994* s 111B.

At the public hearing on 2 April 2025, the committee queried the ‘good character’ requirement:

Mr LEE: [...] *What good character criteria must be satisfied before a person is appointed? Does the bill define ‘good character’?*

Mr Knuth: *That will be under the operation of the minister and the department. They will define what is meant by ‘good character’ in appointing those positions to the Queensland Crocodile Authority.*

Mr LEE: *There is no definition in the proposed legislation. That is at the discretion of the department to define.*

Mr Knuth: *The department and the minister.*¹⁴⁶

With respect to the character requirement, the absence of guidance for interpretation creates an issue, because it risks arbitrary decision making by the Minister in evaluating an applicant’s character. In this way, clause 9(3)(b) of the Bill is unnecessarily restrictive.

Advisory Committee

The Bill requires that the Advisory Committee must include:

- one person who is an Aboriginal person, or a Torres Strait Islander person, who has experience with crocodiles
- one member who has worked in the crocodile farming industry
- one member who resides in Queensland in, or north of, Mackay, and has experience in wildlife conservation; and
- one member who resides in Queensland in, or north of, Mackay, and is involved in one or more community organisations with an interest in recreational activities associated with waterways.¹⁴⁷

The remaining appointees must be persons who have appropriate experience or qualifications to contribute to the management of crocodiles in Queensland.¹⁴⁸

These provisions limit the right to take part in public life, in that only individuals who meet these criteria will be able to be recommended for appointment.

It is usual for appointments to specialist public roles to be limited to persons with appropriate qualifications and experience relevant to that appointment, especially given that they are intended to give recommendations and advice to the Director and Minister with respect to crocodile management.¹⁴⁹

The limitation on the right to take part in public life through eligibility criteria is rationally connected to the purpose of ensuring a person appointed to a role has appropriate expertise and experience for the role. In theory, these eligibility requirements are not

¹⁴⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

¹⁴⁷ Bill, cl 14(3).

¹⁴⁸ Bill, cl 14(4).

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, *Queensland Veterans Council Act 2021*.

unnecessarily restrictive and serve a valid purpose in ensuring that positions are filled by persons with relevant qualifications and experience.

Committee comment



Advisory Committee

On the balance, the committee concluded that the limitations on certain Advisory Committee appointments are reasonable and demonstrably justified. The conditions on certain appointments are designed to achieve the purpose of ensuring the persons appointed to these positions are appropriate. The limitation does not pose a significant human rights issue.

Good character requirement

The committee considers that Clause 9(3)(b) requires further guidance on what is intended behind 'good character', but that the vague nature of the drafting does not pose a significant human rights issue.

Geographical limitations

The committee considers that clause 9(3)(c) of the Bill has the potential to unjustifiably limit human rights of persons who may be otherwise eligible for appointment as the Director. The absence of justification contained in the Statement of Compatibility led the committee to conclude the clause is inconsistent with human rights, because there is no reasoning provided for the limitation with the right.



4.1.3. HRA issue - Freedom of Movement

Every person lawfully within Queensland has the right to move freely within Queensland and to enter and leave it and has the freedom to choose where to live.¹⁵⁰

The Bill engages section 19 of the HRA because it places geographic limitations on the residence of the Director and staff of the QCA.¹⁵¹ Clause 6(2) of the Bill stipulates that the Director and Staff of the QCA must reside in Cairns.¹⁵² Clause 9(3)(c) of the Bill limits the recommendation of appointment by the Minister to persons already residing in Cairns at the time of the recommendation.¹⁵³

The purpose of the limitation is not set out in the statement of compatibility, as the statement does not consider that the Bill engages section 19 of the HRA.¹⁵⁴ Notably, the statement explicitly states that the Bill does not restrict an individual's freedom of movement.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ HRA, s 19.

¹⁵¹ Bill, cl 6(2) and 9(3)(c).

¹⁵² Bill, cl 6(2).

¹⁵³ Bill, cl 9(3)(c).

¹⁵⁴ Statement of Compatibility, p 1.

¹⁵⁵ Statement of Compatibility, p 1.

The introductory speech and explanatory notes indicate that the Member for Hill proposes to limit this right on the basis that ‘almost 80 percent of the crocodile population are located in North Queensland’.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, restricting geographic eligibility of appointees achieves the purpose of management being primarily carried out in Far North Queensland, despite financial and legislative reliance on DETSI.

The restriction on an individuals’ freedom of movement is rationally linked to the purpose of the limitation in requiring crocodile management to be controlled in North Queensland.

However, ‘Cairns’ is not defined in the Bill.¹⁵⁷ For example, that ‘Cairns’ applies only to persons with registered addresses in the catchment of the Cairns Regional Council, a person who lives in the surrounding area, such as Innisfail, Mareeba or Port Douglas would not be eligible for appointment to the Director role, nor could they seek a general staff position.¹⁵⁸

It is unlikely that the intention of the Bill is to be so limited, however, in the absence of a definition identifying the intended boundary, or an explanation in the statement of compatibility as to how limiting the appointments to ‘Cairns’ does not limit freedom of movement, the purpose of the clause is not sufficiently linked to the limitation the clause creates. Further, alternative approaches are available, like those already in place by DETSI in placing officers empowered to act under the QCMP throughout Croc Country.¹⁵⁹

Committee comment



On balance, the restriction on freedom of movement could be reasonable given the purpose of the QCA is to manage an animal population primarily resident in North Queensland.

However, the committee considers that clauses 6(2) and 9(3)(c) of the Bill have the potential to unjustifiably limit human rights. The geographic limitations requirements imposed by clause 6(2) and 9(3)(c) of the Bill are not demonstrably justified, notably, because the Statement of Compatibility explicitly rules out the Bill’s engagement of the right.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Explanatory Notes, p 2; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, First Session of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament - 19 February 2025*, p 134.

¹⁵⁷ Bill, sch 1.

¹⁵⁸ See Cairns Regional Council, ‘Mayor & Councillors – Find your Division’ (Webpage, 5 September 2024, accessed 23 June 2025) <<https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/council/your-council/mayor-and-councillors>>.

¹⁵⁹ See, Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 2.

¹⁶⁰ Statement of Compatibility, p 1.

4.2. The definition of crocodile

The Bill defines ‘crocodile’ as *Crocodylus porosus*, or the saltwater (estuarine) crocodile.¹⁶¹ Adult saltwater crocodiles’ range in size from 2.5 to 7 metres and are the largest species of crocodilian in the world.¹⁶² They are one of the most widespread crocodilian species, and can be found as far west as Sri Lanka, and throughout Southeast Asia, Oceania and Northern Australia.¹⁶³

4.3. Operation of the QCMP under the QCA

The role of the QCMP under the proposed framework is somewhat unclear. The Bill contains references to the QCMP, requiring the Director to review the plan within 6 months to establish a zero-tolerance zone.¹⁶⁴ This suggests an intention to maintain the existing QCMP, but with changes to the responsible authority and some zoning.

At the public briefing on 11 June 2025, the Member for Hill was questioned about whether anything could be done under the current framework to address concerns, and said:

With regard to the current framework, I cannot answer that, that is why I am introducing this bill. All I can see with the present framework is that it is not working so something has to change to make the framework work. It is up to the government now to make a decision on making that framework work. [...] That is why I have put this bill together: to make the framework work.

Development of the current iteration of the QCMP began in 2017. In 2021, an independent expert committee reviewed the QCMP and determined it ‘was world-class, fit for purpose and highly effective in reducing the risks to public safety while conserving crocodile populations in the wild’. A further review of the QCMP is currently underway with public consultation taking place in 2024-25.¹⁶⁵ However, the explanatory notes for the Bill do not:

- adequately address progress made under the QCMP between 2017 and present (which is important given the rationale for the current and earlier Bills remains unchanged)
- identify specific deficiencies in the current approach to justify change; and
- outline how the proposed framework would work with the QCMP, given that the Bill does not purport to repeal any current legislation or regulatory processes.

¹⁶¹ Bill, sch 1.

¹⁶² See for example, Gordon Grigg and Carl Gans, ‘Morphology and Physiology of the Crocodylia’ (1993) 40(2) *Fauna of Australia* 326; Graeme Webb and Charlie Manolis, *Crocodiles of Australia* (Reed Books, 1989).

¹⁶³ 2019 Technical Report, p 9.

¹⁶⁴ Bill, cl 21.

¹⁶⁵ DETSI, ‘Queensland Crocodile Management Plan review’ (Webpage, accessed 27 May 2025) <<https://environment.desi.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/crocodiles/management/consultation>>.

4.4. Creation of a ‘zero-tolerance zone’ and decree of ‘populated waterways’

The Bill proposes that the Director be empowered to, within 6 months of commencement, review the QCMP for the purposes of establishing a ‘zero-tolerance zone’.¹⁶⁶ The zero-tolerance zone includes each ‘populated waterway’ and permits the killing or removal of any crocodile found in that zone.¹⁶⁷ Neither the Bill or the explanatory notes explain the difference between the zero-tolerance zone and the existing removal zones A, B, or F under the QCMP.

The Director’s functions include ‘to declare and manage crocodile sanctuaries and populated waterways’.¹⁶⁸ A populated waterway may be declared, by gazette notice, for the purposes of:

- protecting members of the public from the risk of harm from crocodiles
- allowing a person authorised to kill or remove a crocodile to kill or relocate the crocodile to a sanctuary or farm.¹⁶⁹

The Bill defines ‘populated waterways’ as ‘a populated waterway declared under section 19’;¹⁷⁰ this means the scope of populated waterway would be determined by the Director.¹⁷¹ The Director is required to produce an annual report which would include ‘the number and location of each crocodile sanctuary or populated waterway declared during the year’.¹⁷²

Under the proposed provisions, it would appear that crocodiles are to be killed or removed from ‘populated waterways’ where the area is used for recreational activities.¹⁷³ The Bill proposes to allow persons with an authority to enter onto land and kill a crocodile found in a ‘populated waterway’. However, the Bill does not require that the crocodile has engaged in aggressive or dangerous behaviour.

4.5. Removing and killing crocodiles found on private land

The Bill empowers the Director of the QCA to authorise the killing or removal of crocodiles, by an approved person, located on private land, where an owner has made a request to that effect, regardless of the threat posed by that particular animal.¹⁷⁴ In the Explanatory Speech on the Bill, the Member for Hill stated:

*[...] Importantly, allowing landowners to contact the Crocodile Authority to ask to have crocodiles immediately removed from their property by an approved person.*¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁶ Bill, cl 21(1).

¹⁶⁷ Bill, cl 21(2).

¹⁶⁸ Bill, cl 10(1)(q).

¹⁶⁹ Bill, cl 19(1).

¹⁷⁰ Bill, schedule 1 (definitions)

¹⁷¹ Explanatory Notes, p 1.

¹⁷² Bill, cl 16(1), (2)(g)

¹⁷³ Explanatory Notes, p 1.

¹⁷⁴ Bill, cl 10(1)(i).

¹⁷⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, First Session of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament - 19 February 2025*, p 135.

The Bill does not define ‘approved person’; rather, it vests power in the Director to authorise a person, who has the consent of the landowner, or on State leasehold land, to enter the land for the purpose of killing or removing the crocodile.¹⁷⁶

It is unclear if the Bill intends for waterways on private land to be able to be classified as ‘populated waterways’ given that the standard of assessment for such a classification is the Director’s regard of the ‘public’s recreational or commercial use and enjoyment of the waterway’.¹⁷⁷

Unlike previous iterations of the Bill, this Bill does not explicitly require that an ‘approved person’ undertake any training or otherwise prove their suitability for the role. Instead, the Bill requires the Minister to produce subordinate legislation, within 2 months of commencement, with one of the objectives to be met by the subordinate legislation being ‘enabling the director to authorise an adult, who the director reasonably believes has the skills and training to safely kill crocodiles, to kill [crocodiles]’.¹⁷⁸

Further, the Bill does not provide a proposed time frame for removal, nor does it require the QCA to kill or remove the crocodile upon the request of the landowner, it merely grants the landowner the right to request removal.¹⁷⁹ The Bill fails to consider mechanisms already within the QCMP which enable private landowners to contact DETSI to remove crocodiles located on land who pose a threat, including in agricultural settings.¹⁸⁰

4.6. Increased culling

The Bill proposes to allow annual culling of crocodiles which is intended to ‘constrain population growth and reduce crocodile numbers in populated regions’.¹⁸¹ The Director’s functions include authorising ‘persons to carry out the culling of crocodiles in any part of the State’, with the Director to decide how many crocodiles may be culled each year.¹⁸² Widespread culling to reduce crocodile populations is not permitted under the existing QCMP.

4.7. Trade and farming (including egg harvesting)

One of the policy intentions of the Bill is to ‘create a significant and sustainable crocodile industry in Queensland’¹⁸³. It appears that this would be done primarily through promoting the farming of crocodiles and harvesting of crocodile eggs,¹⁸⁴ and through the introduction of a limited form of commercial hunting (see section 4.8).

¹⁷⁶ Bill, cl 10(1)(i).

¹⁷⁷ Bill, cl 19(2).

¹⁷⁸ Bill, cl 23(2)(c).

¹⁷⁹ Bill, cl 10(1)(i).

¹⁸⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

¹⁸¹ Explanatory Notes, p 3.

¹⁸² Bill, cl 10(1)(e)(f).

¹⁸³ Explanatory Notes, p 2.

¹⁸⁴ Bill, cl 10(1)(o).

