

Our Reference: 6771654  
Contact Officer: Mark Ready  
Telephone: 07 4688 6548

26 February 2016

Attn: The Committee Chairperson  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Howard,

**Submission Re: Inquiry into Barrier Fences Queensland**

Toowoomba Regional Council (Council) has considered the terms of reference for the inquiry into Barrier Fences in Queensland and makes the following submission based on these terms of reference and the level of financial support which Council currently provides to the management of these barrier fences.

Council notes that it contributes to the operation of the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board through payment of an annual precept and councillor representation on the DDMRB. Council is also responsible for the management and maintenance of some 80.3km of the Main Wild Dog Check Fence. Together these contributions represent an annual commitment of approximately \$750,000 by Council to the management and maintenance of the Rabbit Fence and the Main Wild Dog Check Fence, neither of which currently attracts financial support from the Queensland Government. (Barrier Fences funded wholly by Council are as marked-up on the attached map of Barrier Fences as supplied by DAF)

**The Management of the Wild Dog Barrier Fence by DAF**

Council does not contribute to the management of this fence directly and therefore makes no comment on the level of management provided by DAF. However, Council notes that this fence receives 50% of its funding from the Queensland Government; hence our ratepayers are contributing, through their taxes, to the management of this fence. Council sees little difference in the nature of the benefits provided by this fence and those provided by the Rabbit Fence and the Main Wild Dog Check Fence, which receive no contribution from the State tax base.


1. Submission

Council strongly urges the Committee to review the funding models applied to all barrier fences including the Wild Dog Barrier Fence, The Rabbit Fence and the Main Wild Dog Check Fence, with a view to consideration of an appropriate funding model that recognises the "Public Good" nature of the benefits of barrier fences and shares costs equitably across all Queenslanders who benefit from reduced losses in agricultural production.

## The Management of the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Fence by the DDMRB

Council believes that on the whole the DDMRB is maintaining this fence to a high standard. However, Council is concerned with the funding model applied to the operation of the Board. It is Council's belief that the level of funding currently contributed is disproportionate to the level of work undertaken and benefit derived within the Toowoomba portion of the DDMRB operational area.

The following table outlines the proportion of barrier fence and operational area relative to each member councils' financial contribution based on the figures provided in the DDMRB's 2014/15 annual report. It is noted that the financial reporting practices of the Board do not divisionalise its expenses – hence no comparison may be drawn between contribution and work performed in each member councils' local authority area.

RABBIT BOARD & BARRIER FENCE STATISTICS						
Total Barrier Fence Length	530 km*					
Total Rabbit Board Area	35,399 sq km*					
DDMRB Total Barrier Fence Length	555 km^					
DDMRB Total Rabbit Board Area	28,000 sq km^					
						
LGA	Rabbit Fence Length (km)	% Proportion of Rabbit Fence	Rabbit Board Area (sq km)	% Proportion of Rabbit Board Area	Contribution 2013-2014^	% of DDMRB Annual Precept^
Toowoomba Regional	90	16.98%	8,159	23.05%	\$472,540	32.54
Gold Coast City	0	0%	1,370	3.87%	\$101,267	6.97
Ipswich City	0	0%	1,093	3.09%	\$75,745	5.22
Lockyer Valley Regional	0	0%	2,267	6.40%	\$102,527	7.06
Logan City	0	0%	957	2.70%	\$74,707	5.15
Scenic Rim Regional	74	13.96%	4,240	11.98%	\$210,252	14.48
Southern Downs Regional	174	32.83%	4,411	12.46%	\$246,743	16.99
Western Downs Regional (Dalby)	192	36.23%	12,902	36.45%	\$168,212	11.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>530*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>35,399*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$1,451,993</b>	<b>99.99</b>
<small>*Length derived from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) GIS feature 'Rabbit Barrier Fence' published 2009-12-10. Accessed 11/02/2016            © State of Queensland (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries) 2016. Updated data available at <a href="http://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au/catalogue/">http://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au/catalogue/</a>            ^Area derived from DDMRB GIS feature 'DDMRB 2010', provided by DAF on 26 August 2014.            ^Stated in the DDMRB Annual Report 2013-14.</small>						

**Note:** DAF have confirmed that the DDMRB operational area quoted in its annual report is inaccurate.

Council proposes that the nature of the benefits provided by the Rabbit Fence (and the Board in general) are no different to the nature of the benefits provided by the Wild Dog Barrier Fence, a view which was supported by the HYDER report in 2009.

