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CABINET DECISION

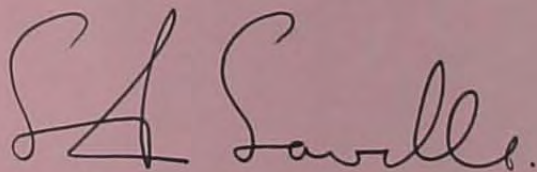
No. **3900**

Submission No.: 3349

Title: STATUS OF SALTWATER CROCODILES

Cabinet -

- (a) approved the application to CITES proceeding; and
- (b) endorsed the programmes mounted to date.



S.P. SAVILLE
A/Secretary to Cabinet

18 December 1984

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SUBMISSION No: 3349

FOR CABINET

Title:	STATUS OF SALTWATER CROCODILES
Minister	Hon. C.N. Padgham-Purich, M.L.A., Minister for Housing and Conservation.
Purpose:	To advise Cabinet of progress to date with the application to downgrade the status of Saltwater Crocodiles and seek additional funds in support of this initiative.
Relation to existing policy:	Pursuant to Government directions
Timing/legislative priority:	URGENT - to permit continuation of the effort
Announcement of decision, tabling, etc:	Not appropriate
Action required before announcement:	N.A.
Staffing implications, numbers and costs, etc:	NIL
Total cost:	\$115,000 additional for 1984/85

Northern Territory Development Corporation



From the Office of the Chairman

11 December, 1984
WD:MC:WD:64

Mr. A. Bishaw,
Chairman & Director,
Conservation Commission
of the Northern Territory,
P.O. Box 1046,
ALICE SPRINGS. N.T. 5750

Dear Alex,

RE: CABINET SUBMISSION - STATUS OF SALTWATER CROCODILES

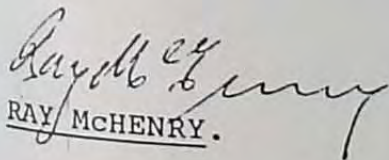
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Cabinet Submission.

Crocodile farming is seen as an important pioneer industry having good long-term prospects for viability in the Territory. The Corporation has demonstrated its confidence in providing loans to two crocodile farms in the Top End.

Inclusion of the saltwater species in the farming programme is essential to the farms' viability. The Commission's aim of gaining re-classification for the species to appendix 2 will materially reduce the risk period faced by crocodile farms.

Completion of the programme to achieve these objectives is supported by the Corporation.

Kindest regards and best wishes,


RAY MCHENRY.

Department/Authority LAW

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE: STATUS OF SALTWATER CROCODILES

COMMENTS:

There are no legal or constitutional barriers to increasing funding for the initiative.

Provided the initiative is acceptable to the Commonwealth (see page 5, 3rd paragraph) then the initiative may succeed. It should be noted that, ultimately, it is the Commonwealth's view that is crucial to any downgrading of status.

Peter J. Conran

SIGNED: P.F. CONRAN

DESIGNATION: FOR DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE & POLICY UNIT

DATE: 12 DECEMBER 1984 CONFIDENTIAL

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TREASURY

Department ~~XXXX~~

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE: STATUS OF SALTWATER CROCODILES

COMMENTS:

The Submission is supported.

It is considered however, that if Cabinet supports Recommendations (a) and (b), the Conservation Commission should revise its current priorities to absorb the additional cost of \$115,000 within its current allocation.



SIGNED: R.C. MADDEN

DESIGNATION: UNDER TREASURER

DATE: 11/12/84

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THE ISSUES

To seek Cabinet's endorsement of:

- (a) the application to CITES proceeding;
- (b) the programmes mounted to date; and
- (c) an additional allocation of \$115,000, subject to normal budgetary constraints, during 1984/85 to maintain the programmes associated with the CITES application.

BACKGROUND

Since 1981 the Conservation Commission, on behalf of the Government, has been pressing the international scientific community to recognise that the Australian populations of the Saltwater crocodile have increased to a level where they should no longer be regarded as an endangered species.

The Commission was endeavouring to down-grade the current Appendix 1 status, reserved for highly endangered species, to Appendix 2 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

This amendment is crucial to the viability of crocodile farming in the Territory.

The Commission's most recent efforts in pursuance of this, have involved participation in two international meetings as part of the Australian delegation.

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The meetings concerned the primary tiers of endorsement necessary before an application can be formally presented to CITES in April/May 1985. Not only did the delegation succeed in gaining the support of the scientists at these meetings but a special resolution was passed recommending approval of the application and commending the quality of the submission.

This however was not achieved without exhausting the existing allocation and incurring considerable commitments for the remainder of the 1984/85 year.

CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES

To complement the case, considerably broader data on existing populations and spread of suitable habitats were required at short notice. This previously unprogrammed item contributed largely to the depletion of existing funds.

Also, whilst the Commission's attendance at the international meetings reaped its successes, it created considerable interest in the Northern Territory's crocodile management programmes. As a result, a conference planned for 14 January 1985 to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Commission's programmes on the ground, has been overloaded with both contributed papers and participants. Instead of catering for 30 it now appears that in the order of 100

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interstate and international crocodile experts will be attending.

