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Crisafulli's Rockhampton Rowing Pledge Signals Regional Focus

July 26, 2025

— Categories: Politics & Government



Queensland Premier David Crisafulli has reaffirmed the state's commitment to hosting the 2032 Olympic rowing and canoeing events on Rockhampton's Fitzroy River, despite ongoing concerns from national and international rowing authorities about the river's suitability. Announced during a milestone event marking seven years to Brisbane 2032, Crisafulli emphasised that the selection aligns with the broader goal of directing Games infrastructure investment into regional Queensland to drive growth, legacy infrastructure, and community benefits.

However, top rowing bodies including Rowing Australia and Rowing Queensland have raised serious objections. Their concerns centre on the Fitzroy River's flowing current, which fails to meet the "no—stream" technical requirement for fair international

competition. The river has not undergone a technical feasibility assessment needed to confirm compliance with World Rowing or International Olympic Committee standards. Seasonal water hyacinth growth and disrupted lane integrity add to the uncertainty.

The presence of saltwater crocodiles in the Fitzroy River has emerged as an additional point of contention. While local officials propose environmental management strategies—including classifying key stretches as active removal zones—rowing officials maintain that wildlife is a secondary concern compared to fairness and safety for athletes.

For Premier Crisafulli, the decision anchors a political strategy aimed at consolidating support in Central Queensland, where the LNP holds the marginal seat of Rockhampton. He contrasts the regional legacy approach with the former government's planning missteps, signalling confidence in a venue that meets training standards and community enthusiasm even if expert bodies remain unconvinced.

Opponents argue that ignoring venue recommendations such as one from the Independent Infrastructure Authority suggesting the Sydney International Regatta Centre as a standard-compliant alternative—could jeopardize international accreditation and the Games' integrity. The delay in final World Rowing inspections and engineering reviews intensifies scrutiny on whether regional pride is outweighing objective venue suitability.

Ultimately, Queensland's push to host Olympic rowing in Atlanti, rather than coastal Venues, carries both promise and risk. If Rockhampton meets international standards, it could spotlight regional capacity and leave lasting benefits in Central Queensland. But failure to meet technical criteria would expose political overreach and raise doubts about Australia's commitment to world-class sporting infrastructure.