



LATE ITEMS ORDINARY MEETING

AGENDA

11 JUNE 2024

Your attendance is required at an Ordinary meeting of Council to be held in the Council Chambers, 232 Bolsover Street, Rockhampton on 11 June 2024 commencing at 9:00am for transaction of the enclosed business.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "C. Pe", is positioned above the printed name of the Chief Executive Officer.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
7 June 2024

Next Meeting Date: 25.06.24

Please note:

In accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, please be advised that all discussion held during the meeting is recorded for the purpose of verifying the minutes. This will include any discussion involving a Councillor, staff member or a member of the public.

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12 NOTICES OF MOTION

12.1 NOTICE OF MOTION - DEPUTY MAYOR COUNCILLOR DREW WICKERSON - QUEENSLAND CROCODILE MANAGEMENT PLAN

File No:	1174
Attachments:	1. Notice of Motion Correspondence to Chief Executive Officer ↓ 2. Fitzroy River User Group Submission ↓
Responsible Officer:	Nicole Semfel - Executive Assistant to the Mayor Justin Kann - Manager Office of the Mayor Evan Pardon - Chief Executive Officer

SUMMARY

Deputy Mayor Councillor Drew Wickerson has indicated his intention to move a Notice of Motion at the next Ordinary Council Meeting scheduled for Tuesday 11 June 2024 regarding Queensland Crocodile Management Plan.

COUNCILLOR'S RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

1. Lodge a submission to the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, in relation to the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan Review, proposing implementation of an Active Removal Zone in the Fitzroy River extending from the Barrage to Alligator Creek;
2. Provide a letter of support to the Fitzroy River User Group, reinforcing the group's submission to Department of Environment, Science and Innovation;
3. Note the recent consultation of the draft Queensland Crocodile Management Plan and the limited changes proposed to the Fitzroy River; and
4. Endorse the need to conserve the Fitzroy River ecosystem in a way that balances protection of native wildlife with community sport and recreational use of the river.

BACKGROUND

Councillor Cherie Rutherford, Councillor Drew Wickerson and Council Officers attended a community consultation forum with members of the Fitzroy River User Group (FRUG) and Senior Officers of the Department Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI) on Tuesday 28 May 2024, to seek further information regarding the draft Qld Crocodile Management Plan Review.

A copy of the FRUG Submission is attached for information.

The draft Queensland Crocodile Management Plan (QCMP) – Revised Draft for consultation (May 2024) can be found on the Department's website:

https://environment.desi.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/343775/qld-croc-mgmt-plan-revised-draft-consultation-may2024.pdf

The draft QCMP proposes that the Fitzroy River from Barrage to Long Island remains a 'Targeted Crocodile Removal (TCR) Zone'. TCR Zoning allows for the removal of large crocodiles greater than 2m in length that pose a threat to humans or are displaying threatening behaviour.

This motion proposes an 'Active Removal (AR) Zone', as designated in Cairns and Townsville, that will allow active removal of all estuarine crocodiles from a designated section of the river. DESI Officers have raised that the implementation of an Active Removal Zone may have an environmental impact on a unique population of crocodiles.

The Fitzroy River User Group, including Rockhampton Water Ski Club, Fitzroy Rowing Club, Rockhampton Grammar Rowing, The Cathedral College Rowing, Emmaus Rowing, Rockhampton Girls Grammar Rowing, Fitzroy Canoe Club, Rockhampton Outrigging Club, and the CQ Dragon Boat Club, report that membership numbers have decreased 40 – 50% due the perceived risk of crocodile attack. This has also created a negative impact on attracting major sporting carnivals to the Region and a significant impact on the Rockhampton Region's economy.

The Fitzroy River User Group is not advocating for culling of crocodiles. In areas that employ an Active Removal Zone, crocodiles are captured and relocated by DESI Officers, appropriately trained Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers, or other authorised entities. The FRUG cautiously support proposed in-situ 'hazing' trials including 'aversive conditioning' utilising firing rubber bullets and/or using electronic and sonar pulses to discourage animals from inhabiting an area. These trials will be conducted by DESI above Eden Bann Weir.

In consideration of the significant impacts on user groups struggling to maintain and grow their chosen sports, and the associated economic impacts on the Rockhampton Region, the implementation of an 'Active Removal Zone', will greatly assist these groups to increase river usage, membership and competition. The FRUG understand that this security and confidence will need to be balanced with a measured awareness that crocodiles may still inhabit the zone.

