




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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SAFER WATERWAYS BILL

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.48 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Safer Waterways Bill 2018. This private member's bill was introduced into the 55th Parliament by the then member for Dalrymple before it lapsed due to the House being dissolved due to the calling of the state election. The bill was reintroduced by the now member for Hill in 2018. I was a member of the committee that inquired into this bill in the former parliament. The committee held public hearings here in Brisbane and visited a crocodile farm owned by John Levers and his family outside Rockhampton.

There is no doubt that crocodile numbers have increased dramatically in recent times. As we have heard, crocodile numbers were decimated due to hunting for skins throughout the forties, fifties and sixties. This led to them being protected in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland during the 1970s. Since then, crocodile numbers have increased to the extent that they have now spread into heavily populated areas in the north and have resulted in an increasing number of crocodile attacks on humans. Due to the large size and power of a crocodile, the chances of surviving such an attack are very low and the result is almost always fatal.

There is no argument that the numbers need to be controlled, particularly in populated areas. Unfortunately, this bill is not the vehicle to achieve this without its fair share of risks. While well intentioned, this bill is another case of overreach.

During our hearing on the bill, there was even a suggestion of trophy and safari hunting of crocodiles, but that was more likely to result in wounded crocodiles inhabiting our waterways and increasing the danger, not decreasing it. The professional shooters who hunted crocodiles in the past mostly hunted at night with spotlights so they could get very close to them so they could be shot in the brain with a very high powered rifle. Crocodile management should be left in the hands of those who specialise in that field, as stated by Mick Burns, Chair of the Crocodile Farmers Association of the Northern Territory. He said—

Crocodiles need to be identified. Problem crocodiles need to be identified and removed. It is important that we do this in a smart way. We need better data. We need to be very conscious, as one of the earlier presenters mentioned, about the indiscriminate killing of crocodiles. That is going to do Queensland damage on a range of fronts, and we have to be very careful that that is not one of the outcomes.

It is the role of the government to protect our citizens from harm, and that should include the control of dangerous animals such as crocodiles and sharks. The Palaszczuk government needs to take notice of the LNP's policy regarding crocodiles. The LNP does have a plan to control crocodile numbers which includes removing crocodiles of any size from urban areas by whatever means it takes by professionally trained and licensed operators. Control will also include commercial egg harvesting. The LNP recognises the problem that crocodiles are causing in the north. We are committed to addressing this problem, but as I stated this bill is not the solution.