

## Media Release

### EXCLUSION FENCING PROJECT SURPASSES 4 MILLION HECTARES PROTECTED BY CLUSTERS

Following the recent approval of 6 new clusters as part of the Collaborative Area Management (CAM) Phase 3 funding; the project will now see a further 596,252 hectares of agricultural land protected from the devastating impacts of wild dogs and other pest animals. Reaching a monumental milestone, the project will now surpass 4 million hectares protected across the three rolled out phases.

South West NRM has been working hard with the newly approved clusters to complete the important step of establishing a cluster legal entity and enter into a formal contract between the cluster, each landholder, and the organisation. The 6 new clusters include 16 landholders across 24 rural properties, and will be established throughout the Balonne, Paroo, and Quilpie shires.

“We continue to see strong interest for clusters throughout the south west, which very much highlights the effectiveness and importance of the project to the long-term viability and resilience of the region”, said Project Manager Jon Grant.

Economic modelling on the 6 new clusters indicate landholders have experienced economic impacts of more than \$5.78 million each year due to feral pests and increased grazing pressure. “Through implementation of the cluster fences, there is the potential to increase current stocking by 138,600 DSE, but more importantly, we have the ability to safeguard more than 53,660 head of sheep from future wild dog predation”, said Mr. Grant.

Completed fencing as part of Phase 2 of the CAM project continues to increase, with approximately 85% of the 1,907 kilometres erected and beginning to protect the region. “Despite a slow start due to delays in materials, the 15 Phase 2 clusters are working hard to complete their fences as quickly as possible. With some clusters already completed, it is expected that all these clusters will be completed by the end of the year, and those under Phase 3 by late 2018”, said Mr. Grant.

“The region map of the clusters really highlights the underlying purpose of the model – to create a honeycomb of protection. The benefit of this honeycomb effect has just been seen with some of the new exclusion fences (in conjunction with private exclusion fencing) creating a sub-cluster of more than 148,000 hectares at no cost”, said South West NRM Chair, and grandfather of the model, Mark O’Brien.

“I always knew these benefits was possible, and I thank each and every landholder involved for their hard work and perseverance in getting the fences up, and the clusters cleaned out of pests. A project like this really shows what can be done when we work together towards a common goal”, said Mr. O’Brien.

The project has established through the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative. The initiative has received funding through the Queensland Government to support the growth of a productive and prosperous food and fibre sector in Queensland.

*Map caption:*

6 new clusters to be established throughout south west Queensland (blue), and the existing clusters established through South West NRM (pink and green).

*Photo caption:*

Ronald Sevil standing with his exclusion fence as part of the Neabul Wallum cluster, funded under Phase 2 of the Collaborative Area Management Project.

End.

## CONTACTS

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<http://www.southwestnrm.org.au/clusterfencing>

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