

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 2259
Asked on 23 November 2010**

MR CRANDON asked the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland (MR MULHERIN)–

QUESTION:

Will the Minister detail how many officers were specifically employed in the detection and eradication of fire ants throughout Queensland as at the start of November for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 (in table format)?

ANSWER:

Details of staff involved in the detection and eradication of fire ants are:

Year	No. of staff ¹ (full time equivalent)
2007	139.05
2008	123.3
2009	109.05
2010	181.86

¹ No. of staff as at 1 November, except for 2010 which is as at 15 November.

Biosecurity Queensland's fire ant detection and eradication staff play an important role in the battle against the fire ants.

We are also developing new scientific tools that will accelerate eradication such as remote sensing technology, micro genetic analysis and spread modeling.

The public and industry also play a very important role in the eradication program through reporting fire ant infestation and adhering to movement controls.

The early reporting of infestations has resulted in fire ant colonies being quickly destroyed, preventing further spread.

We need everyone to continue be vigilant in the battle against fire ants and report suspect ants as soon as possible.

Patricia Griffin

From: Biosecurity Qld CC Community Engagement Mailbox <FACCCE@daf.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 3 June 2015 9:05 AM
To: Coomera Electorate Office
Subject: Fire ant detections on the Gold Coast

Good morning,

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program appreciates your interest in and support of the successful eradication of fire ants. Effective eradication of this highly invasive pest is reliant on political and public support.

For instance, funding requires agreement from all states and territories as well as the commonwealth on an annual basis. The ongoing identification of fire ants requires the public to be educated and engaged in a joint effort to eradicate fire ants. Public reporting of suspect ants contributes significantly to the success of the Program accounting for 70 per cent of all new detections.

In response to your recent request, fire ants have been detected at Ormeau, Stapylton and Yatala within the last 12 months.

The infestations in Ormeau and Stapylton were detected as a result of public reports.

The specific locations of these detections are:

- Brookside Circuit, Ormeau in December 2014.
- Myrtle Avenue, Ormeau in March 2015.
- Jacobs Well Road & Quinns Road, Stapylton in January 2015.
- Alloy St Yatala August 2014, (this detection was a result of aerial surveillance activities).

**Please note, specific location information is not provided to the public or media due to privacy reasons. The above information is provided for your information only.*

All colonies have been destroyed and the immediate area has been bait treated. Recent targeted surveillance activities have been undertaken on risk sites within Pimpama, Ormeau and Ormeau Hills.

Gilberton, Woongoolba, Steiglitz, Norwell, Jacobs Well, Ormeau, Ormeau Hills, Kingsholme, Pimpama, Willow Vale and Coomera are scheduled to be flown aerially surveyed before the 30th June.

Recent public engagement in the area includes:

- Use of a mobile display office at Upper Coomera Masters and Woolworths.
- A community briefing for the Pimpama Men's Shed and the Ormeau and Districts Garden Club.
- A static display at the Upper Coomera library.
- Over 6,500 brochures have been distributed through local businesses in the northern Gold Coast area with large numbers distributed through Woolworths stores at Helensvale, Upper Coomera and Ormeau.

The Program's school education show entitled 'Aka the Fire Ant Tracker' has been to Toogoolawah and Woongoolba State Schools. Fire ant educational materials have been disseminated through 19 schools in the localities of Coomera, Upper Coomera, Ormeau, Pimpama, Yatala and Woongoolba.

Should your office receive any calls from members of the public about fire ants please refer them to the fire ant website for information www.daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or they can call 13 25 23.

Please contact one of our Communications staff on 3330 4633, if you wish to discuss this or any other issue related to the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program.

Regards

Sarah Corcoran

Director

Biosecurity Queensland Control Centre

Biosecurity Queensland

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

55 Priors Pocket Road, Moggill QLD 4070

PO Box 204, Bellbowrie QLD 4070

Telephone 07 3330 4601 Facsimile 07 3330 4640

Website www.daff.qld.gov.au Customer Service Centre 13 25 23

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Adjournment
Coomera Electorate, Fire Ants
17 Sep 2015

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (5.25 pm): I rise to alert the House to the fact that the northern Gold Coast is under attack. In fact, it is being invaded. Yes, we have many thousands of new residents moving into the gorgeous part of the world known as Coomera, where heaven meets earth, but coming with them—and I seek your indulgence here, Madam Deputy Speaker; I need to show a photo of the culprit to those present—is the fire ant. That is a black and white photo of a fire ant. That is the only one I could capture.

Fire ants are moving into the northern Gold Coast. It is very scary indeed. Since the beginning of January, we have had 52 positive detections on the northern Gold Coast. To give members an idea that they are all over the northern Gold Coast area and that we have to be vigilant: Stapylton has had six detections; Ormeau, eight; Yatala, two; Pimpama, two; Gilberton, 12; Woongoolba, nine; Norwell, seven; Upper Coomera, one; and Alberton, five. So we have to do something about this. I quote an email from Biosecurity Queensland that I received recently. It reads—

I would like to inform you of a recent detection of Red Imported Fire Ants within the Gold Coast suburb of Pimpama.

One fire ant colony, consisting of three mounds, was detected on the footpath on Sunstone Avenue in Pimpama. The ants were reported to Biosecurity Queensland by a vigilant member of the public.

That brings me to the main point that I want to make here today. We have to be vigilant. We have to get out there and start looking for these little terrors—and they are terrors. If you touch them, you will know they are fire ants because they will swarm. They will swarm up your arm, so you have to stay right away from them. There is a wealth of information on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' website at www.daf.qld.gov.au/fireants. You can even send fire ants an email at fireants@daf.qld.gov.au, believe it or not, and they will respond to you.

But there are simple things that we can do. This is a simple one and we want to get it out into the community. In fact, I am going to be writing to all of the schools in my community to encourage them to have 'Aka the Fire Ant Tracker' come along and show the children exactly what they have to do. What do they have to do? They have to check, they have to click and they have to send. What does that mean? They have to check to see whether or not they think it is a fire ant or a fire ant nest. They have to take a photo of that, staying well away from it because they are dangerous little beggars. Then they have to send that photo to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to establish whether or not it is in fact a fire ant nest. I will encourage every one of my schools to get out 'Aka the Fire Ant Tracker'.

(Time expired)

06 NEWS

Fire ants on the march

ROBYN WUTH

ROBYN.WUTH@NEWS.COM.AU

DEADLY fire ants are continuing their march toward the Gold Coast with Biosecurity Queensland revealing several nests have been detected in the northern growth corridor.

The fire ant is the most aggressive in the world and nests were found on a property at Ormeau in March.

Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) Control Centre director Sarah Corcoran said the Ormeau outbreak followed nests detected at Stapylton in February and in Yatala in December.

So far northern NSW is fire ant free but experts warn the insects spread "like wildfire" and can eliminate animal species in an invaded area.

These highly aggressive ants will swarm in seconds and bite repeatedly causing red welts and a pustule that fades in a couple days.

In an estimated 5 per cent of cases, fire ants can cause death from allergic reaction.

The discovery has prompted a major BQ aerial surveillance operation in search of other nests.

Flying at just 150m, the helicopter search team will sweep areas from Coomera to Loganholme.

The helicopter surveillance uses multi-spectrum image data that detects energy in three distinct frequency bands (red, green and blue images) near-infra-red and thermal and fire ant mounds have a distinct signature that can be recognised.

Gold Coast City Council has issued an update to all councillors warning of the potential danger and

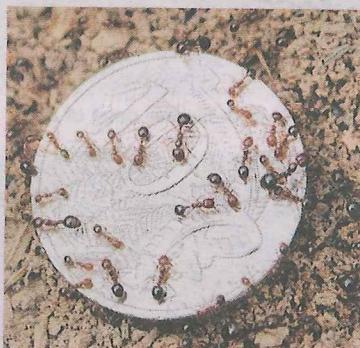
What to expect from a bite

Common reaction to fire ant bites:

Pain
Swelling
Redness
Itching

Allergic reaction to fire ant bites:

Vomiting
Dizziness
Disorientation
Wheezing



A nest of deadly fire ants, which have now been found at Ormeau.

has urged residents to report any sightings immediately.

"Fire ants are one of Australia's most invasive species," it states.

"They have the potential to ruin our Queensland way of life, affect our health and have serious environmental impacts.

"As for our native animals and crops, they don't stand a chance."

Ms Corcoran said the US spent more than \$7 billion managing the impact of fire ants.

Fire ants are coppery brown in colour with a black or dark-brown abdomen and can be anywhere from two

to six millimetres. Nests are usually dome-shaped with no visible entry holes. A typical fire ant colony produces large mounds in open areas and can destroy young plants and seeds.

Fire ants attack en masse and often kill small animals including kittens.

BQ warned the fire ants were on the move across southeast Queensland.

Fire ants have been found in the Scenic Rim, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan and Brisbane.

Biosecurity Queensland can be contacted by phone on 13 25 23.



09 AUG 2018

The Hon Mark Furner MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Our ref: CTS 19517/18

1 William Street Brisbane 4000
GPO Box 46 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7420
Email agriculture@ministerial.qld.gov.au

- 2 AUG 2018

Mr Michael Crandon MP
Member for Coomera
PO Box 314
ORMEAU QLD 4208

Dear Mr Crandon

Michael,

Thank you for your interest in the activities of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program in your electorate.

