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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **\$5m Funding Injected into Balonne Shire**

The Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing (WDEF) Project kicks off this month with a \$5million injection of funding into the Balonne Shire. The WDEF Project Round 1 is providing funding to 35 landholders on a 50:50 basis to help properties undertake fencing activities that will protect livestock and increase sheep and goat numbers.

The Mayor, Councillor Richard Marsh said this project is funded by the Australian Government under the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program and specifically applies to the St George and Dirranbandi communities impacted by water recovery under the Basin Plan.

Council received 70 applications from landholders who were required to offer a 50:50 co-contribution. Councillor Marsh said, Council was overwhelmed with applications with Council receiving over \$12m in proposed projects from landholders. We extended the application period a couple of times to ensure all landholders knew of the opportunity, and we had great support from the Queensland Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP). DSDMIP assisted applicants to complete and upload their applications. Unfortunately, Council could not fund all of the applications as limited to \$5m in available funds.”

At its meeting on 21 November 2019 Council delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer to determine the applications. The Chief Executive Officer, Mr Matthew Magin said, 35 applications have been approved, as recommended by the evaluation panel. The evaluation panel consisted of two council officers and two independent government representatives. All applications were assessed on key selection criteria including economic/stock benefit, strategic fencing links across key gaps, co-contribution and an effective Biosecurity Plan.

Mr Magin said that works will commence once landholder agreements have been signed and all compliances and permits were obtained. He said, “This funding will bring about great economic benefit to our Shire during the fence construction phase and over the long-term with significant increases in sheep and goat numbers forecasted.”

For those that have missed out on this round Council is continually looking for grant funding opportunities. In early 2020 Council will look to release further funding under its special rates scheme for wild dog exclusion fencing. Anyone interested in the rates scheme can contact Council for an application form so they can start preparing. For more information and news about grant programs and the special rates scheme check out our website [www.balonne.qld.gov.au](http://www.balonne.qld.gov.au).

For more information:

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