

## **Inquiry into Crocodile Control and Conservation Bill 2025**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2025**

**Public Submission for the  
QLD Crocodile and Conservation Bill 2025**

**Prepared By Peter Darby  
of**



**Disclaimer:**

I am the president of the Rockhampton Water Ski Club;  
The Rockhampton Water Ski Club is a part of the FRUG – Fitzroy River Users Group.

I have been representing the above-mentioned organisations and have been engaged with the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation and the previous and current state members for Mirani and Rockhampton for 2 years campaigning for a rezoning of the Fitzroy River to an Active Removal Zone under the new Queensland Crocodile Management Plan.

I do not have authority from either of the above-mentioned organisations to represent them in this submission.

These views and perspectives are my personal opinion.

**Acronyms**

DESI- Department of Environment, Science & Innovation  
SEQ – South East Queensland

## Introduction

The Fitzroy River (Rockhampton) upstream of the barrage has been a long-term recreational precinct in Rockhampton, with up to 9 different recreational activities occurring, it was one of the busiest and best multi-use waterways outside of SEQ.

With the Fitzroy River now hosting the rowing in the 2032 Olympics. The future Olympians are being developed on the Fitzroy right now, as well as future national champion water skiers among other sports.

However, over the last 20 years, as the crocodile numbers and sightings increase, the recreational use of the river has decreased as the fear of a human/crocodile interaction has grown to the point that it now threatens the viability of recreational clubs, meanwhile social recreation is almost non-existent.

## The Problem

Almost every year there has been a trap installed, or a known crocodile threat occurs which has caused the postponement or cancellation of recreational events.

Recent events such as the large 5.2 metre crocodile that was shot in 2017, the 4.6 metre crocodile (trapped and removed by DESI in July 2023) and the large 2.5 metre crocodile evading two capture attempts (Nov 23 & June 24) have caused significant damage to the recreational use of the Fitzroy River.

There needs to be a platform to preserve, protect, grow and build recreation in the Fitzroy River!

Not see recreation decline because of constant crocodile sightings, interruptions or concerns.

## Current Queensland Crocodile Management

### **With respect to the current Queensland Crocodile Management Plan (QCMP).**

The plan seems to prioritize the crocodiles and not the humans that want to use the river.

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.

Under the current QCMP, the Fitzroy River is managed as Zone C from the Fitzroy River Barrage upstream 20 kilometres to Belmont Creek. *Zone C = 2 metres and above and aggressive crocodiles targeted for removal*

### **The New Draft Queensland Crocodile Management Plan (QCMP).**

Under the new draft Queensland Crocodile Management Plan, the Department of Environment has rolled the existing plan over with the same zoning for the Fitzroy renamed 'Targeted Removal Zone'.

The Rockhampton community have unanimously declared that they want a "Active Removal Zone", where all crocodiles will be targeted for removal, regardless of size, and the area to be maintained as crocodile free.

### **Environmental Studies**

There is always a study or scientific document which defends the crocodile.

I have also found many issues in these studies, which don't support the decisions that are being made around crocodile management.

In my opinion there should be a study of the social and economic impacts that crocodiles are having on the recreation, sport participation and tourism.

## The Solution

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.

I do support the following:

### **Solution 1 – Adopt Tighter Crocodile Management Controls in highly populated areas.**

Tighter crocodile management is needed in Rockhampton with a large 40 kilometre, 'crocodile free zone', where all crocodiles are removed from the recreational zone regardless of their size or behaviour from the Barrage to Alligator Creek.

This will ensure the long-term sustainability & viability of all the recreational, enhance sporting & tourism in the area and help prevent a human/crocodile interaction.

### **Solution 2 – Cessation Of Media Announcements**

Currently when a crocodile is targeted for removal, DESI make mandatory media announcements.

These media announcements are doing significant damage to our recreational clubs, sports and tourism.

These announcements are unnecessary, yield no benefit to DESI, recreational clubs, the public or the crocodile.

The only thing these announcements achieve is upset conservation groups / organisations.

**The media announcements must cease because they scare the public, damage recreation and tourism.**

*The relocation of crocodiles should be done without media announcements. This will minimise impacts on the Olympic campaign & preparation, recreational clubs, sports, tourism and private schools*

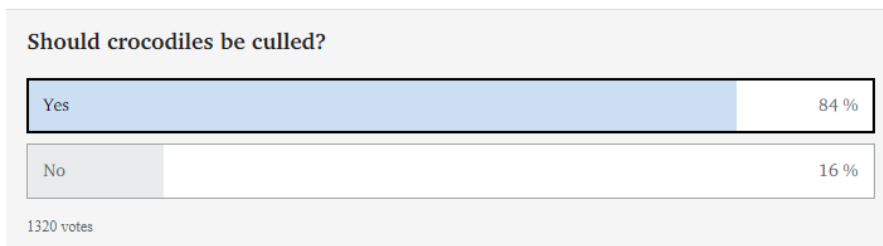
## Surveys and Public Opinion

The public doesn't feel that it is acceptable to hop into water where there are crocodiles.  
The community of Rockhampton

During winter 2023, surveys targeting river users & land holders, revealed:

- Everyone agrees that more people would use the river if the croc risk was reduced.
- 96% have reduced/changed their participation in recreation on the river.
- 56% want the proposed 'Active Removal Zone', 44% want a cull, 0% want the current zoning to remain.
- At least \$0.5 Million/year has been ripped out of the local economy.