I understand you had a productive meeting with senior management of the Program and staff from my office on 13 June 2018 and that the Program committed to provide further information about Program activities. Please accept this letter on behalf of the Program as fulfilment of this commitment.

The Coomera electorate has been a focal point of historic and ongoing Program activity. Areas of the electorate have been subject to proactive and targeted surveillance for over 10 years to determine the extent of the South East Queensland red imported fire ant (fire ant) infestation. It has only been in the last three years, with an increase more recently, that a notable amount of infestation has been found and treated in your electorate and the northern end of the Gold Coast Local Government area more broadly.

The Program is investing a large amount of resources in responding to the infestation in the Coomera electorate. During the 2017-18 treatment season, over the warmer summer months, approximately 10 715 hectares of the Coomera electorate was treated by the broad scale application of bait. This suppression treatment is designed to limit the spread of infestation, particularly further south.

All new detections of fire ants in the Coomera electorate will continue to be treated, either by this broad scale application of bait, or by the direct injection of nests with a contact insecticide. Over 3 000 nests within the Coomera electorate were destroyed by the injection of insecticide in 2017-18.

Importantly, as an area with known infestation, the Coomera electorate is wholly within a fire ant biosecurity zone. Within these zones there are restrictions on the movement of material in which fire ants are known to survive transportation and subsequently start a new colony.

The Program actively manages this risk of human-assisted spread through compliance activities in the Coomera electorate. This includes regular checks on businesses engaged in risky activities to ensure their adherence with actions required under regulation.

I am advised a tracing investigation has determined all activities at the residential development site where fire ants have been recently detected at Jacobs Well have been undertaken in accordance with regulation. Also, checks of relevant nearby businesses have since confirmed their operations as compliant.

With regards to providing advice of new fire ant detections to elected representatives, the Program only does so in instances where the detection is made beyond the limits of the known area of infestation, defined by the Program's operational boundary. Like the biosecurity zones, the Coomera electorate is wholly within the operational boundary.

For privacy reasons, the Program does not provide details of individual infested properties to representatives, the local community or neighbouring property owners or occupants.

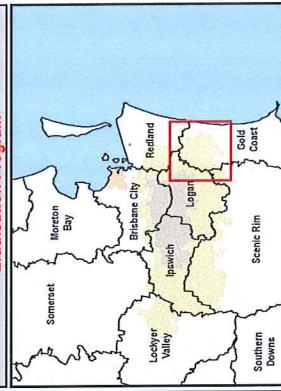
To be successful in effecting the eradication of fire ants, the Program will require the active support and participation of local communities across South East Queensland. The Program is continually improving its engagement with the public, and will also be taking steps to provide local, state and federal representatives with the information they need to help support this effort.

Yours sincerely

MARK FURNER MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Att (1)

National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program



COOMERA ELECTORATE

National Red Imported Fire Ant Program Activities

Operating boundary 2017-18

Suppression Treatment Area 2017-18

State electoral boundary (2017)

Suburb

Surveillance

Known presence of feral ant

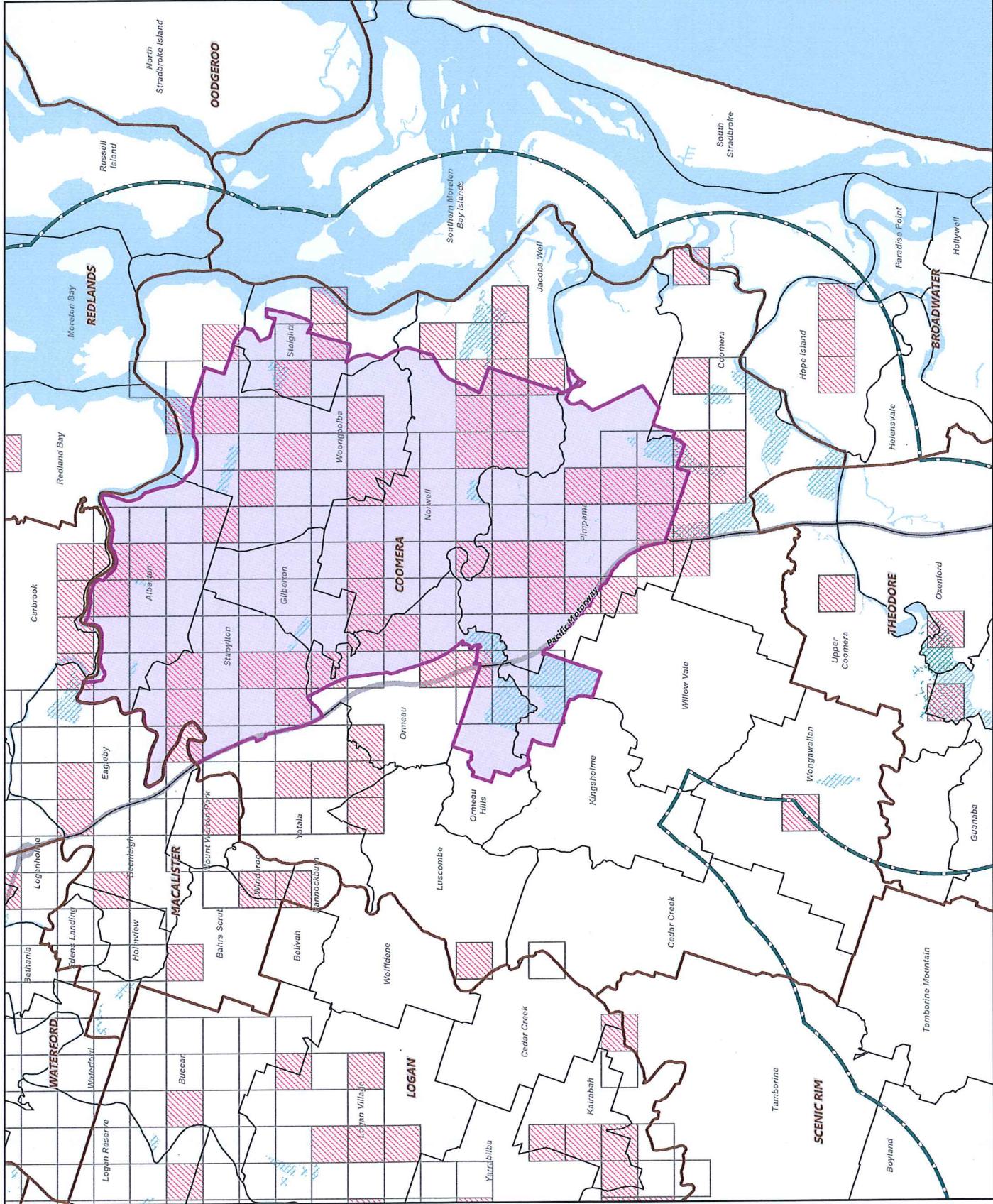
New detections 2017-18

Previous detections

Note:

1. Grid cells are 1km²
2. It should be noted that all new detections in these grids are destroyed, either through the implementation of the Program's treatment protocols or through planned eradication or suppression treatment.

Map produced by National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program,
Biosecurity Queensland



Question on Notice
No. 16
Asked on 12 February 2019

MR M CRANDON ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise in industry order, including the number of cases for each and based on evidence, the top ten industry/business types responsible for the spreading of fire ants in Queensland?

ANSWER:

On behalf of every government in Australia, the Queensland Government is co-ordinating a national effort to eradicate fire ants.

An independent chair leads a National Steering Committee in overseeing and directing the program on behalf of all governments. The Agriculture Minister's Forum and the National Biosecurity Committee provide additional oversight of Australia's largest eradication effort.

Fire ant infestation is often associated with new development sites potentially through the movement of materials that can harbour a fire ant queen such as soil, mulch, turf, potted plants and landscaping products being used during development activities.

Compliance activities conducted by the program target higher risk industries with compliance checks being undertaken of the following industries in decreasing order of the number of checks conducted:

- Civil contractors
- Hay
- Earthmovers/haulage
- Builders
- Nurseries
- Landscaping yards
- Poultry
- Haulage
- Developers
- Turf.

Fire ants also spread through flight with ninety-nine per cent of all known flights of fire ants occurring within two kilometres of an origin site. The remaining one per cent may fly up to five kilometres, but beyond this it is unlikely a successful colony will establish.

No area of Australia is free from the risk of fire ants. The commitment by all States, Territories and the Australian Government underlines the importance of eradicating fire ants and preventing the devastation that this pest has demonstrated around the world.

Question on Notice

No. 528

Asked on 3 April 2019

MR M CRANDON ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Minister's answer to Question on Notice No. 16 asked on 12 February 2019—

Will the Minister advise for those listed (a) how many compliance checks were completed each year, for each industry and (b) how many compliance checks detected fire ants each year, by Industry (referred to in the answer and reported over the last three years)?

ANSWER:

On behalf of every government in Australia, the Queensland Government is co-ordinating a national effort to eradicate fire ants.

National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program officers visit business operators to assess their compliance with legislated movement controls to prevent the spread of fire ants. During 2018–19, the Program increased compliance efforts by undertaking additional monitoring of businesses in industries determined to be high-risk. For the year to date, the Program has undertaken:

- 143 compliance checks on civil contractors and development companies
- 98 checks on hay producers
- 97 checks of earthmovers and haulage companies
- 75 checks of nurseries
- 70 checks of builders
- 36 checks of landscaping, compost, and soil recyclers
- 16 checks of poultry operators and
- 3 checks of turf farmers.