The Bill allows the Director to authorise persons to operate crocodile farms and crocodile sanctuaries.¹⁸⁵ Crocodiles removed under the Bill may be relocated to these farms and sanctuaries.¹⁸⁶

The Bill requires the Minister to develop ‘subordinate legislation implementing action to achieve the policies’ to be tabled within 2 months of commencement.¹⁸⁷ Those policy objectives, outlined in clause 23(2), include requiring the development of regulatory framework for licences, permits or other authorities under the NC Act relating to crocodiles and egg harvesting, and would likely also regulate crocodile farms and crocodile sanctuaries. Notably, the Bill proposes to limit authorities to farm crocodiles (issued after commencement) to Australian entities.¹⁸⁸



4.7.1. FLP Issue – Delegation of Legislative Power

Legislation should allow the delegation of legislative power only in appropriate cases and to appropriate persons.¹⁸⁹ The Bill provides that the Minister must, within 2 months of commencement, table subordinate legislation covering a wide range of matters including:

- providing the Director with power to issue, cancel, suspend, amend and impose conditions on licenses in relation to crocodiles and crocodile eggs
- enabling the Director to authorise a person to harvest crocodile eggs
- enabling the Director to authorise a person, whom the Director reasonably believes has the skills and training, to kill crocodiles, and
- enabling the director to ‘take action’ within 48 hours if the QCA is notified of a crocodile located in a zero-tolerance zone.¹⁹⁰

Whether a Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament depends on whether, for example, the Bill allows the delegation of legislative power only in appropriate cases and sufficiently subjects the exercise of a delegated legislative power to the scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly. Further, clause 4 of the Bill attempts to legislate out of inconsistencies to the extent of the inconsistency. However, in the case of fundamental legislative principle, this would mean the Bill could be inconsistent with section 27A of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1954*.¹⁹¹

Generally, the greater level of political interference with the institution of Parliament, the greater likelihood that the power should be prescribed in an Act of Parliament and not delegate below Parliament.¹⁹² The matters which the Bill requires to be set out in subordinate legislation include matters that may impact on individual rights and liberties. For example, the Director’s power to cancel, suspend, amend or impose conditions on

¹⁸⁵ Bill, cl 10(1)(b).

¹⁸⁶ See for example, Bill cl 10(1)(h)(iii) and 10(1)(i).

¹⁸⁷ Bill, cl 23(1).

¹⁸⁸ Bill, cl 23(2)(k).

¹⁸⁹ LSA, s 4(4)(a).

¹⁹⁰ Bill, cl 23.

¹⁹¹ OQPC, *FLP Notebook*, p 33.

¹⁹² LSA, s 4(4)(a), 4(4)(b). See also QOPC, *FLP Notebook*, p 145.

licenses relating to crocodile management and eggs may be more appropriate to be included in the Bill, rather than subordinate legislation.¹⁹³ The Bill is also silent on whether subordinate legislation would provide for rights of review in the context of these decisions. The explanatory notes do not contemplate the Bill's consistency with fundamental legislative principle regarding the delegation of legislative power.¹⁹⁴

Committee comment



The committee considers that the relevant clauses are inconsistent with the fundamental legislative principle of the delegation of legislative power and that the powers to be delegated to subordinate legislation would be better suited to be included in the Bill, to enable greater scrutiny and ensure that the Bill is consistent with the institution of Parliament.

4.8. Special provisions for Traditional Owners

A stated policy intent of the Bill is to 'empower indigenous landholders, by placing value on crocodiles and thereby creating an unprecedented economic opportunity for these landholders' and to 'empower [them] in regards to [sic] all aspects of crocodile management'.¹⁹⁵

The Bill proposes to authorise the Director, with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land, to allow traditional owners to:

- kill crocodiles on their land
- grant permission to others to kill crocodiles on land, including for a fee, which introduces a form of commercial hunting
- relocate crocodiles to a crocodile sanctuary or crocodile farm
- harvest crocodile eggs on the land, and
- otherwise manage crocodiles on the land.¹⁹⁶

Further, the Bill encourages increased consultation with traditional owners with respect to crocodile management and proposes to 'allow' Indigenous landholders to apply to manage crocodiles, owing to their connection to country.¹⁹⁷ The Bill does not provide clarity in how these proposals will operate in line with the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*, particularly the Minister's declaratory powers under the Act, and the management of country separately to native title determinations.¹⁹⁸

The Bill does not contain a proposed framework to guide the introduction of commercial hunting, nor does it delegate management of the same. Further, the use of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of biodiversity with the involvement of, and in co-operation with, the

¹⁹³ Bill, cl 23(2)(a).

¹⁹⁴ Explanatory Notes, p 4.

¹⁹⁵ Explanatory Notes, p 2.

¹⁹⁶ Bill, cl 10(1)(h).

¹⁹⁷ Explanatory Notes, p 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*.

owners of the knowledge, is a central consideration of the EPBC Act and in wildlife management.¹⁹⁹ While the Bill attempts to integrate Indigenous consultation into crocodile management, it is unclear how it will do so in line with the EPBC Act.

Commercial hunting has been illegal in the Northern Territory since 1971 and Queensland since 1974. Commercial hunting has been previously proposed in NTCMP, most recently, in 2024, but has not been approved by the Commonwealth Government under the EPBC Act.²⁰⁰

Regarding the commercial hunting issue, the Member for Hill, in his response to submissions, noted that commercial hunting is legal in other parts of the world for native and protected animals where Indigenous communities have a connection to the animal.²⁰¹ However, the hunting seasons of those respective animals is strictly limited, including caps on the number of permits, dates in which hunting can take place, and restrictions on the type of weapon and method of killing that can be undertaken.²⁰² The commercial hunting of saltwater crocodiles is not permitted anywhere in the world.

4.9. Public education

The Bill does not vest the QCA with any responsibility to facilitate ongoing education, or otherwise reference or support public education programs, including those already in place, like 'Be Crocwise'.

In his explanatory speech, the Member for Hill appeared to downplay the importance of public education, stating:

I will keep presenting bills until the government and departments start to listen to North Queensland voices, take meaningful action to protect human lives over crocodiles and stop using throwaway comments such as 'be croc wise', putting up more crocodile signs and closing beaches as a solution.

In responding to questions about public education programs at the public briefing on 11 June 2025, the Member for Hill stated:

We hear today that we need to educate people and put up more croc signs. There is an admission now that there is a croc problem. The reality is that the people in North Queensland do not want to be educated on how to be croc wise. They want to see the crocs gone at all costs, by whatever means necessary. [...]

¹⁹⁹ EPBC Act, s 3(1)(g).

²⁰⁰ NTCMP, p 30.

²⁰¹ Mr Shane Knuth MP, *Response to Submissions* (3 June 2025) p 4.

²⁰² For further information see: University of British Columbia, 'The History and Divergent Views on Grizzly Bear Hunting in British Columbia, Canada' (Open Case Studies Webpage, accessed 25 June 2025) <<https://cases.open.ubc.ca/the-history-and-divergent-views-on-grizzly-bear-hunting-in-british-columbiacanada/#:~:text=Over%20the%20past%20decades%2C%20trophy,threatened%20status%20in%20the%20province.>>. Government of the Northwest Territories, 'Apply for a hunting license' (Webpage, accessed 25 June 2025) <<https://www.gov.nt.ca/ecc/en/services/apply-hunting-licence>>. Government of Canada, 'Ceremonial Bison Harvest Banff National Park' (Webpage, accessed 25 June 2025) <<https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/ab/banff/info/gestion-management/bison/faq>>. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 'Guide to Alligator Hunting in Florida' (Webpage, accessed 25 June 2025) <<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/alligator/harvest/hunt-guide/>>.

*This is what they are crying out for, not to be educated, not to be told not to walk too close to the beach water [...].*²⁰³

In response to a Question on Notice, in which the committee requested that the Member for Hill provide evidence to support his position following the public briefing on 11 June 2025, he quoted a section from the NTCMP, but excluded the final section of the NTCMP which provides:

*These actions mitigate the risk to some extent however public education remains a key priority. At best, after a number of crocodiles are removed from these zones, the risk can only be reduced to medium. Crocodiles are wild animals that can be difficult to detect and capture and can swim long distances. At any given time, there may be undetected crocodiles already within the zone, known crocodiles yet to be removed, and new crocodiles entering the zone. Even when a crocodile has been removed, it leaves a vacated territory for another crocodile to fill. People living in or visiting areas in this zone need to practice Be Crocwise behaviour to reduce the likelihood of a crocodile attack.*²⁰⁴

4.10. Reporting crocodile sightings

The Bill does not provide a mechanism to facilitate reporting, nor does it empower the Director to determine the method by which a report of a crocodile sighting should be made.

4.11. Stakeholder submissions

The committee consulted broadly during its inquiry and received submissions and advice on the various matters addressed by the Bill, which are discussed under the respective headings below.

A significant issue that emerged during the committee's consideration of the Bill was the lack of broad public consultation during the development of the Bill (and its predecessors) including with experts and traditional owners.

In contrast to the list of 7 stakeholders provided by the Member for Hill, the committee accepted 190 submissions:

- 131 were wholly against the Bill; and
- a further 11 submissions acknowledged the intent of the Bill while calling for amendments to the proposed framework.²⁰⁵

Many industry stakeholders had not been consulted during development of the Bill or any of its previous iterations. At the public hearings in Cairns and Brisbane, the committee asked Professor Craig Franklin and witnesses from the EDO, C.R.O.C Qld, including Bob Irwin Sr and Emeritus Professor Gordon Grigg, Defend the Wild, Australia Zoo and various

²⁰³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 12.

²⁰⁴ See, NTCMP 2021-2026, p 11. Cf Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill, *Response to Question on Notice – 19 June 2025*, p 7-8.

²⁰⁵ See Submissions 3-10, 20, 31-35, 37-42, 44-58, 60, 62, 68, 70-73, 79, 81, 85, 88, 90, 92, 94, 95, 97, 100, 103-106, 108-119, 121-161, 166, 167, 169, 171, 176. Cf Submission 1, 21, 28, 36, 74, 82, 93, 98, 99, 139, 174.

Traditional Owners if they were consulted on this or any previous iteration of the Bill. Their answers were unequivocal: ‘No’.²⁰⁶

Many stakeholders were critical of how ‘evidence’ had been employed to justify the approach taken in the Bill. For example, in their submission, Australia Zoo stated:

*Again, the Introductory Speech and Explanatory Notes is very selective in its use of statistics and contains many inaccuracies and ‘fake news’. The Bill’s authors again say they have consulted widely but have not contacted Queensland researchers who have carried out the world’s longest continuous study of crocodilian behaviour – Australia Zoo and the University of Queensland.*²⁰⁷

Professor Craig Franklin said:

*I was not consulted nor approached to provide advice on the proposed Bill despite being research active in Far North Queensland and an internationally recognised, leading crocodile scientific expert in Queensland.*²⁰⁸

Committee comment



The committee acknowledges the concerns of members of the community who live in Croc Country regarding the risks posed by crocodiles. The committee recognises that there may be support for the Bill from persons and communities who did not submit on the Bill.

However, from the committee’s review of submissions and consideration of evidence gathered at hearings, it became clear that the consultation undertaken during development of the Bill (and previous iterations) either did not engage stakeholders with opposing views to that of the Member for Hill, or that opposition to the Bill was ignored, given the overwhelming number of submissions in opposition to the Bill received during this inquiry.²⁰⁹

The committee heard from a range of stakeholders in academia, conservation, tourism, local government and the crocodile industry. These submitters were located across the State, and many have close ties to North Queensland, having either lived there, or having spent considerable time in Croc Country by virtue of their expertise or work in crocodile management.

The Committee notes that the conclusions reached in the explanatory notes and statements made by the Member for Hill do not align with the evidence heard during this inquiry.

²⁰⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 10, 20. Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 6, 10.

²⁰⁷ Submission 166, p 2.

²⁰⁸ Submission 57, p 2.

²⁰⁹ See for example, Explanatory Notes, p 3.

4.11.1. Crocodile management

There are diverging views about how to best manage the risk posed by crocodiles in Queensland. It is unlikely that stakeholders across industry, conservation and community groups are going to see eye-to-eye. However, there were common themes raised by stakeholders regarding ‘what is effective crocodile management’. They agreed:

- public safety is a paramount, but that it cannot come at the expense of well-established research and conservation efforts, and
- education is key to ensuring public safety and reducing human-crocodile conflict.

A number of submissions advocated for a balanced approach to crocodile management, acknowledging that there is an opportunity to improve the current QCMP with safe, responsible and evidence-based solutions.²¹⁰ It was noted at the public hearing in Brisbane that the while QCMP is world-leading, departmental resourcing to support the framework could be improved, ultimately leading to better outcomes for locals and animals alike. Bill Ferguson from Australia Zoo said:

*I support the move towards a constant and better resourced review of the populations. We have an understanding that some of the populations are starting to stabilise in their numbers in the more remote areas, where problem crocs are not being removed or large crocodiles are not being removed.*²¹¹

Peter Darby, from the Rockhampton Waterski Club wrote in his submission:

*I have the highest of respect for the DESI staff and what they do. But I do think that they are spread too thin, with respect to management of other animals. Therefore, the current growing crocodile problems and concerns in the Fitzroy River and the greater area of QLD are not always addressed.*²¹²

Peter Freeman from Hartley’s Crocodile Adventures said:

*To operate a good crocodile management plan in Queensland does take resources. Hopefully, out of this exercise, if we can see more resources going into the pending management plan then I feel we should be able to satisfy most of the needs of farmers, the community and those who are concerned about crocodile attacks.*²¹³

Mr Freeman also noted that his farm is used by the Department for training officers who interact with crocodiles, to enable them to gain hands on experience in a controlled environment.²¹⁴

Bob Irwin Sr, father of the late Steve Irwin, noted that he isn’t of the view that there is a systemic issue with response times, because the quality of the training and experience amongst those persons employed under the QCMP is comprehensive.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ See, for example, Submissions 1, 21, 28, 36, 74, 82, 93, 98, 99, 139, 174.

²¹¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 21.

²¹² Submission 167, p 2.

²¹³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 16.

²¹⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 17.

²¹⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 10.

In response to questions about delays in response time by QPWS staff who respond to sightings, DETSI said:

[...] You need to consider the habitat and the environment from which you are trying to remove the crocodile and the approach you will take. Can you deploy a trap easily? Is it in a location where a crocodile will go into the trap? Where is it? When you trap the crocodile, what means can you use to transport it to a farm or another location? There is a range of factors that we need to consider that influences the time it can take to locate and trap a crocodile.

