

Question on Notice

No. 322

Asked on 26 March 2019

MR J KELLY ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on the progress of the Feral Pest Initiative and any additional funding that the program may have received?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

In October last year, I announced a further \$6 million for the construction of cluster fencing in western and southern Queensland. This funding delivers on a 2017 election commitment to provide \$5 million for cluster fencing and is complemented by an additional \$1 million allocated for cluster fencing in the last State Budget.

On 12 March 2019, in conjunction with the Premier and Minister for Trade, I announced the successful applicants for Round 3 of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative. Through this initiative, funding is allocated to support regionally agreed cluster fencing arrangements in areas with high wild dog density. This initiative is complemented by other invasive plant and animal control programs across Queensland.

This round of funding targets drought-affected sheep and wool producing areas with cluster fencing projects managed by the Western Downs Regional Council, Maranoa Regional Council, Goondiwindi Regional Council, Southern Downs Regional Council, the Remote Area Planning and Development Board and Southern Queensland Natural Resource Management Group.

These projects will provide for an additional 2,000 kilometres of cluster fencing, bringing the total amount of cluster fencing in Queensland to almost 9,000 kilometres.

More than \$1 million has also been allocated for projects to tackle invasive plants and animals. The Fitzroy Basin Association has been allocated \$318,000 to carry out an integrated pest management project to control wild dogs, feral pigs, feral cats, Harrisia Cactus and Parkinsonia in the Dawson and Isaac catchments.

Southern Gulf Natural Resource Management (NRM) has been allocated \$553,000 to continue vital Prickly Acacia control in the Flinders River catchment, while the Whitsunday Regional Council will receive \$133,400 to deliver more invasive animal control activities in the Whitsunday region.

Rounds 1 and 2 of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative resulted in the construction of nearly 7,000 kilometres of fencing, protecting more than 400 sheep-producing properties from wild dogs.

Initial data coming out of the completed cluster fence projects indicates that lambing rates and sheep numbers have increased dramatically in most areas. The Remote Area Planning and Development Board has reported that, as a result of their Round 1 cluster fence projects, lambing rates have increased from 40 per cent to upwards of 80 per cent, and sheep numbers have almost doubled in the area, with numbers increasing from 269,000 to nearly 497,000 head.

Queensland Feral Pest Initiative funding has also been provided to employ additional local government officers to support invasive plant and animal control activities in Barcoo, Winton, Maranoa, Barcaldine, Southern Downs and Bulloo local government areas.

In addition, funding through the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative has been provided for a Wild Dog Coordinator Project that is jointly funded by AgForce, Australian Wool Innovation, and Meat and Livestock Australia. Through this project, three Wild Dog Coordinators have been appointed to service the local government areas in Northern, Central-western and South-western Queensland.

The Coordinators aim to deliver effective local and regional wild dog management programs by supporting the development of community-based management groups and improving the capacity of landholders to manage wild dogs through a range of extension activities and field days across the three regions.

Whilst it is early days in the implementation of this project, it has already achieved great successes in increasing landholder participation in coordinated baiting programs and reinvigorating local wild dog committees.