# Submission to the Queensland's Parliament Agriculture and Environment Committee

by

Michael Pratt, [redacted] Longreach.

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***"SHEEP BUILD COMMUNITIES, WILD DOGS DESTROY THEM"***

**Introduction;**

- The viability of the grazing industry in Central Western Queensland is being severely threatened by the ever increasing predation from wild dogs.
- The population and geographic range of wild dogs is expanding rapidly and control techniques used over the last 20 years are now failing.
- Sheep enterprises are most immediately affected, but cattle breeders are also suffering heavy losses as the impacts of an expanding wild dog population spreads across 8 million hectares of the state's last significant sheep region.
- Queensland's sheep flock has fallen from 16 million in 1990 to less than 4 Million today despite the economics of sheep improving over the last decade.
- Local governments in the affected area are currently spending $1.1M per annum on wild dog control on an ongoing basis, with wild dogs costing the CW Qld. sheep and cattle industries a further $13M/annum in lost productivity and control costs.

- **Feasibility study** (Perkins 2013) **concluded that Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing was economically, socially and environmentally credible and necessary for a sustainable sheep and wool industry within CW Qld.**
- CW Qld. Sheep pop. reduced by 77% (6.2m to 1.4m) from 1990 – 2013 (Well below that now, due to drought).
- NGS (shearing contractor) shore 780,000 sheep within 100k of Blackall in 1990 ie. 12 mths work for 4 teams, prior to the drought numbers had reduced to 115,000 head, only 6 months work for 1 team (D. Grant, Comm. Consult. Report)
- $10.00 per sheep totalling $54m lost to the CW Qld. economy annually, in wages alone.
- Sheep gross margins reduced by $13/hd.
- Every $1 spent locally generates $1.64 as the money circulates throughout local businesses (ABARES).
- 63% of gross agric. revenue is spent locally (ABARES).
- Wild Dogs present an unprecedented clear and present threat to the viability of animal breeding in the region, and unchecked will destroy the sheep industry and severely impact the cattle industry within 5 – 10 years.

**Exclusion Fencing;**

The only effective option left for sustainable control of wild dogs, is fencing. Many properties scattered throughout western Qld. have now resorted to this “last gasp” option whether they are part of a cluster group or individually. SWNRM have been able to secure funds to subsidize cluster fencing within that region however as the Longreach region still supports one of the few remaining large sheep populations left in Queensland, regional fencing is the preferred option for the following reasons;

- Cost of construction only/ha; clusters of 8-10 properties, $8.50/ha; individual fence, $27/ha; regional fence, approx. $1.50 - $2/ha (depending on area enclosed)
- 70 - 80% of properties scattered throughout the Longreach district, still run sheep (prior to the drought) with 140 scattered between Muttaburra and Stonehenge. *Why would you cluster fence and where would you start?*
- Regional fencing offers the opportunity for cattle only enterprises to diversify back into sheep, especially meat sheep.
- Cluster fencing in high sheep population areas eg. Longreach will eventually create disharmony between producers, as those outside clusters experience an ever increasing impact from pest animals.
- The more clusters within a sheep region the greater the pressure on those who cannot afford to fence (eg. large areas of low production country), forcing them to exit the sheep industry.

- Minimal regional economic benefit as increased production within the cluster is counteracted by those between clusters experiencing increased wild dog, feral pig, fox and macropod activity.
- The problems still exist and are simply moved elsewhere.
- Regional fencing gives greater return for tax payers $ due to significant environmental, economic and social benefits to the wider community ( *Wild Dog Control Fence Feasibility Study; LPM, 2013)*
- Properties in less productive, low value areas where sheep are the only sustainable option, cannot afford to fence either as part of a cluster or individually as the economics don't stack up. A regional (Longreach Regional Council area) fence would permit all landholders within the Shire boundary to have the option of running a profitable and productive sheep enterprise.

***"FENCE UP; DOGS OUT; $HEEP BACK"***

**Benefits of Regional Exclusion Fencing;**

- ✓ Best return for tax payers $.
- ✓ Regional not individual benefit.
- ✓ Public infrastructure maintained by rate levy on landholders enclosed.
- ✓ Sustainable and productive sheep, goat and beef industries.

- ✓ Viable and sustainable small communities and regional towns.
- ✓ Diverse agricultural sector.
- ✓ Gross margin; with wild dogs $22/DSE; without wild dogs $35/DSE (Perkins; 2013)
- ✓ **Overwhelming support for fencing to control wild dogs; 342 stakeholders surveyed – 93% in favour.** (Wild Dog Control Fence Community Consultation Report; August 2014. Dr Gerry Roberts; GR Consulting)
- ✓ Once a regional fence is erected and the area secure, landholders can cluster or individually fence off it, when time and money permits
- ✓ Diminishing population reversed, flow on economic and social benefits welcomed throughout.

