

# HOLDING THE LINE:

A history of the South Australian  
Dog Fence Board, 1947 to 2012

Leith Yelland



Second edition





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Dog Fence Board, 1947 to 2012

*By Leith Yelland*  
*March 2000*

*Revised by Patricia Fraser*  
*November 2012*





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*The Dog Fence, Coober Pedy, South Australia. Courtesy Michael Balharry (Photo 102044).  
Dingo – 'Hawaii' at Muckup, Lake Eyre, February 1990. Courtesy Peter Bird (Photo 102065).*

## Foreword



'Holding the Line' describes the history of the Dog Fence Board and was commissioned to mark the celebrations of the first hundred years of Federation of South Australia.

The book was jointly funded by Centenary of Federation South Australia and the Dog Fence Board in recognition of the important contribution that the Dog Fence has made to a sustainable sheep industry in the State.

Simply, commercial sheep production cannot coexist with dingos. In the 1890s, in excess of 11 000 sheep were killed by dingos on one property in northwest South Australia – similar levels of predation by dingos on other properties as well, contributed to the abandonment of properties during that period.

Pastoralists initially responded, through the Vermin Districts Act 1894, to the threat by cooperatively building vermin fences to protect their livestock.

The history of the Dog Fence Board illustrates well these hardships faced by the early pastoralists and the hardships of their employees who built the first vermin fences, often in rugged terrain and under harsh conditions, in the late nineteenth century. It also shows the ingenuity, determination and resilience of the pastoral industry to reduce the dramatic losses of sheep caused by dingos and, to a lesser extent, foxes.

The concept of a buffer fence to protect the sheep industry across southern South Australia from dingos loomed as an urgent necessity during the 1930s. This necessity reflected the large number of proclaimed fenced districts at the time, each with its own perimeter fence. Consequently, the Dog Fence Act, 1946 was proclaimed in 1947 to provide for a Dog Fence Board to manage funds for and audit the maintenance of a single, continuous Dog Fence. The Fence linked vermin fences where possible and stretched across the northern edge of the sheep zone — some 2 200 kilometres from the Nullabor to the New South Wales border. The location of the current Fence has changed little from the original fence line.

The book traces a unique part of South Australia's history in detail and describes many of the personalities who contributed to the past successes of the Dog Fence. These personalities include chairs and members of the Dog Fence Board, inspectors and pastoralists who have maintained the Fence.

The book also illustrates how the Dog Fence Board has kept abreast of modern technology to provide the State with a most cost effective Dog Fence. The construction of the Fence has progressed from a full netting fence, to a composite netting and electric fence, to a full electric fence powered by solar panels.

The Dog Fence Board is now managing the Fence in close collaboration with pastoralists through local Dog Fence Boards. Each local board employs contractors to ensure that the Dog Fence in their region is upgraded and maintained in dog-proof condition.

I sincerely believe that this book is a valuable record of an important part of the history of the pastoral sheep industry during the first hundred years of South Australia, and that the Dog Fence has a critical role in protecting the sheep industry from dingos in the future.

*Rob Kerin*  
PREMIER  
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Regretfully Leith Yelland, the original author of *“Holding the Line”*, sadly passed away on the 20 May 2009. He is remembered for his dedication to promoting the cause for preserving and prospering the outback region. Applying his craftsmanship as a published author and editor of the newsletter *“Across the Outback”*, he has captured many outback profiles and legends for posterity. His memory is embalmed through the legacy of his penmanship.

The update for 2000 to 2012, has been prepared from Annual Reports and Dog Fence Board records, made available to me by the Board secretary, Michael Balharry. Bill Sandow, the supervisor for the Fence also gave advice on technical details. The Board members gave support and encouragement, during the Fence inspection in April 2012, when they kindly allowed me to accompany them.

*Patricia Fraser*  
November 2012

## Acknowledgements

The preparation of this history is an official Centenary of Federation, South Australia project and it has been substantially funded by a South Australian Federation Grant approved by State Cabinet. The Dog Fence Board itself has also financially supported the project.

The research needed to prepare this text has only been made possible by the patience, forbearance and goodwill of a number of people including Dog Fence Board members, riders, patrolmen and administrators — past and present. Given that the record recovery rate, particularly with old Department of Lands dockets, was only a little better than 50%, the recollections of many of these people were critical. There are still gaps but by and large what is known is recorded.

There is some conjecture and a few assumptions to help hold the history in a logical sequence. They are based on a reasonable understanding of the country and the people affected by the Dog Fence. At worst these assumptions may lead to the discovery of more private written documentation, which is all to the good.

I am extremely grateful to Michael Balharry and Margaret Durant at the Board’s offices at the Waite Campus, Urrbrae, for the unfailingly cheerful assistance they gave me as I found my way through the records retained there. I was also assisted considerably by the patient staff at State Records’ public reading room at Netley.

I am also indebted to the following people for the time they gave me — some on more than one occasion:

Jim Vickery, Bill Edwards, Basil Kidd, Rod Everett, Donald Byrnes, Bryan Lock, Jack Spiers, Don Nicolson, Phillip Trowbridge, Peter Allen, Hugh MacLachlan, Andrew McTaggart, James Morgan, Lester Lord, John Cook, Bill Sandow, Brian Johns and John Norwood.

Peter Bird of the Animal and Plant Control Commission ran his expert eye over what I had written about the dingo and its habits and Don Carpenter of Ceduna provided me with additional material relating to the Far West Coast Fence.

## The measures used

The text contains area, linear and monetary references firstly in imperial and later metric — and for some of the period in the 1960s and 1970s, a happy mixture of both. I have not attempted conversions. In that context the text speaks the language of the time to which it relates.

*Leith Yelland*  
March 2000

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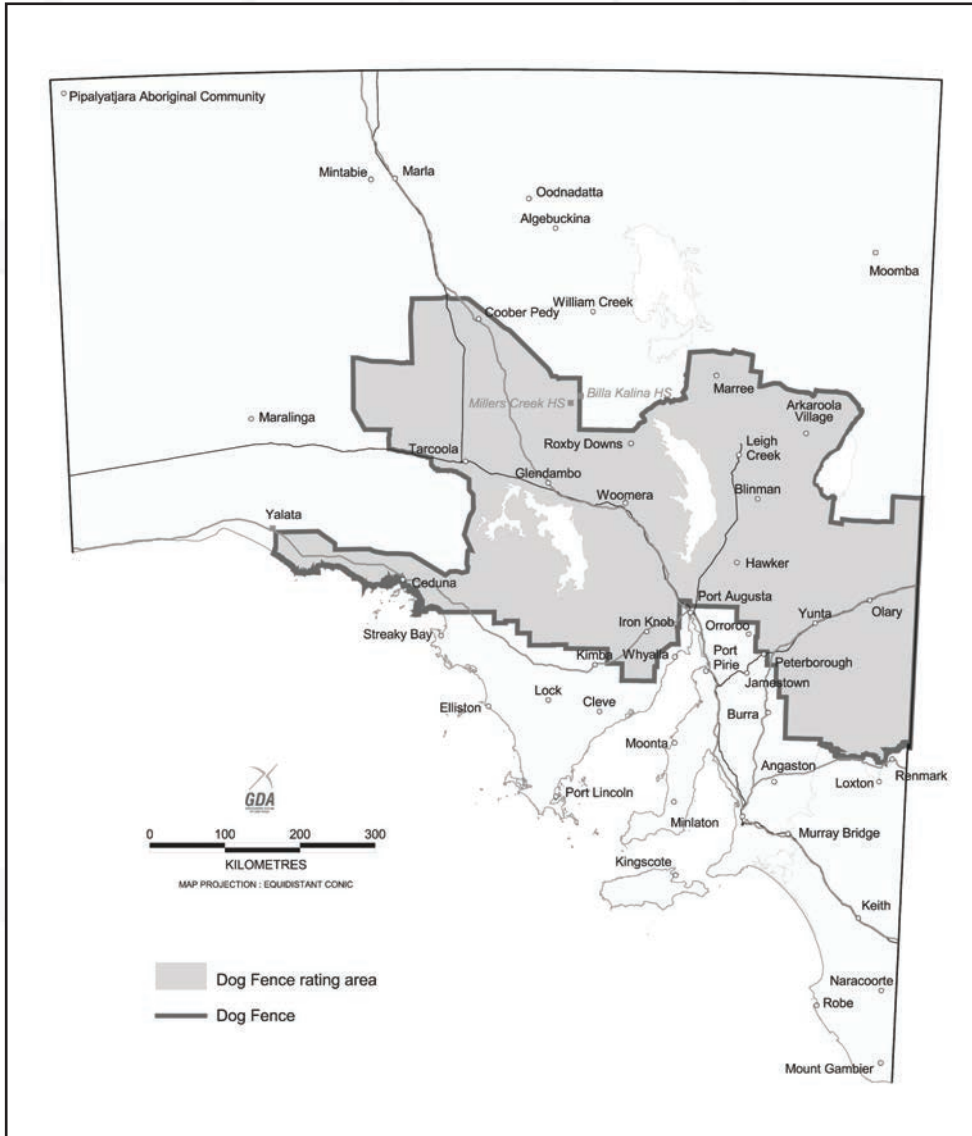


Figure 1: Current Dog Fence, March 2000.

## Knowing the enemy

THIS is a history of the membership and operations of the Dog Fence Board in South Australia, of the sub-groups that have assisted it and of the legislation that has empowered it and driven much of its activity. It is also of course a history of the Dog Fence itself.

But to give context to the imaginative and sometimes extraordinary effort that has gone into making the South Australia portion of this internationally unique wild animal barrier effective, it is necessary to begin with a potted summary of the, often grudgingly, admired enemy that caused it all to happen: the Australian Dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*).

Much has been written about the dingo and there is a reasonable level of agreement among authors about the dingo's appearance, characteristics, breeding patterns and range. However, there are some divergent views between scientists and graziers about its dietary preferences and its capacity to predate domestic grazing animals.

Within the pastoral industry there is, however, a consistent and unequivocal view based on observations over many years and in some cases on bitter experience: that uncontrolled and unchecked the dingo is single-handedly capable of rendering sheep grazing a non-viable proposition in most of Australia's grazing lands.

Bryan Lock, who spent 10 years as Manager of Dog Fence Administration in South Australia, states that in the days before the Second World War the dingo was an immensely important issue. 'At one stage', he says, 'there was a proposal put to the Federal Government that involved returned soldiers from the First World War being deployed to wage war against the dingo'.

Stories like this, and reports of dingo damage, abound. An idea of what could happen can be gauged from a story Bryan tells from the time he managed Yarna Station in the Gawler Ranges. He followed dog tracks one day on the Station thinking they were from a domestic dog because they imprinted along a track through a large mob of sheep. He then came on a dam and saw that the dog had pulled down and killed 15 hoggets. He recalls that there wouldn't have been half a kilogram of meat eaten off any of them. Brian's view is that the dingos sometimes kill merely because the sheep run and the dog can outpace them and pull them down.

There are reports on record of 500 000 scalp bonuses being paid in the 14 years up to 1935. There was an 1893 Royal Commission that took evidence as to the extent of district losses caused by dingos from the Town Clerk of Naracoorte in the State's South East. The same Commission heard the case of a family that drove sheep to Bordertown and after 12 months did not have enough to warrant mustering for shearing.



Dingo – 'Hawaii' at Muckup, Lake Eyre, February 1990.  
Courtesy Peter Bird. (Photo 102065)





The dingo came from southern Asia and is thought to have been introduced into Australia, New Guinea and Borneo by Asian seafarers between 3 000 and 4 000 years ago. Their spread throughout much of the Australian mainland has almost certainly been assisted by Aborigines who have used them to hunt game like kangaroos and wallabies.

A typical adult male dingo stands about 600 mm at the shoulder and weighs about 15 kg. It is a handsome dog; lean with pricked ears and a bushy tail. Coat colour is usually ginger with white points (particularly if it is pure). Black and tan, and white animals, are also fairly common.

Dingos do not bark and differ from domestic dogs in that the female only comes in season once a year and in drought sometimes not at all. She becomes sexually mature at two years and if she is tugged (male dogs are apparently only interested for six months of the year in the more arid areas) she will produce an average litter of five that will be independent within four months.

Dingos can live either alone, in pairs or in a family group. It has also been suggested that even individual animals often belong to a larger pack that gets together fairly regularly or during the breeding season.

The size of a dingo group's territory varies with the availability of prey and terrain. The average home range in the arid rangelands of northern South Australia and central Australia is somewhere between 25 and 65 square km. In the forested regions of eastern Australia it reduces to between 10 and 21 square km. Most dingos remain in or near their birth area, although young males in particular may disperse, with the longest recorded distance for a tagged dingo being 250 km over a 10-month period in central Australia.

In South Australia a dingo collared and released by Peter Bird of the Animal and Plant Control Commission traversed over 225 km in a six-month period.

Dingos predate a number of native and feral animals as well as domestic stock and it has been suggested that they are capable of enlarging their group sizes to more effectively hunt larger species like kangaroo.

It is also likely that, as with the kangaroo in a number of areas, the provision of additional man-made water points in the more remote rangelands have aided their survival and multiplication and allowed them to move well beyond the scattered natural waters. Rabbits are an important item of prey to the dingo and, together with cattle carrion, have also contributed significantly to increases in dingo densities.

There are areas of Australia, like the more settled eastern coastal areas, where the dingo is cross-breeding as barriers between feral and urban dogs and dingos become more imprecise. This is not thought to be happening much in South Australia and it has been suggested, ironically, that the South Australia Dog Fence is also something of a conservation measure in that it keeps purebred dingos away from the 'contamination' of domestic dogs.

Whatever the truth of that argument, the dingo has a dual status in South Australia depending on where you are. Outside the Dog Fence it is now regarded as a native animal while inside the Fence it is a prescribed pest under the State's Animal and Plant Control legislation.

## Preamble: The Vermin-Fenced Districts



PASTORAL occupation of South Australia's better rainfall country and the northern arid lands (described by early administrators as the 'waste lands') followed fairly closely on the heels of exploration. Among the gaps that existed in the early settlers' knowledge of the country they were settling, there were two that were to prove most chronically costly. One was the capacity of the northern country to carry stock at sustainable levels. The other was the havoc the native dingo could cause among their sheep flocks.

Although not as widely documented as the early results of high stocking rates and prolonged drought, it is clear that the dingos made their presence felt almost immediately. They were responsible for heavy losses when the mobs were shepherded and yarded or confined at night. And when three- and four-wire fencing began to replace the shepherds in the comparatively settled areas, the wild dogs were even more destructive.

The more affluent among the settlers began to erect dog-proof netting fences, firstly to protect lambing ewes and then eventually around entire properties. The fences were effective and a number of properties became dingo-proof cells. But it was initially expensive and to save on the linear cost of fencing, neighbouring properties often joined forces.

As the dingo-proof cells multiplied, small, informal cooperatives were formed to share the responsibilities of patrol and maintenance. The stage was now set for more formal, and what would currently be called 'strategic' arrangements.

The first Vermin Districts Act was passed in 1894, with amending legislation passed in 1900, 1905, 1914 and 1931. The 1931 Act mandated the operations of these Districts and their Boards right through until 1975.

The Acts allowed the Proclamation of a Vermin-Fenced District if those responsible for more than half of the rateable property within the area wanted it. They allowed the appointment of a four-person District Board (of which three members had to be local graziers and one from the government), and the Boards to borrow money to construct and maintain fences. They also allowed the Board to set and have gazetted a contribution rate.



*A W Stretton, fence rider,  
McDoull Peak Vermin-  
Fenced District. Taken  
near Coober Pedy, 1954.  
Courtesy Donald Byrnes.  
(Photo 102039)*



*Government fence inspectors; left, B Rogers and right, B McEvoy. Taken at Middleback, 1940. Courtesy D A Nicholson. (Photo 102040)*

The 1931 Act defined vermin to include rabbits, wild dogs and foxes. The emphasis of local board activities was obviously dictated to a large extent by where they were geographically, both initially and as their operations continued. However, it seems clear North East pastoral district, south of what is now the Barrier Highway, while the last to be proclaimed was at Mount Young, north of Cowell in 1925.

The legislation aimed primarily at establishing Vermin-Fenced Districts in areas of the State not under the jurisdiction of local government. But like the development of the better farming country and the pattern of Crown lease issue and freehold grant that accompanied the development, the spread of local government in South Australia was anything but seamless.

Some large tracts of country deemed to be unproductive remained unsettled and virtually un-administrated, at least on the ground, while some areas, north and west of Keith for instance, were quite close to Adelaide. Much of this country was held under grazing licence or pastoral lease only until the early 1950s. This 'patching out' of the better country explains some of the quite surprising locations of early Vermin-Fenced Districts.

In addition to those in the northern pastoral lands there were active Boards and Districts at Box Flat and Red Bluff, north and north-west of Keith and on Eyre Peninsula at Elliston, Flinders, Franklin Harbour, Mount Young and Streaky Bay. On the Far West Coast, Districts were proclaimed at Petina, Penong, Nullarbor, White Well (adjacent to Nullarbor), Fowlers Bay, Murat Bay and Wirrulla. Some of these Districts were to be later re-named and re-formed as Local Dog Fence Boards and play a significant role in the subsequent management and maintenance of the single barrier fence.

In 1909 a Vermin-Fenced District was proclaimed at Loxton to include the Hundreds of Bookpurnong, Gordon, Paringa, Pyap and Murtho. However, it was abandoned in 1932. Closer to Adelaide, there were Districts at Parcoola and Stuart, immediately north of the River Murray, and at Chucka Bend east of the Mount Lofty Ranges in what is now the Hundred of Ridley. Two early proclamations were at Muckaby and Braemar, immediately east of Burra.

In the North Flinders Ranges the configuration of Vermin-Fenced Districts and vermin fences influenced Pastoral Board decisions about the release of land for permanent pastoral occupation. The spectacular country now occupied by Arkaroola Station was not gazetted as open for allotment as a



pastoral lease until 1937. Previously the land had been considered too rough to develop when leases in the area were being vermin fenced. A condition of the allotment at that time was that the lessee was to rid the area of vermin, including, dingos, camels, donkeys and goats.

In 1910 a Vermin Districts Association was formed which met at least annually either at its office in Currie Street, Adelaide or at Port Augusta. It was later to be one of the organisations that nominated members to the first State Dog Fence Board when it was formed. In recent years the Association has been in recess.

A report to the Association in 1936 indicated that there were 55 operational Vermin-Fenced Districts with Boards and shared staff including fence inspectors and secretaries. The report provided a list of secretaries which indicated that, depending on the level of individual Board activity, the busiest of the secretaries was R C P Stanford, who was secretary to the Angorichina, Arcoona, Bora, Kokatha, Lake Torrens, McDouall Peak, Miller's Creek, Moolooloo, Moonarie, Mount Eba, Mount Serle, Nullarbor, Oakden Hills, Roxby Downs, Umberatana and Willippa Boards — 16 in all.

A critical component of the operations of the various Boards was the inspection and maintenance of literally thousands of miles of vermin fencing. In the early to mid thirties, the numerical peak of Vermin-Fenced District numbers, a Victorian researcher estimated that there was in excess of 30 000 miles of operational vermin fence in South Australia. The inspections were carried out mainly with camels, packhorses and mules. Middleback Station between Whyalla and Iron Knob was used as a camel depot and Don Nicolson, who is now a member of the Dog Fence Board, can remember the camels coming and going with inspectors like Vokes Dudgeon, Bill McEvoy and Bill Rogers.

Not surprisingly the inspection trips were long and painstaking. Don's brother Andrew recalls the camels being absent from Middleback for up to two years.

Both brothers can remember the legendary fence rider L G (Len) Burton picking up camels at Middleback, first to inspect the District fences and later the single fence. Even when there was only the single fence to inspect, camels were still in use.

The minutes of the Vermin Districts Association's annual general meetings in the late 1930s indicate that the Association took a very active interest in the rates paid for wild dog tails and scalps under the Wild Dog Act and in the number of scalps paid for each year. The Association made recommendations to the State government on the amount paid for a scalp. In 1937, seven shillings and sixpence per scalp was the recommendation.

The practice of payment for wild dog scalps was becoming somewhat tainted with suggestions that dogs were being farmed and that in one or two cases depot records were being falsified. In 1938 the Commissioner of Crown Lands reported to the Association that following a tour of the Musgrave Ranges he had concluded that dogs were being farmed and a number of the scalps paid for were not from dingos but from dogs 'merely bred for the purpose of scalping'.

The Association did not move to abandon what they saw as a successful dingo control measure but did recommend that the people of the area be restricted to owning two dogs only per person.

It is clear at this time that the need and enthusiasm that had driven the formation and maintenance of Vermin-Fenced Districts was beginning to wane, particularly in the inner districts, where in some cases wild dogs had not been seen for a number of years.



The 1938 AGM of the Vermin Districts' Association discussed what it described as: 'an idea gaining ground in some quarters that it was not necessary to maintain some of the netting fences, as the Districts were free from dogs'. The Association however moved to strongly oppose the abandonment of any Vermin-proof fence and any Vermin Board.

But the interest in 'abandonment' in some areas was gaining momentum. The Districts began closing as early as 1932 in cases where they were becoming more settled, well away from what was being seen as the 'front line'. The reports that the Association was reacting to at the 1938 AGM probably stemmed in part from a meeting of stockowners at Port Augusta in 1936, which was actually called to discuss the abandonment of Vermin Districts and a possible reliance on a single fence. However, the proposal did not progress, since there was no confidence that a single barrier would hold.