We try to do that as quickly as possible. Those that take an extended period are when the crocodile either is very timid or is very difficult to track because the habitat does not allow us to get fully into a location. We do not say, 'We can't find it.' We deploy resources and we try to trap them as quickly as possible when they are declared a problem crocodile.²¹⁶

Many submitters emphasised that there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of human-crocodile conflict, and therefore, the objective of the Bill itself is moot.²¹⁷ Professor Franklin noted:

The 'zero-tolerance zone' concept is especially problematic because:

- (1) It creates an expectation that areas can be permanently cleared of crocodiles, disregarding the highly mobile nature of estuarine crocodiles.*
- (2) It is likely to fragment important habitat and populations, disrupting ecosystem services and the important ecological roles crocodiles play in waterways.²¹⁸*

Professor Franklin hypothesised that, from an ecological perspective, removing crocodiles would have a disproportionately large impact on the health of local ecosystems both from the top-down, as an apex predator, and the bottom-up, via nutrient loading.²¹⁹

Apex predators hold the top rank in a plant-herbivore-carnivore food chain and the uppermost position of an ecosystems trophic pyramid, making them the final destination of energy flow in a given biological community.²²⁰ Some research has concluded that crocodilians are a 'keystone species' in both fresh and salt-water ecosystems.²²¹ Notably, keystone species have 'low functional redundancy' meaning that if they were to disappear from an ecosystem, no other species could adequately fill the gap left in the ecology of the system.²²² There are various examples of how removal of keystone species has

²¹⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 3.

²¹⁷ See for example, Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 14; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

²¹⁸ Submission 57, p 4 citing Mariana Campbell et al., 'Quantifying the ecological role of crocodiles: a 50-year review of metabolic requirements and nutrient contributions in northern Australia' (2025) 292(2042) *The Royal Society Proceedings B*.

²¹⁹ Submission 57, p 5 citing Mariana Campbell et al., 'Quantifying the ecological role of crocodiles: a 50-year review of metabolic requirements and nutrient contributions in northern Australia' (2025) 292(2042) *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

²²⁰ See for example, Arian Wallach, 'What is an apex predator?' (2015) 124(11) *OIKOS* 1453-1461.

²²¹ Ruchira Somaweera et al., 'The ecological importance of crocodilians: towards evidence-based justification for their conservation' (2020) 95(4) *Biological Reviews* 936.

²²² See, for example, Craig Franklin et al., 'Feeding across the food web: The interaction between diet, movement and body size in estuarine crocodiles' (2014) 40(3) *Austral Ecology* 275; L. Scott Mills et al., 'The Keystone-Species Concept in Ecology and Conservation' (1993) 43(4) *Bioscience* 219.

negatively impacted ecosystems (for example, the removal of Gray wolves, and their eventual re-introduction, in Yellowstone National Park).²²³

At the public hearing in Brisbane, Professor Franklin and Australia Zoo noted that apex predators play an essential role in the foundations of an ecosystem, with Professor Franklin comparing the removal of an apex predator to removing the essential foundations of a home – it would collapse.²²⁴

Mr Dennis Ah-Kee, a Wanjuru Yidinji elder, spoke to the connection between the health of the ecosystem and the cultural relationship with crocodiles:

*Our organisation is called Ganyarra, which is 'crocodile' in our language, so it is very important to us. ... From a spiritual sense, yes, it is an important part of the ecosystem. While you have crocodiles in there, you have a healthy system. They help maintain the health of the waterways. Without crocodiles, the waterways get sick. That is what we are trying to avoid.*²²⁵

The Member for Hill took issue with the witnesses who appeared at the public hearing in Cairns, stating:

The meeting was stacked by anti-bill lobbyists, who did not appear to have read the Bill or the explanatory notes.

*While their input is acknowledged, I stress they did not represent the large majority of Far North Queenslanders who do support stronger crocodile control measures outlined in the bill.*²²⁶

At the request of the committee, the Member for Hill provided evidence to support his position on the need for 'zero-tolerance zones' following the public briefing on 11 June 2025. The evidence provided by the Member flatly refuted the position that crocodiles are apex predators, and that there is a connection between the presence of crocodiles and the health of its surrounding ecosystem.²²⁷ This appears to be an untenable position based on prevailing peer-reviewed evidence.

The committee notes that the Member for Hill's response relies on academic research to conclude that claims theorising that crocodiles have an ecological impact on their surroundings are unable to be used as reference points based on various methodology concerns. However, the paper cited in the Member's response appears to undermine his position and states:

Overall, we conclude that the use of crocodylians as ecological indicators of ecosystem responses to management programs, or of ecosystem health in general, is still at an early stage with only a single system containing robust data. However, taken together, results from studies to date demonstrate that most crocodylians meet the criteria of ideal indicator species in that they represent integrated ecosystem change, show clear responses (e.g. reproductive output,

²²³ See, for example, William Ripple and Robert Beschta, 'Trophic cascades in Yellowstone: the first 15 years after wolf reintroduction' (2012) 145(1) *Biological Conservation* 205; Douglas Smith, 'Yellowstone after Wolves' (2003) 53(4) *Bioscience* 330.

²²⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 21.

²²⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, pp 9-10.

²²⁶ Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill, *Response to submissions on the Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025*, 2 June 2025, p 1. See also, Explanatory Notes, p 3-4.

²²⁷ Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill, *Response to Question on Notice – 19 June 2025*, p 3-5.

*body condition, abundance, etc.), can be monitored reasonably easily, and are often of central interest to management and conservation concerns.*²²⁸

Committee comment



The committee appreciates that the Member for Hill may disagree with the categorising crocodiles as apex predators. However, based on the evidence, the committee concludes that crocodiles hold immense ecological importance; species-specific conservation and management must be considered in the broader context of their environmental impact.

The committee agrees that a 'place-based approach' to crocodile management is key. However, 'zone management' currently employed by DETSI and QPWS under the QCMP is accepted best practice.

The committee is unsure how the 'zero-tolerance zone' would be different from Zones A, B and F under the current QCMP, other than in name. Further, the committee has concerns that renaming zones with active removal processes and atypical populations as 'zero-tolerance' will create a real risk of complacency amongst human populations. No crocodile management framework can completely eliminate the risk of crocodile-human interactions which is why education remains essential.

While QCMP zone management is, in theory, a 'place-based approach', it is clear that local stakeholders across Croc Country have concerns about zoning and the efficacy of implementation, and there is more that can be done, particularly in consultation with Traditional Owners on country.

²²⁸ Ruchira Somaweera et al., 'The ecological importance of crocodylians: towards evidence-based justification for their conservation' (2020) 95(4) *Biological Reviews* 936, 945.

4.11.2. Zone F – Mareeba Shire

The committee heard from Councillor Lenore Wyatt from Mareeba Shire Council, who noted that the Mareeba Shire is not traditionally considered a traditional crocodile habitat, and that the crocodile population present in the surrounding waters, including Two Mile Creek and Lake Mitchell areas are atypical.²²⁹ Councillor Wyatt explained that the Council has been advocating for the expansion of 'Zone F' which would empower the QPWS to automatically remove crocodiles found in the areas which are considered atypical habitat locations.²³⁰

George Adil submitted that there have been positive steps regarding the Zone F in the Mareeba Shire, following his own advocacy with the council.²³¹ There was general support from witnesses across industry and conservation groups that crocodiles found in removal zones, or that display dangerous behaviour, should be removed in line with the QCMP.²³²

At the public hearing, the committee heard about a large crocodile which had evaded capture by QPWS officers, who had attended the property in the Mareeba Shire 17 times since the animal was reported and determined appropriate for removal in early 2025.²³³

Cr Wyatt told the committee:

*[...] the farmers used to say, 'Look, we don't care. No-one cares about us up here.' We really asked them to step up and start reporting, and they have. They do what is requested of them. As soon as they report, DETSI come up, but it is the delay in the actual removal—whatever it is; it can be removal to farm, it could be culling. I know for a fact that they tried to harpoon this particular crocodile. They have tried to cull this crocodile, because it is so elusive.*²³⁴

DETSI commented on the submissions regarding delays:

[...] We have what is known as our QWildlife app, and people can report sightings through that. We follow up on every one of those sightings very promptly to get some details as to what behaviour the crocodile is displaying. If it is identified as a potentially problem crocodile that is displaying behaviour that we would be concerned about, wildlife officers or rangers will go out and do an assessment.

*I think some of the commentary that you have had has been around when a matter is reported and it might take some time to remove it after we do an assessment. We try to remove a problem crocodile within seven days, and the median is generally below three days. There are circumstances that need to be considered when you are trying to remove problem crocodiles. We need to ensure that our staff can do it safely. They are a dangerous animal, so you cannot put staff at risk.*²³⁵

²²⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 2.

²³⁰ Submission 175, appendix; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

²³¹ Submission 172, p 1.

²³² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 8, 16.

²³³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

²³⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

²³⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 10.

Committee comment

The committee empathises with the community who have done the right thing by reporting crocodile sightings to the appropriate authorities. We have come to understand that crocodiles are experts in evading capture which can make capture by QPWS staff challenging. The committee also notes that the crocodile in question was successfully captured on 10 June 2025, but that this was not reported until after the public hearing in Brisbane.

Where a crocodile is found in an area that is an atypical habitat, the committee believes that DETSI need to be empowered and resourced to make efficient, timely decisions to ensure the safety of the public, while balancing the humane and ethical treatment of an animal that is deemed a risk, and communicate with the public about those decisions.

The committee encourages DETSI to consider implementing a threshold which enable increased efforts to catch animals after a certain period of time. For example, where officers have attended the known location of the animal more than 5 times without success, there could be an increase in monitoring to ensure the animal is apprehended safely, humanely, and efficiently.

The Bill itself has not sufficiently identified how its proposed approach would improve on crocodile management. The committee is satisfied that the QCMP is fit for purpose and reflects best practice. The review of the QCMP, currently underway, presents an opportunity to incorporate any improvements based on evidence into crocodile management practices in Queensland.

Noting that the QCMP is currently under review, the committee encourages the Member for Hill, and other Members of Parliament representing electorates in Croc Country, to consider how he could work with the Minister and DETSI to improve current crocodile management within the existing framework.

**Recommendation 2**

The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation expand 'Zone F' (atypical habitat with automatic removal) in the Mareeba Shire and engage with Mareeba Shire Council to determine appropriate boundaries of the same.

4.11.3. Definition of crocodile

The Bill would not contemplate the *Crocodylus johnstoni*, or, the freshwater crocodile, in its proposed operation. Adult freshwater crocodiles range in size from 1.5 – 3 metres and are differentiated from their saltwater counterparts by a longer, narrower snout.²³⁶

The Member for Hill was asked why freshwater crocodiles were excluded from the Bill at the public briefing on 11 June 2025:

*[...] There are issues with freshwater crocs in public waterways, you know, such as Lake Eacham which we would like to see removed, but the big issue that we are seeing is as was mentioned down in the Fitzroy River, where they came across a 5-metre croc, it's so much better to target that 5-metre croc [...]. The freshwater crocodiles no doubt have a bite, but there has never been a strong interest in removing freshwater crocs unless they feel that they are a threat in lakes and waterholes that are used by the public.*²³⁷

Further, Australia Zoo noted in their written submission:

*This Bill goes beyond previous iterations by removing all reference to 'rogue' crocodiles. Previous draft legislation referred to the removal of all 'rogue' crocodiles or those which displayed threatening behaviour towards humans.*²³⁸

It may be that the removal of reference to a 'rogue' crocodile departs from the current framework of determining a 'problem' crocodile, thereby permitting removal of all crocodiles in a particular area, regardless of the behaviour of that particular animal.

Committee comment



The committee believes that the proposed definition of 'crocodile' in the Bill is problematic, as it is simultaneously narrow, while also vague. The removal of references to 'rogue' crocodiles effectively stop assessments of what is a 'problem crocodile' and would expand removal to all crocodiles, regardless of risk. The committee concluded that the limited definition of crocodile is inconsistent with the Bill's proposal to empower the QCA to hold responsibility for 'all aspects of crocodile management in Queensland'.

The committee notes that the QCMP is effectively silent on management practices specifically relating to the freshwater crocodile, when compared to, for example, the Northern Territory's crocodile management plan.

In consultation with experts and local stakeholder groups, DETSI may consider how to clarify the intended approach of the QCMP in relation to freshwater crocodiles. For example, the Member for Hill's expressed desire to remove freshwater crocodiles from Lake Eacham would not be possible under the current draft of the Bill.

²³⁶ See for example, Graeme Webb and Charlie Manolis, *Crocodiles of Australia* (Reed Books, 1989).

²³⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 12.

²³⁸ Submission 166, p 6.

4.11.4. Location of staff

DETSI staff responsible for the QCMP are located throughout Croc Country in Cairns, Innisfail, Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton. This allows them to respond promptly to crocodile sightings:

*Given the large geographic extent of the crocodiles' range in Queensland, requiring the staff to reside in Cairns would increase the time it takes to respond to crocodile sightings and incidents and may have an effect of reducing public safety in areas away from Cairns.*²³⁹

Deputy Mayor Lenore Wyatt of Mareeba Shire Council noted that she feels local representation is essential for areas which are adversely impacted by crocodile populations and that the QCMP should employ more of a 'place-based approach'.²⁴⁰

Committee comment



The committee notes that the Bill's proposal to require Queensland Crocodile Authority staff to reside in Cairns may adversely impact operations throughout Croc Country. At present, QPWS staff responsible for crocodile management are strategically located throughout Croc Country: in Cairns, Innisfail, Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton.²⁴¹ This facilitates improved responsiveness to sightings and the timely removal of problem crocodiles. There is no evidence that centralising staff in Cairns would improve outcomes for Queenslanders.

Furthermore, no clear explanation was provided about the difference between the proposed QCA and existing crocodile management operations undertaken by QPWS staff. The committee's analysis suggests that there is no real difference other than the location of staff. The committee prefers the existing arrangements which see staff spread throughout Croc Country.