**NOTICE OF MOTION - DEPUTY MAYOR
COUNCILLOR DREW WICKERSON -
QUEENSLAND CROCODILE
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Notice of Motion - Correspondence to
Chief Executive Officer**

Meeting Date: 11 June 2024

Attachment No: 1



Councillor Drew Wickerson
Division 6 - Deputy Mayor
Communities and Heritage Portfolio
drew.wickerson@rrc.qld.gov.au
0427 349 131

5 June 2024

Mr Evan Pardon
The Chief Executive Officer
Rockhampton Regional Council
PO Box 1860
Rockhampton QLD 4700

Dear Sir

I hereby give notice that I intend to move the following motion at the next Ordinary Council Meeting of the Rockhampton Regional Council to be held on Tuesday 11 June, 2024:

THAT Council:

- 1. "Lodge submission to the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, in relation to the Queensland Crocodile Management Plan Review, proposing implementation of an Active Removal Zone in the Fitzroy River extending from the Barrage to Alligator Creek."*
- 2. "Provide a letter of support to the Fitzroy River User Group, reinforcing the group's submission to DESI."*
- 3. "Note the recent consultation of the draft Queensland Crocodile Management Plan and the limited changes proposed to the Fitzroy River."*
- 4. "Endorse the need to conserve the Fitzroy River ecosystem in a way that balances protection of native wildlife with community sport and recreational use of the river."*

Background:

Cr Cherie Rutherford, Cr Drew Wickerson, and Council Officers attended a community consultation forum with members of the Fitzroy River User Group (FRUG) and Senior Officers of the Department Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI) on Tuesday 28 May 2024, to seek further information regarding the draft Qld Crocodile Management Plan Review. The draft QCMP plan and FRUG Submission are attached for your information.

-2-

The draft QCMP proposes that the Fitzroy River from Barrage to Long Island remains a 'Targeted Crocodile Removal (TCR) Zone'. TCR Zoning allows for the removal of large crocodiles greater than 2m in length that pose a threat to humans or are displaying threatening behaviour.

This motion proposes an 'Active Removal (AR) Zone', as designated in Cairns and Townsville, that will allow active removal of all estuarine crocodiles from a designated section of the river. DESI Officers have raised that the implementation of an Active Removal Zone may have an environmental impact on a unique population of crocodiles.

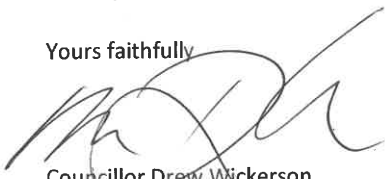
The Fitzroy River User Group, including Rockhampton Water Ski Club, Fitzroy Rowing Club, Rockhampton Grammar Rowing, The Cathedral College Rowing, Emmaus Rowing, Rockhampton Girls Grammar Rowing, Fitzroy Canoe Club, Rockhampton Outrigging Club, and the CQ Dragon Boat Club, report that membership numbers have decreased 40 – 50% due to the perceived risk of crocodile attack. This has also created a negative impact on attracting major sporting carnivals to the Region and a significant impact on the Rockhampton Region's economy.

The Fitzroy River User Group is not advocating for culling of crocodiles. In areas that employ an Active Removal Zone, crocodiles are captured and relocated by DESI Officers, appropriately trained Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers, or other authorised entities. The FRUG cautiously support proposed in-situ 'hazing' trials including 'aversive conditioning' utilising firing rubber bullets and/or using electronic and sonar pulses to discourage animals from inhabiting an area. These trials will be conducted by DESI above Eden Bann Weir.

In consideration of the significant impacts on user groups struggling to maintain and grow their chosen sports, and the associated economic impacts on the Rockhampton Region, the implementation of an 'Active Removal Zone', will greatly assist these groups to increase river usage, membership and competition. The FRUG understand that this security and confidence will need to be balanced with a measured awareness that crocodiles may still inhabit the zone.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours faithfully



Councillor Drew Wickerson
Deputy Mayor
Rockhampton Regional Council

**NOTICE OF MOTION - DEPUTY MAYOR
COUNCILLOR DREW WICKERSON -
QUEENSLAND CROCODILE
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Fitzroy River User Group Submission

Meeting Date: 11 June 2024

Attachment No: 2

30/05/24

To the Department of Environment Science & Innovation,

My name is Peter Darby, I'm the President of the Rockhampton Water Ski Club & I represent the FRUG and all stakeholders on the river upstream of the Fitzroy River Barrage.

Never in my time, have I seen the Fitzroy River so quiet, with so few users, utilising th greatest asset we have in Rockhampton!

- Never has it been so hard to promote or grow the sport of water skiing on the Fitzroy River.
- At the last renewal period, 40% of our clubs' members didn't renew sighting crocodile concerns.
- Despite a strong campaign, last summer we have attracted no new memberships.
- Recreational clubs are recording declining participation rates or lost memberships, meanwhile social recreation is almost completely dormant.
- The public are scared to the point that they are choosing not to use the Fitzroy River for recreation.
- I personally know of families moving away from Rockhampton to continue waterskiing elsewhere.
- At least local one business has closed as direct result of the decline in recreation on the river.