The Districts continued to close except in the outer pastoral areas. In 1975 the Vermin Act 1931 was repealed by the Vertebrate Pests Act, which provided for the Districts to remain under a new legislative base. Some of those that remained became inactive. As Bryan Lock recalls: 'It was a reaction. While the Vermin Districts had a reason to operate it was fine. But you had trouble getting rates out of people for a bloke to ride around when you hadn't seen a dingo for 10 years.'

Under the later Dog Fence Act 1946, some of the Vermin Districts that had inside abutment to the single Fence, which that Act administered, became 'Local Dog Fence Boards'. However, with the exception of those on the Far West Coast, these slowly wound up with the last two (Lake Torrens and Lake Torrens East) formally closing in 1987.

The increasing reliance on the outer Districts throughout the mid to late 1930s and the early 1940s was to be one of the main drivers for a single barrier fence.

Today there is still evidence of the patchwork of vermin fences that were used to protect the inside grazing country. For those who travel regularly to Hawker via Jamestown and Orroroo, a section of the typical four inch marsupial netting fence follows the eastern alignment of the road for a short distance just north of Cradock.

## Chapter 1

### 1946 to 1947 — The beginning



By 1946 the gradual decline in enthusiasm and support for the inner Vermin-Fenced Districts was not the only driver of a re-examination of the way South Australia's sheep grazing lands could be protected from the dingo.

The Second World War had made it very difficult to get the wire and fencing materials necessary to maintain the network of vermin fences. The Broken Hill Proprietary Company in Newcastle, New South Wales, still had the looms that wove the various widths and gauges of netting required for such fences, but labour problems and different production emphases had led to critical shortages as far as the grazing industry was concerned.

There are no records of any deliberate administrative examination of how wild dogs might have been more effectively prevented from attacking sheep flocks in the face of such shortages. No formal 'task force' or 'working group' appears to have been put together as would have almost certainly happened now. The best recollections we have are that in 1945 and early 1946 the Pastoral Board of the day, together with Stockowners' Association members, began to look carefully at the maps of effective remaining vermin fences in the northern pastoral districts.

In looking at these maps of the outer perimeter of the Vermin-Fenced Districts it became apparent that there existed a more or less continuous 'fence' traversing very roughly west to east across the north of the State from the Far West Coast to the New South Wales border. Its condition varied dramatically but it was thought it could form the basis of a perimeter line. A decision was made, driven largely by expediency and pragmatism, to recommend to the Government that future efforts and resources be concentrated on this outside fence with the other remaining inside Districts to be disbanded as the dingos were restricted.

In this process two holders of substantial areas of pastoral leasehold land in the west of the State are widely recognised as playing pivotal roles. One was B H (Byron) MacLachlan (of Commonwealth Hill Pty Ltd) who had then begun to develop the Commonwealth Hill lease north and west of Mulgathing and Bulgunnia at Tarcoola. The other was I R (Ian) McTaggart (of Nonning Pastoral Company) of Nonning Station in the Gawler Ranges who had seen first hand the damage dingos could do in that area in the early to mid 1930s.

Hugh MacLachlan, who in 1979 replaced his father Byron, as a member of the Dog Fence Board, says that he is unsure exactly what would have been in his father's mind at the time. However, he knew that his father had done a lot of dog fencing on Mulgathing before the Second World War and was developing and netting Commonwealth Hill after the war. He had also potentially shut dingos out of Lake Everard by running a netting fence across the sandhills from the Kondoolka fence to the bottom of Wilgena Station.

*'He would have known that the old Bulgunnia and Wilgena netting fences to the east of Commonwealth Hill were certainly not dog proof and that the Vermin Boards involved were fairly inactive. He could have still been attacked from the east.'*

R J (Dick) Rankin of McDouall Peak Station, who was later to become a Dog Fence Board member, supported Byron MacLachlan and Ian McTaggart in suggesting a course of action for the Government that would result in a single fence. McDouall Peak adjoined Bulgunnia and abutted the Commonwealth Hill fence.

The interest in developing a single fence may have arisen from differing motives and drivers, but the Government saw the logic and directed, 'that a bill be drafted providing for a buffer vermin fence'. In 1946 a Dog Fence Act was drafted and was assented to on 19 December of that year. It came into operation on 17 June 1947.



The legislation effectively provided that a dog-proof fence was to be established and maintained in the northern areas of the State, 'For the purpose of preventing the entry of wild dogs into the pastoral and agricultural areas of the State'. It did not delineate and describe such a fence, but gave the Governor the power to proclaim the site of the Dog Fence on the advice of the Dog Fence Board.

The Act established a four-member Board to be appointed by the Governor with the 'power and the duty' to ensure that the Dog Fence was properly maintained 'and at all times dog-proof'. Among other things, the Board was given the power to set and collect a rate on land inside the Fence and it required the State Government to subsidise rates collected on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Significantly, the Act also established a basis of landholder ownership of the Fence and placed an obligation on owners and occupiers to maintain it. This was a critical provision, which effectively vested the ownership of the Fence with the landholders abutting the inside of the Fence. This has always set the South Australia Fence apart from the New South Wales Government-maintained Border Fence, which it is linked to. Depending on who you talk to, it has been both the strength and weakness of the South Australia Fence but in terms at least of public expenditure it has meant that the South Australia Fence has been maintained at only a fraction of the unit cost of the New South Wales Border Fence.

Changing attitudes and a better understanding of the administration of such an unusual asset have seen a number of subsequent amendments made to the first Act. There have been 16 amending Acts over the last 53 years ranging from significant changes (like the 1975 amendments to allow the appointment of Local Dog Fence Boards) to changes that are essentially procedural.

Part 2 of the 1946 Act set out what was to be the composition of the First Dog Fence Board. It established a nexus with the South Australia Pastoral Board by requiring that the chairman of the Dog Fence Board was required to be either the Chairman or a member of the Pastoral Board.

A second member was to be a nominee of the Vermin Districts Association and two other members were to be nominated by the Stockowners' Association of South Australia. Both these latter nominees were required to be ratepayers and at least one had to occupy land abutting the Fence. In relation to these last two nominations there was also a neat and rather visionary provision included to allow future nominations from substitute associations with 'similar objectives'.

It was clear that the legislators had in mind hands on involvement for Board members. There was no provision for the appointment of deputies (still the case today) and a quorum was to be three members. A member could not be absent for three consecutive meetings or be out of the State for three months or more without the permission of the Minister.

Terms of appointment were for four years and there was an initial provision for staggered retirements after two years. A secretary was to be appointed and remuneration levels for both members and the secretary were to be set by the responsible Minister — then the Minister of Lands.

The original nominations were called for after the Act had been assented to in January 1947. C M (Clive) Hambidge, Chairman of the Pastoral Board, was appointed as the Dog Fence Board's first Chairman. The nomination from the Vermin Districts Association was W H Mengersen of Goldsbrough Mort and Co Ltd while, not surprisingly in view of his early interest, B H MacLachlan was one of the nominees of the Stockowners Association. The other was J J Brennan of Siam Station in the Gawler Ranges.



The Board met initially and briefly on 10 March 1947 to consider and recommend initial remunerations and to attend to some procedural matters. They could do little more until the Act was proclaimed in June. The initial recommended remuneration was £50 per annum for each member plus an allowance of 17 shillings and sixpence per day for travelling in the country on Board business. The appointments and the remuneration levels were approved by the Governor in Executive Council on 14 March 1947.

At the initial 10 March meeting the new Board also recommended to the Minister of Lands, C S (Cecil) Hincks, that R W Osborne be appointed as Secretary to the Board at a remuneration of 30 shillings per week.

W H Mengersen was never to attend a full meeting of the new Board. He died in July 1947 and on the nomination of the Vermin Districts Association, I R (Ian) McTaggart, of Nonning Station in the Gawler Ranges, was appointed to replace him. He had been instrumental in early moves to formalise a

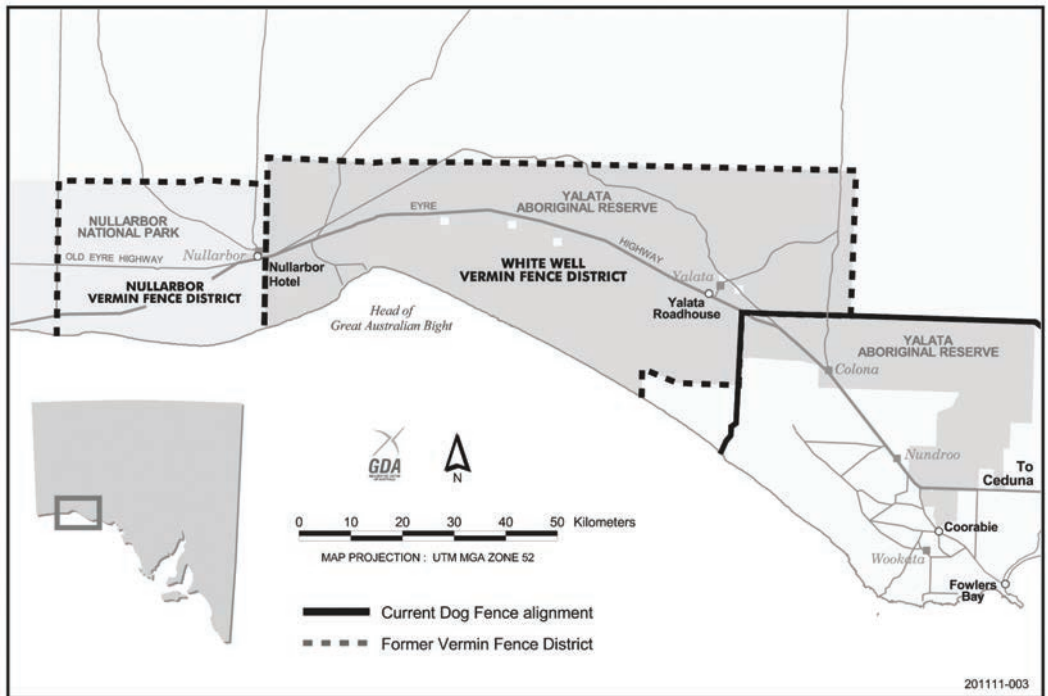


Figure 2: The Dog Fence as at March 2000 in comparison to the more extended fence, which included Vermin Fence Districts, of 1947.





State Dog Fence and, like B H MacLachlan, his appointment was the beginning of an almost dynastic association with the Board. Ian McTaggart was to be a member for 28 years while Byron MacLachlan was a member for a remarkable 33 years and was replaced by his son Hugh in 1979 for a further 13 years.

The Board was going to require its own Inspector of Fences and from those inspectors who had been, and in some cases still would be, involved in riding the various Vermin District fences, L G (Len or 'Doggie') Burton was selected on 23 August 1946. He was to become something of a legend and rode the single Fence for almost 20 years, retiring in 1964. His first assistant on the single Fence was L G Noble, who had also been appointed camel man at Middleback Station.

By the time the Act came into force in mid 1947, the Board was appointed and operational and a single fence was formally recognised and being formally delineated. Early in June 1947 a letter was sent to all lessees abutting the proposed Fence line saying:

*'The first duty of the Board is to recommend the site of the Dog Fence which, so far as is practical, shall consist of dog-proof fences already in existence or fences that are capable of being made dog-proof fences.'*

The line of the Fence that was then being recognised was a little different than the line it takes today. The Fence in 1947 began (or finished) at a point on the shore of the Great Australian Bight further west than it does now and included much of the old White Well and Nullarbor Vermin Fenced Districts. It then more or less paralleled the coast and came quite close to Nunjirkompita between Wirrulla and Ceduna. From there it skirted the eastern boundary of Pinjarra pastoral lease before heading north to the Lake Everard Fence. It continued further north, east of the current Commonwealth Hill Fence and then swung east again, excluding the areas of the Mabel Creek, Mount Clarence and Mount Penrhyn leases that are now inside the Fence.

North of Andamooka it followed the then Andamooka, Stuarts Creek and Mulgaria boundary, as it then was, across the top of Lake Torrens. From there to the New South Wales border it followed approximately today's alignment. Since 1947 the Fence has undergone four significant realignments and two others have been seriously considered and rejected — one as recently as 1997.

At the time its actual length was not known precisely. In the outer areas the Vermin Fences had not followed any lines that had been surveyed on-ground and had not been patrolled by vehicles with tripmeters. In a note to the Under Treasurer in 1947 Board Chairman Clive Hambidge made a 'preliminary and conservative' estimate that the Fence was 'not less than 1 000 miles in length' and enclosed a potentially rateable area of 80 000 square miles. (Later that year the Department of Lands provided the Board with an area estimate for budget purposes of 91 370 square miles.)

Frequent directional changes of the Fence then, as today, were a product of the adoption of existing boundaries of Vermin Districts and properties. The same adoption process accounts for the varying conditions of the Fence the fledgling Dog Fence Board was to begin overseeing. These variations were a product of the enthusiasm with which each Vermin District had maintained its fence.

But in whatever order it was initially, it was a single barrier fence and it joined the New South Wales Border Fence, which in turn joined the Queensland Barrier Fence, to collectively comprise the longest man-made barrier in the world — a continuous fence from the Head of the Great Australian Bight to a point east of Chinchilla, Queensland, in the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range.

## Chapter 2

### 1947 to 1957 — The first decade



THE Fence that the 1947 Board began to supervise remained on its original delineation for all of the first 10 years. It was to be 1960 before the first of the realignments took place. With the notable exception of the appointment of a new Chairman to replace Clive Hambidge, who died in 1950, the Board itself retained a constancy of membership throughout this first decade.

Lengthy terms of membership of the Board were to become the rule rather than the exception. Up until 1986, when the Act was amended to allow the appointment of a five-member Board, there had only been 14 different members on the Board in its 40 years of operation. This figure of course was somewhat skewed by the lengthy incumbencies of Byron MacLachlan and Ian McTaggart.

Byron MacLachlan's incumbency however was not totally continuous. In May 1955 he resigned for what was to be a period of five weeks only. In this short period his place was taken by Cecil E Taylour who worked then for the pastoral family business of A J and P A McBride Pty Ltd.

The shuffle came as a result of a planned overseas trip for which, in terms of the requirements of the Act, he had sought Ministerial approval. J J Brennan had also sought approval to travel overseas at the same time. The concurrent absence of both members would have left the Board without a quorum. At the suggestion of the Chairman, Byron MacLachlan resigned for the balance of his term which was to expire on 30 June 1955. Cecil Taylour's appointment allowed the Board to meet and conduct business without being at odds with a further provision of the Act that required the Board to meet at least every three months.

Byron MacLachlan was then reappointed for a further four years from the beginning of July 1955 and Cecil Taylour retired with the distinction of having easily served the shortest Board term of any member before or since.

Leave of absence for travel both within and without Australia was sought by Board members on at least five occasions during this period. It was always approved with the Minister further approving in each case that remuneration continue to be paid while the members were absent from the State.

In September 1950 Clive Hambidge died and John Neil McGilp OBE, a member of the Pastoral Board, was appointed as Chairman of the Board until 30 June 1951 — the unexpired portion of Clive Hambidge's current term. Neil McGilp was to remain as Chairman for the balance of the Board's first decade.

There was a constancy too with the Fence Rider of this period: Len Burton, but a major change was made in the transport he used to inspect the Fence. In 1948 the Department of Lands decided to abandon the use of camels for Fence inspection purposes and carry out the work using 'a utility or motor truck'. The first vehicle provided was a Dodge, which Burton later described as 'the worst vehicle you could possibly have for sandhills'. He and his various drivers and offsidiers were to use a Jeep and a series of Land Rovers before he retired.

Burton had started with camels when he first became a vermin fence inspector in 1946 and used them for the first two years of his role as the Inspector of Fences. He admitted to knowing nothing about them when he started and Bill Rogers who also worked as a Vermin Fence inspector and at Middleback Station, could recall the day that Burton took off with his first string of camels. The occasion was also observed by a then very young Don Nicolson.

The camels were all packed and prepared but Rogers told Burton that it would be necessary to tie down all the fry pans and pots or they would flap. The advice was ignored and 300 yards down the track something spooked the camels and they were off in various directions. The flapping pans continued to spook the camels and made sure they covered plenty of territory.



The stability of tenure that marked this period for both the Board and its Inspector of Fences certainly did not apply to the camel men and drivers who were appointed to assist Burton. In the first two years of single fence inspection, 24 assistants were engaged and then either resigned or were dismissed. A fairly high turnover of assistants was to continue until 1965 when the Department of Lands began using its own employees to fill the role. These were normally people who had also driven for surveyors.

The immediate reasons for these resignations and dismissals were all faithfully recorded by Burton. In September 1946 J M French was replaced as a camel man because he was suffering from 'Barcoo Rot'<sup>1</sup> which was affecting his hands and face. In early 1947 an Afghan named Omedilly Moosha resigned after three months. Winter on the Fence had been far too cold for his rheumatism. Another assistant resigned because of insect bite.

Second World War POW, R H (Reg) Absalom took on the job late in 1947. Burton described him as a 'bushman, camel man, mechanic and motor driver' and given that he was to be on the job when the change from camels to motor transport occurred, he should have been perfect. But he resigned in March the following year.

There were probably two factors that contributed to most of the high turnover. There is little doubt that the job, which involved making an inspection of the full length of the Fence in one trip, was tedious and conditions were fairly hard. During the immediate post-War years there were a number of returned servicemen travelling the north and looking for work and getting it. A note from Burton to the Director of Lands in July 1947 said that 'all the spare men have gone to the Rocket Range (Woomera) to work'. There was also plenty of work available at the Leigh Creek coal mine which had steadily increased its production from 18 000 tonnes in 1944 to 128 000 tonnes in 1947.

People were on the move at that time and it is significant that a good number of the riders and drivers employed by Burton were engaged at or near the location where the previous rider had either resigned or been dismissed. The appointments had to be confirmed by the Department of Lands and there is a clear paper trail to indicate where these people were engaged. These locations give another hint at what might also have caused the high turnover — Burton himself.

He didn't mind being away from home for lengthy periods, made his own pace absolutely and liked an occasional drink. He knew every pub on or near the Fence and a number of others as well. There is a story that while on a Fence inspection he was reported to his Departmental administrator as being at the Birdsville Hotel which in any direction is a good distance from the Fence. His explanation that he was checking on reports of large numbers of dingos in the Birdsville area appears however to have been accepted.

The Board in those early years met at two to three month intervals and almost always in Adelaide. Given the time taken to inspect the whole Fence and the frequency with which they met, the Board was often considering reports that were up to four months old. They relied on these reports heavily, even some of the grazier members had little personal understanding of the condition of much of the Fence. It would be some years before the Board itself began to make regular inspections of the Fence.

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<sup>1</sup>Barcoo Rot was a essentially vitamin deficiency that caused symptoms like the scurvy that used to plague sailors and explorers of earlier times. It was thought to be primarily caused by a dietary shortage of fresh fruit and vegetables.



This did not mean that the Fence had to wait that long for repair — the Inspector's job was primarily to monitor the condition and upkeep of the Fence and report his findings to the Board. A number of the stations maintained the Fence, which was their outer boundary, in a very sound condition. Mulyungarie Station north of Cockburn, for instance, employed up to four men to camp on the Fence, repair it and trap as many dogs as possible. Other bigger runs did the same.

Along some lengths however the same rigour was not being applied and concerns about some sections began to be noted — an issue that was to become a recurrent one for most future Boards.

The Board's 1956 annual report forewarned of a need to 'forcibly remind some of the (Fence) owners of their responsibilities'. The Board's concern, and its general understanding of the variability in the condition of the Fence, led it in 1957 to submit an article for publication to R A (Ron) Stewart, who was then the Managing Editor of the *Stock Journal*.

The article, which was published, left no doubt as to the Board's concern. It began: 'The apathetic and uncooperative attitude displayed by certain owners to their duties and obligations in relation to the Dog Fence is causing grave concern'. It finished on a similar note: 'Apathy and indifference cannot be tolerated'.

The matter of financing the Fence maintenance subsidy also occupied the Board's time. In keeping with the requirements of the 1946 Act it began, with the approval of the Minister of Lands, to declare an annual rate that would apply to the rateable area — then effectively the unincorporated grazing areas of the State.

The Act also stipulated a maximum rate of one shilling and three pence per square mile, which was the rate that was set for the first six years of the Board's operations. The initial maintenance subsidy paid to Fence owners was £8 per mile. This remained constant until 1955 when it was increased to £15.

The first amendment to the 1946 Act, assented to in October 1953, was made to allow the maximum rate per square mile to increase to three shillings and to increase the maximum maintenance subsidy payable each year to £10 per mile. The same amendments also allowed the Board to declare an additional rate on rateable land within 10 miles of the Fence. This extra rate was capped at the same level as the general rate and effectively doubled the amount payable within the 10-mile zone. The application of this double-rate continued until 1962 and there is no evidence that it caused any particular concern to the graziers affected by it.

There are reports in this period of baiting efforts to reduce dingo numbers outside the Fence, usually at the recommendation of the Board. The 1956 annual report described a special aerial baiting, when 50 000 baits were dropped in an area between Miller's Creek Station and Oodnadatta. There was no mention however of how successful the baiting had been.

