




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: REPORT, MOTION TO TAKE NOTE

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.10 pm): I am delighted to speak on the *Barrier fences in Queensland* report prepared by the Agriculture and Environment Committee. The committee looked at the cost of maintaining the existing barrier fences; the effectiveness of the barrier fences at protecting stock and crops from attacks by wild dogs, rabbits and other introduced species; the unintended impacts on native species; the recent upgrades to sections of the wild dog fence by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries; and whether the barrier fences should be expanded to other areas of the state to protect stock. I thank the committee for its recommendations, which are sensible and canvass relevant issues.

I am very pleased to say that the committee travelled to Western Queensland. They visited places in my electorate such as Cunnamulla and places in the electorate of the member for Gregory such as Tambo. I was able to join committee members for inspections of cluster fences in the Cunnamulla region. Members of the Paroo shire took us out to a property about which I will speak a little later. We also visited the dingo barrier fence near Tambo. Unfortunately, the member for Gregory was not with us that morning, but he joined us that night for a lengthy community discussion about cluster fencing and the dingo barrier fence. The member for Burnett will probably remember that trip quite well, because we experienced 45 degree heat at the Cunnamulla airport. Yes, it was very hot on that day.

I thank the Paroo shire and, in particular, I sincerely thank Jim and Trish McKenzie and their family. Jim and Trish own the property that we visited, Gamarren. I know of the difficulties that they have been going through with drought, wild dogs and low commodity prices. I know of the stress that those things have caused the family. It was great to see them. I think it was probably the first time that a committee has visited that particular property at Cunnamulla. It might even be one of the first times that a whole committee has visited that community. It is good to see that Jim and Trish are continuing in the wool industry. The cluster fences have given them confidence to go forward in their business and enabled them to succession plan for their family. Cluster fencing will certainly help that family continue to manage their property well into the future and it will help them get back into the wool industry. In that part of the world, they are very concerned about the impacts of wild dogs and other plague animals and species.

There is no doubt that the dingo barrier fence is ageing. I can remember as a child I spent time building some parts of the spur fences to the dingo barrier fence. Certainly that fence is ageing. Fences do not last forever in the conditions that we have. The government needs to recognise the value of the dingo barrier fence and the protection that it provides not just to livestock and local communities; it increases the capacity of agriculture to contribute to the wealth of the state. It was beneficial for committee members to talk firsthand to landholders about the differences between cluster fences and the dingo barrier fence. Usually it is only once people see the difference that they understand the different functions and roles that they play in communities.

I make particular note of the recommendations in the committee report, particularly recommendation No. 6 to include the New South Wales Border Fence Maintenance Board in any future consultation regarding a wild dog control strategy and barrier fence construction, which is particularly important. We have an existing fence that is well maintained. Given that a significant portion of the border fence is in my electorate between New South Wales and South Australia, that recommendation is particularly important. I commend and thank Andrew Cripps, the former LNP minister, who started the cluster fencing program. He went out to one of the first cluster fences that was built at Morven.

I note that the cost for cluster fences is about \$7,000 to \$8,000 per kilometre and the subsidy is about \$2,000 to \$3,000 per kilometre. Therefore, landholders make the majority of the investment into cluster fences, not governments and not the state government. I thank the committee for the work that they have done.