The Program's targeted approach to checking these high risk industries commenced on 1 July 2018. Prior to this, compliance checks were undertaken more broadly across a range of industries, with a total of 534 compliance checks undertaken in 2017-18 and 64 checks undertaken in 2016-17.

Compliance checks are performed to ensure persons are complying with necessary movement controls as opposed to a means of fire ant detection or surveillance. This means checking that persons are applying adequate risk mitigation measures to allow movement of the fire ant carrier product as outlined in their biosecurity instrument permit, the Regulation or as a general biosecurity obligation.

No area of Australia is free from the risk of fire ants. The commitment by all states, territories and the Australian Government underlines the importance of eradicating fire ants and preventing the devastation that this pest has demonstrated around the world.

LOGAN

Building sites infested as fire ant program fails, says expert

Judith Kerr, Quest Newspapers

April 12, 2019 4:30am

Subscriber only

THE state government has been accused of leaving Southeast Queensland at the peril of deadly fire ants.

Logan-based fire ant monitor Stuart Webber said the state's \$411 million fire ant program was failing with the number of nests in Logan public parks doubling every year for three years.

Logan City Council debated a new fire ant policy for the city on Wednesday.



Fire ant expert Stuart Webber says the \$411 million fire ant program in Queensland is failing.

The new policy includes a recommendation from parks officers to give council staff and contractors greater authority to treat nests but only in the event of an emergency.

The report to council said housing estates across the southeast were prime sites for heavy infestations and extermination by direct nest injection was "low cost".

Biosecurity Queensland said housing estates were heavily infested with the pest but said it was focused on aerial baiting west of Ipswich with the project gradually working towards Logan and Redlands as part of a 10-year eradication program.

It pinpointed heavy infestations at the Gold Coast and in major housing development suburbs of Logan including Yarrabilba, Waterford, Park Ridge, Chambers Flat, Jimboomba, Flagstone and Bethania.



A fire ant nest in a Logan park. PHOTO: JUDITH KERR

Mr Webber said he believed the eradication program was going “pear shaped” and heading for the same outcome as cane toads and lantana.

He said the southeast had been left “high and dry” over the past year with Logan infestations doubling every year for the past three years.

- **LOGAN FIRE ANT HOT SPOT**

- **FIRE ANTS INVADE FIVE LOGAN PARKS**

He said the low success rate of aerial baiting in the west, at Gatton, had put back the rollout of Biosecurity Queensland’s program in the east to places such as the Gold Coast and Logan.

“Local government staff need greater powers to take immediate action on the ground instead of having to wait for Biosecurity Queensland,” he said.

“I was forced to report a children’s blow-up jumping castle which was erected on a nest in Alexander Clark Park in Loganholme in August.

“None of the nests in the park were flagged to warn parents about the dangers of the ant or what to do in case of a sting. Biosecurity Queensland has stopped flagging the nests, so now nobody knows where they are. These ants are dangerous and a sting can kill a child.”



A children's blow-up jumping castle was erected on a nest in Alexander Clark Park in Loganholme in August.

Logan's new policy, to be voted on at next Tuesday's full council meeting, will include warning signs about ants at public parks.

Bahrs Scrub resident Damian, who did not want to give his surname, said he was concerned about the spread of the pest at a housing subdivision on his street at 32 Berzins Court.

Logan council construction taskforce officers said they would be monitoring the site during earthworks and had alerted Biosecurity Queensland.



Berzins Court in the centre of the photo with the major land development in the top left hand corner.

Logan City councillor Jon Raven said giving officers powers only in emergencies was "the thin edge of the wedge". "I'm worried that this could graduate from council doing the work in extreme circumstances to doing all treatment and Biosecurity Queensland is not even doing the work anymore and the ratepayer is footing the bill," he said.

"The BQ guys have really long lunch breaks in Demio Park in my electorate — so if anyone wants to talk to Biosecurity Queensland their officers are often there."

Responsibility for reporting cases of fire ants lies with local governments but surveillance and control of the ants is the responsibility of Biosecurity Queensland.



The blow-up jumping castle which was erected on a fire ant nest in Alexander Clark Park, Loganlea.

- **DOGS USED TO PAWS FIRE ANTS**

Fire ants can spread by flying with queen ants able to fly up to 5km.

However they also hitchhike in construction materials such as soil, turf, mulch, hay, potted plants and manure.

Any suspect nests should be reported to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

Alternatively, take a photo of the nest and ants and report using an online form.

Question on Notice

No. 897

Asked on 11 June 2019

MR M CRANDON ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Minister's answer to Question on Notice No. 528 of 2019 wherein the Minister did not detail how many compliance checks detected fire ants each year, by Industry, but instead stated 'Compliance checks are performed to ensure persons are complying with necessary movement controls as opposed to a means of fire ant detection or surveillance'— Will the Minister advise (a) if the answer means that no fire ants have been detected during compliance checks and (b) if fire ants have been detected during compliance checks, the number of compliance checks that resulted in fire ant detections each year (for 2016-17 to 2018-19 to date reported separately by financial year and by industry)?

ANSWER:

On behalf of every government in Australia, the Queensland Government is coordinating a national effort to eradicate fire ants.

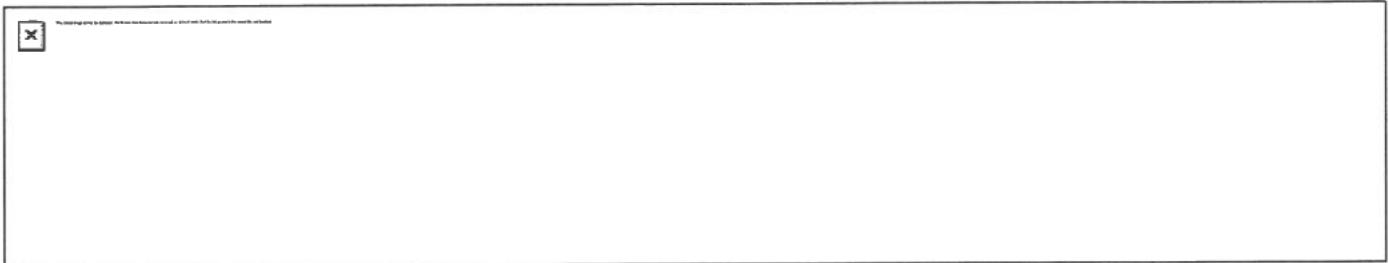
Under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, and Biosecurity Regulation 2016, individuals and organisations whose activities involve the movement or storage of fire ant carriers have a general biosecurity obligation to take all reasonable steps to ensure they do not spread fire ants.

- (a) I can advise that fire ants have been detected during compliance checks.
- (b) Where a new detection of fire ants has occurred during a compliance check, that detection is recorded and combined with detections from all other program activities. These data inform subsequent program activities.

Compliance checks are performed to ensure persons are complying with necessary movement controls as opposed to a means of fire ant detection or surveillance. This means checking that persons are applying adequate risk mitigation measures to allow movement of the fire ant carrier product as outlined in their biosecurity instrument permit, the regulation or as a general biosecurity obligation.

Coomera Electorate Office

From: Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
<departmentofagricultureandfisheries@daf.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 9 August 2019 4:37 PM
To: Coomera Electorate Office
Subject: Fire ant update August 2019



August 2019

Message from the General Manager

Recent national media coverage claiming that Australia has lost the war against one of the world's most invasive pests is not true.

The truth is that our program is on track to rid our country of the 'super pest' once and for all.

Just two years into the program's 10-year plan, residents in Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim and parts of Ipswich City local government area are telling us the strategy is working.

Our eyes on the ground are telling us our efforts to eradicate fire ants in the west of Brisbane are paying off. This is positive news for the program, for Queensland and for Australia.

There is also scientific evidence that the treatment is weakening genetic diversity of the ants, increasing the pressure on this pest.

The program's finite resources over ten years are focussed on eradication strategies, working from west to east — from the western boundary of the infestation, through Ipswich, Logan and ending in Redlands.

Best available advice to the program indicated the strategy moving from west to east, taking a systematic approach, would give us the best chance of eradicating the pest from our backyards once and for all.

Containment strategies are in place on the other boundaries, and suppression methods are used elsewhere within the operational boundary to minimise the spread of fire ants until eradication strategies can be applied.

Since the program began, Australia has eradicated five separate incursions of fire ants, including a population spread over 8,000 hectares at the Port of Brisbane. As the world's largest eradication of any ant species continues, the eyes of the world are on Australia.

We understand that's little comfort to those residents across South East Queensland who see fire ants in their backyards and neighbourhoods, but we haven't forgotten about you.

To some in the suburbs not currently the focus of eradication, fire ant populations will be increasing. This is expected and reports from the community are vitally important to allow us to prioritise our suppression treatments in your area.

Without the efforts of our program, fire ants could be north to Mackay, south to Sydney and west to Charleville by now.

Graeme Dudgeon

General Manager
National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program

10-year fire ant eradication plan

We are now in the second year of our comprehensive 10-year eradication plan to find, contain and eradicate fire ants in South East Queensland.