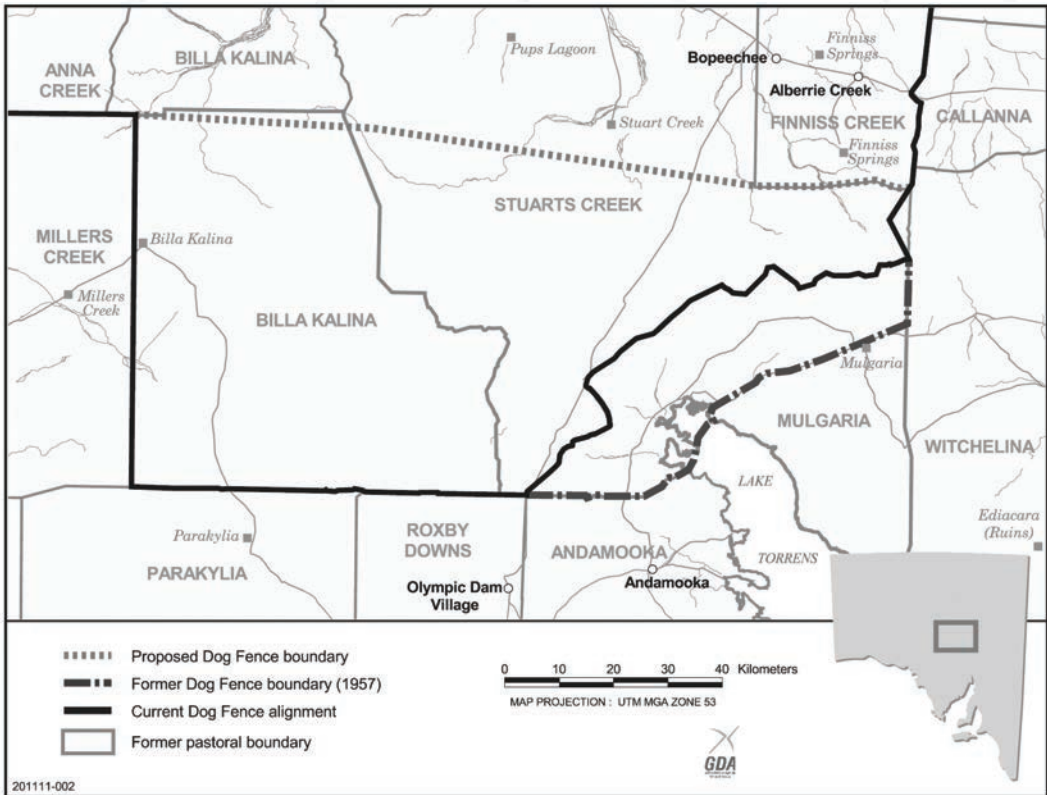
The following year the Board took an interest in some experimental ground baiting of wombats on Yardea Station in the western Gawler Ranges. In the country that suited them, wombats were proving to be capable of doing considerable damage to netting fences erected to keep out wild dogs. Oats and 1080 poison were used. Ian McTaggart reported that in his view the experiment had 'no prospect' of success, presumably on the basis that no deaths had been noted. His report to the Board said: 'The baits could not possibly have been missed by the wombats. Some of the treated oats had clearly been taken and some had been nosed-over'. The damage the wombats were causing was later to be the principal catalyst for a major rethink of dog fence design along the far western lengths of the State Dog Fence.



The Board in 1957 reported that it was in favour of a realignment to follow the southern boundary of Finnis Springs Station from the Witchelina boundary, almost due west to the north-east corner of Miller's Creek Station. The primary concern was the condition of the Fence across the northern extreme of Lake Torrens, which was in a poor state due primarily to salinity and sand drift.

The Board considered that a realignment north would also remove a cul-de-sac that tended to concentrate dingos on this weakened area of the Fence. It would, it was noted, also have reduced the span of that section of the Fence by 88 miles from its then current length of 169 miles. A straightened Fence would have protected the southern end of Stuarts Creek and Billa Kalina Stations — an area which was considered, at least by the Board, to be suitable for sheep grazing.

S Kidman and Co, the lessees of Stuarts Creek, disagreed strongly. The Company's pastoral manager, H J Bird, wrote to the Board pointing out that in their view there was too little rainfall for sheep and the water supply was poor. The matter was not proceeded with at that stage but when reopened in 1972 a new and different alignment well away from the edges of Lake Torrens was agreed by all parties.



**Figure 3: Proposed realignment of the Dog Fence in 1957, which was not agreed upon, and therefore the work never carried out.**



The levels of remuneration paid to Board members and to the Board Secretary were reviewed on at least three occasions during the first decade. In 1950 the Board recommended to the Minister of Lands that the amount paid to Secretary Osborne be increased from 30 shillings to £2 per week (This was in addition to the weekly salary paid to Osborne for other duties within the Department). At the same time the Board's travelling allowances were increased from 17 shillings and sixpence to one pound per day.

A year earlier the Minister had given a special approval for Ian McTaggart to be reimbursed for the use of his light aircraft while travelling on Board business. Later, in 1953, the Minister approved an identical payment per mile for use of either vehicle or aircraft by members. This was set at 11.1 pence per mile. Also at that time, members remuneration and allowances were increased to a flat £100 per annum to cover both travel and expenses, although 30 shillings was still paid each day a member spent in Adelaide. While the remunerations were reviewed again in 1957, the payments stayed at those levels until the mid 1960s.

In November 1956, Neil McGilp resigned from the Board because of what he described as a combination of 'advancing age and indifferent health'. He was replaced as Chairman by J L (Jim) Johnson whose appointment was approved by Executive Council on 27 November 1956. Like his predecessor, Jim Johnson was, at the time of his appointment, a member of the Pastoral Board, which he was later to Chair as well.

Neil McGilp had been made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1945 in recognition of his services to the pastoral industry. He had worked for a considerable time at Cariewerloo Station, had managed Moonarie Station in the Gawler Ranges and North Bungaree, north of Clare, and had been a member of the Stockowners' Association.

Jim Johnson was also familiar with the northern pastoral industry. He had worked on stations in the north-west before the War and had been a stock inspector at Port Lincoln. He had also been a pastoral inspector prior to his appointment to the Pastoral Board.

Jim Johnson was to Chair the Dog Fence Board for the next 14 years.

## Chapter 3

### 1957 to 1970 — Remote supervision

SIX months after Jim Johnson was appointed as Board Chairman, J J Brennan, who had been an original Board nominee from the Stockowners' Association, resigned. His place on the Board was taken by R J (Dick) Rankin of McDouall Peak Station — one of the pastoralists who had been a strong early supporter of the concept of a single fence.

All the main industry movers for a single fence were now on the Board and were to remain members for a significant period in time. After Dick Rankin's appointment, the Board remained unchanged for 13 years.

The records of this period of Board activity are comparatively sparse. What there is however, leaves a strong sense that throughout this time the Board was essentially reactive, seeing its role as one of enforcing and regulating; usually from a distance. This coincides with the recall of past and present Board members who were associated in some way with the members of that time. Much of the available correspondence emanating from the Board was fairly stern, authoritarian and certainly didactic. The tone permeates papers supporting the 1959 legislative changes to increase penalties for failure to maintain the Fence and reports of that time calling for strong action where vehicles damaged the Fence or against the expanding populations of opal miners, who were leaving gates open. There is also an authoritarian sense to the 1964 amendments, which allowed the appointment of a formal arbitrator to settle disputes about vermin fence dollar values, where districts had been abandoned or fences adopted as part of the single Fence.

While Board membership remained constant, there were two significant changes in the staff that served the Board in 1964. Len Burton retired as Inspector of Fences. Burton had become something of an identity in his years as fence rider for some of the earlier Vermin-Fenced Districts and later for the Dog Fence Board. Burton was replaced by F J (Freddie) Franklin. The other change occurred in June 1965, when R W Osborne was appointed as 'Storekeeper and Warden of Standards' and he was replaced as Board Secretary by A H (Hurtle) Walters.

Burton always inspected any fence his way. Along the single Fence each trip from coast to the New South Wales border kept him away from his Riverton base for two and a half months. His assistants, or offsidars as he called them, often didn't drive; he did — a task he apparently managed without much of his left hand, which he had lost at Ypres in the last three days of fighting of the First World War.

Both before and after the change from camels to motor vehicles, Burton would manage to attend every bush race meeting that occurred in the north. The coming of the Land Rovers assisted this pursuit even more. His view was that the bureaucrats, as he called them, had not worked out that he could actually complete his Fence inspection much faster with the four wheel drive vehicle. There does not appear to have been any formal questioning of his time spent away and his report frequencies at that time.

On the Wertalooona Fence, where it runs along the south-west edges of Lake Frome, there was a humpy called 'Lake View', which became far better known as 'Burton's Rest'. It had rainwater, a stove and a crude hot water system. Here Burton would spend up to a week writing up his notes. From here he would also attend race meetings at places like Beltana. It was said that he never missed a race meeting at Coober Pedy, Tarcoola, Kingoonya or Iron Knob. He played hard but never failed to deliver his trademark, handwritten reports on each and every section of the Fence.

The first realignments of the Fence were made in the 1960s. In 1961, the Board recommended that a further area west of Commonwealth Hill be included inside the Fence. The Board was apparently satisfied that the vermin fence, constructed during the ongoing development of the Commonwealth Hill lease, was solid and it exercised its legislative power to recommend to the Governor that this specified dog-proof fence become part of the Fence. This realignment protected a further 1 000 square miles.



*The Lake View  
Hut, Wertaloona Fence.  
Courtesy B A Lock.  
(Photo 102041)*

A further substantial realignment occurred in 1964 when the Board adopted a fence that bowed well north of the McDouall Peak Vermin-Fenced District to include Mabel Creek and Mount Clarence Stations, and the Balta Baltana South block of McDouall Peak. This was the alignment that would place the Fence close to the Coober Pedy opal diggings and actually across the Coober Pedy Precious Stones Field. The new Fence protected an additional 4 863 square miles and extended the overall length of the Fence in South Australia to 1 470 miles and 44 chains (2 365 km) — slightly longer than the Fence's current length of 2 230 km.

There were delays with the proclamation of this new fence alignment caused by difficulties in reaching agreements relating to payments to be made for each of the newly adopted fences. Largely as a result of this experience the Act was amended late in 1964 to allow the Minister to appoint an arbitrator, 'to determine any disagreement as to the value of any fence, the site of which was being varied'.

In 1969 the first discussions were held on the possibility of running the Dog Fence directly north-east to the New South Wales border — from the '65-mile' point on the Moolawatana Fence and across the extreme north-east portions of the Flinders Ranges. The closing off of the cul-de-sac formed by the Fence running south down the west side of Lake Frome and then east to the border was estimated to, 'save a distance of 157 miles'. It was also agreed that it would take 10 years to clear the dogs from inside the old cul-de-sac. In addition, a meeting of Fence owners, convened by the Board, was told that no rate would be charged for the newly protected area until the dogs had been cleaned out.

The conference closed with owners agreeing to submit 'constructive proposals', and there was broad agreement to the idea from one or two landholders including Bob Wilson of Wertaloona Station. But the matter rested. It would continue to be discussed from time to time but not fully resolved until 1997.

Earlier in this period, in addition to legislative changes relating to the appointment of an arbitrator, the Board also sought to introduce stronger deterrents to penalise non-maintenance of the Fence. In mid 1959, with the support of the Stockowners' Association of South Australia, a Bill was introduced into Parliament to impose minimum and maximum penalties of £50 and £100 respectively for non-compliance with Board requirements on Fence maintenance. Previously, the Board only had the power to do the work itself and recover the costs. The amending Bill was passed in November 1959.





*Mabel Creek fence, 2000.  
Courtesy M J Balharry.  
(Photo 102043)*

Another amendment to the Act was passed in 1961 to clarify responsibility for damage to the Fence by motor vehicles. In these amendments gates and ramps were deemed to be part of the Fence. It was these components of the Fence that were the focus of a 1970 report by the Board on the activities of opal miners and their contractors. According to the Board these people had, 'little regard for the importance of the Fence and its gates to the sheep industry of the State'.

By 1970 the general Dog Fence rate paid by graziers in the rateable area had increased to 35c per square mile. The rate was declared and gazetted this way. Decimal currency had, of necessity, been instantaneous but it was to take a few more years before area measurements were uniformly expressed in metric terms. The subsidy paid to Fence owners in this period increased from \$30 per linear mile in 1961 to \$35 in 1970.

It was concern about the level of Government subsidy support late in this period, however, that was to give the first indication that the Board was going to require additional funding to adequately discharge its duties and obligations. In the Board's 1969 annual report, it was noted that its operations had resulted in a deficit for the second year in succession. The Board made a submission to the Minister requesting the Government subsidy be restored to a dollar for dollar basis, as had been, 'provided for in the original Dog Fence Act'. The report had however suggested that this could be limited to a modest maximum of 20c per square mile.



*Mabel Creek fence, 2000.  
Courtesy M J Balharry.  
(Photo 102042)*



In support of this submission the Board pointed out that assistance provided to Fence owners had increased from \$12 per mile in 1947 to \$35 per mile in 1969.

Amendments to the original 1947 Act, which had merely required the Treasurer to pay to the Board a subsidy of \$1 for every dollar of rates collected, had capped the level of Government subsidy at 13c per square mile. This was later raised to 20c and not increased again until 1982.

It appears that the submission was agreed to, but what is not clear from available records is to what extent the subsidy, inside the 'capped' maximum, had actually been withheld by Treasury. The reference in the submission to the provisions of the original Dog Fence Act suggests that this had occurred.

With the coming of decimal currency, Board members' remuneration was reviewed in 1967 and on the advice of the Treasurer was increased to \$200 per annum for the Chairman and members. It was a modest amount and was perhaps early evidence of a self imposed frugality that has tended to mark various Boards over the years. As one current member has put it: 'The emphasis has always been on spending the money on the Fence.'

In 1965 however, the Board strongly supported an increase in the Secretary's remuneration to £4 per week (despite a suggestion from the Director of Lands that the pay be set at £3). The level had not been reviewed since it was originally set at £2 in 1950, which was based (according to the Board) on comparable 'salaries and margins'. The Minister of Lands reluctantly agreed to £4, while requiring that any future review of the remuneration be carried out by the Public Service Commissioner.

The last five years of Jim Johnson's incumbency as Chairman saw the first formal references to Fence damage caused by a four-legged native 'vandal' whose persistence and application was to later help catalyse radical changes to the way future sections of the Dog Fence were built and reinforced. Each annual report from 1966 to 1970 included reference to the holes and damage caused by wombats in the far western section of the Fence. In 1968 the Board reported: 'Owners are faced with a seemingly unending task in repairing holes caused by these animals. They continue their praiseworthy efforts to keep their fences dog-proof.'

In July 1970 Jim Johnson retired from the Public Service and both the Dog Fence Board and the Pastoral Board. His place as Chairman of both was taken by W S (Steve) Reid a former pastoral inspector and a trained land valuer.



*Coober Pedy fence, May 2000. Courtesy M J Balharry. (Photo 102044)*

## Chapter 4 1970 to 1977 — Changes west and north

THE stability of Board membership that had marked the two previous periods was now to change. The next seven years saw two new Chairmen and two new members appointed. After the retirement of Ian McTaggart in 1973, Byron MacLachlan alone remained of the original membership. If the very brief incumbency of Cecil Taylour is overlooked, he had at that time served 27 years on the Board and he still had six to go.

Steve Reid chaired the Board for three years in very much the same manner as his predecessor had. He was of the same 'school' of public service administration. When he retired in July 1973 he was replaced (again as Chairman of both the Dog Fence Board and the Pastoral Board) by F J (Jim) Vickery, who had also been a pastoral inspector. Jim Vickery had previously also worked on Innamincka Station, managed Musgrave Park Station and had been superintendent of the North West Aboriginal Reserve.

At the first meeting after July 1973 the new Chairman was joined by two new members. Ian McTaggart, who after 27 years had not sought reappointment when his term had expired on 30 June 1973, was replaced by L P (Lester) Lord, of Kolendo Station in the Gawler Ranges, as the nominee of the Vermin Districts Association. W J (Bill) Findlay of the Mutooroo Pastoral Company was nominated by the Stockowners' Association of South Australia to replace Dick Rankin.

Jim Vickery, who had spent time in the northern pastoral areas and understood the pace and culture of the grazing industry, instigated changes in the way the Fence inspection program was to be carried out. The Board began to set work priorities and divided the Fence for inspection purposes into two halves. Instead of being away for six, seven or eight weeks while the entire length was inspected, the Inspector would run the Fence from Brougham's Gate on the New South Wales border to the Mulgaria Fence in one trip and from Mulgaria to the Coast in another. The advantages of this were twofold; the Inspector would have some time at home between inspections and the Board would receive its reports in exactly half the time it had under the former system.

One of the beneficiaries of this new arrangement was D G (Donald) Byrnes, who in May 1971 was appointed Inspector of Fences to replace the retiring Freddie Franklin. Donald Byrnes, who had a background in cattle lease management at Mount Barry and Mount Willoughby Stations, north of Coober Pedy, came to the job after an unsuccessful application for a position as an inspector with the Pastoral Board. The Pastoral Board had been looking for a 'sheep man' but Steve Reid, in his dual capacity as Chair of both Boards, had suggested that Byrnes take the Fence job to 'keep him close'. He was planning his succession.

The Fence Inspector's position had been advertised as requiring someone who could drive Land Rovers, was 'capable of affecting running repairs' (presumably to the Land Rover), was willing to be absent from Adelaide for 40 weeks in each year and had some ability to operate a 'wireless transceiver'. The position also came with a driver. Since 1965, the Department of Lands had been providing drivers from its own staff and Donald Byrnes inherited Owen Holland, who had also driven for F (Freddie) (sometimes referred to as 'Paddy') Franklin.

The inspection trips shortened somewhat with Donald Byrnes who had not been brought up to work regulation hours and stop at the weekends as he learnt that his predecessor had. The regulations work ethic that Owen Holland had supported soon faded and they worked right through each run taking their days off in more comfort. In Donald's words they, 'quicken it right up'. When Owen Holland became ill in 1977 he was replaced as driver by his brother-in-law M B P (Milton) Starkey, who would be Donald Byrnes's driver for the rest of his incumbency as Inspector of Fences.

Hurtle Walters retired in early 1971 and his place as Board Secretary was taken by R G (Ron) Schultz,



who had been a district irrigation clerk with the Department of Lands at Berri. The ties between the Dog Fence Board and the Pastoral Board were further tightened with this appointment — Ron Schultz had also become Secretary to the Pastoral Board. At the time of his appointment the opportunity was taken to review the Secretary's remuneration and the Board recommended it be set at \$400 per year. As foreshadowed earlier, the Minister of Lands however took the advice of the Public Service Commissioner and approved it at \$250. A further increase to \$300 was approved in 1972.

Every two years between 1970 and 1976, attendance fees of the Board members were reviewed and progressively increased to \$450 per year for both the Chairman and the members. As had been the case with previous Chairmen, both Steve Reid and Jim Vickery received this allowance although they were paid a separate salary as fulltime employees of the Department of Lands. The Department policy at the time was to pay these additional fees where its staff were involved with statutory bodies as, 'part of ongoing Departmental activity', and where their involvement was, 'primarily as a result of the officer's Departmental position'. This practice was to continue until 1980, when, on the advice of the Public Services Commissioner, the positions occupied by such Departmental employees were redescribed to reflect their involvement with any board or authority and they were paid a commensurate fulltime salary only. From that point onward, fees were only paid to non-government members of the Dog Fence Board.

In the second year of Steve Reid's Chairmanship, the Board recommended for proclamation a new section of Fence along the realigned boundary between Mulgaria and Stuarts Creek stations. This would effectively move the Fence away from the sand drift and salt damage prone area across the top of Lake Torrens. The Board's 1971 annual report noted that the proclamation would 'sort out the Andamooka-Mulgaria section of the Fence which had been vulnerable and of great concern for years'.

This was the realignment that the Board had discussed initially in 1957. But there had been a change of ownership with one abutting property and now two initiatives occurred concurrently to make what had been seen as prudent in 1957 happen.

Mulgaria pastoral lease had been purchased by the Beltana Pastoral Company and in the late 1960s negotiations began between the new owners and S Kidman and Company, the lessees of Stuarts Creek Station. These talks were aimed primarily at expanding the size of Mulgaria and giving the property a better balance of sandy and 'hard' country.

This fitted nicely with a further move by the then Lake Torrens East Vermin-Fenced District to seek to have the Andamooka-Mulgaria section of the Fence moved north to a new alignment on firm ground. This effectively formed a 'watershed' between northward run off to Lake Eyre South and southward run off to Lake Torrens. When the new Fence was completed, the Board accepted its condition and 66 miles of Fence was proclaimed in 1972. It actually only added a further five miles to the overall distance of the State Fence (taking it to 1 475 miles or 2 373 km), but enclosed a further 491 square miles.

It was this area that was then transferred from Stuarts Creek to Mulgaria. But H J Bird of S Kidman and Company had been right in 1957: Mulgaria has only ever run cattle even with the Dog Fence forming its northern boundary.

The Fence today follows a fairly jagged line across the northern boundary of Mulgaria. It was built to stringently avoid as many watercourses or drainage lines as possible to prevent a reoccurrence of the weakness that had been a feature of its former alignment in that area.

Much further west there were, in 1972, the first suggestions of another major realignment that would bring the Fence to close to the length it stretches today. In the 1972 annual report the Board told of the



changes at Mulgaria, it also mentioned that it had been considering shortening the Fence on the Far West Coast by the exclusion of the Nullarbor and White Well sections. It noted that such a suggestion was strongly opposed by the Vermin Districts Association. The change was however to occur in 1979.

In addition to nagging worries about gates being left open by opal miners and prospectors, the expanding Coober Pedy opal field was the main cause of another concern for the Board in the early 1970s. In 1971 the Board reported that Alsatian dogs were being taken into the pastoral areas and particularly to Coober Pedy. The Board made subsequent representations to the police asking that the provision of the Alsatian Dogs Act, 1943 to 1965, be enforced. These provisions included a ban on taking prescribed species of dogs into the pastoral districts. A subsequent report indicated that the enforcement did occur and the problem was under control.

