




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (12.05 pm): In Western Queensland the wild dog barrier fence has for a long time been one of the most important pieces of infrastructure. As the member for Gregory it is very much a part of the electorate that I represent and also a part of the electorate that the member for Warrego represents. It has played a significant role in making sure that we protect our pastures but also protect our livestock and certainly our wool industry from the scourge of wild dogs. For a very long time wild dogs have been a massive problem in Western Queensland. We are seeing a return to the sheep industry. To be a part of that industry we need to maintain important pieces of infrastructure such as the wild dog barrier fence.

The wild dog barrier fence plays a significant economic role in our region, but we have to make sure that we maintain it. This is an important piece of infrastructure that was constructed back in 1948 and has played a significant role. We have to remember that Western Queensland, Mitchell grass country, gidgee, pebbly country, the region that I represent, is wool and sheep industry country. We all know that the wool industry, when it gets going, plays a significant role. It provides jobs and is an economic contributor to towns such as Longreach, Ilfracombe, Isisford, Blackall, Tambo, down to Stonehenge and Jundah and through to the member for Warrego's area.

Prior to 1989 when the federal Labor government took away the floor price, the wool industry was a powerhouse. When that floor price went, the wool industry spiralled down very rapidly and we saw prices for wool at 400 cents a kilogram clean. The good news is that we now have wool prices at 1400 cents a kilogram clean. Wool is being used in wider clothing items. We are starting to see it in sportswear, not just in Italian suits and jumpers. It is moving into a more cross-section of the clothing industry, which is spurring it along. There is a huge appetite overseas for the wool that we produce here in Queensland. We used to have close to 20 million sheep in Queensland with nearly nine million in the central west. Places like Longreach and the central west were renowned for their wool industry. Since the floor price was taken away in 1989 and the drop in prices in the early 1990s down to 400 cents a kilogram clean, we have seen sheep numbers dwindle to the point where right now we only have a million sheep in Queensland. Over the last couple of years we have seen an increase of around 250,000 sheep. A lot of those sheep have gone back to the central west. I see wool producers on a daily basis. Despite the drought there is optimism in their eyes.

We have to continue to maintain the wild dog barrier fence properly. I see in the report that it is costing Queensland taxpayers \$23,500 a kilometre to fix the wild dog barrier fence, whereas people are putting up cluster fencing for \$4,500 a kilometre. I have some concern about that and would like to see more detail in relation to it. We have to make sure that we spend our money wisely. The more money we spend and the more wisely we spend it, the longer we will be able to maintain the wild dog barrier fence. As the member for Greenslopes mentioned, cluster fencing is important. I remind the House that cluster fencing started under the former LNP minister for natural resources, Andrew Cripps, who was passionate about making sure that we had alternatives so as to increase the wool industry in Western Queensland. I congratulate Andrew Cripps for starting that great initiative.

Cluster fencing has been fantastic. It has increased optimism in Western Queensland. We need to continue constructing and maintaining cluster fencing. We also need to look at ensuring that the cluster fences line up with the wild dog barrier fence. We have to connect all of the cluster fences and include the wild dog barrier fence. I can assure the House that if the wool industry returns to Western Queensland, sheep numbers will go up and the shearers, the crutchers and others will return, as well. We have to support the wild dog barrier fence.