



18th August 2017

AgForce Submission

Safer Waterways Bill 2017



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CB/AF/023

Mr Rob Hansen
Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane QLD 4000

By Post & by Email: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Hansen

On 25 May 2017 Mr Shane Knuth MP, Member for Dalrymple introduced the Safer Waterways Bill 2017 into the Queensland Parliament. The Bill was referred to the Agriculture and Environment Committee for detailed consideration. The committee is due to report on the Bill by 27 November 2017.

AgForce is the peak rural group representing the majority of beef, sheep & wool and grain producers in Queensland. The broadacre beef, sheep and grains industries in Queensland generated around \$5.7 billion in gross farm-gate value of production in 2014/15. AgForce exists to facilitate the long-term growth, viability, competitiveness and profitability of these industries. Our members provide high-quality food and fibre products to Australian and overseas consumers, manages about 40% of the Queensland agricultural landscape and contribute significantly to the social fabric of rural and remote communities.

Whilst not directly representing the Queensland Crocodile farming industry, AgForce has an interest in supporting all Queensland primary producers on their investments of capital, time and effort and in the safe operation of their businesses. The management of crocodiles is of interest to the organisation and its members due to their impact on stock losses and risks to human life.

The Safer Waterways Bill 2017 has multiple policy objectives. It aims to eliminate from our waterways all crocodiles that pose a threat to human life, while protecting crocodiles from becoming endangered as a species.

Communities across North Queensland are consistently reporting significant increases in crocodile numbers. Waterways which people previously regularly swam in without significant risk, are now infested with crocodiles.

From 1985 to 2015, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection recorded 25 crocodile attacks in Queensland – seven of them fatal. In just the past 12 months, there have been three attacks, two of them fatal.

This does not include attacks on stock or other animals.

Potential crocodile impacts to agriculture include:

- Loss of working dogs, livestock watering at edge of water holes.
- Risk to human life when servicing submersible water pumps in high risk watercourses and dams.
- Increased difficulty when treating water weed infestations.
- Should a culling program be endorsed, the costs of training, preparing for and undertaking it needs to be considered and resourced.

Trapping and relocating problem crocodiles is expensive and requires specialised skills. To establish an effective and humane industry, significant skills would need to be developed. Further, costs and how many trap nights per crocodile for relocation also needs to be considered and whether there is a farm to take the offending crocodile.

Crocodiles are part of the natural landscape in many parts of the State. Many landholders do not go in the water without assessing the risks and then with supervision. Many landholders adjacent to waterways known to contain crocodiles recognise the risk and when operations are required will maintain spotters to watch for and repel crocodiles.

Landholders would welcome the opportunity The Safer Waterways Bill 2017 introduces - creating surety that crocodiles are removed by an authorised person if they are a threat to humans.

Application of the damage mitigation permit framework to crocodiles may provide a pathway for landholders to access and manage problem crocodiles.

Under the provisions of the Bill, the crocodile may be killed in-situ or relocated to an authorised farm. It would also involve the removal of crocodiles from urban or public areas commonly used by people for recreation.

In terms of distribution across Queensland as reported in literature by Read *et al.*¹ the estuarine or saltwater crocodile is broadly distributed around the coastline of Queensland and is recorded above 12.5° of latitude. Estuarine crocodiles are regularly sighted in the Fitzroy River at Rockhampton (23.5°S, 150.6°E), with infrequent sightings as far south as Elliott Heads (24.9°S, 152.5°E) near Bundaberg. The most southern breeding population is located in the Fitzroy River at Rockhampton (Taplin 1987).

Australia accounts for approximately 60% of the reported global trade in Saltwater Crocodile skins, with about two-thirds of this (~21,000 skins in 2011) grown and exported from the NT².

The Safer Waterways Bill 2017 also aims to create a significant and sustainable crocodile industry in Queensland through controlled egg harvesting.

Strategic plans developed by industry and NT Government indicate the Northern Territory currently has a successful egg harvesting program. Egg harvesting can help sustain crocodile populations and creates a huge economic opportunity, which is currently untapped in Queensland. The Management Program for

¹Mark Read, Brian Wright and Clayton Enoch

Crocodiles in Queensland - An Overview

Crocodile Management Unit, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, PO Box 2066, Cairns, QLD 4780, Australia (mark.read@epa.qld.gov.au, brian.wright@epa.qld.gov.au, clayton.enoch@epa.qld.gov.au) Reference in full

² Northern Territory Crocodile Farming Industry Strategic Plan 2015-21 on behalf of the Crocodile Farmers Association of the Northern Territory (CFANT).

the Saltwater Crocodile in the Northern Territory 2015-2021 provides for an increased harvest ceiling of 100,000 eggs. This effectively allows for a potential 40% increase in the harvest over the next five years³.

This Bill aims to allow Indigenous landholders to market produce from crocodiles including eggs. In relation to crocodiles they would be allowed to collect and farm crocodiles under an Authority established to manage crocodiles and authorise the sale of crocodile products to/under the Queensland Crocodile Authority.

Non-Indigenous private landholders can apply for the same rights.

Significantly, the Safer Waterways Bill 2017 provides power to landholders to apply to manage crocodiles on their own land.

AgForce appreciates that the Bill has been drafted with consideration of Fundamental Legislative Principles.

The Bill creates a new Authority within the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, AgForce would suggest that the industry development component and the establishment of an enhanced marketing of crocodile products may be placed with Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

AgForce is supportive of the intention of the Safer Waterways Bill 2017 and appreciates the opportunity to provide comments.

For any additional advice on the contents of this submission please contact Andrew Freeman, Senior Strategic Advisor, at AgForce. On 32363100 or via email (freemana@agforceqld.org.au).

Yours sincerely



Charles Burke
Chief Executive Officer

³ Wildlife Trade Management Plan for the Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) in the Northern Territory of Australia, 2016-2020.