²³⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 2.

²⁴⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 5.

²⁴¹ DETSI correspondence, 17 April 2025, p 2.

4.11.5. Resourcing, Communication and QPWS Response

A number of stakeholders raised issues with communication and public information sharing from DETSI and QPWS following a crocodile sighting.²⁴² The current iteration of reporting through the QWildlife application, in addition to the Department website and phone number, was introduced in 2020.²⁴³

There was a general feeling that reporting a sighting had no impact, in part, because of the perceived lack of follow up from QPWS and DETSI.²⁴⁴

Mr Hardy said:

We need to document the hazard a little bit better. [...]

With the report of the sightings as well, we get a lot of international tourists who are not aware of Crocwise and the process of reporting either, so I think more signage, making it easier to report sightings and croc education is really important for us in the Whitsundays. It is not obvious how to report croc sightings if you are a tourist from interstate or overseas, so I think we need an easier process to get better data.²⁴⁵

Ms French said:

[...] one of the most positive shifts we have seen is in language. The media now use the term 'reckless behaviour' instead of 'problem crocodile'. This is crucial in changing the public's understanding because we cannot change a crocodile's behaviour, but we can change our own.²⁴⁶

Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard that there have been instances where Indigenous communities have not been privy to reporting processes or decisions about removal. At the public hearing in Cairns, Mr Warren Martens, a Kunggandji Cultural Custodian and Director of the North Queensland Land Council said:

We now are in a position where we are getting crocs removed without consultation with us. We are hearing about it after it has been done. There are no processes in place to even have those basic consultations with our people.²⁴⁷

Some stakeholders raised concerns that there had been underreporting of deaths or injuries in remote First Nations communities, but this was refuted by Mr Yanner at the public hearing in Brisbane:

CHAIR: *[...] In some of the submissions, there is reference made to underreporting of injury or deaths amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Is there any evidence of that or if you are aware of any evidence of injuries or fatalities which have not been reported correctly amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and if it is a bigger issue than we believe it could be?*

²⁴² See for example, Submission 81; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4, 5.

²⁴³ DETSI, 'Report a crocodile' (Webpage, accessed 27 May 2025) <<https://environment.desi.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/crocodiles/report-crocodile>>.

²⁴⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 2.

²⁴⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4, 5.

²⁴⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

²⁴⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 4.

Mr Yanner: *I find that hard to believe. There is an old saying at home: the three fastest ways of communication—telephone, telegram, tell-a-black fella. Word gets around pretty bloody quick in our community. I mean, we have all been bitten by crocs. I have been mauled a few times. We have had them since kids, as little fellas.*

CHAIR: *Do you still have all your fingers?*

Mr Yanner: *Yes, I still have all my fingers; that is how good I am! I find it very hard to believe. Any crocodile attack today, even if a crocodile jumps up and looks at you the wrong way, it is usually leading on the ABC Radio an hour later, so I think that is probably unsubstantiated.*²⁴⁸

DETSI clarified that the QWildlife App is not meant to be used to provide public information regarding the location of crocodiles, or of actions taken by the department. Rather, it is used by the Department to follow up on public reports.²⁴⁹

Committee comment



Throughout this inquiry, all members of the committee engaged with the QWildlife application to understand how it works and the information available to the public through the application. At the public briefing on 11 June, the Deputy Chair opened the QWildlife application on his phone and noted that the application does not provide users with the ability to access information about reported sightings, or action taken by officers to remove an animal.²⁵⁰

While the committee acknowledges that, at present, the application is not a gateway for information to be provided to the public, the committee considers that there is significant scope to improve its functionality and utilise the application to expand the nature and type of information provided to Queenslanders. The committee considers this would be an extremely effective way of communicating with the public, since the application is already widely in use.

Further, the committee considers the use of signage, both permanent and temporary to be an essential part of the Crocwise strategy throughout Croc Country, and that signage should include a QR code to enable individuals to access more information, for example, the history of sightings at that location on the website, or that it takes you to a link to download the application.

²⁴⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

²⁴⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 3.

²⁵⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 3.



Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation include real-time reporting data of crocodile sightings and removals on the QWildlife application, with support from the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small Business in developing an improved interface.

4.11.6. Community education

The committee heard repeatedly, ‘we don’t have a crocodile problem, we have a people problem.’²⁵¹ Many submitters across tourism, industry, and conservation consistently emphasised that attacks often happen when there is a level of complacency in an individuals’ actions in Croc Country, or where they have acted in a way that is demonstrably in opposition to the guidance and education.²⁵²

A focus of media attention and commentary during the committee’s inquiry was the history of reckless behaviour with a totem crocodile, Clyde, near Babinda.²⁵³ Locals found a severed deer head in the water near the beaches where Clyde is commonly sighted, despite penalties and fines for baiting and feeding crocodiles under the NC Plan. DETSI installed temporary signage to in surrounding areas, following outcry from locals and advocacy groups.²⁵⁴

At the public hearing in Cairns, the committee Mr Ah-Kee said:

*We have a crocodile called Clyde. Everybody has seen Clyde on TV and social media where people are feeding it et cetera. Of course, that crocodile is probably going to end up getting into trouble, like attacking people et cetera, because people feed it. People do not understand and they never will understand because they keep on feeding it.*²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 7.

²⁵² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 7, 8, 19, 20. See also, Submissions 4, 46, 47, 60, 103, 166.

²⁵³ See, for example, Sophie McManus, ‘Reckless crocodile interactions spark calls for tougher penalties’ (ABC Far North, Article, 24 June 2025) <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-26/crocodile-interactions-spark-calls-for-tougher-penalties/105457366>>.

²⁵⁴ Sophie McManus, ‘Reckless crocodile interactions spark calls for tougher penalties’ (ABC Far North, Article, 24 June 2025) <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-26/crocodile-interactions-spark-calls-for-tougher-penalties/105457366>>.

²⁵⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 4.



Figure 6. Temporary Crocwise Signage near Babinda, June 2025

The issue of reckless behaviour is not new, with Amanda French, President of C.R.O.C. Qld, noting at the public hearing:

A man from outside the community, while filming on a GoPro, entered the water in speedos and lured his dog into the river, approaching a 4.1 metre crocodile. His dog was killed instantly. The man walked away with a scratch, but the crocodile, a highly totemic animal to the local community, was destroyed. No penalty was issued to the man and no educational response by the department followed.²⁵⁶

Mr Manolis warned the committee against taking steps backward on public education:

Ms DOOLEY: *Charlie, you mentioned education. If there is one common theme that we are hearing across every industry, and they might have opposing views, it is education. Could you comment on Crocwise as the existing education program and how effective it is? Do you think there should be any additions to that?*

Mr Manolis: *I cannot speak for Queensland's version of Crocwise or how that is being done. Certainly in my experience in the territory, we started in 1980 with rangers going around to schools. Even now I get adults coming up to me and saying, 'I remember you. I was in grade 2 and you brought in a crocodile.'*

On the importance of public education, Mr Manolis said:

It leaves a lasting memory with the information that you give them. In the NT's case the program was very successful and they then thought, 'We don't need it anymore' and they stopped it. Guess what? The increase of human-crocodile conflict came along and they implemented it again in a bigger way. Sometimes success can lead to a bit of complacency, even in government, that may be we have done enough.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 8.

²⁵⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 16.

Professor Franklin cautioned the committee that a reduction in public awareness of the threat posed by crocodiles will result in a false sense of security, stating:

*It will cost far less for the Queensland taxpayer to promote education than to go down the very ineffective path of culling. It will not work. It will not keep people safe.*²⁵⁸

Scott Hardy from the Whitsundays Regional Council said there is always a need for signage and community education.²⁵⁹ Cr Wyatt, who supports a cull, said that ‘we should never stop educating people’.²⁶⁰

Mr Tarquin Singleton, a Yirrganydji man, said at the public hearing in Cairns:

*With the culling aspect, a lot of people are complacent because there was a big cull before and then crocodiles were protected. The species has grown back from being critically endangered. Their population is coming back to where it is. People just need to be more understanding that murky water is not a good place to be swimming. Where fresh water and salt water touch each other, it is another indicator that there is the possibility of crocs in the water.*²⁶¹

Further, in the Coronial Investigation into the 2021 death of an experienced fisherman in Hinchinbrook channel, the findings concluded that a crocodile was responsible for his death.²⁶² The next of kin noted that the deceased was experienced in crocodile habitats, and that it was unlikely that he had provoked the crocodile.²⁶³ The Investigation concluded that, based on the theory of the next of kin that he was taken while traveling in his dinghy, that water users may need to be better informed about the risks they face while in Croc Country.²⁶⁴

There may be scope to improve education. Professor Franklin noted that he was in Croc Country while appearing at the hearing via videoconference, and there was no ‘Crocwise’ educational material in his hotel.²⁶⁵

Australia Zoo agreed that education is needed, and indicated that the Irwin family is willing to be a part of that strategy:

*... there can always be improvements in public education, but it has to be a constant thing. As Charlie mentioned, people come in and out of those regions all the time, so it has to be very clear to people what happens when they enter croc territory. Terri has a longstanding offer to the state government. If they want her or the family to do videos around croc safety to be played on screens for people flying in on planes, then she is available to do that as well.*²⁶⁶

²⁵⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 19.

²⁵⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 5.

²⁶⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

²⁶¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 11.

²⁶² Coroner’s Court of Queensland, *Non-inquest findings into the death of A*, 2021/716 (28 April 2023) [1]-[2], [13]-[15].

²⁶³ Coroner’s Court of Queensland, *Non-inquest findings into the death of A*, 2021/716 (28 April 2023) [32].

²⁶⁴ Coroner’s Court of Queensland, *Non-inquest findings into the death of A*, 2021/716 (28 April 2023) [30]-[32].

²⁶⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 21.

²⁶⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 20.



Figure 7. Dr Terri Irwin AM at the Wildlife Warriors Show with 'Graham', Australia Zoo, April 2025

Committee comment



The committee is concerned about the Bill's omission of any reference to public education as a part of the functions of the QCA. Public education is a critical aspect of crocodile management and reduces the risk of crocodile-human interactions. However, public education as a part of effective management has been largely ignored in drafting this Bill and its policy objectives.

The committee repeatedly heard that boat ramps are a hot spot for crocodile activity where people discard food scraps or otherwise display irresponsible behaviour. However, the committee notes that when it attended the Tingira Boat Ramp there was no Crocwise or other educational signage advising of the risk of crocodile-human encounters and the penalties associated with improperly baiting crocodiles.

Recent legislative changes under the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2024 introduced new offences for unlawful interactions with saltwater crocodiles. Combined with ongoing education, this committee hopes that reckless behaviour which contributes to the risk of fatal encounters will reduce.

The committee notes the standing offer from Dr Terri Irwin AM to assist in marketing crocodile safety education. The Irwin family are synonymous with crocodiles around the world and the committee believes that this offer presents a significant opportunity to spread the Crocwise message amongst those traveling into Croc Country, with the assistance of one of Queensland's most famous families.



Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that permanent educational signage be placed at boat ramps in North Queensland, with specific instructions for visitors to the area relating to avoiding human-crocodile conflict around the water.



Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that permanent educational signage be placed at locations with high tourist activity, like the Airlie Beach Marina and Palm Cove, and areas with consistent, verified sightings, like Lake Placid and Babinda.



Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation develop a marketing campaign to be deployed in Croc Country to ensure that all persons living in, or arriving to, the area are aware of the risks posed by crocodiles.



Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation produce educational materials (including, but not limited to, print, digital and social media materials) in traditional languages used in Far North Queensland, as well as the most common languages amongst tourist populations.

4.11.7. Removal and culling

Stakeholder submissions overwhelmingly opposed any proposal to undertake unmitigated culling of crocodiles.²⁶⁷ This presented a major conflict between the proposal by the Member for Hill and submitters who were against the Bill during the inquiry. The Member for Hill continuously advocated for culling on the basis that the public are no longer able to enjoy swimming holes which were previously used for recreation.²⁶⁸

Evidence heard by the committee demonstrates that culling is not effective because authorities would have to eliminate all crocodiles to guarantee safety. At the public hearing on 11 June 2025, Charlie Manolis, who was one of the architects of the Northern Territory Management program, alongside Professor Graeme Webb, said:

*If you want to make waterways safe in Queensland, it is simple: you have to make crocodiles extinct entirely — remove every single one of them — and then put a fence up between the Northern Territory and Queensland, to stop them swimming across, put up another fence between Papua New Guinea and us to stop them coming down, and then you will be able to guarantee safety.*²⁶⁹

Mr Manolis told the committee that culling has not been used anywhere in the world as a management option to improve safety.²⁷⁰ The Bill's proposed approach appears to be to increase culling and removal so that crocodiles are no longer present in populated waterways. To achieve public safety of the type envisioned by the Member for Hill, population levels would need to be reduced to levels akin to commercial extinction last seen in Queensland in the 1970's.

Simon Booth, the Program Coordinator for QPWS's Wildlife Monitoring and Research and Wildlife and Threatened Species Operations told the committee at the briefing:

Mr J KELLY: *Mr Booth, you spent a fair bit of time with the committee in Cairns. If we were to attempt to cull crocodiles, what level would we need to cull them to for waterways to be considered safe?*

Mr Booth: *I do not think there is a level you could cull them to and actually make that statement to the public. I think I mentioned to the committee when they visited that work was done last year in the Northern Territory—a published paper—that looked at the cost of culling crocodiles to improve public safety. I think the research showed that to reduce the rate of attacks by around 50 per cent you would need to remove at least 90 per cent of the crocodile population, which is just not achievable. Even if you left a handful of crocodiles or a small percentage there, at no point would we be suggesting or recommending people enter the water to swim. It is crocodile habitat. Crocodiles can move into areas undetected. They are very good at being ambush predators. I do not think there is a point at which the state could say a waterway is safe. If people chose to swim in crocodile habitat, that would be on them.*²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ See Submissions 3-10, 20, 31-35, 37-42, 44-58, 60, 62, 68, 70-73, 79, 81, 85, 88, 90, 92, 94, 95, 97, 100, 103-106, 108-119, 121-161, 166, 167, 169, 171, 176.

