



# 2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October  
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

**Nominee: Clover Hills Cluster Group, QLD**

**Category: Australian Government Innovation in Agriculture Land Management Award**

In 2015 a group of graziers from five Central Western Queensland properties joined forces to build a fence that would keep feral animals out and native ones in. The Clover Hill Cluster Group started off with three participating properties, before consultation about redirecting fence lines and updating vegetation convinced another two to join. The mission was to maintain grazing practices while protecting grass and tree species, as well as the area's biodiversity generally.

Over a four-year period from 2012 to 2016 the number of sheep in the Desert Channels Region almost halved, as a result of wild dogs and kangaroos decimating the industry. With assistance from the Remote Area Planning and Development Board, the Clover Hill Cluster Group has now erected a 1.6-metre-high netting fence, covering an area of 33,545 hectares. Sheep production has re-commenced, and lambing percentages have risen to 90 percent from as low as five percent before the fence was erected.

The Group estimates that more than 16,500 kangaroos would still roam the Clover Hills Cluster's total land area without the fence; one kangaroo for every two hectares. Studies indicate that three kangaroos eat as many as two adult sheep, which means that the fence has preserved around 11,000 sheep, or \$495,000 in extra wool production. Improved pasture conditions has also given ground-nesting birds a better chance of survival, and encouraged small mammals and lizards to return.

All members of the Clover Hills Cluster Group acknowledge the laws and regulations of the Landholders Approval Agreement and their obligations around vegetation management, workplace health and safety and animal protection. The Group works together to maintain and monitor the fence, especially following storms or rain, when animals have been known to crawl through gullies.

Catching wild dogs and controlling other feral animals including foxes, cats and wild pigs has been managed through regular baiting, trapping and sustainable culling. Feral Scan, a smart phone app used in collaboration with landholder, industry, government and business groups to record sightings of feral animals, has allowed the Group to communicate about potential hot spots.

The fence has been built and maintained despite the cost of doing so; all parties involved experienced one of the worst droughts in history, so cash flow was non-existent prior to the Group's formation. But the results are plain, with an increase in sheep, wool and beef production and healthier paddocks leading to native grass growth, an uptick in biodiversity and five farms that are more sustainable moving forwards.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit [www.landcareaustralia.org.au](http://www.landcareaustralia.org.au)

## Ends

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## Web Summary

In 2015 a group of graziers from five Central Western Queensland properties joined forces to build a fence that would keep feral animals out and native ones in. The Clover Hill Cluster Group has now erected a 1.6m high netting fence, covering an area of 33,545 hectares. Sheep production has re-commenced, and lambing percentages have risen to 90 percent from as low as five percent before the fence was erected. The Group estimates that more than 16,500 kangaroos would still roam the Cluster's total land area without the fence, and that the fence has preserved around 11,000 sheep, or \$495,000 in extra wool production. Improved pasture conditions has also given ground-nesting birds a better chance of survival, and encouraged small mammals and lizards to return.

## Pull-out quote:

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