In January and February 1975, huge bushfires in the north-west of the State severely damaged the western portions of the Dog Fence. An estimated 147 miles of Fence were totally destroyed and 1 730 posts burnt. The intense heat also ruined lengthy sections of the wire. The Board's 1975 annual report commended the efforts of Fence owners in repairing and replacing the Fence. Much of the damage occurred to the Commonwealth Hill Fence, which was, and still is, a privately patrolled and maintained Fence. Bill Sandow, the current Fence Supervisor, remembers the damage well. He spent 18 months at that time as an employee of B H MacLachlan re-erecting huge lengths of the station's western Fence.

Also in the same year (1975) two significant changes to existing legislation occurred that were to have far reaching effects on the way the Fence would be managed; initially on the Far West Coast and much later over the entire length of the Dog Fence.

In April 1975 the Dog Fence Act was amended to provide for the appointment of Local Dog Fence Boards and the Vermin Act was repealed and replaced by the Vertebrate Pests Act. In addition to allowing (in the case of the Dog Fence Act) Local Boards to be appointed, both legislative changes provided that existing Vermin-Fenced Districts could remain under the new legislative bases. They could become Local Dog Fence Boards where they abutted the Fence and could have vested in them all the 'powers, rights and duties' they held where they had existed under the repealed Vermin Act.



*Start of the Fence at the cliffs of the Great Australian Bight, May 2000. Courtesy M J Balharry. (Photo 102045)*



The drivers to formation of Local Boards under the Dog Fence Act were a desire to defray the costs of Fence maintenance to smaller abutting landholders and a wish to allow the Dog Fence Board itself to deal with a group of smaller owners as one.

The benefits of this approach were to be most keenly felt in the Far West Coast and it is therefore pertinent at this point to look at some of the distinctive features of the Fence of that time from the Kondoolka boundary to the Great Australian Bight.

This span of the Fence came very close to farming land and in a few cases actually abutted it. The area itself was more intensely settled. The Penong and Fowlers Bay sections for instance had 20 abutting owners, which at that time was as many as there were along the entire of the Fence from Kondoolka to the New South Wales border. Some of the West Coast owners had lengths as short as 2 or 3 km, while an 'average' length for the rest of the Fence was 50 to 60 km.

One of the outcomes of having the Fence against farming land was an occasional problem with sand drift, which would sometimes reduce the netting Fence to a height that could be stepped over. But overshadowing every thing else was the realisation that the Fence crossed what was clearly good wombat country and in the mid to late 1970s the numbers of these slow but efficient diggers seemed to be increasing.

It has been suggested that the damage wombats caused was partially a consequence of the fact that the Fence stood between the wombats and the attractions inherent in cropping land. But this view is not shared by Brian Johns, a district landowner and an original member of the Fowlers Bay Local Dog Fence Board appointed in 1975. He points out that the wombats lived on both sides of the Fence. He attributes the increasing numbers of wombats at that time to the success of myxomatosis in reducing rabbit numbers in the late 1960s. Without extra competition for food supplies the wombats thrived.

Whatever the reasons, wombat damage to the Fowlers Bay Fence and some 18 km along the western end of the Penong Fence was considerable and unrelenting. Dog Fence Board member Phillip Trowbridge, who was an original member of the Penong Local Dog Fence Board, recalls:

*'They could shift a lot of dirt. There were wombat holes under the Fence that you could crawl through on your hands and knees. They were running the Fence every fortnight and filling the holes with rocks and galvanised iron. The holes were big — they could make the track collapse. I used to doze the holes and then come back the next day and they would be open again.'*

Recollections like this are plentiful. The Dog Fence Board had already been drawing attention to the problem and in 1976 it formally asked the Vertebrate Pests Control Authority to declare wombats 'controllable pests' within the Fowlers Bay Dog Fence area and in a 400 m strip outside the Fence owned by the local board. This report conceded that the abandonment of the Nullarbor and White Well sections of the Fence had left the areas adjoining the 45 mile long Fowlers Bay section 'wombat infested' and the pressure (on the Fence) would increase.

The successful war of attrition waged on the Fowlers Bay Fence by wombats was soon to catalyse some innovative action. It was to be here that native animals in South Australia were to be first introduced to electrified fencing erected specifically to repel them.

In 1975, in the same year that the legislative amendments allowing their formation occurred, six Local Dog Fence Boards for the Far West Coast were appointed and gazetted. These were the former Vermin-Fenced Districts of White Well, Fowlers Bay, Penong, Murat Bay, Petina and Wirrulla. The White Well Board was to be short lived. It was abandoned in 1979 when a new Fence realignment was adopted, with the Fowlers Bay Fence as its west boundary.



At the same time as these Boards were formed (see Appendix 3 for original membership) the Far West Dog Fence Boards' Association was appointed. The Association employed its own Fence Rider who reported to the Local Boards directly, and both directly and indirectly to the Dog Fence Board. Ray Bahr filled this role for five years with his place being taken in July 1980 by John Norwood, who still does the job today. Prior to these men, the Vermin-Fenced Districts had employed their own riders in the area and these had included Mick McCormack and Don Carpenter.

The 1975 amendments also triggered the appointment of three Local Boards in the central sections of the Fence north of Lake Torrens and the north-west Flinders Ranges. The Lake Torrens, Lake Torrens East and Mount Nor'West Vermin-Fenced Districts adopted the title of Local Dog Fence Boards. The Mount Nor'West District was situated in and around the Willouran Range on Witchelina Station.

Concurrent with its provisions for Local Dog Fence Boards, the 1975 amendments also revised the lands 'rateable under the Act' to exclude areas 'which could not be regarded as threatened by dingo predators'. It rather imprecisely defined them as, 'grazing lands as distinct from those used for agricultural purposes but to include the mixed farming areas of the Far West Coast'. Until major changes occurred in 1989, the rateable area had effectively become all the unincorporated areas inside the Fence, plus most of the District Councils of Murat Bay, Hawker, Carrieton and Kanyaka-Quorn (as they were known) and parts of the Peterborough, Burra, Morgan and Kimba Districts.

The passing of the Vertebrate Pest Act presented the opportunity to reduce administrative costs by seeking joint recovery of rates due under the Act and the Dog Fence Act. In 1976 the Dog Fence Act was accordingly amended in relation to the, 'payment and recovery of rates', and to conform to the, 'corresponding provisions of the Vertebrate Pests Act'. This placed additional work responsibilities on the Board Secretary Ron Schultz and came on top of his appointment as the Government member on four of the newly appointed Local Dog Fence Boards. In 1977, the Board again strongly supported an increase in the Secretary's remuneration to \$450 per year, arguing that developments in Dog Fence administration over the previous three and a half years had seen the Secretary's workload double. The suggestion was referred to the Public Service Board which again did not agree with the Dog Fence Board. It would be 1980 before a further increase was granted.

During the latter parts of the 1970s the Board began gazetting its rate in cents per square kilometre and throughout most of this period it was set at 15c. This was now the rate applicable to the whole of the rateable area — the Board had not imposed a special rate for land within 10 miles of the Fence since 1962 and would not do so again. In August 1977 Jim Vickery, who had been appointed Director of the Land Resource Management Division of the Department of Lands, resigned as Chairman of the Board. His had been a time when the forces that were to drive the Board into uncharted territory over the next 10 years had been gathering momentum.

## Chapter 5

### 1977 to 1985 — A power surge

THE next eight years were to be marked by some diametral differences in how the Dog Fence Board did business. It would also see the beginning of an ongoing rethink about Fence design and construction and a coming to grips with the financial implications (for both Fence owners and the Board) of a Fence that, in places, was nearing the end of its useful life.

It was these latter issues which were to push the Board to trial solar powered electrification along some lengths of the Fence. These issues also drove legislative and policy changes that saw increases in the maximum rate payable per unit area; an increase in the maximum linear subsidy paid to owners; the beginnings of a voluntary levy on cattle breeders who abutted the Fence on the outside and the bulk purchase of fencing materials to minimise costs to individual Fence owners.

For the Board itself it was to be a more volatile time as new, energetic and focussed members pushed to do things their way in the face of traditional external and internal conservatism and under strong regional loyalties — particularly on the Far West Coast.

The first of this new membership was R A (Rodney) Everett, who in September 1977 was appointed to replace Jim Vickery as Board Chairman.

Rod Everett, a former general manager of the Beltana Pastoral Company, was to be the first of the Board Chairpersons who were not also Chairs of the Pastoral Board. However, he was a member of the Pastoral Board; he had been since 1973 and would remain so until 1983.

There was to be another significant difference to Everett's incumbency as Board Chairman. Apart from his involvement with meetings of the Pastoral Board (and related matters), he effectively spent all his time on Dog Fence business. This would give him the opportunity to spend a lot of time on the Fence himself, a situation that he took full advantage of. What he saw of the Fence early in his term made him fully supportive of later Board moves to spend more time on the Fence itself and to allocate to individual members responsibility for certain sections of the Fence. The policy became one of requiring the whole Board to inspect half the Fence each year and meeting as many Fence owners as they could 'on site'.

Two years after his appointment, Rod Everett was joined on the Board by a new and likeminded member H G (Hugh) MacLachlan who, in September 1979, replaced his father Byron MacLachlan as the Fence-owners' nominee to the Board from the Stockowners' Association of South Australia. Hugh MacLachlan was to remain on the Board for 13 years; making an eventual total of 46 years during which a member of the MacLachlan family held Board membership. Such interest is not surprising. With the Fence abutments of the extensive Commonwealth Hill and Mulgathing Stations, the family businesses had ownership of, and responsibility for, easily the longest stretch of Fence of any abutting ownership in South Australia.

With their huge western exposure at the edge of pastoral settlement in north-west South Australia, the family has been very aware of the devastation that dingos are capable of. Together with Wilgena and Lake Everard stations they still privately maintain their abutting Dog Fence. In their case, the MacLachlans have station staff who spend four days of every working week on Dog Fence maintenance.



*R A Everett, Chairperson 1977-85.  
Courtesy B A Lock. (Photo 102046)*





*From left; H G MacLachlan, 1979-92, R A Everett (Chairperson) 1977-85, L P Lord, 1973-1996, W J Finlay, 1973-1981. Courtesy B A Lock. (Photo 102047)*

The new Chairman, and the Board itself, began spending increasing time on the Fence, and around kitchen tables, talking to owners. In these face to face situations, the Board was not averse to firmly remind owners (old and new) of their obligations in relation to Fence maintenance. In this they were supported by the 1946 Act and its amendments. It still remains one of the clearest and least ambiguous pieces of legislation drafted — particularly as to the roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Fence owners. As Lester Lord recalls: 'We did come down heavily on some people, but it was in the Act'.

The Board was on a mission. For the first four years of Rod Everett's Chairmanship it was comprised of men who had spent their working lives in situations where capital to fund asset replacement and management (like fencing) could always be found. But to some of their frontline workers, the Fence owners, the situation was not so clear cut. This arose both from an attitude to the Fence itself and on-going concerns about financial viability. These cases were in the minority, but it did mean that even with subsidy there were lengths of the Fence that could not, and would not, be maintained the way the Board would have liked.

In 1981 a new Board member was appointed, who understood and sympathised with these limitations. In that year, Bill Findlay resigned and in July his place was taken by Henry John (Jack) Spiers of Mern Merna Station, Hawker. Like his predecessor, he was the ratepayers' nominee of what had now become the United Farmers and Stockowners Association of South Australia.

Jack Spiers was Chairman of the Hawker Branch of the United Farmers and Stockowners and a ratepayer within the Lake Torrens East Local Dog Fence Board area and had been sufficiently concerned about the number of dingos he had noticed in his country. Spiers, with another local landholder, drove the Fence from Lake Harry on the Birdsville Track to the Moomba pipeline, taking photos as he went.

These photos were to become the basis of a deputation to the Board by an in house Dog Fence Committee appointed by the United Farmers and Stockowners. The photos were taken very early in the term of the Board under Rod Everett and included a notoriously difficult section of the Fence along the Mount Fitton and Moolawatana boundary. For one owner, this section of the Fence was to later catalyse a realignment and cause considerable contention about excessive workload and responsibility. The concerns they created with a number of Flinders Ranges sheep graziers would also lead to Jack Spiers' later nomination to the Board.



With Jack Spiers' appointment, the Board took on the composition of members outlook it would have until 1985, when major legislative changes would affect numbers and representation as well as the status and role of the Chairperson.

There is no doubt that the Board under Rod Everett's Chairmanship was outgoing, proactive and busier. It is equally clear that there were some rigorous debates both around the meeting table and during the overnight camps along the Fence. These debates were a product of both the personalities on the Board and the new directions the Board was taking — particularly in relation to the use of electric fencing.

Earlier in 1978, Fence Inspector Donald Byrnes followed the path prepared for him by Steve Reid and began acting as a pastoral inspector with the Pastoral Board (he was formally appointed in August 1980). In his place, the Department of Lands appointed M B P (Milton) Starkey as acting Inspector of Fences. Starkey had been Donald Byrnes' driver since 1977, a role he took on from his brother-in-law, Owen Holland.

With Donald Byrnes's fulltime appointment as Pastoral Inspector in 1980, Milton Starkey became Inspector of Fences. Starkey held the position until 1983, when he was appointed as Storeman at the Department of Lands' Thebarton Depot.

Largely as a result of the Board's new directions and emphasis, the Inspector of Fences job had changed. It required a new and wider mix of skills and Rod Everett, who now had a local designation as Dog Fence Administrator, as well as Chairman of the Board, facilitated its redesign. It was 'upgraded' from a role of mainly inspecting and reporting, to include a requirement to negotiate with Fence owners directly about condition and maintenance. Based on these negotiations, the Inspector was to provide the Board with reports that identified problems and also suggested solutions. It was also redesignated as 'Dog Fence Supervisor'.

In the new form, the position was advertised in late 1983 and from 130 applications and a 'short list' of 16, B A (Bryan) Lock was appointed. He had been an overseer on Mulgathing Station and a manager at Yarna Station in the Gawler Ranges. Lock was a capable 'jack of all trades'; a contract shearer and crutcher, a teacher for a brief period at Roseworthy Agricultural College and, importantly for the job he was to take on, a trained electrical mechanic.

Lock was to play an important role on the ground in the Board's efforts with electric fencing; a development that he unwaveringly supported. He was patient and persistent; two traits that served him well with the new fencing initiatives and later landowner discontent over Board rates.

Despite the change of job description and the altered responsibilities, the remuneration remained at the same level as that paid to former Inspectors of Fences. Rod Everett made an early application on Bryan Lock's behalf to have the position reclassified. The principal justification was that, in dollar terms, the new position of Dog Fence Supervisor had replaced a paid driver and had reduced by 50% the clerical support work that had previously impacted on the Department of Lands. Inexplicably the reclassification was not approved, which became an ongoing issue throughout the first three years of Bryan Lock's incumbency with the Board.

Ironically it was not until after Rod Everett had left the Department in 1986 that Bryan Lock was nominated and appointed as the first Manager, Dog Fence Administration, at a higher salary. This increase was funded, in part, from the salary that had been paid to Rod Everett as fulltime Dog Fence Administrator.



In December 1979, Ron Schultz retired from the public service and R J (Bob) Durdin became Board secretary. A consequence of Ron Schultz's retirement were vacancies on the Lake Torrens, Lake Torrens East and Mount Nor West Local Dog Fence Boards. In his place Rod Everett nominated himself; a move that was approved by the Minister in February 1980.

The salary allowance paid to the Board Secretary continued at \$350 per year, despite a recommendation from the Public Service Board that, as a consequence of the redefinition of jobs and responsibilities for level four clerical officers (the level at which Bob Durdin was paid), no additional allowance should be paid at all.

For the next three years the remuneration was held at this level by the Minister of Lands (Peter Arnold), despite a recommendation from the Board Chairman that it be increased to \$1 000. With the confirmation of Bryan Lock's appointment as Manager, Dog Fence Administration, the need for an appointed Secretary disappeared and Bob Durdin moved to other duties in the Department.

The Board members themselves fared a little better in regard to increases in allowances. In 1982, Executive Council approved a three-stage increase that eventually saw all members, including the Chairman, paid a flat \$675 per year.

The important changes in Fence alignment and design that occurred during this period began in August 1977, when the Board accepted the west boundary of the Fowlers Bay Local Dog Fence Board area as the new single Fence alignment. Coupled with resiting that took place then as the Eyre Highway was realigned through the Yalata Aboriginal Lands, these moves put the Fence on the alignment it is today in that area. The moves left some 144 km of the old White Well fence outside and led to the abandonment of the White Well Local Dog Fence Board.

The move also tended to refocus attention on the condition of this part of the Fence and the hammering it was continuing to take from the relentless wombats. The recollections are comprehensive and compelling. Brian Johns, who was the first Chairman of the re-formed Fowlers Bay Local Dog Fence Board, talks of a 12-month period between 1979 and 1980, when 2 370 holes were reported in the Fowlers Bay Fence alone. John Norwood, who took over in 1980 as the Association's Fence Patrolman, and who still today runs the 345 km of Far West Coast fence every fortnight, says that it was quite common to find 150 to 200 new penetrations at each inspection in that section of the Fence.

Lester Lord was sent by the Chairman to inspect the Fence. Years later his description was apt: 'It was going down the gurgler. I had never seen wombats in such numbers as they were at that time.'

In late 1981, the Fowlers Bay Board organised a weekend 'working bee' on the Fence. A significant number of local landholders, including the Dog Fence Board Chairman himself, attended and patched the Fence. After a convivial Saturday night barbecue they 'ran' the Fence again the next morning and found a number of overnight penetrations. It was clear that a decisive new approach was needed.

There was some landowner money available at the time. The Fowlers Bay Board had set aside part of its local rate money, while a year earlier W C Bubner (who then Chaired the Murat Bay Local Dog Fence Board) had written to the Chairman of the Dog Fence Board offering 3% of its collected rate for research, 'and full investigation' into electric fencing while encouraging other local boards to be involved.

No doubt encouraged by this support (and spurred further by a report that estimated about 20 000 wombats lived along 124 km of the Fowlers Bay Fence) the Dog Fence Board called in a Victorian fencing expert Bob Piesse. The Chairman had made contact with Bob Piesse during preliminary investigations about electric fencing. He, Lester Lord and Hugh MacLachlan had also been to Western Australia to look at electrified fencing, however they had not been encouraged by what they saw.



Bob Piesse designed and supervised the erection of 16 km of a low three-wire 'foot fence' just outside the main netting Fence and along a stretch where wombat activity had been particularly heavy. It was powered by an 0.5 amp energiser and two solar panels.

The foot fence worked and while it was powered, there were virtually no penetrations along a stretch where previously some 624 breaches had occurred.

It was the 'toe in the door' for electric fencing as a tool to repel native and feral animals. The Fowlers Bay foot fence was clearly purpose designed but it gave a clear indication that hot wires could also be trialed into the main Fence to possibly repel dingos and reduce kangaroo and emu damage. The trial had begun what was to be an ongoing cycle of design incorporation, trial, scepticism, discussion and acceptance.

Soon after the Fowlers Bay experience, the Board turned its attention to two spans of the Fence that were causing concern further east. The Fence adjoining Parakylia Station was old and in very poor condition and the Board was having difficulty persuading the lessee to spend money on it. This was despite the fact that dingo predation had reduced the station's sheep numbers to only about 2 000. The Board eventually prevailed and much of the Parakylia Fence was buffered and protected by a parallel solar-energised, six-plain, wire electrified fence principally to deter kangaroos. However, the old, inside-netting fence remained as the Dog Fence and was required to be maintained as such. This same procedure was adopted on the Balcanoona section of the Dog Fence.

The second span causing concern was the north and east boundaries of Moolawatana Station, sitting at the extreme northern edges of the Flinders Ranges. Here there were some particular features of the Fence that conspired to make it easily the most difficult stretch in the State. The stretch involved the Board in considerable internal and external debate.

Moolawatana Station, as it was then configured, occupied 1 160 square km and straddled the northern extremes of the Ranges and some of the outwash plains running out to Lakes Blanche and Callabonna.



*B A Lock, former Manager, Dog Fence Administration, with the solar energiser – Moolawatana. Courtesy B A Lock. (Photo 102048)*



It was elongated in a west to east direction and presented a long frontage to the north and north-east, where it was bounded by the Dog Fence. This gave it a disproportionately long Fence abutment (130 km) in relation to its area and therefore its potential financial capacity to maintain the Fence. It had easily the longest Fence abutment in relation to grazing area of any of the inside ownerships.

Some of its terrain further compounded the shape disadvantage. It was rough and inhospitable and the Fence crossed a number of creeks and outwashes that took episodic flood rains out of the northern Flinders Ranges. The final factor that pressured this stretch of Fence were the dingos themselves. The dingos were there in numbers and liked the sand dunes, creek beds and salt pans of the country on Woolatchi and Murnpeowie leases to the north and west. As the current Dog Fence Supervisor Bill Sandow says: 'The dogs seem to like lakes, creek beds and sand dunes. I suppose it's easy walking'.

Fence maintenance and dingo baiting on the Moolawatana Fence was time consuming and very demanding. The Fence subsidy was never enough and the Board's maintenance requirements were putting constant pressure on the landholder.

In 1983, Rod Everett, with the assistance of Michael Sheehan of Moolawatana, organised a 21 km Fence deviation from the Mount Freeling boundary out across country on Murnpeowie, where there were fewer creeks. It was a six- and seven-wire fence, of which four were electrified. In 1995, this fence was upgraded to a composite fence (half electrified and half normal wire fencing).

