

Inquiry into Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025

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Barry Lyon.

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27th March, 2025

Health, Environment and Innovation Committee

Sent via email to: heic@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee,

Submission on Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025

I am providing this submission in relation to the *Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025*.

My background is as a former ranger, wildlife researcher, and bush tour guide, for 40 years plus, with significant experience in crocodile management and research, through North Queensland, Cape York Peninsula, and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

This has involved the undertaking of extensive crocodile surveys, problem crocodile assessments and removals where necessary, and long term research into the biology and ecology of crocodiles.

Crocodiles were a key target species for clients when operating bush expeditions.

The bill as I interpret it, in essence promotes the culling of crocodiles and allowing expanded crocodile egg harvesting.

I recommend that the committee rejects the passing of the bill on the following grounds:

i) Reduced Human Safety. Culling crocodiles will not improve human safety. It will instead install a false sense of security, Crocodiles will still be present, and the culling may result in a new mindset in people now thinking that potentially dangerous activities are now acceptable. For example, culling crocodiles could imply to the public that it is now safe to swim in places that were formerly considered unsafe, when in fact crocodiles are still present, or may move in from other areas.

ii) Impacts on Ecosystem Health. Culling crocodiles will de-stabilise the ecological health of river systems and coastlines. Crocodiles are apex predators and essential for keeping these habitats ecologically healthy and balanced.

A prime example is the Northern Territory, which has the highest populations of estuarine crocodiles - and the best barramundi fishing anywhere; the two go hand in

hand.

As a result of culling, fisheries would be negatively affected.

Crocodiles also feed on feral pigs, and significantly contribute to controlling their numbers.

iii) Impacts on Eco- cultural Landscape. Crocodiles are vital components of the eco/cultural landscapes where they occur. Crocodiles are deeply valued by Traditional Custodians and are often totem animals.

Crocodiles are also highly valued by local communities generally, something which is often not recognised.

People typically assign individual crocodiles names, regularly view the animals and recognise them as an integral part of *their* community.

Barry Lyon

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iv) Diminished Tourism Opportunities. In a world of rapidly diminishing nature, seeing an estuarine crocodile in the wild - the world's largest living reptile, is an exceptional natural experience. Culling crocodiles will affect the opportunities for such experiencers, and the viability of tourist operations that focus on these remarkable reptiles.

Both domestic and international tourists regard seeing crocodiles as the amongst the most anticipated and valued experience of their visit to North Queensland. Culling would undoubtedly attract widespread condemnation, and likely deter some people from visiting altogether: Eg: 'Let's go to North Queensland, we'll be able too see crocodilesno let's not, they've been culling them, probably really hard to see now'. The flow on detrimental effect to tour operators who showcase crocodiles as part of their operations is obvious.

v) Crocodiles in a world of diminishing nature. Culling crocodiles totally flies in the face of the growing global trend of valuing and conserving nature, not destroying it. Crocodiles are the world's largest living reptiles and are highly significant components of Australia's natural heritage.

vi) Custodianship. We are the custodians of these truly remarkable animals, and have a responsibility in ensuring their conservation, not diminishing it.

vii) Conflict with existing State and Commonwealth legislation. The proposed act appears to be in conflict with existing legislation in relation to crocodile management/conservation

In summary, I believe the proposed Act would; diminish public safety through engendering a false sense of security; detrimentally effect the ecological health of river systems and coastlines; significantly reduce tourism opportunities for exceptional natural experiences; effect tourist operators and potentially reduce tourist numbers; erode important and positive cultural and community values and ownership of crocodiles - including both Indigenous and non - Indigenous Australians; reflect very poorly on Australian's, and Queensland's nature conservation ethics/ management; and conflict with both Commonwealth and Queensland legislation.

Crocodiles have lived in these areas for untold millions of years, long before humans. Public education and crocodile wise behaviour are the keys to co-existence, along with perceptive and skilled crocodile management.

In terms of the current management, I believe the Queensland Department of Environment is generally doing a good job with what can be quite a challenging task. Expanding education about crocodiles and crocodile wise behaviour, and effectively dealing with nuisance crocodiles are always positive initiatives.

I am more than happy to be involved further with this matter if required. Thank you for your time.

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