



Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Crocodiles

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (2.35 pm): We recently saw the death of Andrew Heard from a crocodile attack in North Queensland. I offer my sincere condolences to his family. There have been three crocodile attacks in North Queensland over the last three weeks, with one occurring at the once popular swimming spot of Lake Placid in Cairns.

It was disappointing when the KAP presented its Safer Waterways Bill during the last term of parliament that the bill was attacked and voted down by the government and opposition. It was obvious that no-one from the government or the opposition even read the bill. The bill was designed to save lives by removing crocodiles from popular waterways where there was an immediate danger to people while maintaining sustainable crocodile numbers in North Queensland.

One of the main initiatives of the bill was to set up a Queensland crocodile authority based in Cairns—central to where the issue is—to better manage crocodiles rather than it be managed in the offices of bureaucrats in Brisbane. The authority would have complete control over all crocodile management. The bill also sought to create a multimillion dollar egg harvesting and crocodile industry for Indigenous communities in the Far North.

In an article in the *Courier-Mail* Peter Gleeson warns of the risk that crocodiles pose. I table that article.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 22 February 2021, titled 'Learning to live with killers? What a croc' [168](#).

The article states—

Before his death, Andrew Heard warned about the dangers of crocodiles, suggesting they be culled around known hot spots such as Hinchinbrook Island.

Earlier this month, Mr Heard left for a fishing trip in his small dinghy near Hinchinbrook Island and never returned.

His boat, overturned and damaged, was found ...

Mr Gleeson went on to say—

Conservationists and environmentalists argue that culling big saltwater crocs will only make it more dangerous for humans as the smaller reptiles fight for supremacy.

They say educating people of the dangers of crocodile attacks is the answer.

This is absolute rubbish. If a crocodile comes at your dinghy then no amount of education or knowledge will help, Mr Gleeson said.

In my second reading speech on the Safer Waterways Bill on 2 April 2019 I tabled a *Cairns Post* article titled 'Biggest rise in beach closures due to crocodiles in Far North in five years'. In the article, Surf Life Saving North Queensland regional manager said the recent crocodile alerts were a wake-up

call for politicians in terms of the change that has occurred to aquatic recreation in Cairns in recent years. The article stated—

We've had these wonderful swimming holes like Ross and Locke, but we can no longer swim at them,' he said.

'The people of Cairns just want their swimming holes back. But (the State Government's) advice is "this is croc country—don't go in the water".'

We used to swim in the Ross and Locke rivers and we used to swim in Lake Placid, but we do not now. The government says that this is their territory, but the people up there say, 'This once was ours.' For decades we would swim and enjoy our pristine rivers, beaches and lakes without the fear or threat of crocodiles. We used to ski in the Johnson and Tully rivers and spearfish in the Tully River, but now if one does one gets torn to pieces. I again warn the House of the damage this poses to the tourism industry. Prominent tourist authorities in North Queensland stated the dangers that crocodile attacks pose to the industry during committee hearings into the Safer Waterways Bill in 2018. The detailed warnings on the damage to this industry were ignored by the committee.

With our tourism industry already smashed by COVID, the last thing the industry needs is publicity from rising croc attacks and deaths. It is a cop-out that the state government keeps using the excuse that our waterways and beaches are croc country and croc habitat when over the last 10 years croc sightings have tripled, which goes to show that the present and previous government croc management policies have been a complete failure. The KAP will be introducing another bill into the parliament that will place the lives of people before crocs.