Although it was effective, it was to be a trial fence only. The Board only approved it as a 'buffer fence' (as they had done at Parakylia and Balcanoona) and continued for some time to require the netting Fence on the old alignment to be maintained as part of the Fence.

The Chairman, it seems, had made some unilateral decisions that did not sit well with some Board members. It was also apparent that neither the lessee of Murnpeowie or the Pastoral Board had been fully consulted.

To assist with the funding pressures arising from the maintenance of the ageing Fence, in 1982 the Board applied successfully for State Cabinet to approve the drafting of an amendment to the Act that would lift the existing landholder contribution rate 'cap' of 20c per square km. An amending Bill was proclaimed in February 1983, which lifted the maximum to \$1 per square km with the proviso that the use of the maximum rate would have to be staged over two billing periods, with 55c used in the first year. The same Bill allowed the maximum subsidy payable to be increased to \$225 per km of Fence. The messages regarding the deteriorating Fence condition were getting through.

The rate increase was imposed in 1983 and a general rate of 55c was declared. At the same time, subsidy payments jumped from \$35 per km to \$105 — they stayed at that level until 1986.

Section 26 of the Dog Fence Act had (since 1975) allowed Local Dog Fence Boards to impose an additional special rate on all landholdings of greater than 100 hectares in their areas irrespective of land use. The maximum rate allowed was \$3 per square km. As with the redefinition of rateable areas in the 1975 amendments, this provision was to assist the West Coast Local Boards. In 1985, these Boards were charging on the basis of 50c per square km at Fowlers Bay and \$3 at Penong and in the new Pureba area, where farming was the dominant land use.

Late in 1984 an amendment was made to the Act to deal with a financial support issue that had been niggling some Board members for a long time. A clause was inserted so that cattle breeders living outside the Fence and using the Fence as one of their boundaries were required to pay an annual levy at a prescribed rate. This rate was applied to each kilometre of Fence that, until then, was being maintained for them at no charge. The initial prescribed rate was \$37.50 per km. In 1995 this clause was to be amended to require the rate to be reviewed every five years in consultation with the South Australia Farmers Federation.



In 1984, a major Fence deviation was proposed that would make use of electrification and reconfigure the six Local Boards on the West Coast to three Local Boards. The Fence at Nunjikompita and north of Wirrulla had outlived its economic life. It was located in an area used for cereal production, which was actually occurring on both sides of the Fence. With this had also come an associated problem with sand drift. As Rod Everett put it: 'Agriculture had consumed it'.

A proposal, initially known as the 'Petina relocation', was considered by the Board. It involved erecting a new 80 km Dog Fence mainly through what was then unallocated Crown land (now the Pureba Conservation Park) from the north-east corner of the Murat Bay Dog Fence to the southern extremity of the Lake Everard Fence. It would protect cropping areas in the Hundred of Nannyah, Pinjara pastoral lease, one grazing license and the Crown lands. The fence was to be of plain wire and electrified. Along such an alignment, the proposed fence, when completed, would isolate the Murat Bay, Petina and Wirrulla Local Dog Fence Board districts from any abutment.

In August of 1984 a meeting took place at Ceduna involving Dog Fence Board members and members of local boards and the Far West Coast Boards' Association. The formal report of the meeting indicates a resolution that the new Fence be erected and that it be electrified using solar power. The same report also told of an agreement to disband the Wirrulla, Petina and Murat Bay Boards and replace them with one new board called Pureba. There were almost certainly other meetings on the same issues and it is quite clear that, despite the bland words of the report, those meetings were not totally harmonious.

Both Rod Everett and Lester Lord recall the meeting as 'volatile'. At issue was not the location and construction of the new fence (as far as landholders in this area were concerned electric fencing had already proven itself with the Fowlers Bay foot fence) it was the disbanding of three Boards that caused most contention.

In 1986 the new Pureba Local Dog Fence Board was appointed and gazetted with B J Hughes as its first Chairman.



*Wombat damage to the Fowlers Bay fence. Courtesy Daryl Rankine. (Photo 102049)*



The delineation and construction of the new Pureba Fence marked the first time that Dog Fence Administration dealt with conservation concerns and the requirement to apply for approval to clear vegetation along a fence line pursuant to the newly enacted Native Vegetation Management Act of 1985. Conservationists were principally concerned that the realignment of the Fence might preempt local land use decisions and particularly a future dedication of the unallocated Crown land for conservation purposes.

The agreed line of the new Fence was chosen first on aerial photographs and then bulldozed and pegged on the ground by Rod Everett, Bryan Lock and a dozer driver. Because of the thickness of the mallee in the area, they used a combination of compass bearings and a rear vision alignment on three pegs to push an irregular line along mainly interdunal flats. Rod Everett maintains it was an accurate traverse: 'Two weeks after they started, the bulldozer driver topped a sandrise and had the southernmost post of the Lake Everard Fence aligned squarely with the centre of his blade.'

Work on building the Fence began at the Kondoolka–Lake Everard end in late 1985. It was carried out by an Afghan contractor Jimmy Akbar, who camped along the line with his wife and used a self-designed, trailer mounted assembly rig that he had practiced with at Copley before he started. He 'delivered the Fence' in 1986.

In the meantime in Adelaide, proposals were being examined that would sever the time honoured relationship between the Chairman of the Dog Fence Board and the Pastoral Board and reshape Dog Fence Board membership and representation.

The Minister of Lands and the executive of his Department were coming to the view that the two Boards were on divergent courses. The Pastoral Board was changing its emphasis to a more specialised focus on scientific rangeland condition assessment, while the Dog Fence Board was focusing on new fence technologies to help it upgrade the Fence. It was decided to recommend to Cabinet that the current qualification relating to Dog Fence Board chairmanship be removed and the Director of Lands, or his nominee, be made Chairperson of the Board.

In the same Cabinet submission it was noted that while the Board maintained the Fence, the Vertebrate Pest Control Authority (VPCA) was responsible for the control of dingos and that failure of either of these initiatives 'would cause huge problems for the other'. It was therefore recommended that this coordination be formalised by extending the membership of the Dog Fence Board to five with the inclusion of a nominee from the VPCA now Animal and Plant Control Commission (APCC).

Finally the submission referred to the changed role of the Vermin Districts Association following the 1975 repeal of the Vermin Act and recommended that the Board should in future include a nominee from the Local Dog Fence Boards, rather than the Vermin Districts Association.

These recommendations were approved by Cabinet in October 1985. A Bill was drafted and the Dog Fence Amendment Act No. 22 of 1986 was assented to on 20 March 1986. It meant, of course, that a new Board had to be nominated and formally appointed. It was almost, but not quite, the end of Rod Everett's association with the Fence.

In terms of the barrier Fence, posterity should remember Rod Everett favourably. There is no doubt that during his term as Chair, the Board had been at its most dynamic. He could be forgiven his natural tendency to make unilateral decisions and some examples of purpose driven selective recall, since he and his Board understood that the Fence needed an injection of funds and technology. However, he also knew that in any approach to the State Government for \$11 million to \$14 million to replace the traditional Fence they would have been 'shown the door'.



He and the Board were prepared to 'get on the front foot'; even to the extent of seeking special grants like the \$100 000 they successfully applied for to help the Muloorina Fence after the 1984 floods.

As Jim Vickery succinctly puts it: 'You've got to hand it to Rod Everett, he was a very dynamic fella. I believe he did a bloody good job.'



*Fence inspector, TV Cook, 1988-97. Old Murat Bay-Petina fence almost covered by sand drift. Courtesy of B A Lock. (Photo 102050)*



## Chapter 6 1986 to 1996 — The Ministers' chairs

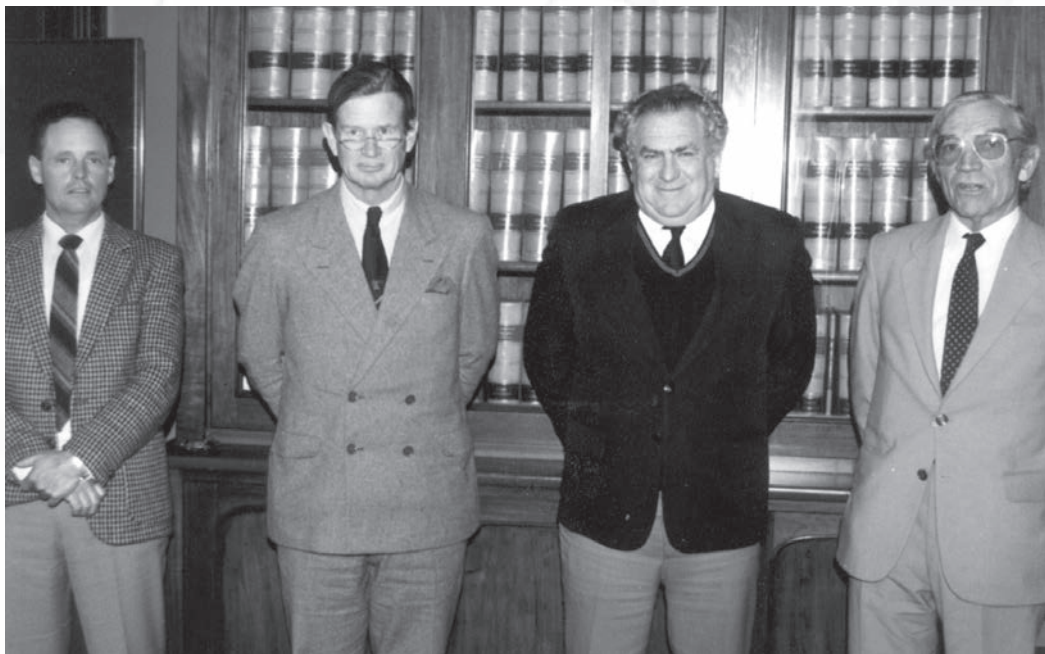
THE Board that was appointed following the enactment of the 1986 amendments initially contained only one new face. It also had a 'nightwatchman' Chairman (Rod Everett until 30 June).

The new member nominated by the Vertebrate Pest Control Authority was A D (Andrew) McTaggart from Oakden Hills Station, north of Port Augusta. He was a nephew of former long serving member Ian McTaggart. His appointment began a 14-year association with the Board that still continues.

Hugh MacLachlan and Jack Spiers were nominated again by the United Farmers and Stockowners to represent the Fence owners and the ratepayers respectively, while Lester Lord was again appointed; this time as representative of the Local Dog Fence Boards.

Although he had resigned from the public service, Rod Everett continued to chair the Board from January through to June 1986, while the then Director of Lands, D A (Don) Alexander, considered who to nominate to the Minister as Board Chairperson. Rod Everett was engaged under a consultancy agreement during this period, the formal reason given in the proposing document being that at the time there was, 'no Department of Lands person suitable or available to chair the Board'.

The apparent caution with the nomination was a reflection of one of the issues addressed by the Director of Lands and the Departmental executive at the time. There was a general move to look closely at semi-autonomous statutory authorities and Boards to make them more directly accountable to the agency in which they were located. While there were elements of this thinking in other government agencies it sat well with the philosophy of Don Alexander and his predecessor Max Scriven, while they sought to reassess the role and direction of the Department of Lands. Along with the, 'diverging specialisations', reasons formally put forward, it is almost certain that concerns about accountability and reporting lines were as much a driver of the proposed amendments to allow the Dog Fence Board Chairperson to be nominated by the Director of Lands.



*From left; A D McTaggart 1986-current, (Chairperson 1996-ongoing), H G MacLachlan 1979-92, H J Spiers 1981-90, L P Lord 1973-96. Courtesy of B A Lock. (Photo 102051)*



The Director's nomination in July 1986 was W J (Bill) Edwards, who was then Manager of the Department's Outback Region and stayed in that substantive position for the duration of his incumbency as Board Chairman. Ironically, but perhaps not surprisingly, Bill Edwards was a former pastoral inspector and member of the Pastoral Board. He was a land valuer by training and had worked as a stock and station agent for a number of years. He possessed a good grasp of the Dog Fence Board's role and had, for two years prior to his nomination, accompanied the Board on its Fence inspection trips.

At almost exactly the same time as Bill Edwards's nomination, the Board's inspectorial and field staff numbers doubled. The funds 'freed up', notionally at least, by Rod Everett's resignation from the public service had been one of the reasons for redesigning and redesignating Bryan Lock's position as Manager, Dog Fence Administration. The 'freed up funds' were also mentioned as helping, in part, to secure an executive approval to appoint an Inspector of Fences; initially on a temporary basis.

There was no doubt that the workload was increasing particularly with the negotiating role now expected of inspectors, the replacement of parts of the Fence and the emerging interest in electric fencing. The rating base was also being studied and it was anticipated that any change to this system would mean increased work for both the Board and its staff.

In June 1986 S P (Shane) O'Connell of Booleroo Centre was appointed to this temporary position as Fence Inspector for six months and had his term extended for a further six months on two occasions. He resigned in 1988 and his place was taken by J V (John) Cook, who was appointed on a permanent basis and became the first of the Dog Fence Supervisors responsible to the Manager, Dog Fence Administration.

The permanency did not bring immediate salary recognition and applications for a higher level remained unresolved. However, in 1991, an application for a backdated higher duty allowance was approved. Salary recognition for the work that John Cook did, particularly with electric fencing, was to be something of an issue for most of his 10 years in the job, but it didn't sour his interest in a job that he admitted to being 'wrapped in'.

Much of the official hesitation about salaries was a product of the internal restructuring and functional placements that land related agencies were becoming involved in. It was also constrained by the unknowns of future funding that might or might not improve with the adoption of a wider geographic spread of rate contribution (rating base) that was under examination.

In 1989, the Board, in consultation with the Department of Lands and with some advice from the State's Valuer-General, decided it would enlarge the traditional grazing oriented rating base. The wider rating base was to include every property inside the Fence that had an area greater than 10 square km and that was not on one of the offshore islands. The initial rate struck in June 1990 was 65c per square km, with a minimum rate of \$45 on every eligible property.

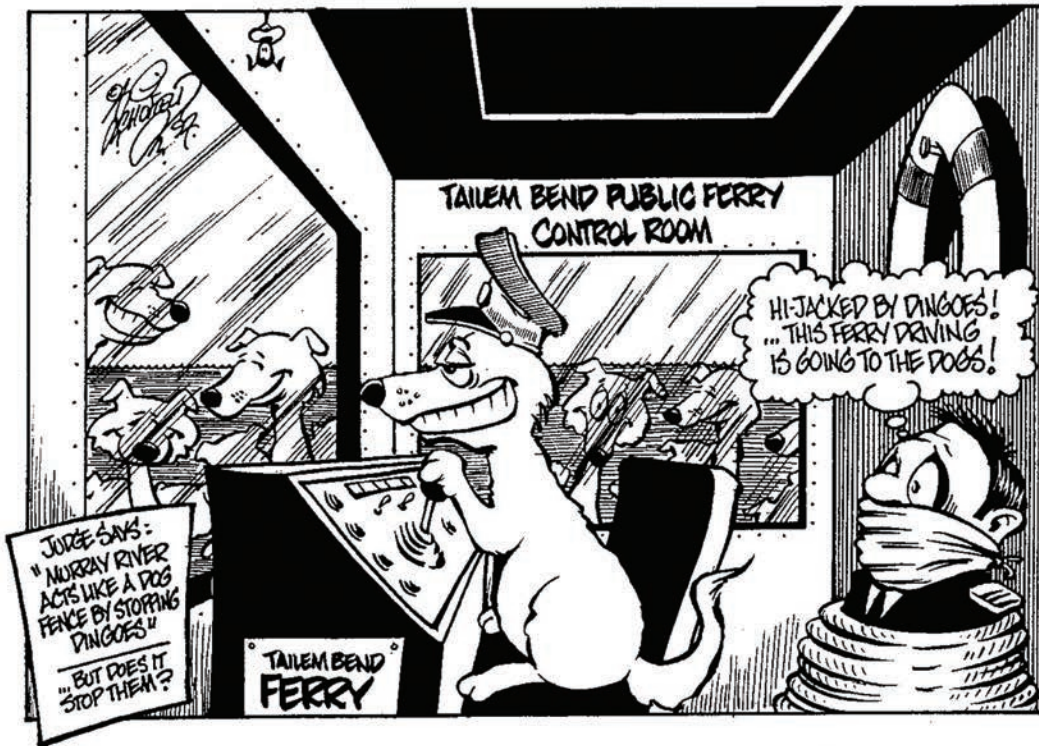


*W J Edwards, Board member 1986-90. Courtesy B A Lock. (Photo 102052)*

When the new rating base was introduced in 1989, the last year of Bill Edward's Chairmanship, it would involve the Board in some lively meetings, particularly in the South East of the State. As anticipated, the base did place additional work on the Board's staff, occupying Bryan Lock's time particularly and taxing his considerable reserves of patience.

The rate was applied irrespective of land use and consequently included, in some cases, saltworks, vineyards and a lot of totally undeveloped country. There were pockets of strong landholder resistance, particularly the further owners were from the Fence. The resistance was strongest in the South East and adjacent the Ngarkat Conservation Park near where a revitalised Box Flat Vermin Board, while not appointed pursuant to the Dog Fence Act, was nonetheless actively engaged in controlling dogs coming out of the Park.

The debate was not about a lot of money, given the property sizes in the better rainfall country. To many it seemed to 'fly in the face' of traditional country 'help others' values. It did have its lighter sides and at one stage involved debate as to whether the River Murray was an effective dingo barrier. This led to the publication of a cartoon in the Stock Journal (Allan Schofield, 3 July 1997), showing dingoes in control of a River ferry.



*Allan Schofield*  
Stock Journal 3/7.



From left;  
P A Trowbridge 1996-  
current, M J Balharry,  
manager 1996-current,  
J R Morgan 1992-  
current, D A Nicholson  
1990-current,  
A D McTaggart 1986-  
current (Chairperson  
1996-current).  
Courtesy Dog Fence  
Board. (Photo 102054)



By imposing a rate over all lands inside the Fence, the Board was merely, as one member put it, 'involving the Act'. One or two members however saw it as unjust and in those districts well removed from the Fence, the concept struggled against similar attitudes that 50 years before had led to a waning interest in the old Vermin-Fenced Districts. The United Farmers and Stockowners generally supported the wider coverage, although the vote was not seen as decisive. The Board still needed to carry the message into those areas where support was lukewarm.

Hugh MacLachlan recalls flying the Board down to a meeting in the South East involving landowners in the Kingston and Robe districts; a meeting for which the Board had prepared itself well: 'At the end of the meeting 20-odd landholders had voted for it, 12 were against it and seven abstained. We felt very proud. We had gone to the jaws of the lion.'

But those who were opposed to it were vocal and articulate and knew how to make use of the rural press particularly. In many cases the concept of a 'measure of benefit from the Fence' was never accepted and the issue simmered. The withholding of rates by some 60 landowners was to eventually lead to court action and the formal abandonment of the wider rating basis.

Along the Fence itself, the issues were still its condition, its maintenance and what part electrification could play in both these tasks. In November 1987, the Board, at the encouragement of Bryan Lock, agreed to erect some fencing research 'cells' on Muloorina Station just outside the Fence. Both Bryan Lock, and later John Cook, played major roles in the design, erection and monitoring of these cells. Both became champions of electrified fencing. Long runs along the Fence, and the penetrations they had to deal with, gave them both the time and the incentive to think hard about the various fence assemblies that could be trialed at Muloorina. In Bryan Lock's case, he was keen to re-establish some of the principles about repelling dingos that he had seen work earlier on fencing cells around waters. This had been undertaken in the Lake Eyre South area (Muloorina Station) by Peter Bird of the Animal and Plant Control Commission.

It is at Muloorina that much of the work on refining the sloping foot fence and the composite fence (the two dominant designs of electric fencing now in use) took place and still occurs today. The foot fence is an amalgamation of a plain wire upright fence and the original Fowlers Bay foot fence; the latter angled over to join the upright fence with powered wires in both. The composite fence involves the addition of



*From left; C D Cane 1990-92, L P Lord 1973-96. Courtesy B A Lock. (Photo 102055)*

Board Chair with C D (Christine Dawn) Cane; an appointment that the then Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Susan Lenehan, approved 'with pleasure'. Christine Cane was the only woman before or since to serve as a member of the Dog Fence Board and it is believed, at least at the time, she was the only female member of any Dog Fence or wild dog board in Australia.

L B (Basil) Kidd, who was then the Department of Lands' Director of Operations Services (and later to Chair the Board himself), recalls that the advice he had given the Director was that there was a gender imbalance on a number of Boards and that Christine Cane, who was then acting as a 'sort of executive assistant' to the Director, was very capable of growing into the job.

There is no doubt she did just that. The initial suspicion of the existing, older Board members was tempered as time moved on. She chaired meetings in a very professional manner, learnt quickly about Fence issues, understood policy development and agency politics and asked absolutely no favours when she and the Board visited and camped on the Fence. It was an education for some of the members. As Bill Edwards recalls: 'On camp she would shoulder her spade with the best of them. And she could tell a joke.'

She was to tell them one night around the camp fire that she had been put in as Chairperson to have a close look at the Board's operations and to consider its future.

But she told them that what she had actually seen had led her to the view that the Board was an effective, cost conscious and hard working group that was making the Dog Fence work. It appears that this was the substance of any reports she provided to the Director or his executive.

The concept of internal investigations like this one was not totally foreign at that time. Quite apart from the ongoing examination of the structure and operations of the Department of Lands, there was also a central government requirement to study the operations of a number of committees and boards to ascertain their relevance and effectiveness. It was aimed at disbanding what had become known as 'quangos'.

a netting or mesh lap at the base of the powered wire fence. The lap extends out on the ground for about 30 cm on the outside of the fence. The Muloorina cells have always been stocked with sheep in an area where dingo numbers have been high. Bryan Lock recalls that in his time the cells had got to a stage where they went for six years without letting a dingo in.