The morning bulletin has conducted the below poll in this article: <https://bit.ly/3tXaiJl>



Other large populations of 100,000+ such as Cairns and Townsville have an Active Removal Zone under the new QCMP, and Mackay has a large structure being the Dumbleton Weir protecting their recreational precincts. Rockhampton deserves the same. There are over 100,000 people in this area.

## **In Summary**

We need tighter crocodile management!

The current management of crocodiles is not up to community standards or expectations.

This isn't about science, environmental factors or population studies.

It's about the viability and sustainability of water sports on the river. Most normal citizens don't consider it socially acceptable to enter a river that has crocodiles in it, leading to reduced recreation on the river.

The Fitzroy River is now the home to:

- Rowing in the 2032 Olympics, our current rowing champions, & future Olympians.
- 9 different recreational activities.
- Current state and national champion water skiers & our future international water skiers.
- Our tourism future!

**It is only a matter of time before the next crocodile interrupts our recreation on this river.**

- The public should feel safe when using the river and be safe.
- I am not irresponsibly advocating for a cull.
- I am only advocating for the removal of crocodiles where there is high human population.

The Fitzroy River Could be and should be like the Murray River. House boats everywhere with 10's of thousands of people travelling to the area to engage in their chosen recreation!

Thank you for hearing our concerns.

Regards,

Peter Darby

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## Timeline & History of the public demand for the proposed rezoning of the Fitzroy River.

April 2004 - A large crocodile sighted during a water ski event leading to reduced recreational activity.

2005 – A large campaign and 500+ people attend a public meeting demanding tighter crocodile controls upstream of the barrage.

Sept 2017 - A 5.2 metre crocodile was shot approximately 30 kilometres upstream of the rowing course.

2017 to 2023 - Families move away to pursue their water sports elsewhere. RWSC memberships reduce.

30/03/23 - Large 4M+ Crocodile reported at the ski club. **10 kilometres upstream from the rowing course.**

12+ reports/sightings followed.

05/05/23 - Rowing and Waterskiing activities stop on the river following the many reports.

10/05/23 - MP for Mirani, asks a question (on notice) in parliament as to why the QCMP was not being followed

26/05/23 - MP for Mirani, Mr Steve Andrew & Peter Darby find and confirm the 4M+ crocodile.

27/05/23 - A public meeting is held attended by over 100 people including leadership for most recreational organisations on the river. The resolution that Active Removal Zone from the Barrage 40 kilometres upstream to Alligator Creek to ensure the long-term sustainability of water sports on the river.

27/05/23 - MP for Mirani, Mr Steve Andrew phones Environment Minister Leanne Linnard and demands that DESI sets a trap for the 4M+ crocodile.

31/05/23 - MP for Mirani, Mr Steve Andrew wrote to the Environment Minister Leanne Linnard demanding an active removal zone be implemented in the Fitzroy River as per his constituents' requests.

22/06/2023 – Meeting with Department of Environment, Science & Innovation (DESI)

16/07/23 - DESI trapped and removed the **4.6 metre crocodile, 6km upstream of the rowing course.**

25/09/2023 – Meeting with Department of Environment, Science & Innovation (DESI)

30/09/23 – 40% of Rockhampton Water Ski Club members do not renew their membership.

November 2023 - A large 2.5 metre croc sighted, **1km upstream of rowing course.** DESI set a trap, croc evaded capture.

13/03/2024 –Deputation at community cabinet with Hon Leanne Linnard to highlight the need for this change in the QCMP and requested the 'Active Removal Zone' in the first draft of the new QCMP.

09/05/24 - Draft QCMP release with no zoning changes to the Fitzroy River.

16/05/24 - A meeting and explanation from DESI, as to why the zone wasn't granted.

28/05/2024 – Meeting with Department of Environment, Science & Innovation (DESI) to discuss the new draft QCMP. DESI's explanation being the risk of attacks isn't increased to warrant the change in Zoning.

29/05/24 – The Frug being unhappy at being dismissed by DESI launch a cam

05/06/24 - Public Submissions for the new QCMP closed. Many organisations called for a rezoning.

08/06/25 - A large 2.5 metre crocodile sighted **beside the rowing club**, DESI set a trap, crocodile evaded capture.

09/06/25 - Cancellation of a rowing regatta and interruption of rowing training followed weeks.

11/06/25 - Press conference with Senator Canavan, Hon Michelle Landry, John Lever of Koorana crocodile farm, calling for the DESI to listen to the public and implement the rezoning.

July 2024 – A large 2.5 metre crocodile sighted Hopkins Brothers Dredge **7km upstream of the rowing course**.

Feb 2025 – A large 2.5 metre crocodile sighted Hopkins Brothers Dredge **7km upstream of the rowing course**.

27/03/25 – A larger crocodile than the previous 2.5M crocodile sighting Hopkins Brothers Dredge **7km upstream of rowing course**.