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I speak in support of this bill, but want to cast a far wider net to include Cape York Peninsula.

I represent three Cape York pastoralists and three indigenous Prescribed Body Corporations.

In 1993 and 1995 while working on a NT cattle station I observed salt water crocodiles in the Adelaide and Daly River systems and their interaction with humans and other animals.

Since then, while working across much of Cape York Peninsula I have made many more observations and undertaken related research.

These observations leave me in no doubt that the estuarine crocodile poses the greatest threat of all animals to human and animal life in Australia.

It is a savage predator and strikes to kill every time. I am quite amused when I hear wildlife rangers or some politician talking about non-aggressive crocs.

I invite anybody here to get into a creek with a non-aggressive croc.

There is no such thing in nature, least of all crocs, because if they are not aggressive they do not eat and they perish.

Every crocodile is a potential man-eater. Over the past few years I mustered stock on Bertie Haugh station on the northern Peninsula, more recently named the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve, and have been told one relatively short stretch of the Wenlock River running through the cattle station was home to 134 tagged crocodiles ranging in size from 5 metres to one metre.

There are many others in this river which are not tagged.

Another local station has 70 stock water dams of which about 30 are home to crocodiles. However this inhabitation can change from year to year. This has not occurred before.

How many cattle have been lost on this property?

Another large property west of Coen built a sizeable dam two years ago on a gully quite some distance from any permanent water courses. Earlier this year four crocs had to be removed from this dam before stock would water there.

Gulf grazier Jack Fraser related to me how crocodiles were causing huge losses of cattle in the Gulf District.

He was present several years ago when a large croc was cut open after it died and 63 plastic cattle ear tags were found in its stomach contents.

If this number of tags is correlated across the extensive river and estuarine system in the Upper and Lower Gulf grazing areas, the cattle number and economic loss to innumerable crocodiles is staggering if each beast is valued on average at a conservative \$500.

Ear tags are usually found only on adult stock and many others have no ear tags. How many calves have been taken over the last decade?

I should also mention that I am based near Weipa and in NPARC communities and islands. I could have daily contact with crocodiles in the wild on a daily basis. So does every other inhabitant of these communities.

Every tourist or local who crosses the Jardine River on the car ferry runs the same risk, similarly the Daintree ferry.

I should mention my inquiries revealed the Daintree River is out-of-bounds for the proposed legislation.

Local Traditional Owners have been telling me for years that the crocodile population has exploded within the last decade.

Cray fishermen are now fearful to dive on reefs and in the open sea where they have never had a croc problem before.

Aurukun now has a State Government tagged 'splash pool' for inhabitants who are unable to go near any water courses or rivers.

Last week I spoke to the chairman of one of the local PBC's who said he was fearful, after many near misses a child will soon be taken by crocs which patrol the beaches between Injinoo and Seisia.

Crocodile sightings or incidents are generally not reported in indigenous communities.

Once everybody swam on these beaches now they are terrified to launch their boats at boat ramps where at Injinoo, I have seen a croc lie in wait for an inattentive fisherman.

A pilot for a local helicopter tourist business advises the far northern coastline and river estuaries are crawling with crocs of all sizes.

I had to reassure Sydney tourists at a NPARC area caravan park three weeks ago they would not be attacked by marauding crocs while sleeping in their tents 60 metres from the beach, but warned them not to go anywhere near water, fresh or salt during the night or day.

In short tourism is being adversely affected by the croc danger and no amount of senseless posturing by some politicians will assure visitors of their safety.

Large crocodiles found in populated areas seem to have little or no fear of humans today.

In the 70's and 80's after culling and the skin market ceased, crocs had an inherent fear of humans and during this period there were few recorded attacks on humans. People swam in rivers and the sea throughout the north.

A former Cairns politician de-pastured a number of horses in the upper reaches of the Russell River about eight years ago. I saw some of them in the paddock at the time. Initially he put 30 horses into the paddock where the only water source was the Russell River.

When he came back for them some 12 months later he could only find about 15. A local land owner told me at the time he had seen large crocs kill several horses when going for water.

I was present soon after the croc attack on a cane worker in a paddock at Mareeba last year.

What are crocs doing in a cane paddock? Waiting to catch feral pigs, any human or other food source which might have ventured there. Since this

episode there has been no fanfare over the removal of several other crocs from the same area by farmers.

Fortunately, the Safer Waterways bill is in part, based upon Queensland's successful, regulated kangaroo cull over some four decades.

I once shot roos for profit.

Kangaroo shooting in western areas of an often parched state has enabled farmers, graziers and townspeople alike to keep food on the table by selling meat and skins.

Like kangaroo skin, crocodile leather is highly sought after world-wide.

The previously unique Queensland kangaroo tagging system has now been copied across the nation and in other parts of the world where essential culling of over-abundant wildlife takes place.

Offering the Peninsula's 15 indigenous PBC's control of crocodiles within their tribal areas would open up a brave new world of commerce for these struggling communities.

This is just what the bill sets out to do.

It should be noted there is much anecdotal evidence suggesting at least 300 crocs of all sizes are culled each year in North Queensland mainly on private property. This number has had no impact whatsoever on the burgeoning croc population.

In summary there is no doubt whatsoever there are far many more crocs in the wild now than ever there were when culling was taking place in the 60's and 70's.

Australian crocodiles have never reached near-extinction status nor are they likely to.

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