




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2017

**AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: REPORT, MOTION TO
TAKE NOTE**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (12.15 pm): I rise to contribute to the commentary on the Agriculture and Environment Committee's report No. 35, *Barrier fences in Queensland*. The committee's task was to consider the policy outcomes to be achieved by the wild dog barrier fence and the rabbit fence and, to a lesser extent, examine the operations of local government administered check fences and the construction of fencing clusters. The report took some time to write, as the membership of the committee changed a number of times. It had multiple wonderful chairs.

Mr Butcher interjected.

Mrs GILBERT: The member for Gladstone was one of those many chairs. I thank all of them and all of the parliamentary staff who supported us from the beginning through to the tabling of this report. It was great to be a part of this report process, because we had the opportunity to go into the communities and look at the different types of fences. We looked at how different shires combat pests, particularly wild dogs. I thank the communities of Tambo, Roma and Cunnamulla for their hospitality. They were very open with their views on the different ways that shires deal with pests. Not all of the shires deal with wild dogs in the same way. Some are baiting and some are not; some are culling the dogs and some are not. There is a bit of tension between landholders from different shires who do not believe that everybody is doing the same heavy lifting to get rid of the scourge of wild dogs.

It was quite alarming to hear from landholders about the terrible destruction that wild dogs do within the sheep industry and, in particular, the way that they rip apart sheep and lambs, not for food but for fun. It is really important that we get the fencing right. The Palaszczuk government has introduced more funding to improve the fencing and I believe that will go a long way to help the sheep industry.

Another problem that we came across is absentee landholders who are not doing enough to keep their properties clean. We heard how some landholders have turned to cattle instead of sheep because they do not want to see their stock being ripped apart. However, the land is better suited to sheep because cattle hooves are more destructive on the ground. It is very important that we get sheep back onto properties, not just for the environment but also for the economy of those areas.

The committee's recommendation No. 1 states—

The committee recommends that the Wild Dog Barrier Fence and the Rabbit Fence continue to be actively maintained as major components of Queensland's control strategies for wild dogs and rabbits.

We must protect crops and animals from destruction by pests.

Recommendation 4 was that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries consider the merits and a cost-benefit analysis of the proposal to extend the wild dog barrier fence northwards from the Windorah area to within the area of the Longreach Regional Council. It is important that we get sheep back onto these properties. As other members have said, people in the towns we visited reported to us that once sheep left, a whole lot of people left those towns. The workers from the properties and the shearers left those communities and that has had a huge impact on small rural towns. I commend the report to the House.