²⁶⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 14.

²⁶⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 14.

²⁷⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 14.

²⁷¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 4.

Emeritus Professor Gordon Grigg said in his tabled statement at the hearing:

*In my opinion, what is proposed in the Bill to make NQ's populated waterways significantly safer by removing crocodiles is not practical. The very large number of them that would have to be removed to make a difference to human safety would be a significant impediment. We know this from recent data analysis in the NT which showed it would require the removal of a very high proportion of the crocs to reduce the risk. We could expect a similar result here.*²⁷²

Peter Darby stated that Rockhampton Waterski Club's use of the Fitzroy River has been significantly impacted by the increased frequency of crocodile sightings, and club membership has suffered as a result. He advocated for a comparative study of the socioeconomic impacts of a growing crocodile population on Queenslanders.²⁷³ However, he also said:

*I don't support a cull. There was open season on crocodiles for 30 years from the 1940's to the 1970's and the population has recovered significantly and will do so again.*²⁷⁴

David White, Owner of Solar Whisper Wildlife Cruises, disagreed with claims that tourism was being demonstrably impacted by the presence of crocodiles in Far North Queensland, stating that the operation of tourism enterprises in Croc Country will always pose a risk of human-crocodile interaction, regardless of population, unless extinct.²⁷⁵ Irene Rix noted in her submission that the Bill is not grounded in evidence.²⁷⁶

The conclusion reached by a number of submitters and witnesses was that achieving the Bill's purpose would have a demonstrably negative impact on tourism, waterway health and the long-term sustainability of the species.²⁷⁷ This sentiment was supported by Bob Irwin Sr who said at the hearing:

*Culling crocodiles is a pointless exercise—absolutely pointless. It is not going to achieve anything. You are never going to be able to say to the general public, 'You can swim in that river now' because you will not ever know, will you, that there are crocodiles still there.*²⁷⁸

The risks associated with culling and migration by other crocodiles were also addressed in evidence put to the committee.

²⁷² Emeritus Professor Gordon Grigg, *Tabled Paper – 11 June 2025*, p 1.

²⁷³ Submission 167, p 1.

²⁷⁴ Submission 167, p 2.

²⁷⁵ Submission 55, 11-12. See, for example, Submission 5, p 1; Submission 7, p 1; Submission 35, p 1; Submission 150, p 1.

²⁷⁶ See Submission 60.

²⁷⁷ Submission 55, 11-12. See, for example, Submission 5, p 1; Submission 7, p 1; Submission 35, p 1; Submission 150, p 1.

²⁷⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 8.

Where a large, dominant crocodile is removed from a particular area, one of two things will happen:

- if the crocodile is relocated, there is a high likelihood that the crocodile will find its way home. Crocodilians are highly mobile animals, and the committee heard from submitters about the large distances in which crocodiles can travel when needed; or
- one or more smaller, more juvenile crocodile will replace the previous animal.²⁷⁹

Regarding the potential return of a crocodile to an area it has been removed from, Professor Franklin said:

*[...] Let me just detail the issue here. From data, we know that some crocodiles can move 60 kilometres in a day. They can hold their breath for more than eight hours. They can go from river system to river system and use the coastline as a highway to migrate from one system to another. It is an impossibility to say or give a guarantee that we have removed all crocodiles to make it safe to go swimming in crocodile country. You would have to monitor 120 kilometres of coastline and river to achieve that. Plus, if they are spending eight hours underwater, or even four hours underwater, the likelihood of actually seeing every crocodile is again another impossibility. This is the real data that has not been considered.*²⁸⁰

Mr Yanner said:

*Worse than that this, if you do remove them—Steve Irwin proved this. He removed one from the gulf side and took it to the east coast above Cairns and released it. It took a few weeks, but it came back to exactly where it was released. Not only is it not successful to remove a problem croc, but it is very cruel because, if you release him somewhere else, he has to swim a long way back home and go through the territories of a lot of other big male bulls that will try maul and kill him.*²⁸¹

The second issue of smaller crocodiles moving into an area previously occupied by a large crocodile that is removed, was highlighted by Bob Irwin Sr, at the public hearing:

*[...] If we are going to cull crocodiles and we cull the big ones from three metres to five metres, the so-called problem crocodiles, what we are going to do is take the apex predator out of that area and within a matter of a very short time you are going to have these juvenile delinquent crocodiles move in because there is nobody to stop them.*²⁸²

While in Cairns, Peter Freeman explained to the committee that if a crocodile is not euthanised correctly (i.e. where it is shot or speared) it can take up to an hour for brain function to fully cease, which creates the potential that the Bill's proposal to allow persons to kill crocodiles without training would be inconsistent with the approved plans under the QCMP and the WTMP.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 12.

²⁸⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 21.

²⁸¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 11.

²⁸² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 7-8.

²⁸³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 5.

Cr Wyatt advocated for individual land owners, particularly those with weapons licenses, to be able to kill crocodiles on their own private property.²⁸⁴ For this to occur under the existing framework, landholders would need both a permit under the NC plan and a weapons licence. Holding a permit under the NC Plan would mean that the permit holder had received appropriate training.²⁸⁵ However, the NC Plan emphasises removal and relocation, rather than killing, and only permits euthanasia where there is no other option from the perspective of animal welfare and likelihood of relocation. DETSI noted that they cannot recall any animal that has been unable to be relocated in the past 10 years.²⁸⁶

Further, permits granted under the NC Plan, and the actions of persons holding those permits, must be compliant with the Australian Code of Practice and the NC Act.²⁸⁷ This is not addressed in the Bill's proposed framework.

At the request of the committee, the Member for Hill provided evidence to support his position following the public briefing on 11 June 2025. In large part, the Member purports to rely on certain statements in the NTCMP to justify a mixed cull and removal approach:

*An 'active removal zone' is used where there are high human populations in proximity to rivers, harbours, creeks and wetlands where crocodiles are frequently found. An urban centre close to bodies of water encourages water-based recreational activities and management of both human behaviours and crocodile numbers is implemented. The objective in this zone is to generate the highest possible levels of safe behaviours, while also removing a number of crocodiles from the environment, therefore lessening the risk.*²⁸⁸

The Member for Hill's response to the Question on Notice omits the final sentence of the paragraph of the source material, with respect to the risk profile of waterways in which crocodiles are present:

*It should be noted that the risk profile in these areas cannot be brought lower than a medium risk of a problem human/crocodile interaction as there will always remain the possibility that a crocodile is in the environment.*²⁸⁹

The Member for Hill did not provide a cohesive rationale for the proposed approach to culling and removal, and did not acknowledge evidence that concludes such an approach cannot achieve public safety without crocodile population numbers essentially reaching commercial extinction.

²⁸⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 5.

²⁸⁵ NC Plan 2018, Part 2 and 3.

²⁸⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 5.

²⁸⁷ NC Plan 2018, Part 2 and 3.

²⁸⁸ Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill, *Response to Question on Notice – 19 June 2025*, p 7.

²⁸⁹ See, NTCMP 2021-2026, p 6. Cf Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Hill, *Response to Question on Notice – 19 June 2025*, p 7.

Committee comment



The committee does not support private, unregulated and unmitigated culling on private land and does not support the approach to culling contained in the Bill. The QCMP provides for human-crocodile interaction in agricultural settings. The risk of harm in allowing licensed weapons holders to interact with crocodiles outweighs the benefit. Further, the committee concluded that any changes to weapons licensing is beyond the scope of this Bill.

The committee notes the restrictions under the current QCMF on permits issued which empower a person to catch, cull or remove a 'problem crocodile' are ultimately limited by virtue of various Commonwealth frameworks, mainly the Australian Code of Practice. However, the Bill's proposed approach, including the absence of experience or skills requirements for persons who may be issued with authorities to act by the Director, is likely problematic and potentially dangerous.

4.11.8. Crocodile farms and sanctuaries

Peter Freeman noted that a number of farms are at capacity, and national parks have reached saturation points.²⁹⁰ He noted that the cost associated with infrastructure for crocodile enclosures can be upwards of \$20,000.²⁹¹ Mr Freeman continued:

It was more just a comment about the drafting of the bill that is so loose and it does not require people to demonstrate skills, knowledge, financial resources or facilities to handle crocodiles. You can read it that way: they do not need a licence to go catch crocodiles. Then they basically bring them home and then they have a pet crocodile. Then it grows up, becomes a pest and what do they do? They release it. Even worse, they go out and get a licence to catch crocodiles and put the crocodile in their backyard. The comment I made was that there are going to be more fatalities, but the fatalities will be in their backyard. After a few beers, they will say, 'Let's go and feed the crocs,' and alcohol and crocodiles do not mix.²⁹²

At the public briefing, DETSI explained their experience with relocating crocodiles which are tagged for removal under the QCMP:

Mr Klaassen: [...] Generally, we have been able to rehome crocodiles. We have locations at our premises where we can hold crocodiles for a period of time until we do find a suitable location for them to go. You have to consider animal welfare grounds, in that you cannot transport them significant distances. We do not recompense the farms for taking a crocodile. They are generally willing to take them because it helps their ongoing farm interests. [...]

Mr Booth: I am not aware in the last 10 years of an instance where we have not been able to rehome a crocodile. We do obviously euthanise some crocodiles and that decision may be made by the delegate on the basis that we have exhausted all other options to catch a crocodile and its interest to public safety to do so, or it may be on the considerations of animal welfare and resource

²⁹⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 17.

²⁹¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 17.

²⁹² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 17.

*practicality where it may not be reasonable on the crocodile to transport it, for instance, from the Torres Strait by vessel to the mainland and all the way down the Peninsula Developmental Road to Cairns to find a facility. It can be done, but we also see instances where those crocodiles often die or suffer damage to internal organs due to having their weight largely on the internal organs when they are not suspended in water. We do euthanise on public safety and welfare grounds, but when we have captured a crocodile, we have not had any instance that I am aware of where we have not been able to rehome.*²⁹³

Mr Freeman noted that the Bill does not contain provisions for farms to expand their capacity, nor is there consideration of the same under the QCMP. Mr Booth explained that there may be issues in the drafting of the Bill with respect to relocation:

*If we were to remove more crocodiles under this bill, the challenge for farms would be that they would have a large number of subdominant or juvenile, especially male crocodiles, that are of no commercial value for the farm in terms of breeding and the farm would then be footing the bill for paying for a crocodile for 20 years or so before it may become of commercial use in a breeding context.*²⁹⁴

4.11.9. Trade and farming

The relationship between the authorities regarding the crocodile trade proposed under the Bill and existing frameworks, such as the NC Act, subordinate legislation and the Qld WTMP, is unclear. As discussed above, the NC Act already has a well-established framework for various crocodile related activities, including removal, farming and egg harvesting.²⁹⁵ DETSI advised:

*‘Any increase in people able to keep crocodiles would need to be managed under the Commonwealth Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles and would take significant ongoing resources to ensure newly authorised keepers are compliant’.*²⁹⁶

Regarding the Bill’s proposed approach to trade and farming, stakeholders raised issues with animal welfare and also highlighted the Bill’s incompatibility with current legislation at a State and Federal level, in addition to various best practice guidelines and industry standards. This is addressed in further detail below.

²⁹³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 5.

²⁹⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 5.

²⁹⁵ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025), p 8.

²⁹⁶ DETSI, *Written Briefing* (14 March 2025), p 8.

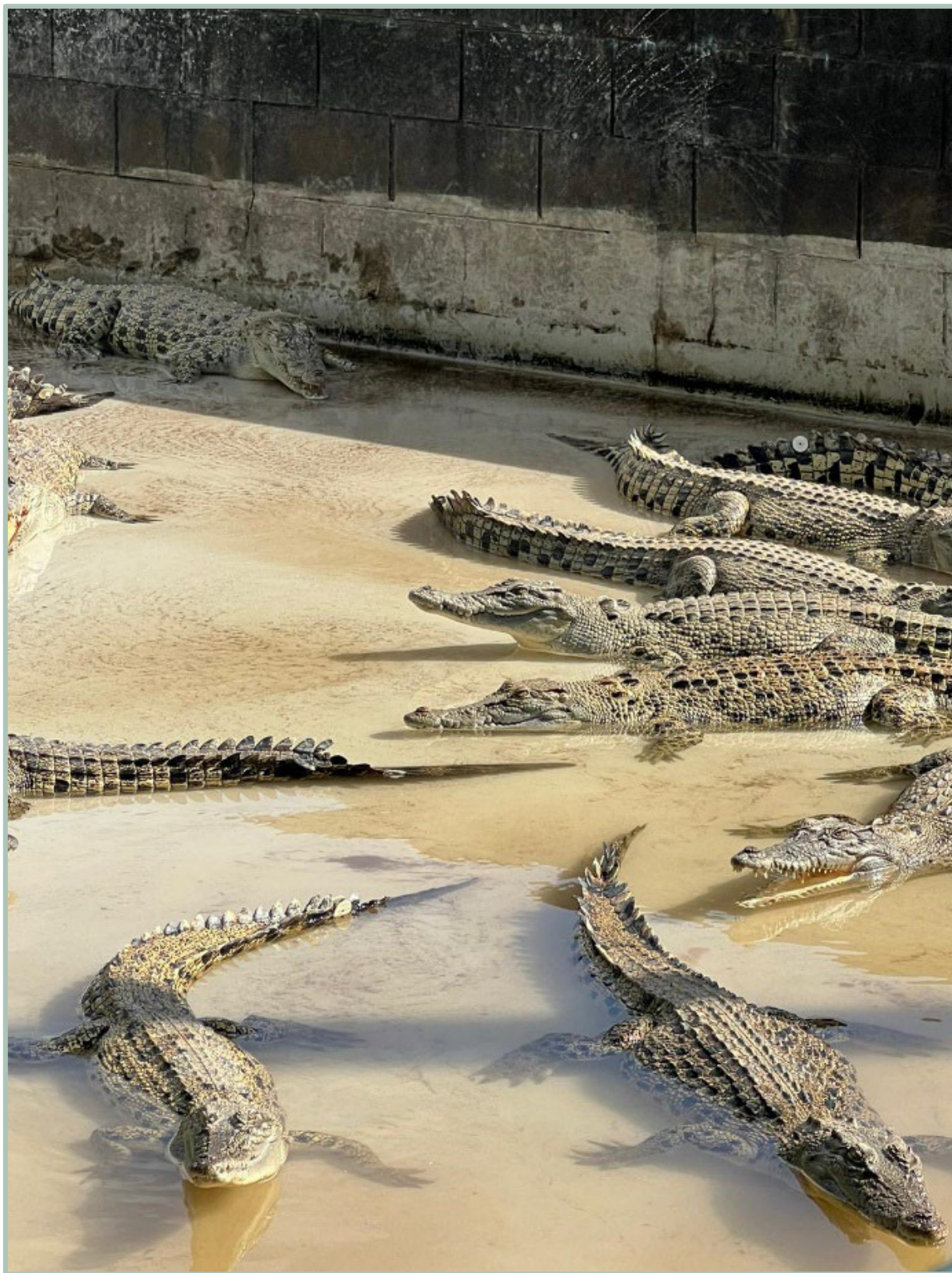


Figure 8. Crocodiles at Hartley's Crocodile Farm, 7 May 2025

i. Animal Welfare

At the public hearing on 11 June 2025, Defend the Wild noted that animal conservationists, notably, the RSPCA, have been prevented from entering crocodile farms to inspect and report on conditions.²⁹⁷ DETSI provided a response to these concerns:

In Queensland, a wildlife farming licence issued under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Nature Conservation Act) is required to keep, breed and use estuarine crocodiles for farming. Licence holders are required to comply with the Commonwealth Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles as a condition of their licence.