On the main Fence in the late 1980s, the electrified sections were still confined to Fowlers Bay, Pureba, Parakylia, Moolawatana and the Balcanoona Fence between Wooltana and Wertalooona. These sections used a variety of fence designs and with the evolution and success of the foot fence in particular (on fence lengths where creeks and washouts were not a problem) it became evident later that some of this totally upright electrified fencing was still vulnerable. John Cook recalls an inspection run on the Pureba Fence where he marked 16 holes.

A period of four years of stable Board membership came to an end in 1990, when the new Director of Lands J A (John) Darley replaced Bill Edwards as



Jack Spiers decided not to seek renomination when his term expired. His place as the ratepayers' representative on the Board was taken by D A (Don) Nicolson of Roopena Station near Whyalla, who was then a member of the United Farmers and Stockowners Wool and Meat Executive.

Don Nicolson already knew a significant amount about vermin fences, the people who had inspected them and the animals they had used. He had been a boy on Roopena when Fence riders like Bill Rogers and Len Burton had picked up their camels from the Station.

In 1987 and again in 1990 the support staff of the Board moved offices. The 1987 move was the first since the Board's inception in 1947. The Board had always maintained an office in the old Treasury Building on the corner of King William and Flinders Streets in Adelaide — the same building that housed most of the Adelaide based staff of the Department of Lands. In 1987 the support staff accompanied other staff of the Department's Outback Region to Wakefield House on the corner of Wakefield Street and Gawler Place.



*From left; L B Kidd (Chairperson) 1992-95, P Morgan, fence owner, Mulyungerie. Courtesy B A Lock. (Photo 102056)*

The second move was independently made at the suggestion of the Chairperson Christine Cane. This move was an indirect consequence of a government decision to transfer most of the Outback Region function (including the Pastoral Assessment group) from the Lands portfolio to the Environment portfolio. The papers relating to the transfer to the Department of Environment and Planning (soon to become the Department of Environment and Natural Resources) made no particular reference to the Dog Fence Administration section, prompting Christine Cane to suggest to Bryan Lock that they find their own independent premises. They secured an office, and later an office and boardroom, at Steadfast House on Magill Road, Maylands, and moved there in 1990 with the somewhat belated approval of the then Director of Regional Operations, Anne Stimson.

The office was to remain there virtually until late 1995, when it moved to the Waite Institute at Urrbrae.

There had been earlier suggestions (for example, in 1986) that, what was then described as Dog Fence Operations, might be relocated to Port Augusta. In September of that year, however, the then Director of Lands, Don Alexander, had assured Board members that he had recommended that the Board's offices remain in Adelaide.

In March 1992, Hugh MacLachlan resigned from the Board. He had been a strong supporter of the policy of 'getting the Board onto the Fence'. It was his continuing belief in the importance of this approach that substantially led him to resign. He was, he recalls, beginning to take on 'the full load of his family's business', including responsibility for investments in the Kimberleys of Western Australia.

'I was running out of time', he says. 'I didn't want to become a member who couldn't go on inspections or attend some meetings. And I could see it happening.'



His departure brought to a close 45 years of MacLachlan family membership of the Dog Fence Board.

Hugh MacLachlan's replacement as the nominated Fence owners' representative from the South Australia Farmers Federation (which had now replaced the United Farmers and Stockowners) was J R (James) Morgan of Mulyungarie Station at Cockburn.

His family interests were in the Mutooroo Pastoral Company and, in that sense, the Company was renewing an active association with Dog Fence management and administration that had begun with Bill Findlay, a former Board member and at one time Managing Director of the Company.

Later in 1992 Christine Cane resigned from the Public Service and in August, at John Darley's nomination, L B (Basil) Kidd, who had previously suggested her as Chair to the Director of Lands, became Chairman of the Board himself. He was then still Director of Operations Services in what had become the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Born at Gladstone in the State's mid-north, he had developed a personal interest in rock fossicking and gold prospecting, particularly during an early career posting in New Guinea. This had led him to spend a considerable amount of leisure time in the State's far north. Along with the financial understandings that were also to see him employed in the State Treasury, he began to take a keen interest in the work Bryan Lock was doing on electric fencing along the State's barrier Fence — well before he was formally appointed to chair the Dog Fence Board. He was, he recalls, particularly impressed with the calculations he was shown that indicated that the capital cost of an electrified fence was about \$3 000 per km, compared with \$10 000 per km for a conventional netting fence.

He admits to starting his chairmanship with a 'missionary zeal' to electrify all 2 250 km of the existing Fence. But he says of his later period of incumbency: 'I came to the realisation fairly quickly that it was a case of horses for courses and that there were lengths of the Fence where traditional fencing was better than electric fencing.'

In both Christine Cane and Basil Kidd's time the Board looked at introducing measures that would augment the basic maintenance subsidy, which at that time had increased to \$115 per km. In 1991, a policy was introduced that provided a Fence owner with one metre of materials for every metre he or she purchased. Later, largely as a result of representations from the lessee of Moolawatana Station, Michael Sheehan, a policy was introduced that provided for payment by the Board for all materials used to repair the Fence where it had been damaged or destroyed by natural disasters, like flood or bushfire.

Later in 1995 and 1996, the Board was to extend its additional assistance to Fence owners further and reintroduce measures that had begun in Rod Everett's time. This involved purchasing fencing materials on behalf of Fence owners to prevent delays with 'procurement and delivery' of materials in remote areas. The policy coordinated purchases and also made possible some economies of scale.

In this period of the Board's operations, amendments to its empowering Act had been relatively minor and largely procedural — at least until 1995. Previously, in 1989, Amending Act No 63 was assented to and the new designation of Animal and Plant Control Commission was formally recognised in lieu of the Vertebrate Pest Control Authority. The same Bill authorised the Far West Coast Dog Fence Boards' Association Inc. to nominate a member of the Dog Fence Board to replace the person previously nominated by the responsible Minister from a pool of names submitted by Local Dog Fence Boards.



This latter amendment was a consequence of disbanding the Lake Torrens and Lake Torrens East Local Dog Fence Boards in 1987. With the exception of the Far West Coast, these Boards had been the last of the old Vermin-Fenced Districts with actual Dog Fence abutment that had opted in 1975 to continue as Local Dog Fence Boards. It was clear that representation of Local Boards on the State Board required someone who was particularly familiar with the Far West Coast.

The realignment of the Frome Fence along Yandama Creek to the New South Wales border was raised again in 1995. In a briefing note to the Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Bryan Lock took a new tack and stressed that there were potential environmental implications to such a significant realignment. It was at this time that formal negotiation had been given to the fact that movement of the Fence could impact on fauna. In this case the impacts could relate to goat, cat and fox control, the possibility of kangaroo build up and the stability of the area's population of dusky hopping mice (*Notomys Fuscus*). It was also mentioned that the erection of a new Fence would provide labour and work training for young Aboriginals.

But one way or the other, this matter which had been first raised in 1969, was still two years off finality.

Under Basil Kidd's chairmanship, the Board took a renewed interest in working closely with the Animal and Plant Control Commission to provide 1080 baits for dingos for Fence owners. The Board also began to make available an additional subsidy of \$15 per km of Fence to owners who would participate in what was termed 'buffer baiting' — baiting around waters up to 35 km from the Fence. It was a technique that had been developed in 1992 by Peter Bird of the Animal and Plant Control Commission.

Both Bryan Lock and John Cook attended training courses on baiting techniques and how to mix and prepare baits. Later their Chairman took a similar course himself. Despite 'territorial reservations' expressed by some Animal and Plant Control Commission members and staff, Basil Kidd recalls being adamant: 'Our charter in relation to baiting was to see that fence owners destroyed dogs in reasonable proximity to the Fence'.



*A D McTaggart, the first chairperson nominated by the Board. (Photo 102057)*





The baiting process had improved considerably and had become strategically targeted and such support and interest by the Board was not entirely new. As early as 1954 and 1955 it had given its support to aerial baiting along the entire length of the Fence in South Australia. In 1973, it supported a different approach: targeted baiting from the New South Wales border to the Wilgena Fence, a process that it reported: 'was proving superior to the aerial campaign previously conducted in the 1950s.'

Late in 1995, the relationship between the Dog Fence Board and the Animal and Plant Control Commission became a little more 'locally intimate'. A Ministerial decision was made to move the responsibility for Dog Fence Administration from the environment to the Primary Industries portfolio and, with what some saw as very limited consultation, the office was moved from Steadfast House to the Sustainable Resources area of Primary Industries and Resources at the Waite Institute.

To those who had observed the ebb and flow of agro-politics in South Australia the move was no great surprise. On the basis that some of the rationale for the 1985 amendments to the Dog Fence Act was the sensitive interdependence of both the dingo control and Fence maintenance programs, the move made at least logistic sense.

Also in 1985, the Minister for Primary Industries, Dale Baker, introduced a Bill into the House that removed the provision allowing the responsible Minister to appoint the Board Chairperson on the nomination of his or her Director of Chief Executive. Instead, it allowed the Minister to appoint any member of the Board as Chairperson. A D (Andrew) McTaggart was the first Chairperson to be appointed this way.

The Bill also allowed more flexibility in the way rates might be imposed in different areas and allowed Local Dog Fence Boards (that were soon to be reappointed in areas other than the Far West Coast) to make a unanimous recommendation on the rating base for their area to the Minister. There was also a 'machinery matter' that allowed unpaid Dog Fence rates to become a charge against the property and could be registered on the title.

The Act was assented to in December 1995. A clear policy direction had been given that could lead to the resolution of the still simmering issue of who should pay Dog Fence rates and see the reintroduction of more regionalised responsibility for the Fence.

## Chapter 7

### 1996 to 2000 — New perspectives



*From left; standing,  
J Morgan, W H Sandow,  
P A Trowbridge. Seated,  
D A Nicholson,  
A D McTaggart, M J Balharry.  
Courtesy A D McTaggart.  
(Photo 102059)*

**T**HIS period heralded some new perspectives, including a decision not to proceed with the realignment of the north-east corner of the Fence along Yandama Creek to the New South Wales border. This decision allowed for the replacement or upgrading of the Fence around Lake Frome. An exciting development was the establishment of three local boards to manage the maintenance of most of the Fence east from Commonwealth Hill.

Another development was the management of the rating system by the Dog Fence Board, including the collection of outstanding debts. This activity brought to a head concerns that agriculturalists had with the inequity of the rating system. The issue was resolved with decision by the newly formed Sheep Advisory Group to cover the rates from the agricultural areas through their Sheep Transaction Levy.

In addition, five-year plans were implemented by the Dog Fence Board and the local Dog Fence boards and a much overdue review of the Dog Fence Act was initiated with a Green Paper for public comment expected at the end of 2000.

In October 1996, the Minister appointed the first Chairman to be nominated by the Board itself and two new members came to the Board. In October Andrew McTaggart was appointed as Chairman for what was the balance of Basil Kidd's term, which was to expire in July 1998. Basil Kidd resigned as Chairman in August 1995. The new Chairman remained the actual nominee of the Animal and Plant Control Commission, leaving the option open for a non-organisational appointment to the Board by the Minister as his or her nominee.

Dr P G (Peter) Allen, a senior officer with Primary Industries and Resources South Australia, was appointed in October 1996 to replace Basil Kidd as the Minister's nominee. Peter Allen was (and still is) Program Manager with the Animal and Plant Control Commission and the Commission's Executive Officer. He further 'shored up' the strong ties that were being forged between the Board and the Commission. His background was actually in entomological research, which, through his involvement with locust control, had led him to what he describes as, 'some pastoral exposure'. He was a new breed of Board member, who, like Christine Cane, understood administration and bureaucracy, policy development and the new rigours of government accountability.

Also in October 1996, P A (Phillip) Trowbridge of Ceduna was appointed. He filled the vacancy left by the resignation of Lester Lord as representative of the Far West Dog Fence Boards' Association. He was a logical choice. For almost 30 years (since 1969) he had been a member of the Penong Local Board, which had been both a Vermin-Fenced District and, after 1975, a Local Dog Fence Board. He is still a Penong Board member and has chaired the Far West Dog Fence Boards' Association that nominated him.

The new Chairman and members were appointed initially until July 1998 to coincide with the four-year terms of the other Board members. In late 1998, all the existing Board members were reappointed for a further four years to 2002, giving the Board the membership, skill and experience mix it has today.

The 1995 relocation almost coincided with the resignation of Bryan Lock as Manager, Dog Fence Administration, which took effect in February 1996. He did move to Waite for a few weeks, but the last months of his incumbency were worked from the Port Augusta regional office of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia. John Cook, the Fence Supervisor, however, remained at the Sustainable Resources offices at the Waite Campus, Urrbrae.

During his time at Steadfast House, Bryan Lock had been able to enlist the clerical support of Margaret Durant who had, since 1988, been a word processing officer with the Department of Environment and Planning. In April 1993, she began work with the Board's support group on the five-day-per-fortnight basis that she still puts in today. At the time of the relocation, she (like John Cook) moved directly to the Waite Campus. However, before the appointment of Margaret Durant the entire workload (largely generated by the widened rating base) had forced Bryan Lock to enlist the occasional assistance of his wife Helen on a voluntary basis.

In February 1996, M J (Michael) Balharry was chosen from 10 applicants to replace Bryan Lock as Manager, Dog Fence Administration. The Board and its host agency had been looking for someone



*From left; P G Allen 1996-current, P A Trowbridge 1996-current, D A Nicholson 1990-current, W H Sandow, Fence Inspector (current), A D McTaggart 1986-current (Chairperson from 1996). Courtesy M J Balharry. (Photo 102058)*



*Board on inspection, lunch break at Hamilton Creek, Moonawatana. From left; W H Sandow, A D McTaggart, J Morgan, D A Nicholson, P A Trowbridge. Courtesy M J Balharry. (Photo 102060)*



with hands on experience, a knowledge of fencing and its management and an understanding of the people who lived on or near the Fence. Michael Balharry fitted the bill.

He had begun his property management experience on ‘Waterloo’ just north of Mount Gambier (almost as far as you can get away from the Fence in South Australia) but for the 20 years prior to his appointment he had managed and owned a property on the Far West Coast that had 13 km of the Penong Fence as a boundary. He had been a member of the Penong Local Dog Fence Board, Chairman of the Penong Progress Association and a member and Chairman of the Outback Areas Community Development Trust.

Michael Balharry’s understanding of what was achievable and acceptable ‘on the ground’ continues to help him with the sensitivities that still arise in the job. On the Board’s behalf, he (like Bryan Lock before him) dealt with much of the angst caused in some areas by Dog Fence rates. Michael Balharry’s particular mix of whimsy and diplomacy has earned him the title of ‘Rumpole of the Waite’ and this is still affixed to his office door.

The final appointment to the group that today constitutes the Board and its support staff followed the resignation in November 1997 of John Cook and his replacement as Supervisor of Fences by W H (Bill) Sandow. Like Michael Balharry, he also brought to the job a large measure of hands on experience. Born in Peterborough, he had lived and worked on a property there before spending 15 years of his working life on a Western Lands lease on the Bogan River, near Nyngan, New South Wales. In the mid 1970s, before he went to Nyngan, he had worked for 18 months on Commonwealth Hill, largely at rebuilding the western Fence damaged by the fires of 1976. His last job before joining the Board support staff had been with the National Parks and Wildlife Service at Innes National Park for three years, teaching construction and revegetation under the long term unemployment schemes.

The Board appointed in 1996, and its support staff, had two major tasks before them: to rekindle consistent local interest in managing the Fence and, with senior staff of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia, develop a Fence maintenance funding and rating approach that had as wide an acceptance within the sheep grazing industry as possible.

Before tracing an outline of what was done to address these issues it is timely to briefly describe the alignment, construction and condition of the Fence, which in 1996 was almost the same as it is today.



In 1996, as now, the Fence was a mixture of constructions and deterrents to suit differing terrains, soil conditions, risk exposures and pressures — and to some extent differing commitments to electrified fencing. Some lengths were electrified and constituted the psychological barrier that Rod Everett had often spoke of; a Fence respected as much for the pain it had inflicted on the dingos, and could inflict again, as well as for the physical barrier it obviously presented. Generally the view of the Board was that the optimum design should incorporate electrical fencing.

The only real difference between the Fence of 1996 and today was a new electrified Fence completed at Moolawatana in 1998, running due east from the Mount Freeling boundary, across Woolatchi lease (since 1992 part of Moolawatana Station) and for the first time, therefore bisecting a single lease or tenured block instead of following boundaries. Nearer to the Lake Callabonna Channel, the new Fence swings south to rejoin the older Fence and follow down the western side of Lake Frome. This diversion to better fencing country has helped to secure Moolawatana particularly but also other properties that had suffered the dingo penetrations arising from a very vulnerable and difficult section of the Fence.

However, in Moolawatana's case the 'horse had bolted'. Since 1993, largely in response to consistently excessive sheep and lamb losses, the Station had switched to running cattle.

The alignment today still retains the cul-de-sac formed by the Fence following the western edges of Lake Frome, before swinging east to the New South Wales Border along the north boundaries of Erudina and Mulyungarie Stations. The Yandama Creek realignment from the 40 km mark on the Moolawatana Fence to Tilcha Gate on the New South Wales Fence was finally rejected at a meeting of a number of owners and interested groups called by the Minister for Primary Industries in August 1997. The meeting was facilitated and chaired by the immediate past Presiding Member of the State's Soil Conservation Council, Neil Smith.



*Witchelena fence. Courtesy M J Balharry, 2000. (Photo 102061)*



*New fence, 10-wire with sloping foot, Moolawatana, 1998. Courtesy W H Sandow. (Photo 102062)*

Despite the ultimate cost savings anticipated, the proposal was rejected principally because S Kidman Holdings, lessees of Quinyambie Station, required kangaroo numbers to be kept at the present level, some 7% of the numbers inside the Dog Fence, after removal of the dingos. The Board was prepared to proceed with the proposal with the lessees being unwilling partners. It is problematical whether it would have been possible without compliance. Other considerations were the requirement and the costs of maintaining the old fence while the dingos were cleared out of the cul-de-sac.

This was not the first time the Kidman Company had influence on fence realignments. They had been opposed to the first proposal to realign the Mulgaria fence north of Lake Torrens in 1957.

It is, as Andrew McTaggart puts it, the 'Holden' Fence, while he likens the netting Fence to the Mercedes he would rather have and feel comfortable sitting behind.

The new Fence erected at Moolawatana is a 10-wire electric fence with a sloping foot, designed by J V Cook. As in other lengths, mesh and netting are used on waterways as a matter of policy and netting is draped into the steeper drainage lines. Composite electric fencing, involving an on-ground lap of mesh or netting, is also used, but not where saline ground will corrode the lap.

A similar construction of fence will be used this winter as the Wooltana Fence is replaced through the partially eroded and saline country immediately west of Lake Frome. It was also used in 1997 to replace 11 km of traditional Pureba Fence and to replace 17 km of traditional Fence abutting Mundowdna Station at Marree. Closer to Moolawatana, 5 km of the Mount Freeling Fence was electrified in 1997, while a fairly recent replacement of the Parakylia Fence has involved a sloping, electrified foot fence.

Square steel mesh is used often in preference to the traditional netting. When chicken netting is used for lapping, it is treated as a precaution against corrosion. The Board maintains an intermittent but ongoing dialogue with BHP about mesh construction and requirements. There are still considerable savings to be made from bulk orders and the company was represented at last year's Arkaroola meeting of Dog Fence administrators from three States.



The electrified Fence can now 'hit' harder which may offer some comfort to those who reluctantly depend on it. It certainly won't offer any comfort to the dogs or other animals that contact it. The energisers are now capable of providing 4000-plus volts to about 60 km of single wire from each location (where there are four live wires, the energisers will each power a 15 km length of fence). Contact with the Fence will give you a very nasty 'hit' — one that some say the dingos never forget.

Rod Everett always emphatically believed that the shock from first contact was pivotal to his 'psychological barrier' concept and he is still adamant that the dogs could smell the current in the wire.

Perhaps it is preferable to think of the Fence as a 'line in the sand' that the Board has drawn to defend. The fortification of the 'line' depends on the needs and conditions at each length and location and on the extent to which trapping and baiting have cleared the enemy from each area. It seems that higher material costs will continue to encourage innovative electric fencing designs. It is expected that refined and trusted future remote monitoring systems advances will also encourage ingenuity.

It is also likely that the traditional netting Fence, where it exists over reasonably hospitable terrain and a landscape that is un-dissected by creeks and watercourses will remain the main barrier for some time yet. Conditions like this are typified by the far west Commonwealth Hill Fence. Largely free of human intrusion and severe natural run off, this part of the Fence has been a very stable area for a long time.

Don Carpenter from the Far West Coast recounts the story about Len Burton losing £25 on the Commonwealth Hill Fence. On the next trip, three months later, he found it again caught in the netting.

In 1997, the Fence, for much of its length, was vested under the ownership and control of three new Local Dog Fence Boards. These Boards were to be a significant first step in returning 'local ownership and responsibility' to the Fence. It was hoped that what had been so successful for the smaller abutting owners and district landholders in the Far West Coast Local Board areas could be repeated along much of the Fence.