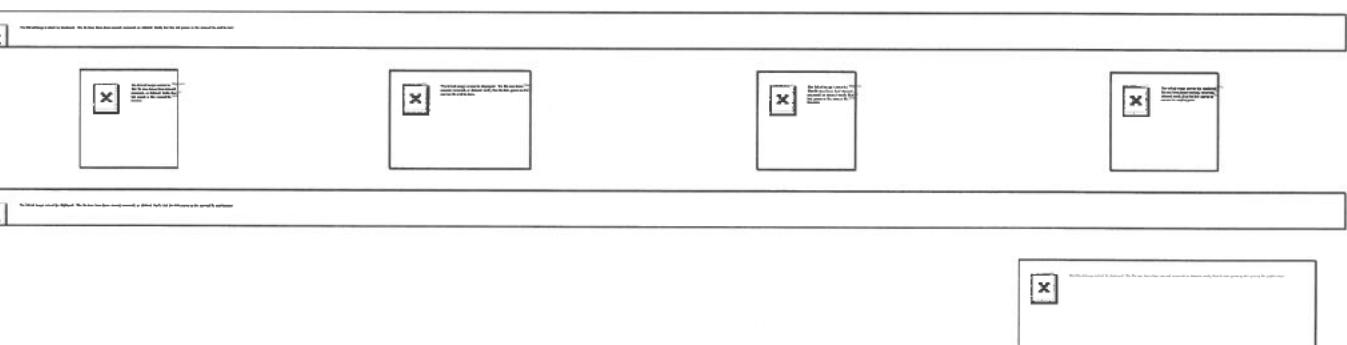
We have almost completed bait treatment along the western boundary of the fire ant containment area in the Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim and parts of the Ipswich local government area and our efforts to eradicate the 'super pest' appear to be paying off. Residents in the area are telling us "there used to be fire ants, now there are none."

We are supported by a National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) steering committee which provides

guidance and support, and monitors our progress against targets to ensure we are successful.

Read more about our 10-year National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication plan.

Listen to what our farmers out west have to say: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4xYNpQ38tI>



Question on Notice

No. 1131

Asked on 20 August 2019

MR M CRANDON ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Minister's answers to Questions on Notice Nos. 897 and 528 of 2019—

Will the Minister (a) confirm that the department cannot determine whether detections of fire ants occurred during compliance checks or detections from all other program activities or (b) if the department can determine whether detections of fire ants occurred during a compliance check, provide breakdowns per compliance check categories and years as requested in Questions on Notice nos. 897 and 528 of 2019?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

On behalf of every government in Australia, the Queensland Government is co-ordinating a national effort to eradicate fire ants.

In 2018-19, 72 per cent of fire ant infestations were reported by the public, with the remainder identified through program activities such as field surveillance, either planned by the program or as a follow-up to the public reports. Detections can occur during compliance checks although this is not the primary purpose of compliance activities.

Detections that are reported by compliance officers during compliance checks are recorded along with detections reported by other program officers. A fire ant sample is routinely collected and also recorded in the information system along with details of the officer who collected it. Further to Questions on Notice nos. 897 and 528, the program has now undertaken a detailed manual cross-matching of detection reports and fire ant sample records to identify which detections were reported by a compliance officer and the details of the compliance activity.

During the past three years there have been two instances where fire ants have been detected during compliance checks and suspect ant samples brought back to the program offices by compliance officers. These detections occurred in 2017, one on a turf farm and the other at a poultry and hay business.



The Hon Mark Furner MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Our ref: CTS 24293/19
Your ref: A 485250

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Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7420
Email agriculture@ministerial.qld.gov.au

09 OCT 2019

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Neil,
Thank you for your letter of 4 September 2019 concerning Petition No. 3163-19, received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly, relating to the management of Red Imported Fire Ants in the northern regions of the Gold Coast.

The Palaszczuk Government is aware of the potential negative impacts fire ants could have on Queensland's economy, environment, public health and lifestyle and is committed to eradicating this pest. It is for this reason that the Queensland Government, in partnership with the Federal and all State and Territory Governments, has committed to a 10-year plan to eradicate fire ants in South-East Queensland by 2026–27.

The eradication strategy over the 10 years has been designed to reduce the size of the infestation, using a staged, rolling planned treatment program, starting from the west and progressively moving to the east, using the Pacific Ocean as a natural boundary to the east. This approach was taken in order to prevent fire ants becoming established in the prime agricultural areas west of Brisbane, which are considered to be ideal habitat for the species. If this had occurred, it is likely that there would have been significant financial impacts upon the agricultural sector in this region.

The 10-year fire ant eradication is being delivered by Biosecurity Queensland through the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. Eradication treatments for 2019–20 have already commenced. Significant changes to the 2019–20 eradication works, would not be logistically practical and could undermine eradication outcomes. The program of work for this financial year does include suppression of fire ants in some areas of the Gold Coast.

As the Program progresses, the eradication strategy is reviewed to account for changes in the nature and behaviour of the fire ant infestation, and to address any new risks that may arise. These reviews are scheduled for later this year.

I would like to stress that all Queenslanders have a general biosecurity obligation to help stop the spread of fire ants. The Fire Ant Eradication Program continues to invest in community education to help inform people of what can be done at an individual level to help stop the spread. This includes options for self-management of fire ants through the use of pest management technicians.

If you require further information, I encourage you to contact my office on 07 3719 7420.

Yours sincerely

MARK FURNER MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries



The Hon Mark Furner MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Our ref: CTS 27669/19
Your ref: A499591

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GPO Box 46 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7420
Email agriculture@ministerial.qld.gov.au

13 NOV 2019

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 18 October 2019 concerning Petition No. 3218-19, received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly, relating to the management of Red Imported Fire Ants in the northern regions of the Gold Coast.

The Palaszczuk Government is aware of the potential negative impacts that fire ants could have on Queensland's economy, environment, public health and lifestyle, and is committed to eradicating this pest. It is for this reason that the Queensland Government, in partnership with the Federal and all State and Territory Governments through the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program, has committed to a 10-year plan to eradicate fire ants in South-East Queensland by 2026-27.

The eradication strategy over the 10 years has been designed to reduce the size of the infestation, using a staged, rolling planned treatment program, starting from the west and progressively moving to the east, using the Pacific Ocean as a natural boundary to the east. This approach was taken in order to prevent fire ants becoming established in the prime agricultural areas west of Brisbane, which are considered to be ideal habitat for the species.

Eradication treatments for 2019-20 have already commenced. Significant changes to the 2019-20 eradication works would not be logically practical and could undermine eradication outcomes. The program of work for this financial year does include suppression of fire ants in some areas of the Gold Coast.

As the Program progresses, the eradication strategy is reviewed to account for changes in the nature and behaviour of the fire ant infestation, and to address any new risks that may arise. These reviews are scheduled for later this year.

I would like to stress that all Queenslanders have a general biosecurity obligation to help stop the spread of fire ants. The Fire Ant Eradication Program continues to invest in community education to help inform people of what can be done at an individual level to help stop the spread. This includes options for self-management of fire ants through the use of pest management technicians.

If you require further information, I encourage you to contact my office on 07 3719 7420.

Yours sincerely

MARK FURNER MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Question on Notice

No. 500

Asked on 22 April 2021

MR J KRAUSE ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the National Fire Ant Eradication Scheme that is funded over a 10 year period through Commonwealth, Queensland and other States' funding— Will the Minister advise (a) how much of the approximately \$400m funding over 10 years has been spent to date, (b) when is it expected that present committed funding from all sources for the scheme will be entirely exhausted and (c) how many square kilometres of Queensland which have had fire ant infestations are now removed from fire ant mapping and how many square kilometres now are included on mapping as having fire ants that did not at the commencement of the 10 year program?

ANSWER:

- (a) Since the commencement of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program in July 2017 until 31 March 2021, the Program had spent \$187 million of the \$411 million total funding.
- (b) Program expenditure, which is approved by the Program's National Steering Committee, is in accordance with the current funding profile and will exhaust the total budget of \$411 million as at 30 June 2027.
- (c) Since the commencement of the Ten-Year Eradication Plan in 2017, eradication treatment has been undertaken over approximately 1 652 square kilometres. This area is currently undergoing clearance. Once clearance is achieved, these areas can be removed from the fire ant biosecurity zone map. Since the commencement of the Plan, there has been an increase of 204 square kilometres to the biosecurity zone map and zero kilometres removed. For ease of zone definition, zones are based on whole suburb boundaries including suburbs where only a small portion of the suburb may have fire ants. Modelling has demonstrated that, had the Program not been in place, fire ants would have spread to 20 per cent of Australian continental landmass or 1.53 million square kilometres.

Convened - 2017 - 10 yr Plan / a 5 year
Bring forward - \$. \$40M.. not 60m ...

Pilot + TEST for Convened.

Beginning - 2021 Reasons Why Achieve Eradication

DR. Helen Scott - DRR. REVIEW.

Will ZAKER / Monica GRUBER.

FREESES Project (- August).

Now Converting Outcomes into D. ABCR

RESPONSE TIME for Submission Down TO A WEEK.

Most Southern Suburbs South to North

(60% Infrastructure 30% TAKED)
(Back yards).

Possibly Leads To ERADICATION PROGRESS ...

ERADICATION - SUPPRESSOR - ERADICATOR - *

WORSE CASE SCENARIO - / HOPE

Everyone leave Area: / LOCALS NEED TO BE ADVISED.
Our back yards. ERADICATOR IS STRICT FEDERALIS

Restriction to Convened Areas For Protection*.

1. REVISING - Greater Geraldton 1st QTR 2022.
Government Surveyor

2/ ~~Surveyor~~ ^{Edgar} Committee HAVE REPORT AND ARE
WORKING TOWARDS THAT... BY EO 1st QTR 2022.