Conservation officers under the Nature Conservation Act have powers to investigate compliance for licence holders, including crocodile farms, and regularly conduct audits at such farms. RSPCA officers are not conservation officers, so have no powers for regulating activities authorised under the Nature Conservation Act.

However, the Department of Primary Industries (Biosecurity Queensland) and the RSPCA work in partnership to provide animal welfare services in Queensland. In particular, they share responsibility for administering and enforcing animal welfare requirements under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation is not aware of the RSPCA having had any access issues at crocodile farms.²⁹⁸

Committee comment

The committee understands the concerns of Defend the Wild and shares the view that the business needs of Australia's crocodile export industry should be appropriately balanced with humane treatment of crocodiles, pursuant to the outcome of the current Commonwealth review of the Australian Code of Practice and other regulatory best practice requirements.

ii. Legislative compatibility with Commonwealth and International Legal Frameworks

At the public hearing on 11 June 2025, the EDO stated:

The Environmental Defenders Office submits that the committee should reject this bill. It not only duplicates the law but also creates direct and confusing inconsistencies that undermine the bilateral state and Commonwealth framework.²⁹⁹

When asked how many pieces of legislation would need to be amended to make the Bill operational, DETSI said:

We have not done that level of analysis but there would absolutely be a range different legislative frameworks which we would need to consider through the bill, which mainly would be the interaction with the Nature Conservation Act and the regulations under that framework. There would be implications with the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act that we would need to work through and then we would need to consider the frameworks in Queensland—some of ones which you mentioned such as around

²⁹⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 8.

²⁹⁸ DETSI, *Response to Question on Notice – 19 June 2025*, p 1.

²⁹⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 6.

*the Department of Primary Industries. There would be quite fair bit of work for us to do over the couple of months the bill provides as a timetable to do that. That would be a body of work that we would need to look into.*³⁰⁰

iii. Incompatibility with the Australian Constitution

The EDO noted in their submission that clause 4 of the Bill provides:

*If there is an inconsistency between this Act and another Act, this Act prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.*³⁰¹

The EDO pointed out that section 109 of the *Constitution of Australia* deems that federal laws override inconsistency with state laws to the extent of the inconsistency.³⁰² Section 109 does not prevent the Queensland Government from legislating on the same issue of law as the Commonwealth, but where an inconsistency may arise, it is an accepted and established principle at common law that the Commonwealth legislation would prevail in effect.³⁰³

iv. Incompatibility with the EPBC Act and CITES

Submitters and witnesses explained that the WTMP is an essential part of the broader QCMP, and if the Commonwealth Government determines that a WTMP is incompatible with Commonwealth legislation or Australia's international obligations, permits and licensing would be suspended, and it would risk industry collapse.³⁰⁴

Mr Freeman noted the Bill's silence on developing and maintaining a compliant WTMP would cause the Commonwealth to breach their own obligations under section 13A of the EPBC Act.³⁰⁵ At the public hearing on 11 June 2025, Kirstiana Ward, Managing Lawyer for the EDO said:

*At the Commonwealth level, saltwater crocodiles are protected both under the EPBC Act and through CITES obligations. [...] the Wildlife Trade Management Plan incorporates Queensland's statutory plans by reference. It is a cooperative, bilateral framework that relies on Queensland's regulatory process for implementation. At the state level, the Nature Conservation Act, the conservation plan and the Crocodile Management Plan provide a well-established and balanced framework that supports both public safety and threatened species protection. This bill disrupts that alignment.*³⁰⁶

A large focus of the letter writing campaign by C.R.O.C. Qld and the EDO focused on the Bill's incompatibility with CITES.³⁰⁷ The committee heard from submitters across law reform, conservation and industry who were concerned that the Bill's interaction with CITES would risk the species inclusion on Appendix II (species not necessarily threatened

³⁰⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 8.

³⁰¹ Bill, cl 4. See also Explanatory Notes, pp 4-5.

³⁰² Submission 46, p 7.

³⁰³ *Constitution of Australia*, s 109. See for example, *Engineers Case* (1920) 28 CLR 129 for analysis on implied intergovernmental immunities and Australian federalism; *R v Licensing Court of Brisbane; Ex parte Daniell* (1920) 28 CLR 23 for analysis on the legal test of whether it would be impossible to obey both laws.

³⁰⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 20. See for example, Submission 46, p 7; Submission 81, p 2.

³⁰⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 15.

³⁰⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 6. See also Submission 81.

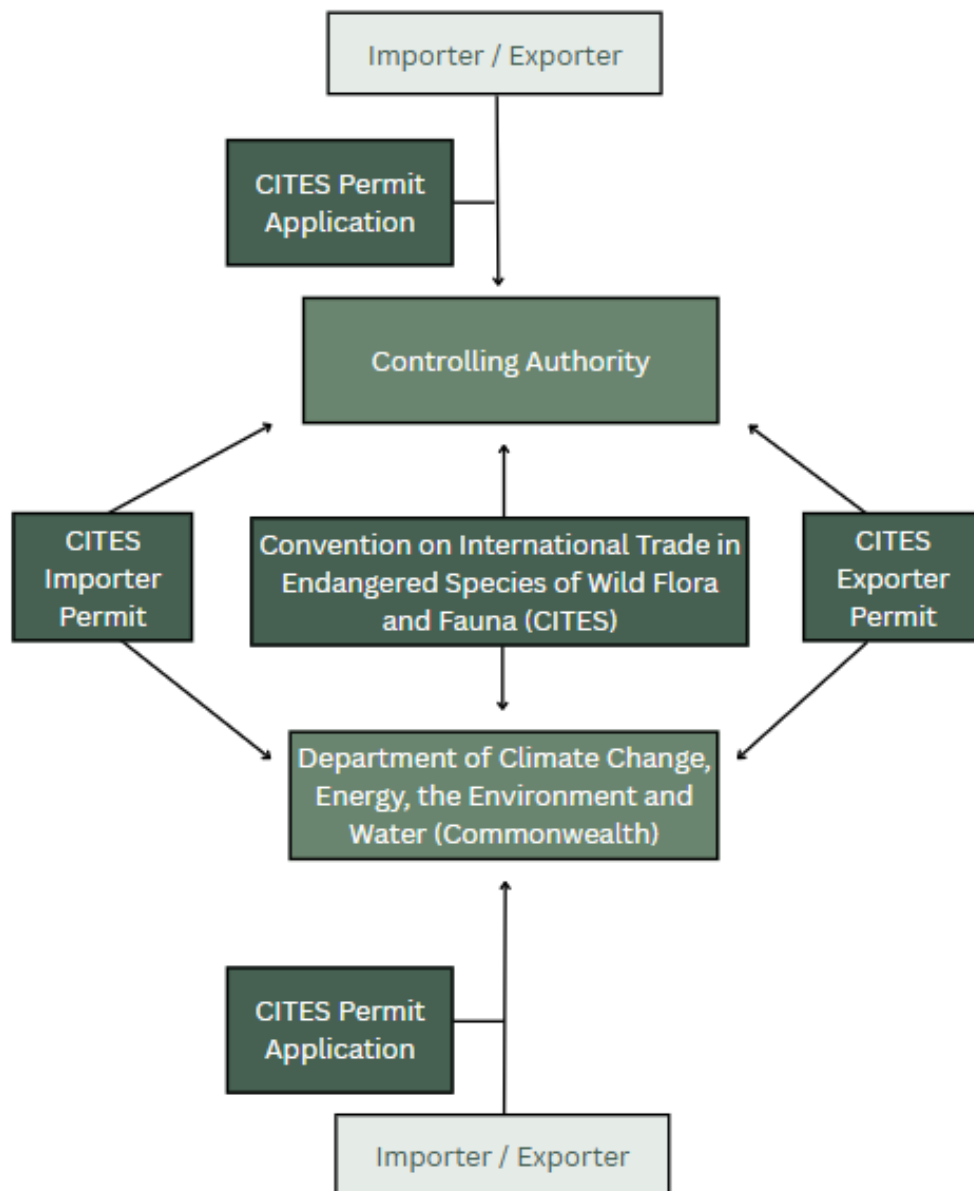
³⁰⁷ See, for example, Submission 47, Submission 111-161.

with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilisation incompatible with survival). Inclusion within Appendix II is necessary to protect the ongoing viability of commercial interests.

Peter Freeman said:

*It was a fantastic opportunity to explain how the crocodile industry works and why it is absolutely necessary, to protect that export industry, that we do have a properly managed crocodile plan for Queensland that ensures that the population in the wild remains sustainable so that our species remains on appendix II of CITES and we can continue to trade.*³⁰⁸

While the committee was in Cairns, Mr Freeman explained the permit process under the CITES and Commonwealth frameworks (illustrated below):



³⁰⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 15.

Mr Charlie Manolis, who is Co-Chair of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Crocodile Specialist Group, went further:

One of the cornerstones of CITES is that an appendix II species is recognised as being on that appendix because trade may be detrimental to its survival in the wild. What you have to show under CITES is a non-detriment finding, an NDF. You cannot just go and blast away and take 80 per cent of the population as a wild harvest; you have to show sustainability. Each state and territory in Australia has to submit an annual report to the management authority in Canberra and that is then passed on to CITES. At any time, if something is shown that it is not going to be sustainable or is impacting on the wild population detrimentally, the federal government has the right to stop and not approve your management plan, which means you cannot export any crocodile product out of that state.³⁰⁹

Additionally, Alix Livingstone from Defend the Wild raised concerns with the proposal to expand crocodile husbandry with the Australian Code of Practice which is approved by the Chief Executive under section 174A of the NC Act.³¹⁰ Ms Livingstone stated that the concerns of conservationists and animal rights activists cannot be ignored if the committee were to consider passing legislation that expanded Australia's for-profit crocodile industry.³¹¹

v. Incompatibility with other international legal conventions

The framework proposed by the Bill may also be incompatible with other international conventions include:

- the *Convention on Migratory Species* (CMS), the only specialist international legal instrument which focuses on the conservation of migratory species.³¹² The saltwater crocodile is contained in Appendix II of the CMS.
- the *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Convention), the primary international legal instrument concerned with the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.³¹³ Queensland is home to 6 Ramsar sites, Bowling Green Bay and Shoalwater / Corio Bay are both known crocodile habitats.³¹⁴
- the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Rio Convention), a multilateral treaty aimed at conserving biological diversity through sustainable use, including ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits realised through genetic resources.³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 15.

³¹⁰ Submission 103, 46, 47, ; Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 8.

³¹¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 8. See also, Submission 46, 47, 94, 103, 166.

³¹² CMS, 'About' (Webpage, accessed 25 June 2025) <<https://www.cms.int/en/legalinstrument/cms>>.

³¹³ *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance*, opened for signature 2 February 1971, 996 UNTS 245 (entered into force 21 December 1975) preamble.

³¹⁴ DCCEEW, 'Australia's Ramsar Sites' (Webpage, accessed 25 June 2025) <<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/wetlands/publications/factsheet-australias-ramsar-sites>>.

³¹⁵ *Convention on Biological Diversity*, opened for signature 29 December 1993, 1760 UNTS 79 (entered into force 29 December 1993); CBD, 'Introduction' (Webpage, accessed 25 June 2025) <<https://www.cbd.int/intro>>.

Committee comment

The committee concluded that the legislative frameworks which are relevant to crocodile management are complex, and the Bill does not provide sufficient guidance on navigating inconsistencies, namely:

- the Bill attempts to supersede the operation of other legislation, creating a potential violation of the *Constitution of Australia*
- the Bill does not contemplate the requirements associated with crocodile management (including trade and responsible conditions to ensure animal welfare) under the EPBC Act and the Australian Crocodile Code
- the Bill is potentially incompatible with Australia's obligations under CITES as it does not provide guidance on ensuring sustainability of the species
- the Bill is potentially incompatible with Australia's obligations under the CMS as it would impact the migratory patterns of the saltwater crocodile within Queensland through increased culling practices
- the Bill is potentially incompatible with the Ramsar Convention because it does not contain mechanisms to ensure that the proposed expansion of egg harvesting is undertaken in areas which are not considered ecologically significant, and does not require that the Director ensures permits and authorities are compliant; and
- the Bill is potentially incompatible with the Rio Convention as it risks compliance with the EPBC Act, which operates under the CBD to maintain and conserve Australia's biodiversity.