Late in 1995 and again in early 1996, Stuart Shipard and Phillip Trowbridge of the Far West Dog Fence Board Association had been invited to meetings at Port Augusta organised by the South Australia Farmers Federation. Their role was to explain how the system had worked in their area. On the second



*Composite fence at Moolawatana. Courtesy WH Sandow. (Photo 102063)*



occasion in January 1996, they were accompanied by Michael Balharry. On this occasion, the meeting (which followed the regular Zone 15 meeting of the Federation and was chaired by Mary Oldfield of Mungeranie Station) voted to proceed with the formation of the new Local Boards. The Boards themselves were nominated and formed at three subsequent meetings during the first half of 1996 at Glendambo, Lyndhurst and Mannahill. They began operating almost immediately but were not formally gazetted until 1997.

The Fence from the Commonwealth Hill–Mabel Creek boundary to the Mulgaria–Witchelina boundary (a length of 615 km) was vested in the Central Local Dog Fence Board under the chairmanship of Sharon Rankin. From Witchelina to the Mount Freeling–Moolawatana boundary, a further 289 km was vested in the Marree Local Dog Fence Board, chaired by L P (Peter) Litchfield. Along the balance of the Fence to the New South Wales border, 285 km were vested in the Frome Local Dog Fence Board, while two abutting landholders (Mulyungarie and Erudina Stations) elected to patrol and maintain their own Fence over a distance of 159 km. J R (James) Morgan, a member of the Dog Fence Board, was elected to chair the Frome Local Board.

After the 1997 amendments, abutting owners had been individually offered the retention of ownership of the Fence as an alternative to Local Dog Fence Board ownership. In addition to the two abutments along the Frome Fence, three adjoining managements (Lake Everard, Wilgena and Commonwealth Hill) elected to retain ownership of 482 km of the Fence between Kondoolka and Mabel Creek. Today, this Fence is still privately patrolled and maintained, while along the Frome Fence the Erudina lessee, John McEntee, alone now patrols and maintains his section of the Fence.

The Chairs of each of these new Local Boards remain today and the full memberships of each of the Boards are contained in the Appendices. Patrolmen were appointed from what James Morgan, Dog Fence Board member, described as ‘plenty of high quality applicants’. Initially, Jeff Boland and Graham Fraser patrolled the western and eastern lengths of the Central Fence respectively, while David Coverdale kept an eye on the Marree Fence.

Bryan Lock came happily out of partial retirement on Katunga Station to be the Frome Fence Patrolman, while on the Far West Coast, John Norwood continued as Patrolman for the three Local Boards there.

There have been two changes since the initial Local Fence Inspector appointments. Keith Beelitz took over from Graham Fraser in October 1999 and Randall Singleton now patrols the Mulyungarie Fence only for the Frome Local Board.



*Mesh fence at Moolawatana. Courtesy W H Sandow. (Photo 102064)*





The general consensus has been one of satisfaction in the way the Local Board system is now working. It has always worked well on the West Coast, but the issues there have always been different and a little unique. Elsewhere the 'localisation' of management is working not so much because of unique issues, but because it imparts a sense of ownership and removes some of the inevitable mistrusts that can occur with a single and physically removed controlling body.

Together with the Minister for Primary Industries, Rob Kerin, and senior staff of the Sustainable Resources section of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia, the new Board has also addressed the lingering concerns (and remnant outrages) arising from the 'total inside area as a rateable area' concept.

In 1999 for the first time since 1989, the rates from within district council areas became zero and the foregone rates are now being collected via a Sheep Transaction Levy through the South Australian Sheep Advisory Group.

What affect such a system will have on Dog Fence funding is not totally clear yet. However, the formation of new Local Dog Fence Boards and the general expectation of an increasing funding base, has led the Dog Fence Board to request the West Coast Boards to cease imposing special rates in their areas and rely on the Board's general collection mechanism to provide all their funding. This would also bring their funding base into line with those of the newly appointed Local Boards. However, the power for those Boards to impose a special rate remains in the legislation although the Act itself is currently under review.

### **March 2000**

It's been quiet out there for a while now. Bill Sandow thinks the calici virus effect on the rabbits has, 'dropped the dog numbers a bit'. James Morgan and Bryan Lock say much the same about the areas adjacent to the Frome Fence. And along the Mulyungarie Fence there is plenty of opportunity to see evidence of dingos — here the Station Fence is patrolled three times a month.

Bill Sandow says that when he first started his supervisory patrols you could always hear the dogs calling:

*'I used to quite enjoy it. But I haven't heard a dog calling for six to seven months now. And I haven't seen a dog for that time. Haven't shot one for a number of months now either. But they would still be there.'*

It seems that in any discussion about dingo numbers and the Fence, Moolawatana Station is always mentioned. The number of dogs in that area on both sides of the Fence is seen as a sort of litmus test of the dingo control program.

Bill is no exception: 'At Moolawatana, the shooters used to get 40 or 50 dogs over a weekend. Now they might see one'. Of course the Fence is getting better.'

Good rains have occurred now over much of the northern cattle country and a lot of the water courses are filling. There's plenty of surface water now for dingo movement. There has been a suggestion that in some areas rabbit numbers may be increasing. Everyone acknowledges how quickly the dingos can return when conditions suit them.

They may well be moving again. But the Fence is there.

## Chapter 8

### 2001 to 2012 — First drought and then flood



**T**HE Fence continues to maintain a silent presence in the outback of South Australia. An isolated feature standing amidst rugged terrain, it stretches across flat clay pans, assails rocky outcrops and endures through sandy dunes. A sentinel of antiquity, parts of the Fence have been keeping vigil over the pastoral wilderness for almost a century. If it could speak to us it would relate legends of boom, bust, heat, dust and torrential rains. The Fence has protected grazing sheep in the remote areas of the State since early settlement, thereby enabling the sheep industry to prosper.

During this past decade, the Fence has been the subject of more debate than usual. Its purpose and value has come under scrutiny from the government and the private sector. The Honourable J D Hill, Minister for Environment and Conservation has visited the Fence and the Dog Fence Act, 1946 has been amended. Funding has been made more readily available to the Boards through the Sheep Transaction Levy, so that they have been able carry out maintenance and repairs to the Fence.

Newly developed technology, adopted by the Board's administration staff, has improved methods of recording and communicating information, and fence design. Mobile phones and satellite technology have made it easier to collect information and communicate it across vast distances of the State instantaneously. Global positioning devices have enabled the Fence coordinates to be recorded and mapped electronically. Developments in solar technology have enabled the introduction of electrified fences to become viable.

#### Review of the Act

Late in 1998 the review of the Dog Fence Act 1946 was initiated. A Green Paper was produced for the review. It was published in July 2001 and community consultation was effected through a series of regionally located public meetings held at Keith, Mannahill, Ceduna, Port Augusta and Adelaide.

The review of the Dog Fence Act required an evaluation of the economic benefits of the Fence. The findings supported the case for a Government role in the ongoing maintenance of the Fence. Parliamentary Counsel prepared the Dog Fence Amendment Bill in 2004.

The Dog Fence Amendment Bill 2005 was introduced to Parliament by the Honourable J D Hill, Minister for Environment and Conservation and amendments to the Dog Fence Act, 1946 were proclaimed on 4 November 2005

The amended Act included proposals for the continued maintenance of the existing Dog Fence as well as additional relevant dog protection fences within South Australia.

#### New Board Members

Andrew McTaggart retired from the position of chairman of the SA Dog Fence Board in November 2002. Don Nicholson was appointed to the position in March 2003 and he remained chairman until June 2011. Following on from Don, Jock MacLachlan was appointed in July 2011 and he is currently serving as chairman. Jock's grandfather was Byron MacLachlan, one of the founding members of the Dog Fence Board. Jock is one of the directors of Commonwealth Hill Station which has a boundary on the Dog Fence.

Several new members have been appointed to the Board since the year 2000. Mark Ramsey was appointed by the Governor as the Minister's nominee, in September 2001. He resigned in November 2006. Carolyn Ireland replaced Mark as the Minister's nominee in 2007. Carolyn is an arid zone ecologist who has also served as Chair of the Arid Land Natural Resource Management Board's, Pest Advisory Committee. Peter Litchfield served on the Board for the term between 2007 and 2011. Peter was chairman of the Marree Board and he currently lives on the Mundowdna property which has a



boundary on the Dog Fence. Peter Lawrie began serving on the Board in 2011. He is a wheat and sheep farmer from the West Coast who was previously chairman of the Pureba Board. Also since 2011 James Irwin and Kathryn Fargher have become Board members. James is a pastoralist from Balah Station, east of Burra and Kathryn is a pastoralist from Martins Well Station, a sheep and cattle property, south west of Lake Frome.

### **Maintenance of the Fence**

Collecting of rates by way of the Sheep Transaction Levy has proven to be an effective means of financing the Dog Fence. The South Australian Dog Fence Board allows for the levy funds to be made available to local Boards, to enable them to continue to upgrade and renew old sections of the Fence, as well as maintain the access track. Under Section 35A of the Dog Fence Act 1946, local boards can be formed inside the Dog Fence. The Local Dog Fence Boards currently operating in South Australia are as follows:

- ❖ **The Far West Coast group of local Boards** of Fowlers Bay, Penong and Pureba, own and maintain 454 km of the Dog Fence. They employ a contractor to patrol and keep the Fence in dog proof condition. In March 2006 both Lake Everard and Wilgena stations became part of the Pureba Local Dog Fence Board so that their station fences could also be maintained by the Board's patrolman, relieving the station owners of that responsibility.
- ❖ **The Central Local Dog Fence Board** is responsible for 608 km of fence from the boundary between Mabel Creek and Commonwealth Hill to the Mulgaria and Witchelina boundary. The Central Board employs two contractors to patrol and maintain their section.
- ❖ **The Marree Local Dog Fence Board** is responsible for 282 km of fence from the boundary between Mulgaria and Witchelina to the Mt Freeling and Moolawatana boundary. The Marree Board employs one contractor to patrol and maintain this section of fence.



*Fence at Mulyungarie buried under sand drift. (Photo No 109290)*



- ❖ **The Frome Local Dog Fence Board** is responsible for 330 km of fence that starts at the boundary between Moolawatana and Mt Freeling and finishes at the New South Wales border. The Frome Board employs one contractor to patrol and maintain this section of fence and one lessee patrols and maintains 52 km of fence along his boundary.

In addition to the local boards, 412 km is owned and managed by the lessees of the stations Mulgathing, Mobella/Commonwealth Hill and Erudina/Billeroo West.

With administrative and technical advice from South Australia's Manager, Michael Balharry and Supervisor, Bill Sandow giving support to their efforts, the local Boards have been effective in maintaining and improving the Fence. Aided by the new flush of funding made available to them through the Sheep Transaction Levy, they have replaced fence posts, repaired netting, upgraded existing electrical fences, built new electrical fences, cleared vegetation and repaired the access track.

Difficulties occurred over the last decade with a series of dry seasons when incidences of dust storms buried parts of the Fence in drifting sands which had to be cleared away using heavy machinery. Entire sections of fence on Mulyungarie were buried in sand drift. The Board supervisor, Bill Sandow reported driving through dust so thick that he could hardly breathe, nor could he see past the bonnet of his vehicle. There were more dogs about than usual because the extremely dry conditions caused them to migrate from the north, towards the Fence and tracks were seen regularly near the Fence.

Unprecedented rains in 2010 caused considerable flood damage to the Fence. Dog numbers increased considerably due to the good season. Evidence of their increased activity on the outside of the Fence, was observed during inspections between 2010 and 2011. Fortunately however, the dogs had ceased to migrate from the north, where the good season had provided abundant water and local prey, to keep them at bay.



*Flood damaged fence at Mulyungarie.  
(Photo No. 109231)*



The Board continued to adopt the Buffer Zone Baiting program that was developed with the aid of officers of the Animal and Plant Control Commission, in 1992. Their trapping and baiting strategies had proven to keep the area free of dogs between 2008 and 2009 when there was limited dog activity observed. Baits therefore, were laid out each year during the months of October and April. They were placed around waters, located within 35 kilometres from the outside of the Fence.

In the aftermath of drought and flood the Boards had to undertake large scale repairs to the Fence. Difficult circumstances of isolation exacerbated delays. Vast distances over inhospitable terrain, made it difficult to access the damage that rapid flowing, flood waters had caused to the Fence. Reports of washed out areas and broken down fences had to be investigated. In March 2012, it was reported that seven flood gates were washed out and about 1.5 km of fence was down at Mt. Lyndhurst. At the same time, it was also reported, that approximately 2 km of electric fence was down, in various locations on the Mundowdna boundary. Boggy conditions made it impossible to inspect affected areas with a vehicle, until the rains subsided and the ground dried out. Repairs required that materials and equipment needed to be carted over long distances to the Fence. The abnormally harsh conditions and isolated work sites on the Fence, made it difficult to entice the skilled fencing labour, essentially required to do the repairs. With the Board under such duress to fix the problems, reports of wild dogs attacking sheep inside the Fence made hot press in the newspapers.

In spite of these incumbrances large scale repairs were instigated in order to make the Fence dog proof once more. For example fence damage at Mt Lyndhurst and Mundowdna was repaired. At Wertaloon, 16 km of new electric fence was constructed. Existing electrical fences have been upgraded by installing new energisers and solar panels, replacing wooden spaces with polythene spaces and adding extra wires. The top wire of the Fence at Mabel Creek was electrified as this proved to be effective in deterring camels. At Murnpeowie they erected 10.5 km of composite electrical fence on a new line to avoid the very rough terrain at the Moolawatana and Mt Freeling corner. Improvements to existing fence were made through re-posting, using 15,000 new posts in replacement of old posts, along the Fence from Roxby Downs to Commonwealth Hill.

The vehicle access track essential for servicing and inspecting of the Fence became impassable due to flood damage in some areas. Water erosion caused gaping gullies to form along some parts and service vehicles left bog holes in soft, wet patches. Repairing the access track began on sections at Mundowdna and Mount Lyndhurst. Clay topping and repairs to the track took place at Mulyungarie and Mulgara. The sandy sections of the track needed protection against wind erosion. The sand dunes at Parakylia and Roxby Downs were clay topped to prevent them from blowing over the track during sand storms.

Plants needed to be cleared from the Fence as they cause other wind blown plants and sand particles to be caught in the Fence. This build up eventually covers the Fence, or weakens it, so that it falls over. A build up of vegetation was cleared along the Fence at Lake Everard, Wilgena, Mulgaria, Muloorina, Wilpoorina and Moolawatana.

## **Fence inspections**

The Fence was monitored regularly by the Supervisor, Local Boards and the South Australian Dog Fence Board. Supervisor, Bill Sandow made several trips a year, with the objective of producing an audit of fence condition along the whole length of the Fence. Each year during May, the Dog fence Board inspected half of the Fence. The western half of the Fence stretches from Fowlers Bay to Roxby Downs. The eastern half of the Fence, starts from Roxby Downs and finishes at Mulyungarie Station boundary at the New South Wales Border.



The inspection trip requires for the Board members to camp out for five or six days as they journey along the Fence. All food and supplies are carried with them as they spend the period in the outback wilderness far away from towns and civilised amenities. Nights are usually clear enough for sleeping comfortably in swags under a starry dome of open sky.

Fencing materials and equipment, for mending minor holes in the Fence, have to be carted along on the inspection trip. The holes are often caused by burrowing animals, like rabbits or wombats and the Board members mend them where they can. Otherwise they mark the damage with a coloured tape and the patrolman carries out the necessary repairs during his regular round.



*Michael Balharry, during a Fence inspection trip in May 2012, about to attach a piece of tape near a hole in the Fence at Curnamona, so that the patrolman knows to make the necessary repairs. (Photo No.109292)*

In May 2003 the Honourable J D Hill, Minister for Environment and Conservation, Nick Talbot, Media Liaison Officer and Roger Wickes, then as Executive Director, Natural Resources Management Services, Department of Water Land and Biodiversity Conservation, accompanied the Board for two days to inspect the western half of the Fence.

During the inspections the Board met with Local Dog Fence Board Members, fence owners, patrolmen, station managers and other interested parties, for the opportunity to discuss first hand with them, local issues such as reconstruction, upgrading, realignment and dog baiting.

### **Technological advances**

New satellite technology is being embraced by the Board to improve safety and efficiency. Mobile phones open up communications networks over the vast distances of the outback wilderness. Between 2000 and 2002 the Dog Fence was mapped using Global Positioning System (GPS) by the Manager, Michael Balharry and Supervisor, Bill Sandow. The coordinates were forwarded to Geoscience Australia for the production of a map.

The Dog Fence Board has been investigating new types of fencing. It has continued to trial different types of fence construction and material. The aim of the trials was to find the Fence that proved to be



the most suitable for the purpose of keeping out dogs, the most able to stand up to floods, the most durable and the cheapest and easiest to construct. The Fence also needed to have the least impact on native animals and their habitats. Trials for electrical fences were continued at Mulloorina Station.

The Board has been interested in broadening its perspective on national developments in administration, design, construction materials, funding and management of barrier fences, through conferring with interstate agencies. In May 2003, The South Australian Chairman, Don Nicholson, Board member, Philip Trowbridge, Manager, Michael Balharry, and Supervisor, Bill Sandow, attended the Barrier Fence Conference, held in Kalbarri Western Australia. The exercise included a trip to inspect the West Australian barrier fence.

On another occasion Manager, Michael Balharry, and Supervisor, Bill Sandow, along with two Board members attended the Fence Administration Conference convened by Darling Downs Morton Rabbit Board. They inspected 300 km of the Queensland Barrier Fence.

### Summary

In summing up, this last decade has seen a number of challenges. Enduring drought and flooding rains have caused excessive damage to the Fence. The Boards and administration staff have proven to be organised and competent to deal with adversity in restoring the Fence. With ongoing support and cooperation, from the community and government, the restoration and maintenance of the Dog Fence should continue to guarantee the security of the sheep industry in South Australia.

The decade finishes with a good season of rain. The land is flourishing with abundant species of plants that have revived after a long period of drought. Conditions are favourable for sheep graziers to expect good returns. Hopefully those affected, can look forward to finding enough resources to keep the Fence “*Holding the Line*”.



*Board members Jock MacLachlan, Carolyn Ireland, Kathryn Fargher, James Irwin and administration staff, Michael Balharry and Bill Sandow, meeting with John McEntee at Erudina during the Fence inspection trip in May 2012. (Photo No 109291)*

# Appendices



## Members of the Dog Fence Board

	Chairpersons		Members	
1947	C M Hambidge (ap. 14/03/47)	W H Mengersen (ap. 14/03/47) (d. 06/09/47)	B H MacLachlan (ap. 14/03/47)	J J Brennan (ap. 14/03/47)
		I R McTaggart (ap. 02/12/47)		
1948	C M Hambidge	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
1949	C M Hambidge	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
1950	C M Hambidge	I R McTaggart (d. 04/09/50)	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
		J N McGilp (ap. 07/09/50)		
1951	J N McGilp	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
1952	J N McGilp	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
1953	J N McGilp	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
1954	J N McGilp	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
1955	J N McGilp	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan (res. 23/05/55)	J J Brennan
			C E Taylour (ap. 23/05/55)	
			B H MacLachlan (ap. 17/06/55)	
1956	J N McGilp (res. 31/12/56)	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan
	J L Johnson (ap. 27/11/56)			
1957	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	J J Brennan (res. 25/07/57)
				R J Rankin (ap. 23/09/57)
1958	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1959	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1960	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1961	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1962	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1963	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1964	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1965	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1966	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin
1967	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin





	<b>Chairpersons</b>		<b>Members</b>		
1968	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin	
1969	J L Johnson	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin	
1970	J L Johnson (res. 21/08/70)	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin	
	W S Reid (ap. 03/08/70)				
1971	W S Reid	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin	
1972	W S Reid	I R McTaggart	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin	
1973	W S Reid (res. 01/07/73) (ap. 01/07/73)	I R McTaggart (res. 01/07/73)	B H MacLachlan	R J Rankin (res. 01/07/73)	
		F J Vickery (ap. 01/07/73)	L P Lord	W J Findlay (ap. 16/07/73)	
1974	F J Vickery	L P Lord	B H MacLachlan	W J Findlay	
1975	F J Vickery	L P Lord	B H MacLachlan	W J Findlay	
1976	F J Vickery	L P Lord	B H MacLachlan	W J Findlay	
1977	F J Vickery (res. 23/08/77)	L P Lord	B H MacLachlan	W J Findlay	
	R A Everett (ap. 19/09/77)				
1978	R A Everett	L P Lord	B H MacLachlan	W J Findlay	
1979	R A Everett	L P Lord	B H MacLachlan (res. 31/07/79)	W J Findlay	
			H G MacLachlan (ap. 06/09/79)		
1980	R A Everett	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	W J Findlay	
1981	R A Everett	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	W J Findlay (res. 30/06/81)	
				H J Spiers (ap. 02/07/81)	
1982	R A Everett	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	
1983	R A Everett	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	
1984	R A Everett	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	
1985	R A Everett	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	

*Five-member Board after 1986 amending legislation (from 03/07/86)*

	<b>Chairpersons</b>		<b>Members</b>		
1986	W J Edwards*	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	A D McTaggart
1987	W J Edwards	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	A D McTaggart
1988	W J Edwards	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	A D McTaggart
1989	W J Edwards	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers	A D McTaggart



