




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: REPORT, MOTION TO TAKE NOTE

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (12.24 pm): As the grandson of a sheep farmer and with an uncle who is a sheep farmer, this is an issue that I had heard about long before I entered this place. We see tears welling up in the eyes of farmers when they describe how they have to go and put down ewes and lambs when they have been attacked by dogs. They are often just maimed for the kidneys of the animals. Not all of the meat is taken.

I was a member of the committee that went out to Tambo and other regional centres to see the cluster fencing in action. What is interesting for me is that this is a collective action problem. We speak about the tragedy of the commons, where people can overexploit their use, but this is a different type of collective action problem. If one farmer does not maintain their part of the fence they endanger not only their own farm but also the farms of others. This led to a tipping point where farmers turned more and more to cattle that were less vulnerable and the fences further degraded.

Instead of the vicious cycle where more and more farmers opt out of a system of collective action to preserve our fences, this government has helped create a virtuous cycle where the maintenance of the cluster fencing and dog fences has created greater employment and greater productivity for sheep farmers in the west. This was described by the member for Burdekin as being a jigsaw being filled in. This virtuous cycle saw each farmer begin to contribute their part to the collective action of reducing dogs.

One old hand who was passionate about cluster fencing described to me that in the old days leaseholders were forced to maintain their fences in certain areas. Indeed there were inspectors who would go out there to inspect them. The tradition of increasing the wealth of regional areas by government having a role in making sure the collective action is maintained has a long history.

It is important that these things are a collective decision of the community. Towns in the west could truly be said to be built on this collective action—the collective work and effort of shearers and the collective action to build these fences. I commend the report to the House and note that this collective action must be maintained.