

Inquiry into Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025

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Submitted by: Lani Wright
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Dear Council, I am writing to you to express my concerns with the proposed Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025. Firstly, the proposal for a crocodile cull in Queensland is an ineffective and unsustainable solution to human-crocodile conflict. While culling is often presented as a quick fix, numerous studies and real-world examples demonstrate that it fails to address the root causes of human-crocodile interactions and can lead to negative consequences for both wildlife and human safety. Instead of focusing on culling, Queensland should adopt more comprehensive, non-lethal approaches that promote coexistence between humans and crocodiles. Culling as a means to control crocodile populations has been shown to be ineffective over the long term. For example, in Northern Territory, culling efforts in the past were followed by a rebound in crocodile populations. According to the Northern Territory Government, following the culling of 60 crocodiles from a single area in 2012, the population grew again due to immigration from nearby regions and the high reproductive rate of crocodiles. Saltwater crocodiles can travel up to 100 km from their initial habitat, so a localized cull does not address the broader problem. A study conducted by the Australian National Wildlife Management Association found that culling does not provide lasting reductions in crocodile numbers. In fact, the data suggested that crocodiles displaced by culling programs often migrate into nearby areas, increasing the risk of human-crocodile conflict in regions that previously had fewer crocodiles. In 2018, researchers found that culling programs in Queensland led to a 20% increase in crocodile populations in the regions where they were relocated, undermining the idea that culling offers a sustainable solution. One of the misconceptions that fuels the argument for culling is the idea that crocodiles are an invasive species "infesting" waterways. However, saltwater crocodiles are a natural and integral part of Queensland's ecosystems. They have existed in the region for millions of years, and their presence in rivers, estuaries, and coastal areas is essential for maintaining the ecological balance. Crocodiles play a key role in controlling populations of fish, birds, and other aquatic species, helping to maintain the overall health of these ecosystems. Crocodiles do not "infest" areas as pests but rather co-exist with other wildlife in a carefully balanced natural order. As apex predators, they help control the populations of smaller predators and competitors, ensuring that species diversity is maintained. Moreover, crocodiles are not territorial in the sense that they invade new territories; rather, they are part of the natural landscape. Studies from the Queensland Department of Environment and Science have indicated that crocodiles typically use the same stretches of river and coastal waters as breeding grounds for decades, meaning their populations are not growing at an unsustainable rate in areas where they have historically been present. Culling crocodiles can lead to a dangerous complacency among local populations and tourists, creating a false sense of security. When people believe that culling has "solved" the problem, they may feel more inclined to venture into crocodile-prone areas without caution. This can increase the risk of human-crocodile interactions, especially as the crocodile population often rebounds quickly after culling operations. In Cairns and other regions where crocodile culling has taken place, reports of human-crocodile conflict have persisted despite culling efforts. For example, in 2016, 2 fatal crocodile attacks were recorded in the Far North Queensland region, which had been subject to periodic culling operations. This suggests that the culling did not significantly reduce the risk of crocodile attacks and that a false sense of security among residents and tourists may have contributed to these incidents. A 2019 survey conducted by Tourism Tropical North Queensland found that 60% of local residents felt that culling crocodiles did not address the underlying risk factors and that public safety campaigns and better management strategies were more effective in preventing

attacks. Additionally, 40% of respondents reported seeing tourists engaging in risky behaviors, such as swimming or fishing in crocodile-prone waters, due to the perception that culling had resolved the problem. Saltwater crocodiles have a remarkably high reproductive rate, with females capable of laying up to 50 eggs per clutch and potentially producing several clutches per year. This ability to reproduce quickly makes it extremely difficult for culling programs to keep pace with population growth. Research conducted by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service shows that even after a cull, crocodile populations can recover within a few years, especially if the environmental conditions are favorable for breeding. For example, a study of crocodile populations in the Daintree River area showed that despite several years of targeted culling, the crocodile population grew by 12% annually. This is largely due to the rapid reproductive cycle of crocodiles and their ability to migrate from surrounding areas to repopulate culling zones. Consequently, culling provides only a temporary reduction in numbers, making it a poor long-term solution. Instead of culling, Queensland can adopt more sustainable and humane solutions to manage crocodile populations and reduce human-crocodile conflict. These alternatives include: Crocodiles that pose a threat to human safety can be captured and relocated to more remote areas, away from human activity. The Department of Environment and Science in Queensland has successfully implemented such programs in areas like Cairns, where crocodiles have been moved from high-risk zones to safer habitats. These programs are proven to reduce human-crocodile conflict without resorting to lethal measures. Increasing public awareness about crocodile behavior, safety protocols, and the importance of respecting crocodile habitats can prevent many incidents. Research by Wildlife Queensland indicates that education programs can reduce the likelihood of risky behavior, such as swimming in crocodile-prone areas or approaching crocodiles too closely. Improved Habitat Management and Zoning: Establishing and enforcing no-go zones around key crocodile habitats, such as river mouths and estuaries, is an effective way to minimize human-crocodile interactions. In Cairns, such zoning efforts have contributed to a noticeable decrease in human-crocodile conflicts. Coupled with better urban planning to reduce human encroachment on crocodile habitats, these strategies can provide a long-term solution. Culling crocodiles in Queensland is not an effective or sustainable solution to the problem of human-crocodile conflict. It fails to address the root causes of the problem, is ethically questionable, and can lead to complacency among the public, increasing the risk of further crocodile attacks. Instead of culling, Queensland should focus on long-term, non-lethal strategies, including relocation, education, and better habitat management, which have proven to be more effective in reducing conflicts while protecting both human safety and crocodile populations. The cull may offer a temporary solution, but it fails to solve the deeper, more complex issue of coexisting with a natural and essential part of the ecosystem. I hope you consider the points made in this submission; and opt against controlling crocodile populations, as this is their land as much as ours.