**DOG FENCE (PAYMENTS AND RATES) AMENDMENT BILL 2016**

**Legislative Assembly, 24 February 2016, pages 4426-7**

Second Reading

**The Hon. S.E. CLOSE (Port Adelaide—Minister for Education and Child Development, Minister for Higher Education and Skills) (15:36):**I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This amendment bill is about ensuring that there are sufficient resources available to maintain the dog fence into the future. The dog fence protects the sheep industry from stock losses by preventing the entry of wild dogs into southern pastoral areas. The South Australian Dog Fence is 2,171 kilometres long, from near Fowlers Bay to the New South Wales border. The Dog Fence Act 1946 focuses exclusively on the management of dog-proof fences and destruction of wild dogs in the vicinity. The broader issue of wild dog management in South Australia is addressed through the Natural Resources Management Act 2004.

The Dog Fence Board administers the act and is responsible for ensuring that the dog fence is maintained in a dog-proof condition. The board does not own the dog fence. Ownership remains with the landholder, or may be vested in local dog fence boards. The owners are responsible for the inspection and maintenance of the fence, with funding provided by the board. Two private owners manage sections of the dog fence on their properties. However, most of the dog fence has been vested in six local dog fence boards that employ contractors to inspect and maintain their sections of fence.

The board is responsible for collecting rates from ratepayers and making payments to owners to cover the cost of inspecting and maintaining the dog fence. The Dog Fence Fund receives rates collected from ratepayers, and a government contribution to defray the cost of maintaining and upgrading dog fences. Rates are collected from owners of the rateable land, which are holdings of more than 10 square kilometres inside the fence. The current act caps the maximum amount that ratepayers can be levied at $1.20 per square kilometre. This cap was last reviewed in 2005.

Each year, the board reviews its financial requirements and agrees on a rate that will be levied. For several years, the board has been levying rateable land at the maximum amount allowed by the act as the cap prevented it from increasing rates with inflation. Failure to increase the financial caps will result in a funding shortfall. With the existing cap, the board collects approximately $508,000 from ratepayers, which is then matched by the government. This bill lifts the cap on the maximum amount that can be levied on rateable land to $2 per square kilometre. This will allow the board to increase rates in line with inflation for some time into the future, or until the act is next reviewed.

The act also sets a cap on the maximum amount that the board can pay to fence owners to maintain the fence. This cap is currently set at $250 per kilometre of fence. This bill also raises the cap on the amount payable to fence owners for maintaining the fence to $400 per kilometre. This will allow the board to adjust the payments to fence owners to reflect inflationary changes to the cost of labour and materials.

No issues were raised on these proposed amendments during consultation with key stakeholders in December 2014. The board is committed to ensuring that rates increases are responsibly managed to meet the cost of maintaining the fence, and in line with inflation. The bill also includes a minor technical amendment to remove a reference to the 'South Australian Farmers Federation Inc.', and replace it with 'Livestock SA Incorporated'. The South Australian Farmers Federation no longer exists, and Livestock SA is now the most appropriate representative body for ratepayers into the Dog Fence Fund. This bill will ensure that the dog fence is adequately resourced, and continues to be maintained in a dog-proof condition into the future. I commend the bill to the house, and seek leave to have the explanation of clauses inserted without my reading them.

[Leave granted.]