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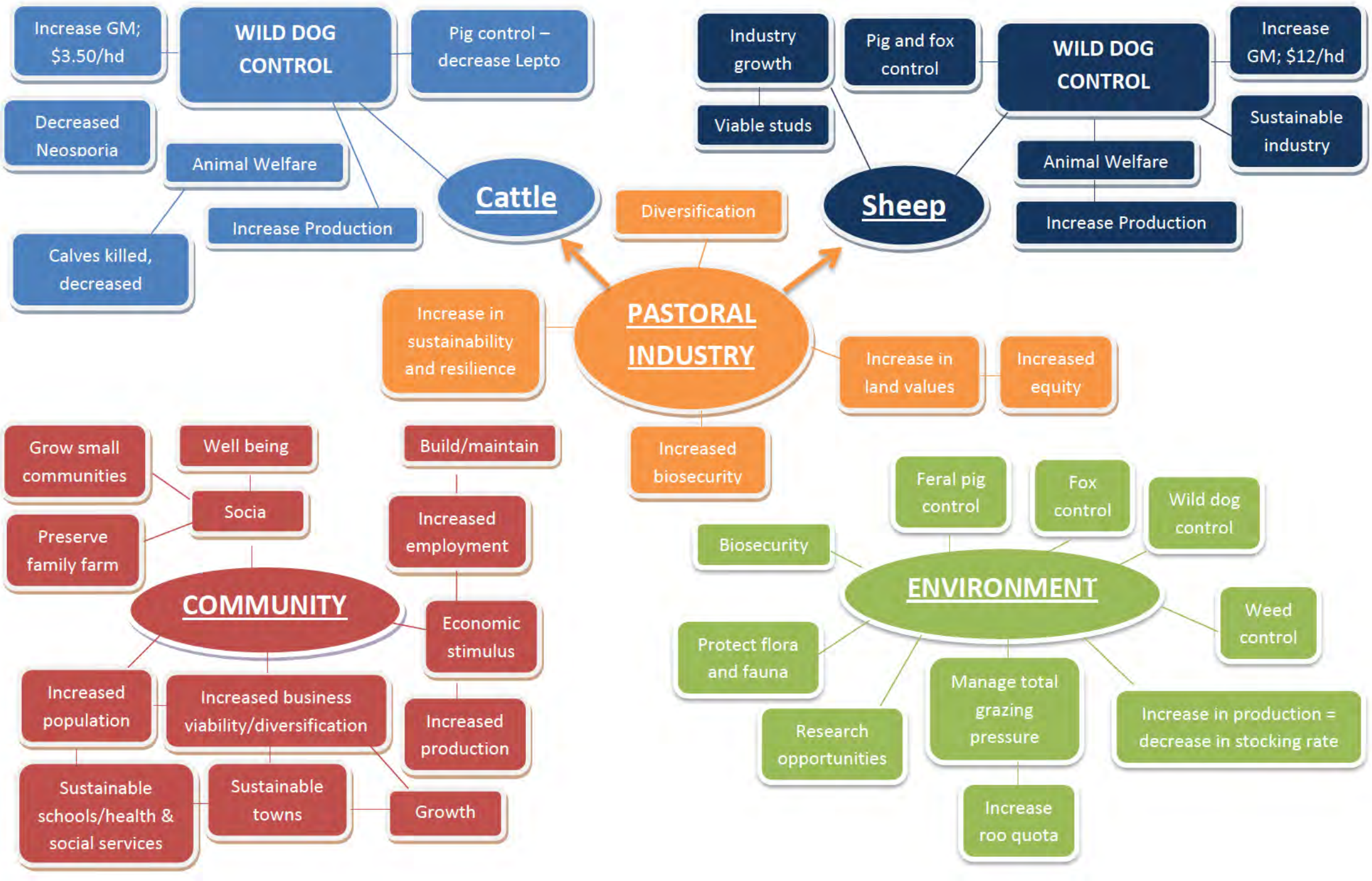
PASTORAL INDUSTRY
Cattle
WILD DOG CONTROL
Increase GM; $3.50/hd
Pig control – decrease Lepto
Decreased Neosporia
Animal Welfare
Increase Production
Calves killed, decreased
Sheep
Industry growth
Viable studs
Pig and fox control
WILD DOG CONTROL
Increase GM; $12/hd
Sustainable industry
Animal Welfare
Increase Production
Diversification
Increase in sustainability and resilience
Increase in land values
Increased equity
Increased biosecurity
COMMUNITY
Grow small communities
Well being
Socia
Preserve family farm
Build/maintain
Increased employment
Economic stimulus
Increased population
Increased business viability/diversification
Increased production
Sustainable schools/health & social services
Sustainable towns
Growth
ENVIRONMENT
Feral pig control
Fox control
Wild dog control
Biosecurity
Weed control
Protect flora and fauna
Research opportunities
Manage total grazing pressure
Increase in production = decrease in stocking rate
Increase roo quota