Council also considers that there is the potential for significant reductions in management overheads which may be realised by the combining of management of all Barrier Fences under a common authority. This is a view which was also supported by the HYDER report in 2009.

## 2. Submission

Council strongly urges the Committee to consider a common management authority for all Barrier Fences (Wild Dog Barrier Fence, Rabbit Fence and Main Wild Dog Check Fence). Further, to consider an appropriate funding model that recognises the “Public Good” nature of the benefits provided and to which all Queenslanders should contribute.

### **The effectiveness of Barrier Fences at protecting stock and crops from wild dogs, rabbits and other introduced species.**

Council has no data on which to base a qualified opinion with regard to the effectiveness or otherwise of Barrier Fences. Rather, Council is aware of two anecdotal and opposing views amongst its rural constituents.

One view is that barrier fences do provide a valuable service by preventing the movement of pest animals from “Dirty” areas to “Clean” areas. This view is supported by the extensive lobbying Council has received (and responded to) to improve the condition and maintenance of the Main Wild Dog Check Fence. This Wild Dog Check Fence is wholly managed by three neighbouring councils (Toowoomba Regional Council, Goondiwindi Regional Council, Western Downs Regional Council) with no financial contribution from the Queensland tax base.

The alternative view is that there are significant populations of pest animals on both sides of the barrier fences and the fences simply separate these populations with little impact on pest numbers, unless there are increased levels of pest control practiced in areas which the fences seek to protect.

## 3. Submission

Council suggests that, should any additions or reductions to the Barrier Fence network be considered, that full independent assessment of their effectiveness needs to be undertaken. Such investigation must focus on actual effectiveness and not on a Net Present Value assessment which assumes they are effective. Although it is noted that an NPV assessment may also be required as part of a Cost Benefit Analysis.

Council further suggests that there is a need for greater investigation of the level of pest management effort undertaken by landholders protected by the barrier fences in comparison to landholders who are not protected and of more effective means of managing vertebrate pests generally.

### **The unintended impacts of Barrier Fences on Native Species**

Council has no data on which to base a qualified opinion with regard to any unintended impacts of Barrier Fences.

### **Recent Upgrades to sections of the Wild Dog Barrier Fence by DAF**

Council does not contribute to the maintenance of this fence other than through its constituent’s taxes as part of the State Government contribution. Hence no comment may be made in regard to these upgrades.

However, Council maintains an interest in the construction standards and management costs of Barrier Fences in general due to our investment in both the Rabbit Fence and the Main Wild Dog Check Fence.

#### 4. Submission

Council supports further investigation of fence construction standards which aim to balance cost and level of protection most efficiently.

Council further supports a governance model across all Barrier Fences which seeks to minimise overheads and share costs equitably amongst all Queenslanders who benefit from reduced losses in agricultural production which otherwise lead to increased costs for agricultural produce.

