




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2017

AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take note

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.17 pm): I wish to make a contribution to the Agriculture and Environment Committee report titled *Consideration of the Auditor-General's report 12: 2016-17—Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases*. I would like to thank the members of the committee for their report on this issue. It is of great significance to many landholders across the state and also in relation to safe food production.

I particularly note the member for Gregory, who is on that committee. He knows firsthand about pest management in his electorate, be it wild dogs or prickly acacia. Also, I have had experiences in my electorate in relation to biosecurity issues. I have unfortunately had outbreaks of anthrax in my electorate. It is a very concerning situation for the landowner in terms of what they have to go through with that particular situation. It is also a worrying time for the neighbours of those landowners, but it is unfortunately one of those things that we have to deal with and we have to deal with it properly so that we can contain it.

The Queensland Audit Office audited the Panama program, wild dog management and state funded surveillance activities. Of particular interest to my electorate, of course, is the comments by the Audit Office in relation to wild dog management. The Audit Office raised a number of concerns in relation to Biosecurity Queensland and how the department is measuring performances, outcomes and operational efficiency. The audit report, however, noted—

Biosecurity Queensland is delivering on the activities and outputs it has committed to in most cases, but it cannot always demonstrate it has successfully achieved the ultimate aims or outcomes of its programs.

It also noted—

Where Biosecurity Queensland has shared delivery responsibility for managing pests and diseases with other government and non-government entities, the effectiveness of its contributions is not always clear or easy to measure.

There are many shared responsibilities that Biosecurity has across my electorate—a large part of Queensland—with local governments and landholders. I do urge caution when looking at the biosecurity effectiveness of wild dog management without taking a more holistic approach of including the work done by local government and landholders and the contributions to the management of wild dogs across Queensland. Our local governments do an incredible amount of work to implement those programs. We would love all landholders to be really good participants, even those who are not involved in small stock properties, and to continue their involvement but also encourage anyone who is not involved, because the management of wild dogs is not about one particular mechanism. A whole suite of measures is required. The terrain can often be different. Sometimes cluster fencing can be effective, but sometimes mechanisms like trapping and shooting and wild dog drives—things we do not hear very much of—are quite effective in some areas. It is a matter of horses for courses and Biosecurity, landholders and local governments need to have at their disposal a whole suite of measures to control wild dogs.

I note the committee's recommendations and, in particular, recommendation No. 2 that the minister is to report back to the House in six months regarding the implementation of all the recommendations in the Auditor-General's audit report. I look forward to that report in the House from the Minister for Agriculture. I hope that we might have a Minister for Agriculture at the time, not the current situation whereby the Labor government has abandoned rural and regional Queenslanders and has failed to appoint a full-time Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Economic Development. What hope does the Audit Office have in improving biosecurity outcomes when this government cannot appoint a full-time minister?

The agriculture and fisheries department is responsible for administering a budget of approximately \$453 million of taxpayers' money. The department needs stability and direction to achieve outcomes. The agricultural industry needs a champion, not a revolving door of ministers which we have seen under this Labor government.