4.11.10. Egg harvesting

Submitters expressed various concerns about the Bill's proposal to increase crocodile egg harvesting. Mr Freeman explained his interpretation of the Bill, and the risks:

*I was taking the widest possible interpretation of it, that the director can licence anyone—without qualification, skills or experience—to collect eggs.*³¹⁶

The EDO explained that the WTMP which has been approved for 2023-2028 by the Commonwealth includes an annual limit on egg harvesting in Queensland (3000 – 5000 eggs) to ensure sustainability.³¹⁷ In Cairns, Mr Martens said:

Ms BOLTON: *In relation to the gathering of eggs, we have heard from commercial farms that they would like to be purchasing eggs. Does the totem consider that the gathering of eggs also should not be supported or is there support broadly?*

Mr Martens: *It may well be. With my mob, the gathering of eggs is not sustainable in our area. It has to be based around what the evidence is telling us about the numbers and the sustainability levels of crocs. We do not want to have a situation where we are depleting stocks. As the amount of crocs come in, we do not want to be overdoing it. We would need to evidence-base it around informed evidence.*³¹⁸

Mr Manolis said that opening the door for untrained or uncontrolled egg collection would create a higher risk of human-crocodile conflict.³¹⁹ Despite the broader concerns raised by submitters, Mr Manolis continued:

... It is not the sort of thing that even we did not leap into. [...] We did it cautiously. We did not want it to fail. Leaping into these sorts of things without appropriate science and training can be fraught with peril. I think Queensland has potential.

*You also have to remember that the Northern Territory has a lot more habitat, so our egg harvest will always be much larger than Queensland's. Nonetheless, there are opportunities there for landowners to be involved. Again, do it cautiously and properly.*³²⁰

The CLCAC is supportive of the proposal but noted in their submission:

[...] under section 10(1)(c) and (e) the Director is to make decisions about the number of crocodile eggs that may be harvested, and the number of crocodiles that may be culled each year in any part of the State.

*CLCAC believes that more baseline information about the population of crocodiles, across their entire range, is required before any determination is made about what level of harvest of crocodiles and their eggs is considered sustainable. Similarly, more information is also required about what level of sustainable harvest or take should be, including a mechanism to monitor the harvest and to vary the amount over time.*³²¹

³¹⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 17.

³¹⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 6.

³¹⁸ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns, p 11.

³¹⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 18.

³²⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 18.

³²¹ Explanatory Notes, p 2.

The Member for Hill said the Bill will incentivise Indigenous communities to engage in egg harvesting on their land, because ‘Indigenous landholders will likely see the value in crocodile eggs, and the income they can generate’.³²² At the public hearing in Cairns, the committee asked Mr Harbrow, a Yirrganydji Kuku-Yalanji man, about this issue, who said:

*[...] I think it is a great opportunity for First Nations ventures to see that as a sustainable venture for a business. If there are businesses already existing, the inclusion of traditional owner groups will add business value to that venture and then inspire First Nations people to go, ‘Okay, I can make a connection to this and be part of the solution.’ I think it is a great idea and a great concept but, again, some clan groups might say, ‘Definitely not.’ Some clan groups will say, ‘Absolutely. We’d like to explore those venture ideas.’ If it is there already and there are proven methods of a business in that space working and First Nations groups can be included and value-add to it, I think it is a brilliant idea.*³²³

DETSI raised concerns that the Bill is not sufficiently clear and unambiguous in its intent surrounding conservation and the viability of the crocodile population, including mechanisms to ensure that the proposed expansions of farming and egg harvesting will remain ecologically sustainable in the long-term.³²⁴

Committee comment



The committee notes the concerns submitters regarding the Bill’s proposal to permit increased egg harvesting and the absence of scientific data supporting the proposed approach. The committee considers that a controlled approach, similar to the one already in place under the QCMP and associated WTMP, is appropriate.

The committee did not hear any substantive evidence which supported the Member for Hill’s claims that an increase in egg harvesting will provide an explicit or direct benefit for Indigenous communities. However, the committee is of the view that with consultation with a variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the QCMP’s approach could be modelled off the NTCMP. This should be done in line with the evidence of Mr Manolis, namely that the priority of egg harvesting programs must be to train and educate communities on safe and sustainable practices and that it must be implemented slowly and deliberately.

Despite the general support for the proposal, the committee concluded that the Bill’s proposed timeline for introduction of the expanded program (4 months from the date of assent) would be impractical and irresponsible in light of Mr Manolis’ evidence and the calls for increased community consultation.

³²² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 2 April 2025*, Brisbane, p 6, 8. See also Explanatory Notes, p 2.

³²³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 14.

³²⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Briefing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 2.

4.11.11. Special provisions for traditional owners

Numerous submissions raised concerns that the process of developing the Bill did not include adequate consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, some who have totemic relationships with crocodiles. At the public hearing in Cairns on 8 May 2025, Mr Martens and David White stated:

Mr LEE: *To your knowledge, was there any consultation with traditional owners in the preparation or the drafting of this bill and any previous versions of the bill?*

Mr Martens: *David can probably answer that better than I could. What I have been hearing is that there has been very little.*

Mr White: *There has not been much locally here, otherwise Warren would know about it. I am not sure how much consultation there was with Indigenous people. In answer to your question about the numbers, there are scientists who have been working their whole lives studying crocodiles. Very respected scientists have come up with numbers that are peer reviewed. Unfortunately, in the preparation of this bill, no-one has talked to these scientists. There are all sorts of stories about how many crocodiles there are out there, but you have to look at the science.*³²⁵

Given the emphasis on Indigenous consultation and engagement in the Bill, the committee elected to host a 'Traditional Owner Round Table' at the public hearing in Cairns. The committee heard from Traditional Owners and Indigenous persons who, culturally, have a totemic relationship with crocodiles, but who had not been consulted during the development of the Bill.



Figure 9. The Committee hears from Traditional Owners in Cairns, 8 May 2025

³²⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 6.

The relationship between crocodiles and First Nations peoples is diverse. As noted by Mr Singleton:

*In some areas they do kill crocs for ceremonial purpose. For some it is a food source. For some it is a protected species, so we care for it like it is a family member. It is really up to the group that you are engaging with. You cannot make a blanket claim: 'Let's do culling,' or 'Let's not do culling.' You really have to think about it that way.*³²⁶

At the hearing in Cairns, Ms Errin Munbrary, a Mandingalbay Yidinji woman said:

*I think it is important to recognise there are two different views coming into this. We are speaking for the crocodile; you guys are not. You are speaking for the safety of the people, the economics behind it—all of that. We are not speaking for that; we are speaking for the crocs.*³²⁷

Mr Martens, in a joint submission alongside Ms Margaret Barstow, a consultant to the Elders of the Gunggandji People, Geemooiburra-Yarraburra Kunggandji people and the Thanaqwithi people, and Aunty Sarah Addo, Elder of the Geemooiburra-Yarraburra Kunggandji peoples of Kamoi and traditional owner of Yarrabah Country and Deputy Chairwoman of the North Queensland Land Council, submitted that:

*Crocodiles are our sacred totems and part of our cultural heritage and it is breaking our law to make decisions about culling or trophy hunting without consulting us, it is the Senior Tribal Elders who speak for their country, not the rangers or the younger people.*³²⁸

Mr Martens explained to the committee that the government has to work with Indigenous communities to develop a mutually beneficial and consultative relationship regarding crocodile management, that respects crocodiles as a totem.³²⁹ This was echoed by other submitters who said the importance of traditional knowledge sharing regarding crocodile management was another recurring theme amongst submissions and witnesses. Mr Yanner said:

*I think we manage crocs here pretty well. You have deaths in Cape York and you have deaths in Arnhem Land on both sides of the gulf, but here in the lower gulf where I live there has never been a death by crocodile, yet we are as much amongst them daily as anyone else. The one deciding factor I think is that we do have a level of native hunting here, and that has been a great deterrent. I would like to offer up our region and our organisation to work with you to see if we can actually do something practical, realistic and scientific that tries to answer the problem.*³³⁰

³²⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 11.

³²⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 18.

³²⁸ Submission 49, p 4.

³²⁹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 13.

³³⁰ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 11-12.

The knowledge held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about crocodiles is remarkable, and is reflected in comments made by Mr Harbrow:

*...there are some traditional owner groups who have names for every single croc within two river systems. They know their movements. They know their eating patterns. They know when they are not hungry. I think that, at a government level, not involving traditional owner groups is detrimental to the management of this.*³³¹

The Round Table session allowed the committee to learn more about diversity of views with respect to land access, the proposal to cull crocodiles and allow limited commercial hunting of crocodiles:

Mr J KELLY: *...What are your views on that section of the bill in terms of hunting or removing crocodiles from private landholdings?*

Mr Singleton: *It is up to the group, really. That is all it is coming down to. We cannot speak for anyone else's group. If you are talking about traditional hunting, it is up to the lore and custom of that group. We cannot speak for other people's groups.*³³²

Mr David White, who appeared on behalf of Ms Barstow at the Cairns hearing, said:

The bottom line is that they [Elders] do not agree with the proposed bill. They reject it entirely. The proposal to eliminate every crocodile in any waterways that are used by humans, which is basically every waterway, without proper consultation with the traditional owners of those areas is insulting.

*Coastal people traditionally believe that when their people die their spirit would enter the large boss crocodile and it would transport them around. They call them 'travellers'. Killing a large crocodile is literally spilling the blood of the ancestors. It has been likened by one elder to someone going into a church and smashing a statue of Jesus. It is totally disrespectful. What is even more disrespectful is the proposal to allow First Nations people to profit from killing their totems. While some non-coastal First Nations people may agree with this unsustainable concept due to short-term financial incentives, they do not have the right. It is the elders from the crocodile country who remember the old ways. It is they who should be consulted.*³³³

Mr Singleton emphasised the need for a mixed approach with traditional knowledge consultation, lived experience of locals (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and regular training for rangers.³³⁴

Mr Martens suggested that all stakeholders need to come together on the issues to create a joint path forward, or else the conversation would never reach a solution:

Let's get some concrete things together for the next generation who we will leaving behind. Then we can say, 'This is what the elders said and this is where we need to go forward.' A lot of our old people who are knowledge holders around

³³¹ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 10.

³³² Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 15.

³³³ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 4.

³³⁴ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 15-16.

*these things are leaving them for the younger generation—people like me and my mob—to manage with government. That is where the agenda has to be.*³³⁵

At the public hearing in Brisbane, the committee asked how the objectives of the Bill can be achieved in line with customary law:

Mr KELLY: *I note from your submission and the other gentleman's submission that desire to do hunting of crocodiles in a version of ecotourism. From a practical perspective, how do you determine in your group who has those rights to go and hunt as a traditional owner? What is the mechanism of determining that? Then how would you extend that to tourists coming in?*

Mr Yanner: *That is why the native title, PBC—prescribed body corporate—so when a claim is determined in Australia as successful, the court demands that a group be established by the successful group—a tribal corporation, a tribal council—and that is based on the claim and the customs and the culture. People have to have the customary right. The young uninitiated men in my clan or tribe probably would not have the right, and even then, amongst say a particular area or beach, there will be a senior person—there will be 100 TOs or other young blokes, but he will have the say. We call it a mayutju, like a clan leader. There are several clans in a tribe, so that is why you have to tie it in with native title. You have to use the words 'customary law' and 'authority', otherwise you will have these young punks, black, white or brindle, even in our own culture, running it. They do not have the years of experience. With that authority comes responsibility, not just rights—responsibility and experience. So that is why you definitely want a sensible hand at the wheel, so our elders and customary authority, for sure.*³³⁶

Mr Yanner noted that where a native title determination exists, legislative provisions should not supersede an Indigenous person's rights on their country.³³⁷ CLCAC noted in their submission:

*The right of Indigenous people to take crocodiles while undertaking traditional hunting, without any license, permit or other authority, has already been established through the High Court of Australia in Yanner v Eaton in October 1999. As such section 10 is in conflict with this by requiring an authority for the owner of Aboriginal land or Torres Strait Islander land to kill crocodiles or harvest crocodile eggs.*³³⁸

The CLCAC's submission stated:

CLCAC agrees that allowing other persons to kill crocodiles on Aboriginal land or Torres Strait Islander land, for payment of a fee or free of charge, should be allowed and that the sustainable harvest of both crocodiles and crocodile eggs would present an opportunity for economic benefits to Traditional Owners and Native Title holders. This could include fees for providing guided hunting, using either lethal or non-lethal take methods, trips for people paid directly to Indigenous organisations. There also needs to be further funded training

³³⁵ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 8 May 2025*, Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, p 6.

³³⁶ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 12-13.

³³⁷ Hansard, *Record of Proceedings, Public Hearing – 11 June 2025*, Brisbane, p 12.

³³⁸ Submission 28, p 2.

*opportunities provided to allow such enterprises to operate, for example, capturing and handling large crocodiles.*³³⁹

Committee comment



The committee is grateful for the opportunity to have heard from a number of First Nations peoples during the course of this inquiry. From listening to these stakeholders, the committee learned about the significant and diverse relationships that different First Nations peoples have with crocodiles, including totemic relationships. These unique differences contribute to the wide variety of opinions, held by various Indigenous stakeholders, about how crocodiles should be managed, including differences in opinion about the appropriateness of allowing commercial hunting as a part of land management. It is important to identify and respond appropriately to this diversity and to listen deeply to what these stakeholders are telling us.

The committee's consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples led the committee to conclude that the Member for Hill's consultation during the development of the Bill was completely inadequate and failed to properly account for these diverse relationships and opinions amongst First Nations stakeholders.

The committee considers that there is an opportunity for expanded utilisation of services provided by Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers in carrying out the sustainable and culturally sound management of crocodiles throughout North Queensland.