Three other minor aspects are also currently being pursued as part of the Commission's management programmes, viz:

- . Aboriginal Land Council's Working Group to involve aboriginal people in management and research initially on crocodiles, but eventually spreading to broader conservation issues.
- . Assistance to Industry - to commence egg collections as soon as possible now that the status change is imminent.
- . Surveying of Melacca Creek in preparation for the acquisition of this important breeding area.

OPTIONS

Action to date has received Ministerial support but progress has not been sufficient to warrant presentation to Cabinet.

Now that achievements have been made, Cabinet's consideration is appropriate.

The options now appear to be either:-

- (i) provide financial support to complete the programme for amending the status of saltwater crocodiles including support for the January conference; or

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(ii) abandon the programme.

Option (ii) is not recommended as this would destroy the credibility of the Northern Territory and Australian Government in the field of crocodile management.

PUBLIC IMPACT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

It is not appropriate that any announcement of this be made until the CITES decision is known.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Additional funds are sought in pursuing the CITES application as follows:

	ALLOCATION	PROJ. EXP	VARIATION
	\$000	\$000	\$000
Surveys	-	65	+65
Darwin Conference	30	50	+20
Attendance at International Conferences	-	35	+35
Aboriginal Land Councils	-	10	+10
Working Group			
Assistance to Industry	30	10	-20
Melacca Creek Survey	-	5	+5
	60	175	+115

Whilst these expenses may appear high, the yield in terms of viability of the existing crocodile farms and the investment in those farms by the NT Development Corporation, warrant continuation of this initiative.

EMPLOYMENT AND STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

Nil

COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

These initiatives have been well supported by both Queensland and Western Australia and, in the overseas forums by the Australian Government. All three will be participating in the forthcoming crocodile conference.

CO-ORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

Comments are attached from the Departments of Law and Treasury and the Northern Territory Development Corporation.

LEGISLATION

Nil

PUBLICITY

Nil recommended at this stage.

TIMING

Funding requirements warrant urgent consideration.

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) approve the application to CITES proceeding;
- (b) endorse the programmes mounted to date; and
- (c) approve in principle the allocation of an additional \$115,000 during 1984/85 subject to normal budgetary constraints, to maintain the programmes associated with the CITES application.

C. N. Padgham-Purich

Hon. C. N. PADGHAM-PURICH, M.L.A.

Minister for Housing and
Conservation

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ATTACHMENT 'A'

DETAILS OF EXPANDED PROGRAMMESURVEYSEXPENDED
TO DATETOTAL
1984/85

(i) surveys by boat and spotlight of major river systems to provide an up-to-date population estimate, and to provide the base line figures against which our management programmes can be assessed following the CITES change;

50,000

60,000

(ii) Surveys by helicopter of otherwise in accessible or logistically difficult habitat, to provide a more complete picture of C. porosus abundance and distribution, and ultimately a cheaper and more efficient population monitoring technique for all habitats.

DARWIN CONFERENCE

The original allocation was fully committed in fares and accommodation costs before the Caracas meeting. At that meeting it became apparent that there was considerable enthusiasm for the concept and many

5,500

50,000

individuals with valuable contributions to make, who had not previously been invited, were eager to attend. Their participation will improve the quality of the conference and its product, the publication of a "manual" of worldwide crocodile management and farming.

ATTENDANCE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Attendance by:

G. Letts, H. Butler, G. Webb, P. Whitehead and C. Manolis at Crocodile Specialist Group Meeting, Caracas, Venezuela.

G. Letts at IUCN meeting, Madrid, Spain.	48,000	48,000
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Party of 3 at CITES meeting Buenos Aires, Argentina.		<u>22,000</u>
		70,000

ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCILS WORKING GROUP

Established to involve Aboriginal people in management and research, which could in future serve as a vehicle for other Commission and N.T. Government objectives. Also, I.U.C.N. bodies are very sensitive to the question of involvement of indigenous	3,000	10,000
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peoples in wildlife management and our case would falter if this consultation was lacking.

ASSISTANCE TO INDUSTRY

Following the acceptance of our farming proposal by the CSG and ANPWS, it is desirable from the industry's view that C. porosus egg collections start as soon as possible. The farms have yet to see an income from skins and it will be impossible for them to fund collections in this year. A Commission funded collection programme is therefore proposed for January 1985. This timing is essential to avoid mortalities through flooding.

- 10,000

MELACCA CREEK SURVEY

To determine final boundaries of this important breeding site prior to acquisition. Melacca Creek will be featured during the field trips as part of the Darwin Conference and the positive management expression will be well received.

- 5,000

TOTALS

106,500

210,000

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SOURCE OF FUNDS:

Original Allocation	60,000
Expenditure absorbed internally	35,000
Additional Allocation sought	<u>115,000</u>
	<u>\$210,000</u>

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