3/ EO 1st QTR 2022 WE WILL KNOW WHAT PLANS.

Waging war on fire ants

Minister briefs Cabinet on battle to stop invasion of aggressive pests

**Paul Weston &
Andrew Potts**

City leaders will meet with state Minister Mark Furner later this week over the growing fire ant crisis as pressure mounts on the government to reveal its plans for tackling the pests.

Agricultural Minister Mr Furner briefed state Cabinet on the Gold Coast on Monday about the latest infestation at Tallebudgera.

"The latest detection of fire ants at Tallebudgera has been dealt with but we all need to remain vigilant and do everything possible to prevent any further spread," he said.

"I briefed Cabinet on our ongoing fire ant eradication efforts and how we're working

with Gold Coast City Council to achieve this. I'll be visiting the Gold Coast again this week to further outline our plans."

It was revealed over the weekend, the super pests reached the southern Gold Coast, found in Tallebudgera Valley.

Fire ants were discovered by Council workers at a pony club in the valley, just 5.5km from the NSW border.

They moved more than 8km in a handful of weeks, having most recently been found at Miami High.

The presence of the pests also near The Spit to the north has the city on high alert, with the potential to close down our beaches and various public facilities if the spread gets out of

control. This worst case scenario would have a devastating impact on the Coast economy. Mr Furner said all stakeholders had a role in stopping fire ants.

"It's important to remember everyone has a responsibility to stop fire ants and that's why we've provided \$37 million to operate a Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce," he said.

"This taskforce has been working with Gold Coast City Council to treat 800 hectares of council land and is providing training and on-ground support to staff.

"We've also developed an MOU with Canegrowers Rocky Point to eventually self-treat 6000 hectares of sugar cane production area.

"We will continue our efforts

to educate agricultural stakeholders and Gold Coast residents on the role they can play in suppressing fire ants."

Gold Coast councillors have expressed growing concern about the state's approach to the problem.

Earlier this week Robina councillor Hermann Vorster said the latest discovery showed the state had lost control of the situation.

"While the state dithers on its plan of attack, fire ants continue their biological attack on southern Gold Coast communities," he said.

"In a frightening escalation, fire ants have now been detected on a community facility in the Tallebudgera Valley – within striking distance of na-

tional parks and prime agricultural land.

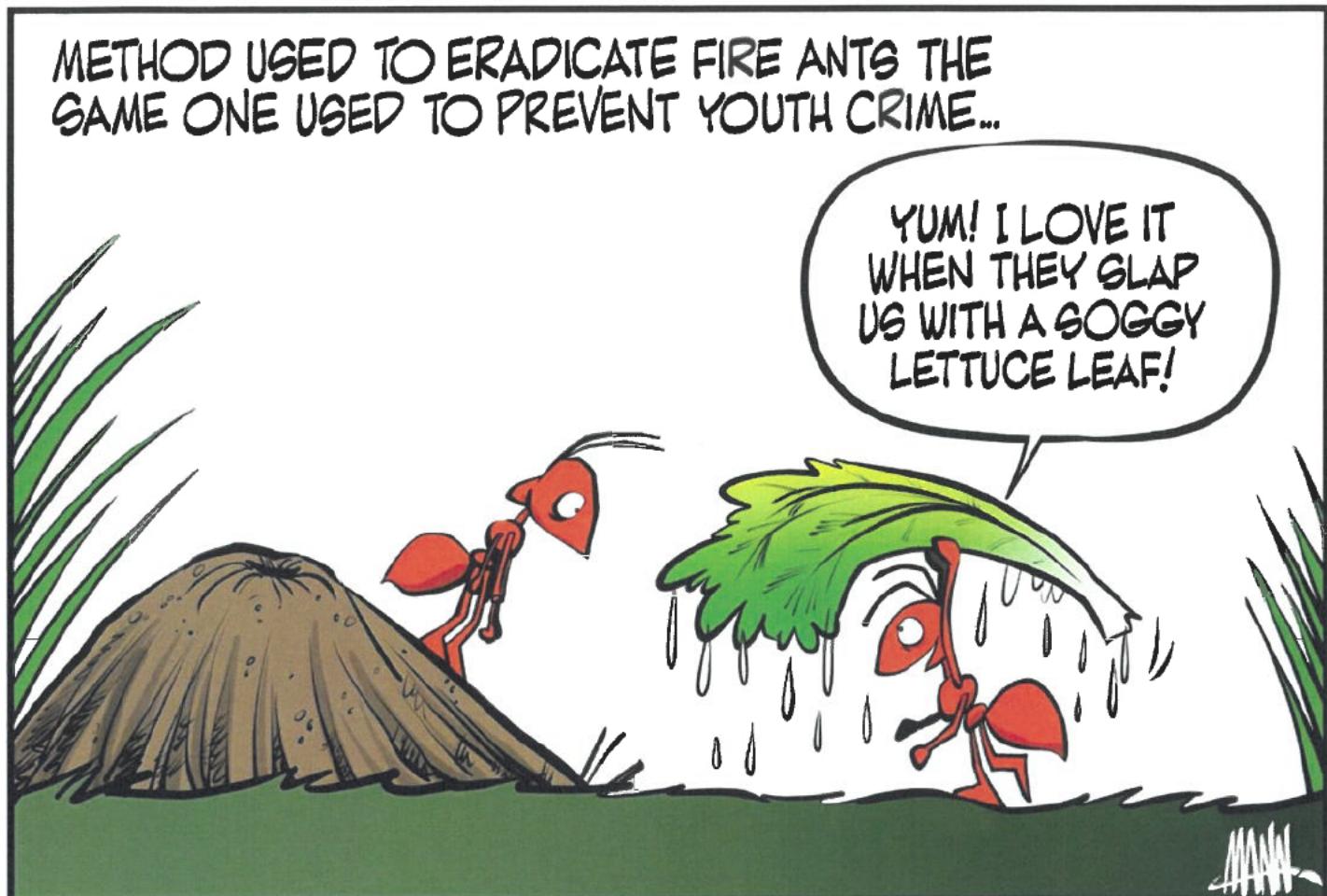
"Every minute the state delays puts more communities and more of our economy at catastrophic risk."

Councillors this year described the spread of the fire ants as a frightening development, as only three years ago they were not predicted to reach Burleigh until 2024.

Fire ants, which are native to South America and first discovered in Brisbane in 2001, are considered one of the world's worst invasive species because of their rapid spread.

They are highly aggressive and will swarm anything which disturbs nests.

Their stings can be fatal in rare circumstances.



Fire ants' \$470k sting

Compliance crackdown includes jail

**Andrew Potts &
Ashleigh Jansen**

People who cause the spread of fire ants will face \$470,000 fines and three years in prison as part of a state-led crackdown on the super pests.

New detection dogs are being trained to find the deadly ants as part of an eradication program.

Agriculture Minister Mark Furner announced the harsh biosecurity measures, which are part of the \$60m 2023-27 Red Fire Ant Eradication Program endorsed earlier in July by the federal, state and territory ministers.

Mr Furner, speaking at Philip Park on The Spit where fire ant nests have been detected, said he wanted to eradicate the "super pests". "This is a plan which will find a horseshoe shape from Moreton Bay out to the Lockyer Valley and south to the Tweed in which (fire ants) will be suppressed and eradicated," he said.

"People need to remember as part of this funding and national program we will be coming down tough on compliance and in the past there have been sectors of industry which have not been compliant, so this funding will provide for more compliance officers, but also deal with the need for suppression and then eradication."

"Everyone also needs to remind themselves regardless of whether they are inside or outside the zone that the Biosecurity Act 2014 has an obligation on everyone to not spread these



Benny and Jack the fire ant sniffer dogs for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program; and (inset) Queensland Agriculture Minister Mark Furner. Picture: Ashleigh Jansen

insidious super pests," he said.

It was revealed at the weekend, the ants had reached the southern Gold Coast, in the Tallebudgera Valley. Fire ants were discovered by council workers at a pony club in the valley, just 5.5km from the NSW border. They moved more than 8km in a handful of weeks, having most recently been found at Miami High.

Mr Furner said the nest, which had since been wiped out, arrived in the rural area as a result of soil or mulch being brought in. Harsh measures allowed under the Biosecurity Act would be used in the crackdown, he said.

"There has been people movement on many occasions where some of the incursions have been," he said.

"It is important that people understand their obligations when they are moving materials around the area," he said.

"There are fines in the act for up to \$470,000 or three years' imprisonment, which naturally will be a heavy cost on those people who do not conform with the Act. It can also see movement orders put upon those businesses where they are unable to operate for a period of time until Biosecurity Queensland is satisfied that they are compliant."

As part of the eradication program, seven dogs have been trained to help with the detection of fire ants.

"With the introduction of the dogs, we use the pheromone of the fire ant as their odour source," handler Justin Gibson said.

"It takes six months to get a dog operational and into the field. The dogs will indicate to their handlers through body language if they've detected the odour they're trained to find. Then we know we're on and there's fire ants present."

Mr Gibson said all dogs are tested prior to joining the program to assure they won't be affected by the ants sting.

While the \$60m funding announced earlier this month by the agriculture ministers was welcomed, civic leaders and the Invasive Species Council say it is a drop in the bucket of what is needed after a Queens-

land Audit Office report identified the need for an additional \$593m over the next four years to fight the pests.