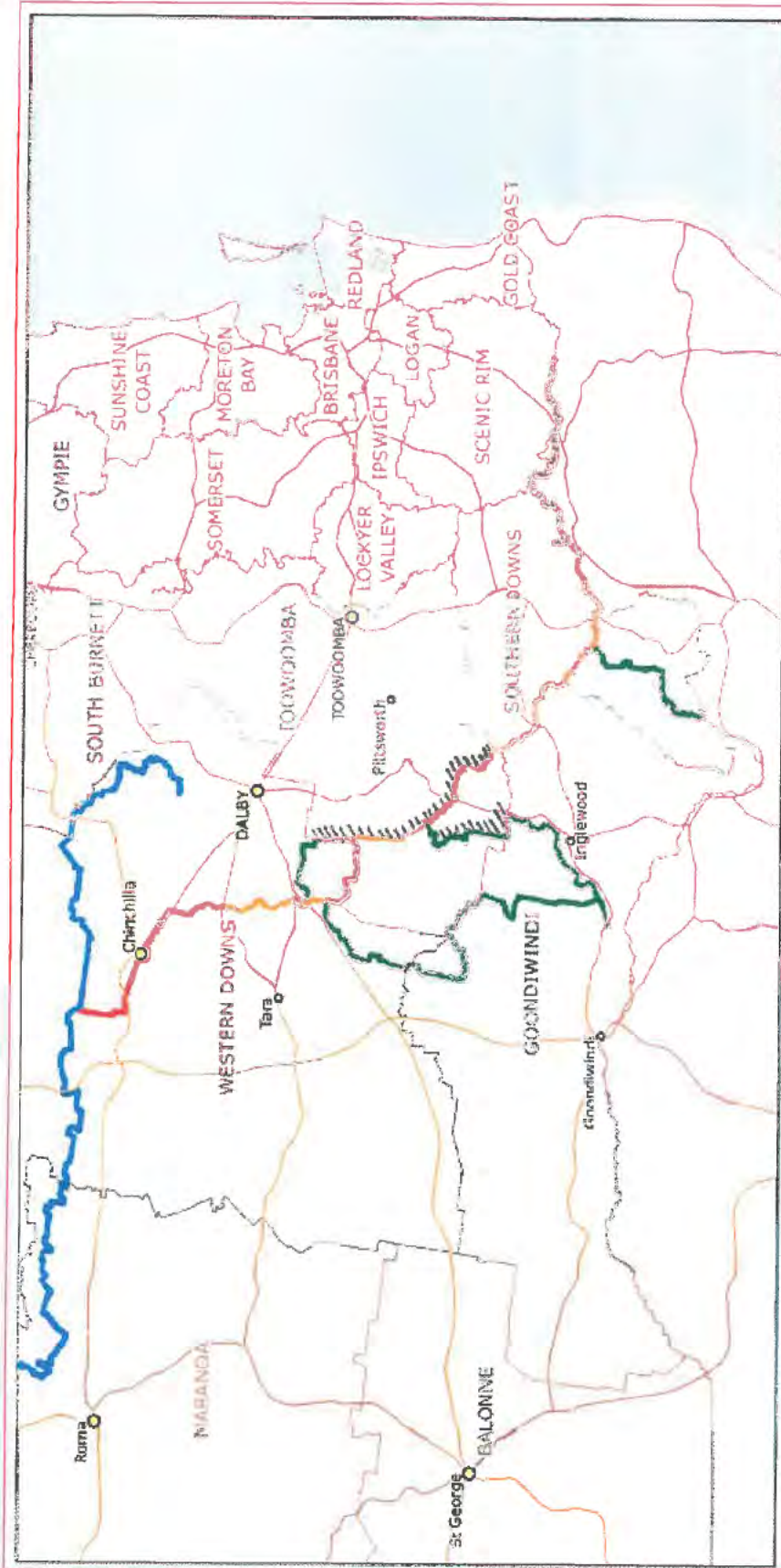
Thank you for the opportunity to provide submission on this matter on behalf of the Toowoomba Regional Council and its community. Your consideration of our submissions will be appreciated.

Should you require any additional information please contact Council's Principal Conservation and Pest Management, Mr Mark Ready (07 4688 6548), who will be able to assist you further.

Yours sincerely,



Brian Pidgeon  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**



# WILD DOG CHECK FENCE, Queensland

Map number: DF02

- Fences**
- Wild Dog Barrier Fence
  - Wild Dog Check Fences
  - Rabbit Fence
  - Wild Dog Check Fences with top netting for wild dogs
  - Fences Fenced by Toowoomba Regional Council
- Towns**
- Main town
  - Town
- Other**
- Road
  - Local Government Areas



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 Projection and datum: Geographics, GDA94  
 Map produced by Bioscience Queensland, DEEDI 06 Sept. 2010.  
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