Furthermore, traditional owners already have the right to hunt crocodiles on their traditional lands. The committee notes that the Bill's proposed approach, which would require the QCA to grant hunting rights, imposes further limits on the rights of traditional owners. Legislation should not unduly interfere or limit native title determinations or, more broadly, the cultural rights of Indigenous peoples.



Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation develop a more fulsome engagement process with Indigenous communities to ensure that the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan operates in tandem with traditional knowledge, without compromising the timeliness of removals.

³³⁹ Submission 28, p 2.

Appendix A – Submitters

Sub No.	Name / Organisation
1	Mark Freeman
2	Dr Timothy Coyle
3	Name Withheld
4	Danny McFeely
5	Brandon Sideleau
6	Name Withheld
7	Name Withheld
8	Name Withheld
9	Steven Gill
10	Tobias Kennett
11	Steven Diehm
12	Karen West
13	Ocean Rafting
14	Confidential
15	Belinda Fowler
16	Anita Lee
17	Creek Ninha Guided Fishing
18	Trevor Milevskiy
19	Name Withheld
20	Bonney Parkin
21	Paul Creighton
22	Ryan Brand
23	Mark Luther
24	Mick Gilbert
25	Roger Barnett
26	Shayne Irish
27	Raylene McElligott
28	Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
29	Name Withheld
30	Name Withheld
31	Marcus Odgaard
32	Name Withheld

33	Brynn Mathews
34	Joyce Bakker
35	Greg Reid
36	Heath Richardson
37	Noah Wotherspoon
38	Name Withheld
39	Charlotte Furley
40	Megan Oberholster
41	Chantel Lawson
42	Ryely Newman
43	Confidential
44	Nicolas Pond
45	Sam Osterballe
46	Environmental Defenders Office
47	Community Representation of Crocodiles (C.R.O.C) Qld – Form A
48	Joshua Prieto
49	Margaret Barstow, Warren Martens and Sarah Addo
50	Name Withheld
51	Kaitlin Ainsworth
52	Name Withheld
53	Lani Wright
54	Marc Kooistra
55	Solar Whisper
56	Name Withheld
57	Professor Craig Franklin
58	Melby Connell
59	Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association
60	Irene Rix
61	Rachelle Ambrum
62	Name Withheld
63	Wayne Vickers
64	Name Withheld
65	Shane Blair
66	Confidential

67	Neil Brook
68	Name Withheld
69	Clinton Hayes
70	Lynne De Groot
71	Kerry Doherty
72	Sally Dobbie
73	Lesley Royle
74	Magalie Chiron
75	Joanne Hutana
76	Kelvin Douglas John Bunyan
77	Name Withheld
78	Carla Grieve
79	Tom Black
80	Matthew Ryan
81	Hartley's Creek Crocodile Farm
82	Name Withheld
83	Name Withheld
84	Jonathon Price
85	Name Withheld
86	Name Withheld
87	Jason Coles
88	Capricorn Conservation Council
89	Confidential
90	Richard Sheather
91	Confidential
92	Annette Kloster
93	Nicholas Pervan
94	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Australia
95	Olivia Charlton
96	Belinda Santarossa
97	Name Withheld
98	Michael Bode
99	Local Government Association of Queensland
100	Cairns and Far North Environment Centre

101	<i>Number not allocated</i>
102	Name Withheld
103	Defend the Wild and Warren Martens
104	Daniel Bamblett
105	Name Withheld
106	Barry Lyon
107	Whitsunday Regional Council
108	Name Withheld
109	Caitlin Sebbens
110	Rhys Gotje
111	Kim Poulsen
112	Leon Degenars
113	Name Withheld
114	Sophie Nelson
115	Allen Sheather
116	Dr Sally Martin
117	Emily Dunnett
118	Name Withheld
119	Name Withheld
120	Confidential
121	Name Withheld
122	Ian Jenkins
123	Rachel Pollard
124	Aaron Sweeney
125	Name Withheld
126	Caitlin Tomsett
127	Daniel Kemp
128	Name Withheld
129	Ella Davies
130	Bryony Sumner
131	Ted Howard
132	Laura Ridout
133	Lynne Livery
134	Allison Ray

135	Chris Field
136	Ashley King
137	Vicki Lowing
138	Melanie Reynolds
139	Sophie Solway
140	Paul Bowen
141	James Waterston
142	Angel Pesut
143	Whitsunday Conservation Council
144	Name Withheld
145	Brian Ross
146	Name Withheld
147	Shelene Garvey
148	Elliot Nelson Smith
149	Chloe Decobert
150	McKenzie Sirmon
151	Bats and Trees Society of Cairns
152	Jack Ritchie
153	Jack Gatto
154	Name Withheld
155	Sue Smith
156	Noah McKenzie
157	Eric Santo
158	Angela Egan-Santo
159	Alexandria Voss
160	Rhiannan Burrows
161	Andrew Bryant
162	Anthony Richter
163	Name Withheld
164	Name Withheld
165	Name Withheld
166	Australia Zoo
167	Peter Darby
168	<i>Number not allocated</i>

169	Sera Steves
170	Confidential
171	Rae Le Serve
172	George Adil
173	FNQ Consultants
174	Cairns Regional Council
175	Mareeba Shire Council
176	Jean Thomas
177	Confidential

Form A (submission 47) – 13 submissions received

Sara Sarungallo	Katie Williams	Name Withheld
Clair Knobloch	Confidential	Lucia Santiago Pérez
Jack Wallace	Rebecca Cameron	Romie Pellegrini
Jennifer Sternbeck	Confidential	Chi Vo
Justine Kazan		

Appendix B – Public Briefing, 2 April 2025

Individuals

Shane Knuth MP

Member for Hill

Brad Tassell

Senior Policy Officer

Appendix C – Public Hearing, 8 May 2025, Cairns

Individuals

Warren Martens

David White (on behalf of Margaret Barstow)

Traditional Owner Panel

Dennis Ah-Kee

Robert Ambrum

Marc Harbrow

Errin Munbarry

Warren Martens

Nevin Reyes

Tarquin Singleton

Organisations

Cairns and Far North Environment Centre

Kala-mia Harvey

Volunteer

Appendix D – Public Hearing, 11 June 2025, Brisbane

Individuals

Charlie Manolis

Professor Craig Franklin, University of Queensland School of Environment

Organisations

Whitsundays Regional Council

Scott Hardy Manager, Natural Resource Management and Climate

Mareeba Shire Council

Cr Lenore Wyatt Deputy Mayor

Environmental Defenders Office

Kirstiana Ward Managing Lawyer

Community Representation of Crocodiles (C.R.O.C) Qld

Amanda French President

Professor Gordon Grigg Scientific Advisor

Bob Irwin Sr Conservationist

Defend the Wild

Alix Livingstone Founding Director

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

Murrandoo Yanner Community and Stakeholder Officer

FNQ Consultants

Rosco Bensted Secretary

Hartley's Crocodile Farm

Peter Freeman Director

Australia Zoo

Bill Ferguson Chief Government Relations Officer

Appendix E – Public Briefing, 11 June 2025, Brisbane



















Individuals

Shane Knuth MP	Member for Hill
Robbie Katter MP	Member for Traeger
Brad Tassell	Senior Policy Officer

Department of the Environment, Science, Tourism and Innovation

Ben Klaassen	Deputy Director-General, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships
Kahil Lloyd	Acting Deputy Director General, Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs
Simon Booth	Program Coordinator, Wildlife Monitoring and Research and Wildlife and Threatened Species Operations
Karalyn Herse	Manager, Environment and Conservation Policy and Legislation and Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs

Appendix F – Chronology of Crocodile Management

	1974	Crocodiles are legally protected under the <i>Fauna Conservation Act</i> in Queensland. Population estimates indicate commercial extinction.
	1979	Crocodile population statistics start to be collected by the State Government with reporting by Dr Laurence Taplin.
	1976	Australia becomes a signatory to CITES.
	1992	Queensland passes the <i>Nature Conservation Act</i> which contains legal protections for crocodiles on the basis of their low population.
	1999	The <i>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act</i> is passed by the Commonwealth, which regulates environmental conservation and biodiversity protection.
	Early 2000s	The Queensland version of 'Be Crocwise' is rolled out.
	2016	The State Government announce the development of the new Queensland Crocodile Management Plan and 4 year population study, headed by Dr Laurence Taplin.
	25 May 2017	Safer Waterways Bill 2017 is introduced in the Legislative Assembly.
	26 June 2017	The Queensland Crocodile Management Plan is released and implemented by the Department.
	2018	The <i>Nature Conservation (Estuarine Crocodile) Conservation Plan 2018</i> comes into effect under the <i>NC Act</i> .
	21 March 2018	Safer Waterways Bill 2018 is introduced in the Legislative Assembly.
	2021	The Queensland Chief Scientist released an independent expert review of the QCMP, containing 22 recommendations, which are all accepted by the Government.
	2022	Dr Taplin's population studies are released to the public. They indicate no explosion in population, and no indication that the population has moved south into areas that were not former crocodile habitats pre 1970s.
	2023	The Queensland Government announce a review and revised draft of the QCMP to be released in late 2024, and starts consultation with stakeholders.
	22 May 2024	Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2024 introduced in the Legislative Assembly.
	21 Aug 2024	Crocodile Control, Conservation and Safety Bill 2024 introduced in the Legislative Assembly.
	Nov 2024	Following machinery of government changes, the new Minister extends consultation on the revised QCMP.
	19 Feb 2025	Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025 introduced in the Legislative Assembly.

Appendix G – Crocodile Attacks in Queensland (1985 – 2025)

Information sheet

Crocodile attacks on humans in Queensland

This information sheet provides a summary on crocodile attacks on humans in Queensland. The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the department) records and investigates all crocodile sighting reports received from the public and will take appropriate action in accordance with the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan. Unfortunately, despite best efforts by the department to ensure the safety of the public, crocodile attacks do occur on humans in Queensland. Thankfully, these events are relatively rare.

Crocodile attacks on humans in Queensland - 21 December 1985 to 11 June 2025

Year	Date	Location	Comments
1985	21 December	Barratt Creek, Daintree River	Fatal Attack
1986	11 February	Staaten River, Gulf of Carpentaria	Fatal Attack
1987	04 February	Mulgrave River, Gordonvale	Non-fatal Attack
1987	26 June	Mabuiag Island, Torres Strait	Fatal Attack
1993	29 December	Jardine River Ferry Crossing, Cape York Peninsula	Fatal Attack
1996	23 February	Cape Flattery Jetty, Princess Charlotte Bay, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
1997	28 November	Yorkeys Knob, Cairns	Non-fatal Attack
1998	6 February	Chinamans Creek, Cairns	Non-fatal Attack
1999	18 August	MacArthur Island, Shelburne Bay, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
1999	20 September	Russell River, near Babinda	Non-fatal Attack
2000	21 August	Pine River, Weipa, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2001	02 July	Hann Crossing, Rinyirru National Park, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2001	29 September	Four-Mile Beach, Port Douglas	Non-fatal Attack
2004	05 April	Margaret Bay, Eastern Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2004	11 October	Bathurst Bay, east of Rinyirru National Park, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2004	10 December	Barron River, Cairns	Non-fatal Attack
2005	16 August	Midway Waterhole, Rinyirru National Park, Cape York Peninsula	Fatal Attack
2006	11 October	Mt Adolphus Island, Torres Strait	Unconfirmed Non-fatal Attack
2006	08 November	Mason's Creek, Cape Tribulation	Non-fatal Attack
2007	08 January	Mt Adolphus Island, Torres Strait	Non-fatal Attack

Information sheet
Crocodile attacks on humans in Queensland

Year	Date	Location	Comments
2007	16 October	Cow Bay, north of Daintree River	Non-fatal Attack
2008	30 September	Endeavour River, Cooktown, Cape York Peninsula	Fatal Attack
2008	18 December	False Pera Heads, Weipa, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2009	08 February	Daintree River, near Daintree Township	Fatal Attack
2011	05 February	Beening Creek, Weipa, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2011	09 March	Trunding Creek, Weipa, Cape York Peninsula,	Non-fatal Attack
2011	07 December	Bushy Island, Shelbourne Bay, Cape York Peninsula	Fatal Attack
2015	13 April	Port Douglas Golf Course	Non-fatal Attack
2015	03 December	Lizard Island	Non-fatal Attack
2016	29 May	Thornton Beach, near Cape Tribulation	Fatal Attack
2017	18 March	Palmer Point, north of Innisfail	Fatal Attack
2017	19 March	Johnstone River, Innisfail	Non-fatal Attack
2017	12 October	Craiglie Creek, Port Douglas	Fatal Attack
2017	27 November	Mason Creek, Cape Tribulation	Non-fatal Attack
2018	15 January	Nagi (Mt Ernest Island), Torres Strait	Non-fatal Attack
2019	10 November	Captain Billy's Landing, Heathlands, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2020	23 September	Lizard Island	Non-fatal Attack
2020	28 November	Lizard Island	Non-fatal Attack
2021	28 January	Lake Placid, Cairns	Non-fatal Attack
2021	31 January	Vyce's Crossing, Weipa, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2021	11 February	Hinchinbrook Island	Fatal Attack
2021	6 August	Portland Roads, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2021	3 November	Molvor River, near Hopevale, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2023	22 February	Bloomfield River Boat Ramp, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2023	08 April	Archer Point, Cape York Peninsula	Non-fatal Attack
2023	29 April	Kennedy River, Rinyirru National Park, Cape York Peninsula	Fatal Attack
2023	27 May	Charles Hardy Islands	Non-fatal Attack
2024	18 April	Saibai Island, Torres Strait	Fatal Attack
2024	3 August	Annan River, near Cooktown	Fatal Attack
2025	30 January	Watson River, near Aurukun	Fatal Attack

Further information

Crocodile sightings may be reported using the QWildlife app, online or by calling 1300 130 372 (Option 1) (<https://environment.desi.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/crocodiles/report-crocodile>).

For further information about this document please contact the department at Wildlife.Management@detsi.qld.gov.au

Appendix H – Legislative and Regulatory Framework