The presence of the pests also near The Spit to the north has the city on high alert, with the potential to close down beaches and public facilities if the spread gets out of control. This worst-case scenario would have a devastating impact on the Coast economy.

Fire ants, which are native to South America and first discovered in Brisbane in 2001, are considered one of the world's worst invasive species because of their rapid spread.

They are highly aggressive and will swarm anything that disturbs their nests.

Their stings can be fatal in rare circumstances.



'Flying the white flag' on fire ant eradication amid fears war on pests lost

Paul Weston

The battle to stop fire ants invading the entire Gold Coast has only weeks to play out, with the City calling for an immediate boost in the eradication program.

Councillors now fear the war against the pest appears to be lost, with agencies dealing with a containment scenario as the ants head towards the Queensland-NSW border.

After a full council meeting on Tuesday, councillors were "bitterly disappointed" the state government would create a "shoe horn" containment area for fire ants on the border.

"What that tells us is they are flying the white flag," Councillor Hermann Vorster said.

"They have absolutely surrendered to eradication here on the Gold Coast, by making the border and not the Gold Coast, the last line of defence."

At its last budget, council had approved three new staff to stop fire ants, and at full council endorsed a new report to see what could be done to support the government, Mr Vorster said. "But we are at the mercy of the national fire ant eradication program, and that remains horribly under-resourced," he said.

"What I do know is \$593m needs to be thrown at this problem by the state and common-

wealth governments, and both failed to commit to that funding. By kicking the can down the road, they will put more southern communities at risk."

Meanwhile, Nationals leader and Opposition Agriculture Minister David Littleproud has accused the federal government of stalling on funding.

Mr Littleproud said the Albanese government was spending less on the eradication program, after a joint meeting

between the federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt and state agriculture ministers failed to reach an agreement on funding allocation.

Labor's decision to go back to the drawing board was not good enough, particularly when they announced \$60m in funding for fire ant eradication, down from \$94m last year, he said.

"Labor is taking too long to make what is a critical decision

for the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication program," Mr Littleproud said.

"This was discussed back in May and it's now crunch time. There were already fears this program would be underfunded, but now Labor is dragging the chain."

At least \$200m-\$300m per year is needed to eradicate fire ants by 2032 and save Australia from \$2bn in annual economic costs.

GCBD01Z01MA - V1

Fire ant strategy falls short of expectations

Madura McCormack

Australia's latest battle plan against a destructive super pest will involve less money than expected, slashing the treatment area in half, and reducing surveillance efforts, leaked documents have revealed.

Slow bureaucracy is largely to blame for the funding shortfall this financial year, according to a leading campaign group, warning any "dithering and delay" risks failure in the fight against the deadly and industry-decimating red imported fire ant.

A recent review of the nation's efforts to eradicate fire ants warned all hopes would be "lost forever" if the pest - now just 5.5km away - jumped the Queensland border into New South Wales.

Agriculture ministers, at a July meeting in Perth, agreed in principle to a new four-year fire ant strategy starting with \$133m this financial year to ring-fence the entire infested area for treatment and surveillance.

This boundary stretches from about Caboolture, to Esk, down to Gatton and Boonah and out to Coolangatta.

Group says 'dithering and delay' risk failure



Queensland Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries Minister Mark Furner and (inset) the dreaded fire ant.

But the leaked strategy document reveals the National Fire Ant Eradication Program only has \$84m to spend in 2023/24 as it stands because the federal government and a number of states need to head back to the budget drawing

board. It means the attack against fire ants will be limited to treating the area from Coolangatta out to Glen Rock State Forest, with surveillance also cut from 17 per cent of the ring-fenced area or "horseshoe" down to 8 per cent.

Invasive Species Council spokesman Reece Planta said the window to stop fire ants spreading across the country was "rapidly closing".

"Instead of the urgent funding boost needed, we have more dithering and delay from

the federal government. This is risking failure," he said.

"When we saw these alarming documents, our worst fears were realised. They reveal planned eradication and surveillance work has been cut by more than half this year due to delayed funding. This is outrageous. We are in a race against these fire ants and the fire ants are winning."

But federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt, in a joint statement with Queensland counterpart Mark Furner, said they rejected the Invasive Species Council's "analysis" and affirmed the commonwealth and jurisdictions were "100 per cent" committed to fire ant eradication.

"Ministers confirmed their commitment to eradication, and will now go back through their own individual budget processes to seek ongoing funding for a new response plan beyond July 2024," they said.

"Make no mistake, this is a world leading program which has successfully limited the spread of fire ants - and it's based on expert scientific advice from the very best minds in this field."

GCBE01201MA - V1

Gold Coast Bulletin

EDITORIAL

Pest invasion

A national approach is a must if we have any chance of halting the march of fire ants

For months now officials across the Gold Coast and this publication have been making plenty of noise about the need for a stronger approach to fire ants.

These invasive pests represent an enormous threat to the Gold Coast economy and way of life as they continue their march towards the border.

City leaders are deeply concerned about the proximity of the ants to our beaches in particular, with nests discovered near The Spit.

Our various state and federal agricultural ministers came together for an emergency meeting to discuss the problem.

And the outcome was a promise of more money and a strong united front to not just halt the ants, but eradicate them and put an end to the threat that they pose.

But a report today from a leaked strategy document reveals the National Fire Ant Eradication Program only has \$84m to spend in 2023/24 as it stands because the federal government and a number of states need to find more funds from their budgets.

The strategy indicates the fire ants response will be limited to

treating the area from Coolangatta out to Glen Rock State Forest, with surveillance also cut from 17 per cent of the ring-fenced area or "horseshoe" down to 8 per cent.

While that is a key stretch of territory for the Gold Coast, it has to be remembered that the fire ants march on our city originated in Brisbane.

They have wound their way down towards the Coast and if the problem is not addressed elsewhere in the southeast, then there is every chance this simply becomes a containment project and the problem arises again in the future.

So if indeed the federal government and some states or territories are dragging the chain on funding, then it is critical that they find a way to come up with some cash and fast.

Because while this might seem like a southeast Queensland and northern NSW problem right now, this has the potential to grow into a broader national issue very quickly.

And that means it is in the best interests of other states to find the funds and make sure that the fight takes place here and ends here.

WRITE TO US: Make sure to include your name, address and phone number if verification is required. Only your name and suburb will be printed. Please note we reserve the right to edit letters for reasons such as clarity and length. **PRIVACY POLICY:** Our privacy policy at <https://preferences.news.com.au/privacy> includes important information about our collection, use and disclosure of your personal information (including to provide you with targeted advertising based on your online activities). It explains that if you do not provide us with information we have requested from you, we may not be able to provide you with the goods and services you require. It also explains how you can access or seek correction of your personal information, how you can complain about a breach of the Australian Privacy Principles and how we will deal with a complaint of that nature.

Blazing row over fire ants

By Madura McCormack

The Courier Mail

Monday 7th August 2023

449 words

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260cm on the page



Blazing row over fire ants

Claims super pests are 'winning race' has minister on defensive

Madura McCormack

Australia's latest battle plan against a destructive super pest will involve less money than expected, slashing the treatment area in half, and reducing surveillance efforts, leaked documents have revealed.

Slow bureaucracy is largely to blame for the funding shortfall this financial year, according to a leading campaign group, warning any "dithering and delay" risks failure in the fight against the deadly and industry-decimating red im-

ported fire ant.

A recent review of the nation's efforts to eradicate fire ants warned all hopes would be "lost forever" if

the pest – now just 5.5km away – jumped the Queensland border into NSW.

Agriculture ministers, at a July meeting in Perth, agreed in principle to a new four-year fire ant strategy starting with \$133 million this financial year to ring-fence the entire infested area for treatment and surveillance. This boundary stretches from about Caboolture, to Esk, down to Gatton and Boonah and out to Coolangatta.

But the leaked strategy document reveals the National Fire Ant Eradication Program only has \$84 million to spend in 2023/24 as it stands because the federal government and a number of states need to head back to the budget drawing board.

It means the attack against fire ants will be limited to treat-

ing the area from Coolangatta out to Glen Rock State Forest, with surveillance also cut from 17 per cent of the ring-fenced area or "horseshoe" down to 8 per cent.

Invasive Species Council spokesman Reece Pianta said the window to stop fire ants spreading across the country was "rapidly closing".

"Instead of the urgent funding boost needed, we have more dithering and delay from the federal government. This is risking failure," he said.

"When we saw these alarming documents, our worst fears were realised. They reveal planned eradication and surveillance work has been cut by more than half this year due to delayed funding.

"This is outrageous. We are in a race against these fire ants and the fire ants are winning."

But federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt, in a joint statement with Queensland counterpart Mark Furner, said they rejected the Invasive Species Council's "analysis" and affirmed the Commonwealth and jurisdictions were "100 per cent" committed to fire ant eradication.

"Ministers confirmed their commitment to eradication, and will now go back through their own individual budget processes to seek ongoing funding for a new response plan beyond July 2024," they said.

"Make no mistake, this is a world leading program which has successfully limited the spread of fire ants – and it's based on expert scientific advice from the very best minds in this field."



Murray Watt

10 NEWS

Paying to conquer fire ants

Ratepayers to fund the fight to wipe out invading pest infestations

Paul Weston

Ratepayers will fund a crackdown on fire ants after more than 1200 infestations of the aggressive pest have been found on the Gold Coast in the past 18 months.