Our Surveys / Data / Economics & Public Opinion

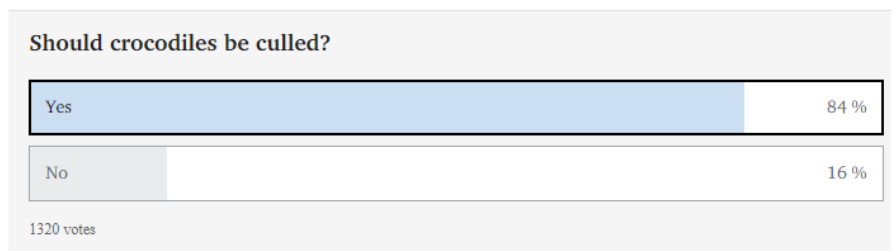
We have conducted small scale surveys (81 respondents) to get more information about this issue:

- **All respondents want an "Active Removal Zone" at minimum on the Fitzroy River.**
- The local economy was losing at least \$0.5 Million/year.
- There is much more lost opportunity on top of that.
- These are significant numbers given we were able to establish that off only 81 people's responses talking about their personal circumstances.

This economic loss is just the tip of the iceberg. There's been no attempt to quantify the devaluation of river front property, generate exhaustive list of financial impacts to landholders or estimate the economic exposure of other large stakeholders. The true lost economic loss per year would be found to be much higher if a full feasibility study was conducted.

Notation: We haven't attempted to gather more data due to time & cost constraints.

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



As you can see, there is serious public support of stronger crocodile management as shown by the poll above.

**No stakeholders (river users or landholders) that are directly affected by crocodiles want crocodiles in our river!
Only people that are not directly affected by crocodiles want them in our river!**

Our Assessment of the draft QCMP

The Targeted Removal Zone listed in the draft QCMP upstream of the Fitzroy River Barrage falls well short of community expectations!

We need a crocodile free section of the Fitzroy River upstream of the barrage, where 100,000 people want to participate in their chosen recreation.

The First Priority of this new draft QCMP should be the long-term sustainability of sports, recreation & tourism on the river.
The Second Priority should be environmental or other considerations.

The hazing trials are welcome, but they will not provide any extra protection to the public as they are occurring upstream of Eden Bann weir and are a trial only.

The Modelling Population Study - Taplin 2023

As the "Modelling Population Study" only applied to the area between Cooktown to Ingham, it is our view this study cannot be used as the basis to not implement an "Active Removal Zone" in the Fitzroy River.

I also as an individual seriously question the validity of some of at least one discussion points of the study.

I quote, page 82, paragraph 223, "A real-life example of a ghost population might be the small population in the Fitzroy River at the extreme limit of the breeding range in Australia. This population has grown a little since the 1980s but the rate of increase has been very low compared with favourable habitats further north (Taplin et al, 2020, 2021). Almost no hatchlings have been discovered despite known nesting and large numbers of surveys over many years".

As a resident who owns a river front property and spends most of my spare time on the river, I disagree with paragraph 223. In my personal experience over the last 2 years, since the Taplin et al 2020 & 2021 publications, every time I have done a nocturnal inspection of the river, I have observed many juvenile crocodiles suggesting a healthy, sustainable & breeding population, and more recently I have observed hatchlings. The crocodiles in the Fitzroy River are certainly not a ghost population and this is contributing to the social, sporting and recreational impacts to river users.

Required Amendments to the draft of the QCMP

We need the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation to adopt the following as a part of the new Queensland Crocodile Management Plan:

1) An "Active Removal Zone" be adopted upstream from the Fitzroy Barrage to Alligator Creek.

This needs to comprise of routine proactive surveying (fortnightly), monitoring and removal of crocodiles upstream of the barrage, before they become a known problem to the public, not reactive 'sighted based' targeted removals as happens today under Zone C.

2) Mandatory Media Reporting of crocodile management activities needs to be abolished.

The practice of informing the media every time a crocodile is targeted for removal/removed must be abolished. This does significant damage to recreational clubs in the river. It is not necessary and provides no environmental, social, economic or recreational benefit. It only causes fear in the community and harms recreation, sports, tourism and the local economy. We believe the crocodiles can be quietly removed with the rest of the public becoming aware.

3) Information Sharing and communications

As a part of the routine proactive surveys suggested in item 1, The observations from all surveys and crocodile management actions should be sent to all Frug members as a reporting obligation of the DESI.

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

(We are not advocating for a widespread cull. We are not advocating for the removal of crocodiles elsewhere.)

In Closing

- It is not acceptable to the stakeholders on the river that the current, Zone C "Targeted Removal Zone" be rolled over to continue as a "Targeted Removal Zone" it falls well short of community expectations!
- Sports, Recreation and Tourism must have long term sustainability & growth.
- As the public are already voting with their feet! DESI & the QLD government can't ignore this problem any longer!

If the crocodile management plans are not changed, then in time, organised recreation on the Fitzroy River will become unviable meanwhile social recreation is already almost dormant, which is contributing to a lack of new entrants into various sports.

If DESI refuses to change the zoning in the Fitzroy River, I call on all levels of government to work together to construct 'off river' water sport facilities. Those facilities being dual world class water ski lakes, circuit lakes & an Olympic standard size rowing lake.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Darby
President
Rockhampton Water Ski Club
0459 022 377



30/05/24