	<b>Chairpersons</b>			<b>Members</b>	
1990	C D Cane <sup>♦</sup> (ap. 9/6/90)	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	H J Spiers (res. 09/07/90)	A D McTaggart
				D A Nicolson (ap. 09/07/90)	
1991	C D Cane	L P Lord	H G MacLachlan	D A Nicolson	A D McTaggart
1992	<i>C D Cane</i> (res. 08/92)	<i>L P Lord</i>	<i>H G MacLachlan</i> (res. 05/03/92)	<i>D A Nicolson</i>	<i>A D McTaggart</i>
	L B Kidd* (ap. 27/08/92)		J R Morgan (ap. 10/08/92)		
1993	L B Kidd	L P Lord	J R Morgan	D A Nicolson	A D McTaggart
1994	L B Kidd	L P Lord	J R Morgan	D A Nicolson	A D McTaggart
1995	L B Kidd (res. 18/08/95)	L P Lord	J R Morgan	D A Nicolson	A D McTaggart
1996	A D McTaggart <sup>†</sup> (ap. Chair 17/10/96)	L P Lord <sup>‡</sup> (res. 11/07/96)	J R Morgan	D A Nicolson	P A Trowbridge (ap. 17/10/96)
		P G Allen** (ap. 17/10/96)			
1997	A D McTaggart	P G Allen	J R Morgan	D A Nicolson	P A Trowbridge
1998	A D McTaggart	P G Allen	J R Morgan	D A Nicolson	P A Trowbridge
1999	A D McTaggart	P G Allen	J R Morgan	D A Nicolson	P A Trowbridge
2000	A D McTaggart	D A Nicolson	P A Trowbridge	P G Allen	J R Morgan
2001	A D McTaggart	D A Nicolson	P A Trowbridge	P G Allen	J R Morgan
2002	A D McTaggart	D A Nicolson	P A Trowbridge	M D Ramsey	J R Morgan
2003	D A Nicolson	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge	M D Ramsey	J R Morgan
2004	D A Nicolson	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge	M D Ramsey	J R Morgan
2005	D A Nicolson	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge	M D Ramsey	J R Morgan
2006	D A Nicolson	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge	M D Ramsey	J R Morgan
2007	D A Nicolson	C Ireland	L P Litchfield	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge
2008	D A Nicolson	C Ireland	L P Litchfield	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge
2009	D A Nicolson	C Ireland	L P Litchfield	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge
2010	D A Nicolson	C Ireland	L P Litchfield	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge
2011	D A Nicolson	C Ireland	L P Litchfield	J H MacLachlan	P A Trowbridge
2012	J H MacLachlan	C Ireland	K Fargher	P Lawrie	J Irwin

♦ Director of Lands nominee

\* Director—Chief Executive of Lands nominee

† Appointed by Minister as Chairperson

‡ Acted as Chair following L B Kidd resignation

\*\*Appointed by Minister

ap. appointed

d. died

res. resigned



**Membership of Local Dog Fence Boards appointed in September 1975 following enabling amendments to the Dog Fence Act**

**White Well**

D L Busbridge  
K J Craddock  
B W Nicholas  
R G Schultz

**Murat Bay**

W C Bubner  
A J Lowe  
M J Martin  
E H Warneke

**Lake Torrens**

M I McTaggart  
W J Morish  
H Pick  
R G Schultz

**Fowlers Bay**

H R Allchurch  
B H Johns  
D T Mahar  
E H Warneke

**Petina**

T W Blumson  
P P May  
G A Pascoe  
E H Warneke

**Lake Torrens East**

B M Allison  
W J Findlay  
R J McAuley  
R G Schultz

**Penong**

R G Law  
S A Shipard  
P A Trowbridge  
E H Warneke

**Wurrulla**

P G McInnis  
J N Pearson  
E H Warneke  
D J Woods

**Mount Northwest**

B M Allison  
L H Litchfield  
M O Hughes  
R G Schultz

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## Membership of the Far West Local Dog Fence Boards and Association

### Members of the Far West Local Dog Fence Boards

*The Far West Local Dog Fence Boards were appointed following the 1984 decision to disband the Wirrulla, Petina and Murat Bay Boards and the 1985–86 definition and realignment of the new Pureba Fence.*

	<b>Fowlers Bay</b>	<b>Penong</b>	<b>Pureba</b>
1987	B H Johns W H Dunn M D Wheadon B Johns (Secretary)	P A Trowbridge S A Shipard L M Murray L Bailey (Secretary)	B J Hughes L C Bubner V M Slatter K F Ross N Bubner (Secretary)
1988	B H Johns W H Dunn M D Wheadon B Johns (Secretary)	P A Trowbridge S A Shipard L M Murray L Bailey (Secretary)	B J Hughes L C Bubner V M Slatter K F Ross N Bubner (Secretary)
1989	B H Johns W J Dun M D Wheadon B A Lock B Johns (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock L Bailey (Secretary)	B J Hughes L C Bubner V M Slatter K F Ross B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1990	B H Johns (res. 09/03/90) G R Johns (ap. 13/08/90) W J Dunn M D Wheadon B A Lock K Dunn (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock L Bailey (Secretary)	B J Hughes L C Bubner V M Slatter K F Ross B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1991	G R Johns W J Dunn M D Wheadon B A Lock K Dunn (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock L Bailey (Secretary)	B J Hughes L C Bubner V M Slatter K F Ross B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1992	G R Johns W J Dunn M D Wheadon B A Lock K Dunn (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock L Bailey (Secretary)	B J Hughes (res. 27/07/92) L C Bubner V M Slatter K F Ross (res. 27/07/92) B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1993	G R Johns W J Dunn res. 23/07/93) M D Wheadon (res. 23/07/93) W G Dodd (ap. 11/11/93)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock	J R Nicholls (ap. 08/02/93) L C Bubner V M Slatter J P Lawrie (ap. 08/02/93)



	R D Miller (ap. 11/11/93) B A Lock K Dunn (Secretary)	L Bailey (Secretary)	B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1994	G R Johns W G Dodd R D Miller B A Lock K Dunn (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock L Bailey (Secretary)	J R Nicholls L C Bubner V M Slattery (res. 12/08/94) J P Lawrie M J Tremaine (ap. 24/10/94) B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1995	G R Johns W G Dodd (res. 22/07/95) P G Scott (ap. 05/10/95) R D Miller B A Lock K Dunn (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock L Bailey (Secretary)	J R Nicholls (res. 26/07/95) B C Bergman (ap. 05/10/95) L C Bubner J P Lawrie M J Tremaine B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1996	G R Johns P G Scott R D Miller B A Lock K Dunn (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray B A Lock L Bailey (Secretary)	B C Bergman L C Bubner J P Lawrie M J Tremaine B A Lock N Bubner (Secretary)
1997	G R Johns (res. 31/07/97) A G Mahar (ap. 20/11/97) A J Klook (ap. 20/11/97) P G Scott R D Miller M J Balharry T K Gurney (Secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha (ap. 20/11/97) M J Balharry L Bailey (Secretary)	L C Bubner J P Lawrie M J Tremaine M J Balharry N Bubner (Secretary)
1998	R D Miller (Chair) P G Scott A J Klook A G Mahar M J Balharry T K Gurney (Secretary)	S A Shipard (Chair) P A Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha M J Balharry L Bayley (Secretary)	J P Lawrie (Chair) L C Bubner M J Tremaine B C Bergman M J Balharry N Bubner (Secretary)
1999	R D Miller P G Stott A J Klook A G Mahar M J Balharry T K Gurney (secretary)	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha M J Balharry L Bailey (secretary)	J P Lawrie L C Bubner M J Tremaine B C Bergmann M J Balharry N Bubner (secretary)
2000	R D Miller P G Stott A J Klook	S A Shipard P A Trowbridge L M Murray	J P Lawrie L C Bubner M J Tremaine



	A G Mahar	K W Trewartha	B C Bergmann
	M J Balharry	M J Balharry	M J Balharry
	T K Gurney (secretary)	L Bailey (secretary)	N Bubner (secretary)
2001	R D Miller	S A Shipard	J P Lawrie
	P G Stott	C P Trowbridge	L C Bubner
	A J Klook	L M Murray	M J Tremaine
	A G Mahar	K W Trewartha	B C Bergmann
	M J Balharry	M J Balharry	M J Balharry
	T K Gurney (secretary)	L Bailey (secretary)	N Buber (secretary)
2002	R D Miller	S A Shipard	J P Lawrie
	P G Stott	C P Trowbridge	L C Bubner
	A J Klook	L M Murray	M J Tremaine
	A G Mahar	K W Trewartha	B C Bergmann
	M J Balharry	M J Balharry	M J Balharry
	T K Gurney (secretary)	L Bailey (secretary)	N Buber (secretary)
2003	R D Miller	S A Shipard	J P Lawrie
	P G Stott	C P Trowbridge	L C Bubner
	A J Klook	L M Murray	M J Tremaine
	A G Mahar	K W Trewartha	B C Bergmann
	M J Balharry	M J Balharry	M J Balharry
	T K Gurney (secretary)	L Bailey (secretary)	N Buber (secretary)
2004	R D Miller	S A Shipard	J P Lawrie
	P G Stott	C P Trowbridge	L C Bubner
	A J Klook	L M Murray	M J Tremaine
	A G Mahar	K W Trewartha	B C Bergmann
	M J Balharry	M J Balharry	M J Balharry
	T K Gurney (secretary)	L Bailey (secretary)	N Buber (secretary)
2005	R D Miller	C P Trowbridge	J P Lawrie
	P G Stott	L M Murray	L C Bubner
	A J Klook	K W Trewartha	M J Tremaine
	A G Mahar	B Dunn	B C Bergmann
	M J Balharry	M J Balharry	M J Balharry
	T K Gurney (secretary)	L Bailey (secretary)	N Buber (secretary)
2006	R D Miller	C P Trowbridge	J P Lawrie
	P G Stott	L M Murray	L C Bubner
	A J Klook	K W Trewartha	M J Tremaine
	A G Mahar	B Dunn	B C Bergmann
	M J Balharry	M J Balharry	M J Balharry
	T K Gurney (secretary)	L Bailey (secretary)	N Buber (secretary)
2007	R D Miller	C P Trowbridge	J P Lawrie
	P G Stott	L M Murray	L C Bubner
	D A Stott	K W Trewartha	M J Tremaine
	A K Klook	B Dunn	B C Bergmann
	A G Mahar	M Chandler	A W Nicholls



	B P Smith M J Balharry T K Gurney (secretary)	M J Balharry L Bailey (secretary)	M J Balharry N Buber (secretary)
2008	R D Miller P G Stott D A Stott A J Klook B P Smith M J Balharry T K Gurney (secretary)	C P Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha B Dunn M Chandler M J Balharry L Bailey (secretary)	J P Lawrie L C Bubner M J Tremaine B C Bergmann A W Nicholls M J Balharry N Buber (secretary)
2009	R D Miller P G Stott D A Stott A J Klook B P Smith M J Balharry T K Gurney (secretary)	C P Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha B Dunn M Chandler M J Balharry L Bailey (secretary)	J P Lawrie L C Bubner M J Tremaine B C Bergmann A W Nicholls M J Balharry N Buber (secretary)
2010	R D Miller P G Stott D A Stott A J Klook B P Smith M J Balharry T K Gurney (secretary)	C P Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha B Dunn M Chandler M J Balharry L Bailey (secretary)	B C Bergmann L C Bubner M J Tremaine J P Lawrie A W Nicholls M J Balharry N Buber (secretary)
2011	R D Miller P G Stott D A Stott A J Klook B P Smith M J Balharry T K Gurney (secretary)	C P Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha B Dunn M Chandler M J Balharry L Bailey (secretary)	B C Bergmann L C Bubner M J Tremaine J P Lawrie A W Nicholls M J Balharry N Buber (secretary)
2012	R D Miller D A Stott A J Klook B P Smith M J Balharry T K Gurney (secretary)	C P Trowbridge L M Murray K W Trewartha B Dunn M Chandler M J Balharry L Bailey (secretary)	B C Bergmann L C Bubner M J Tremaine J P Lawrie A W Nicholls M J Balharry N Buber (secretary)

*ap. appointed*  
*res. resigned*



## Members of the Far West Local Dog Boards' Association

	<b>Chairs 1987–2012</b>	<b>Secretaries</b>	<b>Patrolman</b>
1987	P A Trowbridge	P J Shuttleworth	J H Norwood
1988	P A Trowbridge	A Bates	J H Norwood
1989	S A Shipard	B Johns	J H Norwood
1990	S A Shipard	K J Dunn	J H Norwood
1991	S A Shipard	K J Dunn	J H Norwood
1992	S A Shipard	K J Dunn	J H Norwood
1993	S A Shipard	K J Dunn	J H Norwood
1994	S A Shipard	K J Dunn	J H Norwood
1995	S A Shipard	K J Dunn	J H Norwood
1996	S A Shipard	K J Dunn	J H Norwood
1997	S A Shipard	P J Shuttleworth	J H Norwood
1998	S A Shipard	P J Shuttleworth	J H Norwood
1999	S A Shipard	P J Shuttleworth	J H Norwood
2000	S A Shipard	P J Shuttleworth	J H Norwood
2001	S A Shipard	T Gurney	A Yendal
2002	S A Shipard	T Gurney	A Yendal
2003	S A Shipard	T Gurney	A Yendal
2004	S A Shipard	T Gurney	A Yendal
2005	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal
2006	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal
2007	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal
2008	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal
2009	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal
2010	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal
2011	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal
2012	R D Miller	T Gurney	A Yendal

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## Membership of Local Dog Fence Boards appointed in May 1996

	<b>Central</b>	<b>Marree</b>	<b>Frome</b>
1996	Sharon Rankin (Chair) A J McTaggart R J Savage S Rankine M J Balharry (Secretary)	L P Litchfield (Chair) J N Fraser A J Reynolds A R Hilder M J Balharry (Secretary)	J R Morgan (Chair) L E Badger J L Clarke M K Francis M J Balharry (Secretary)
1997	R G Mould (Chair) A J McTaggart R J Savage S Rankine (res. 27/07/97) C B Greenfield (ap. 27/07/97) M J Balharry (Secretary)	L P Litchfield (Chair) J N Fraser A J Reynolds A R Hilder M J Balharry (Secretary)	J R Morgan (Chair) L E Badger J L Clarke (res. 13/10/97) M K Francis M J Balharry (Secretary)
1998	R G Mould (Chair) A J McTaggart R J Savage C B Greenfield M J Balharry (Secretary)	L P Litchfield (Chair) J N Fraser A J Reynolds A R Hilder M J Balharry (Secretary)	J R Morgan (Chair) L E Badger M K Francis M J Balharry (Secretary)
1999	R G Mould (Chair) A J McTaggart R J Savage C B Greenfield M J Balharry (Secretary)	L P Litchfield (Chair) J N Fraser A J Reynolds A R Hilder M J Balharry (Secretary)	J R Morgan (Chair) L E Badger M K Francis J A Irwin (ap. 7/10/99) M J Balharry (Secretary)
2000	R G Mould A J McTaggart R J Savage C B Greenfield M J Balharry (secretary)	L P Litchfield J N Fraser (Chair) A R Hilder A J Reynolds M J Balharry (secretary)	J R Morgan L E Badger M K Francis J A Irwin M J Balharry (secretary)
2001	R G Mould A J McTaggart R J Savage C B Greenfield M J Balharry (secretary)	J N Fraser (Chair) L P Litchfield F E McCourt A J Reynolds M J Balharry (secretary)	J R Morgan L E Badger M K Francis J A Irwin M J Balharry (secretary)
2002	R G Mould A J McTaggart R J Savage C B Greenfield M J Balharry (secretary)	J N Fraser (Chair) L P Litchfield F E McCourt A J Reynolds M J Balharry (secretary)	J R Morgan L E Badger M K Francis J A Irwin M J Balharry (secretary)



2003	R G Mould	J N Fraser (Chair)	J R Morgan
	J Gibson	L P Litchfield	L E Badger
	R J Savage	J Mengerson	M K Francis
	C B Greenfield	L Nutt	J A Irwin
2004	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)
	R G Mould	J N Fraser (Chair)	J R Morgan
	J Gibson	L P Litchfield	L E Badger
	R Nitschke	J Mengerson	M K Francis
2005	C B Greenfield	L Nutt	J A Irwin
	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)
	R G Mould	J N Fraser (Chair)	J R Morgan
	R Nitschke	L P Litchfield	L E Badger
2006	C B Greenfield	J Mengerson	M K Francis
	R Rankin	L Nutt	J A Irwin
	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)
	R G Mould	J N Fraser (Chair)	J R Morgan
2007	R Nitschke	L P Litchfield	L E Badger
	C B Greenfield	J Mengerson	M K Francis
	R Rankin	L Nutt	J A Irwin
	S Rankin	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)
2008	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)
	R G Mould	J N Fraser (Chair)	J R Morgan
	R Nitschke	L P Litchfield	L E Badger
	C B Greenfield	J Mengerson	M K Francis
2009	R Rankin	L Nutt	J A Irwin
	S Rankin	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)
	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)
	R G Mould	L P Litchfield (Chair)	J R Morgan
	R Nitschke	G Mengerson	M K Francis
	C B Greenfield	L Nutt	J A Irwin
	R Rankin	M J Balharry (secretary)	R Treloar
	S Rankin		S Damian
	M J Balharry (secretary)	M J Balharry (secretary)	



2010	R G Mould R Nitschke C B Greenfield R Rankin S Rankin M J Balharry (secretary)	L P Litchfield (Chair) G Mengerson L Nutt M J Balharry (secretary)	J R Morgan M K Francis J A Irwin R Treloar S Damian M J Balharry (secretary)
2011	R G Mould R Nitschke C B Greenfield R Rankin S Rankin M J Balharry (secretary)	L. P. Litchfield (Chair) G. Ragless G. Mengerson L. Nutt M J Balharry (secretary)	J R Morgan M K Francis J A Irwin R Treloar H. Bartholomaeus M J Balharry (secretary)
2012	R G Mould R Nitschke C B Greenfield R Rankin S Rankin M J Balharry (secretary)	L. P. Litchfield (Chair) G. Ragless G. Mengerson L. Nutt M J Balharry (secretary) B. Baade S. Hallett I. Fergusson	J R Morgan M K Francis J A Irwin R Treloar H. Bartholomaeus M J Balharry (secretary)
Patrolmen			
1999	J Boland G B Fraser	D E Coverdale	B A Lock
2000	J Boland K Beelitz	D E Coverdale	B A Lock
2001	J Boland K Beelitz		B A Lock R Singleton
2002	J Boland K Beelitz	D E Coverdale	R Singleton R Sutton C Workman
2003	J Boland K Beelitz	D E Coverdale	R Singleton N Vogelsang
2004	J Boland K Beelitz	D E Coverdale	R Singleton N Vogelsang
2005	J Boland K Beelitz	D E Coverdale	R Singleton N Vogelsang
2006	J Boland K Beelitz	D E Coverdale	R Singleton N Vogelsang
2007	J Boland K Beelitz	D E Coverdale D Reschke	R Singleton N Vogelsang
2008	J Boland K Beelitz	D Reschke	N Vogelsang
2009	J Boland K Beelitz	D Reschke	N Vogelsang



2010	J Boland K Beelitz	D Reschke	N Vogelsang
2011	J Boland K Beelitz	D Reschke R. Ireland	B Reschke
2012	J Boland K Beelitz	R. Ireland	B Reschke
Fence length	615 km	289 km	444 km

Between the 345 km of Dog Fence owned and operated by the Far West Coast Local Dog Fence Boards and the length patrolled and overseen by the Central Local Dog Fence Board, three Stations (Lake Everard, Wilgena and Commonwealth Hill) patrol and maintain their own Fences over a total distance of 482 km.

*ap. appointed  
res. resigned*

## Secretaries, Administrators and Inspectors–Supervisors of Fences

### Secretaries, Administrators and Inspectors–Supervisors of Fences

R W Osborne	10/03/47 – 31/05/65
A H Walters	01/06/65 – 20/11/70
R G Schultz	12/01/71 – 17/12/79
R J Durdin	18/12/79 – 27/10/83

*(From 27/10/83 the Secretarial role was provided through the Dog Fence Administration section; initially in the Department of Lands, then the Department of Natural Resources and now in Primary Industries and Regions SA).*

### Dog Fence Administration Managers

B A Lock	08/04/86 – 23/02/96
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### Executive Officer of the Dog Fence Board

M J Balharry	12/02/1996 – current
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### Inspectors of Fences–Supervisors of Fences

L G Burton	23/08/46 – 1964	Inspector of Fences
F J Franklin	1964 – 15/05/71	Inspector of Fences
D G Byrnes	23/10/71 – 04/09/78	Inspector of Fences
M B P Starkey	25/10/78 – 31/03/86(?)	Inspector of Fences
S P O'Connell	30/06/86 – 15/01/88	Inspector of Fences
J V Cook	22/04/88 – 22/11/97	Supervisor of Fences
W H Sandow	06/04/98 – current	Supervisor of Fences

### Dog Fence Administration Officer

M Durant (Administrative Officer)	14/04/1993 – 16/10/2001
L Gager (Administrative Officer)	18/10/2001 – 25/05/2007
I. Juric (Administrative Officer)	28/02/2008 – 05/04/2012



## Further reading

- Corbett, L., 1995. *The Dingo in Australia and Asia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Percival, D. and Westley, C., 1989. *Fence People. Yarns from the Dingo Fence*. Hutchinson Australia.
- Donovan, P., 1995. *In the Interest of the Country — A History of the Pastoral Board of South Australia, 1893 to 1993*. Pastoral Management Branches, South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Adelaide.
- Beltana Pastoral Company Ltd, 1965. *A History of the Beltana Pastoral Company Limited*. Beltana Pastoral Company Ltd, Adelaide.
- Litchfield, L., 1983. *Marree and the Tracks beyond in Black and White*. Gillingham Printers, Adelaide.
- Donovan, P. and Donovan, J., 1996. *The Strzelecki Track. Lifeline to the Corner Country*. Transport SA, Adelaide.