Council is being forced to fund extra resources after a report showed fire ants are now regarded as a worse threat than feral cats, foxes and cane toads.

At least \$200m-\$300m per year is needed at a state and federal level to eradicate fire ants by 2032.

City officers warn the impact on sporting fields requires a higher protection as staff can

Lifestyle committee chair Hermann Vorster said: "This council report reveals the awful truth, that taxpayers will be smashed by the state's environmental mismanagement. "People will feel it in their taxes, in their rates, and when they're faced to clean up avoidable infestations.

"City officers have backed locals' concerns and are proposing an urgent short-term ramp up on our part. This means more boots on the ground protecting our most precious community and economic assets."

A weekly report in July



Councillor Hermann Vorster

only treat nests and not undertake any surveying.

A report to council's lifestyle committee on Tuesday recommends appointing an independent expert and spending \$350,000 on more staff and vehicles.

Tallebudgera is the most southern detection. Fears are emerging that the pest will be an "embarrassment" for the staging of the 2032 Olympics with the eyes of the world on our city.

The City officer report warns the multi-agency Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce "does not have the resources out in the field".

Mapping confirms the policy for the Coast is "suppression" – not eradication. "There's also a need to cut through the spin and that's why we will be recruiting an independent biosecurity expert to debunk the rhetoric and give us a plan of action to present the state," he said.

"We don't want to see locals put off treating an infestation because they're struggling with higher power bills and housing costs."

Mapping confirms the policy for the Coast is "suppression" – not eradication.

Detectors are increasing substantially with 636 con-

firmed fire ant sites recorded

within the city in 2022 and 570

confirmed during the first six

months of 2023. Cr Vorster said council would champion a more incisive community education campaign.

"But most of all we want to see the state provide baits free of charge at this critical moment," he said.

"We don't want to see locals put off treating an infestation because they're struggling with higher power bills and housing costs."

Mapping confirms the policy for the Coast is "suppression" – not eradication.

Detectors are increasing substantially with 636 con-

firmed fire ant sites recorded

within the city in 2022 and 570

confirmed during the first six



Gold Coast city councillor Mark Hammel says the fire ant suppression program rolled out by the state government is 'an absolute joke'. Picture: Mike Batterham

Concerns that City will become 'the face of disaster'

Paul Weston

A Gold Coast city councillor who owns a rural property doubts fire ants can be stopped, saying the suppression program rolled out by the state government is "an absolute joke".

Mark Hammel said the government, after two years of "badgering", agreed to do an aerial treatment by helicopters on the northern cane lands, which was a lesser priority than southern border areas.

"Nest reportings went through the roof," he said.

"So every land owner in the farming area was given baits, and said you go out and treat your land by hand, then we will come over the top by a helicopter. Well, half the baits they gave out failed, were out of date or not treated properly.

"On my property, for exam-

ple, not only did it not only take 10 of those resources to come and drop off those two buckets of bait, I had three marked LandCruisers and trailers come onto the property to drop off two buckets of baits. There were 10 people there.

"One of those buckets didn't work, so half the nests died, the other half they (the ants) went crazy.

"The helicopter somehow managed to stuff it up and double up in areas and not treat others which I believe is a half million dollar exercise."

Property owners would report one nest and six people would arrive to put a "pink flag" on it.

"But they're not the people to treat it. You wait for a different team to come out later - which is two weeks later - you have probably called them up two to three times,"

“
You can probably detect my level of confidence that they will actually ever eradicate the damn things

Cr Mark Hammel

Cr Hammel said. "And then a different team of 10 people in a few vehicles come out to kill that one nest.

"In that time they've (the ants) moved 5m to the left - you can see the other nest, it is sitting right there. But because there's no pink flag next to it, that team can't kill it. I kid you not, that is the quality of their response. It is an absolute and utter joke. You can probably

detect my level of confidence that they will actually ever eradicate the damn things."

Councillors at a lifestyle committee meeting on Tuesday agreed for the City to boost resources to stop the pest, ticking off on more staff and rolling out a communication program.

But committee chair Hermann Vorster cautioned that council must not become "the face of the disaster" because the state government was to blame.

Officers and councillors told the meeting:

■ There was a massive lag in real-time reporting of fire ant infestations.

■ Residents were being told to wait 30 days for treatments only to receive out of date and ineffective baits.

■ It was clear many people "don't know what to look for"

in searching for the pests on their properties.

City CEO Tim Baker advised councillors that there was too high a risk for the City not to step up and protect its important assets like beaches and sporting facilities.

The council could not just rely on Biosecurity Queensland and the City was the most connected in terms of messaging the community, he said.

"The risk is too high for the City not to be involved," Mr Baker said.

Council will recruit another three staffers to join their existing team of three, adding to the four teams of 50 state officers due to arrive on the Coast early next month. The office of Agriculture Industry Development Minister Mark Furner referred the Bulletin to the national program team but a comment could not be obtained.

NORTHERN RIVERS WATCH 15

Fears as 'super pest' closes in

Farmers, politicians raise fire ants alarm

Catherine Piltz

Farmers and politicians are sounding the alarm as "super pest" fire ants advance toward NSW from Queensland, often hitching a ride in soil, mulch and other materials.

State Tweed MP Geoff Provest said he believes the ants will surpass cane toads as one of the most significant pests in NSW unless more is combat the spread of the dangerous insects. Invasive Species Council spokesman Reece Pianta agrees and previously said: "A fire ant invasion across Australia will be worse than the cane toad."

The ants have caused problems as they move south on the Gold Coast, even prompting fears beaches and other public areas could end up closed.

Tweed Cane Growers Association president Robert Hawken said the aggressive stinging ants posed a risk to farmers, their crops and machinery. "Fire ants have no natural predators in Australia and their population is rapidly expanding," he said.

Mr Hawken said the ants eat

seeds, tunnel through roots and stems of crops and damage irrigation systems.

"NSW needs to do a much better job than their Queensland counterparts in controlling the spread of this very invasive and dangerous pest," he said. Mr Provest said he believed many people are not aware of what a fire ant even is, or comprehend the damage they could cause.

He has joined a push for more money for The National Fire Ant Eradication Program, which is funded by the state and federal governments.

Its aim is to "eradicate" the pests to "protect our Australian lifestyle". "Fire ants could devastate our environment, economy and outdoor way of life we know and love," the program website states.

Mr Provest said more education is required.

"A lot of people here in the Tweed will cross the border and go to nurseries and buy soil and different things unaware they could be importing these damn things," he said.

"Queensland has had them

for 20 years and they keep spreading south."

Mr Provest said the ants have the potential to spread throughout NSW. "Unless you spend a fair bit of money right now these things are going to be five times as bad as cane toads," he warned.

Organic farmers on the Tweed are "horrified" they may end up being forced to use pesticides to protect crops, stripping them of their beneficial organic accreditation.

The Invasive Species Council said on Monday government documents showed at least a \$49 million shortfall in fire ant funding for 2023/24, "risking the spread of the super pest across Australia", but that has been disputed by federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt and Queensland Agriculture Minister Mark Furner.

Mr Pianta said the window to stop the ants taking over Australia was rapidly closing.

"But instead of the urgent funding boost needed, we have more dithering and delay from the federal government. This is risking failure," he said.

dogs in border ant fight

Savannah Pocock

Ant-sniffing detection dogs and traffic cameras are just part of a NSW's beefed-up biosecurity measures as fire ants march closer to the border.

The red imported fire ants, which are aggressive, spread quickly and pack a dangerous sting, were first detected in Brisbane in 2001 and have recently been found in numerous spots across southeast Queensland - including just 5km from the Queensland-NSW border at Tallebudgera.

NSW Agriculture Minister Tara Moriaty visited Tweed Heads on Wednesday with assistant police commissioner Stephen Hegarty.

They were joined by Tweed Mayor Chris Cherry, National Fire Ant Eradication Program executive Ashley Bacon and representatives from the NSW Department of Primary Industries at Jack Evans Boat Harbour.

Fire ant biosecurity zones in southeast Queensland apply to people working with materials like soil, hay, mulch, manure, turf, potted plants and quarry stones and aggregate from infested areas.

Ms Moriaty said it was important to educate the community to identify the ants.

She warned fire ants "are small" but "come together in clusters and swim through water."

"We know how significant this (the ants in NSW) would be for industry and human health," she said.

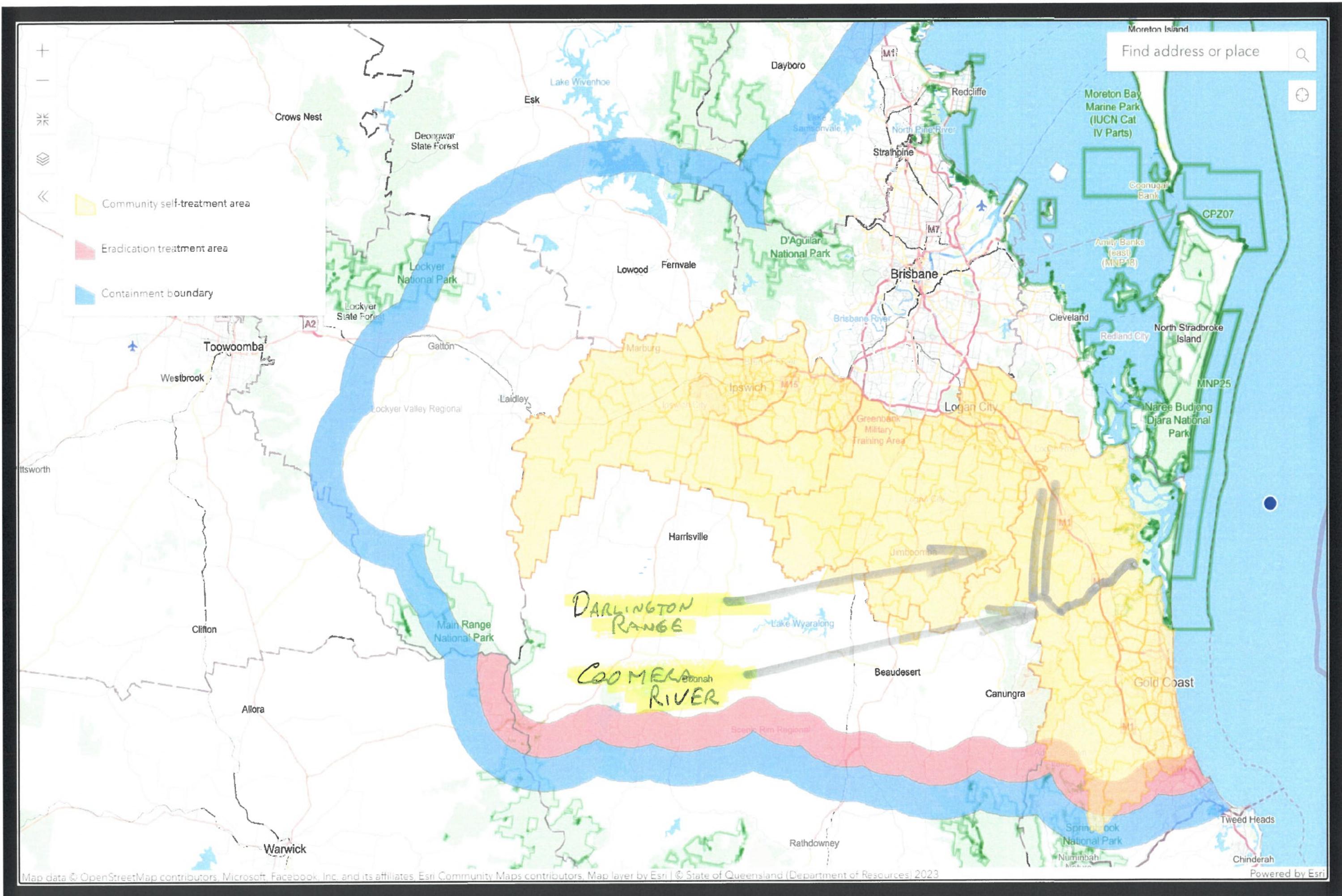
"We expect that more people will be transporting fodder across the border as seasonal conditions deteriorate in some areas of NSW, and that we'll see increased demand for landscaping and building supplies as the weather warms up."

Nevertheless, fire ant queens can fly up to 5km, assisted by the right conditions.

Ms Moriaty said the eradication program had \$95m in funding from NSW over four years, but more was needed.

"I'm encouraging my state counterparts to come forward with funding," she said.

"We are throwing everything at our efforts to stop fire ants in their tracks because we know the potential impact they



Survey reveal: What residents want fixed on the Gold Coast

Paul Weston

Improved community safety, upgraded parks and traffic congestion busters are the key issues that Gold Coast residents want fixed, according to new local government poll surveying.

Naomi Fowler in Division 2, the first candidate to kick-off their campaign in May, has finalised priority actions after extensive consultation with 85 groups. The division covers some of the faster growing areas in the city, including Oxenford which was revealed in the recent Future Gold Coast series.

Ms Fowler's data nails down the issues for next March's poll, in which there will be a record change in ranks with at least three senior councillors retiring.

She said she would, if elected, commit to a Division 2 park review of playgrounds collaborating with the community to create a plan for future upgrades.

"Our parks are essential and enjoyable community open spaces, and I believe in working together to ensure they meet the evolving needs of our residents," she said. "It's important that we have adequate green spaces, footpath connectivity, alongside having the right park equipment in the right parks."

The key aspects of her local action plan include:

■ Undertake a local road and footpath review focusing on key traffic hotspots and high traffic areas ensuring the council budget is focused in the right areas.

■ Audit the entire 65 parks across Oxenford, Helensvale and Hope Island and create a plan for future investment and renewals in talks with the community.

■ Review the city's camera network to enhance CCTV in critical locations to increase public safety in collaboration with police.

■ Advocate to the state government to prioritise efficient east-west bus services - improving accessibility from Regatta Waters to the new Hope Island station.

Ms Fowler said a significant aspect of the plan was to investigate improvement of the Division's camera network.

Her plan is to expand the



Naomi Fowler, Division 2 candidate in the 2024 local government election, surveying residents.

city's camera network to critical locations throughout the suburbs in collaboration with the Queensland Police Service (QPS).

The City would work with the QPS to ensure lighting around the community was adequate, she said.

In Oxenford, Ms Fowler has outlined a range of projects, including delivering the new

Men's Shed, container storage and a community garden.

Other projects include the \$10m Regatta Sports Park project and increasing parking capacity at Damian Leeding Memorial Park.

Hope Island initiatives include creating new dog parks, enhancing facilities at Charles Holm Park and Santa Barbara Boat Ramp, and upgrades to Sicile Park.

within the perimeter are restricted in how they can move potential fire ant carrier materials without permission. The movement of mulch, woodchips, compost, sand, gravel, soil, hay and other haled products are restricted as a result.

NSW authorities are using detection dogs to determine the extent of the infestation, undertaking genetic testing of the fire ants and searching all properties within the control radius. Australia's National Fire Ant Eradication program is based in Queensland.

A recent review of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication program warned all hopes would be "lost forever" if the pest jumped the Queensland border into NSW. They are a major threat to backyards and agriculture. The red imported fire ant, native to South America, was first detected in Queensland in 2001.

Veteran faces political scuffle

Andrew Potts & Paul Weston

Veteran councillor Daphne McDonald is facing a serious fight for her political career with a leading tourism promoter announcing his plans to contest next year's council poll.

Former Connecting Gold Coast CEO Josh Martin will stand in Division 13 at the March election next year, ensuring Palm Beach-Burleigh voters are given a choice at the booths. Cr McDonald in recent weeks has refused to declare her hand on whether she would retire, despite approaches from colleagues and The Bulletin about her future.

"I'll let you know like I always do," Cr McDonald said, when asked at the most recent council meeting. But there has been speculation around council headquarters for weeks she would face at least one challenger with Mr Martin regarded as a "high profile organised community leader".

Mr Martin described himself as a "second generation southern Gold Coaster" who would bring not just a deep family connection but business experience along with passion for the region.

He said he had spent his life on the southern Coast, from Mijerup Currimundi as a kid to "learning to surf at Palmy" and more recently delivering major tourism events.

"Currently, to assist with the establishment of Experience Gold Coast, I have been seconded to EGC from my nominal role in the Office of the CEO at the City of Gold Coast on a short term contract, and will take leave in the new year ahead of the election."

Mr Martin said he wanted to offer "energetic leadership" for the division and use his skills in business leadership and connecting with the community.

"I am not a politician - I am a passionate member of our community with the drive, business acumen, and commitment needed to champion the best outcomes for Division 13 and the broader Gold Coast," he said.

"I led the revitalisation of the Cooly Rocks On Festival, a



major economic windfall for local business and winning Bronze in the Queensland Tourism Awards, as well as many significant

community events such as the Coolangatta Christmas Carols and NYE fireworks."

Mr Martin has worked with major sporting organisations including the Gold Coast Suns, the Titans and the Indy 300 event during its international racing years, before working at Burleigh Brewing.

"I actively contributed as a voluntary board member of the Southern Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce supporting local businesses through the most challenging Covid-19 impacted years," he said. "More recently I was the CEO of Film Fantastic, an arts and culture not-for-profit organisation, successfully delivering the annual Gold Coast Film Festival and screen culture events."

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Out of control fire ants jump the border

Madura McCormack

Destructive fire ants have been detected in NSW for the first time, in a catastrophic incursion of the pest from Queensland that could spell the end for hopes of eradication forever.

The NSW agriculture department on Saturday confirmed three fire ants nests had been located in South Murwillumbah, 13km south of the Queensland border.

Expert teams have been deployed in a bid to chemically eradicate the infestation across a 200m radius from where they were found.

NSW Agriculture Minister Tara Moraray said the government was prepared for the discovery of fire ants in northern NSW and had immediately implemented the response plan, which was part of a \$600 million national program.

Businesses and residents

within the perimeter are restricted in how they can move potential fire ant carrier materials without permission. The movement of mulch, woodchips, compost, sand, gravel, soil, hay and other haled products are restricted as a result.

NSW authorities are using detection dogs to determine the extent of the infestation, undertaking genetic testing of the fire ants and searching all properties within the control radius. Australia's National Fire Ant Eradication program is based in Queensland.

A recent review of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication program warned all hopes would be "lost forever" if the pest jumped the Queensland border into NSW. They are a major threat to backyards and agriculture. The red imported fire ant, native to South America, was first detected in Queensland in 2001.

Paraglider crash-lands

A rescue operation was underway on the Gold Coast yesterday afternoon to extract a paraglider who landed on a roof and injured himself.

The man landed on a building in Canungra, inland from the Gold Coast, about 12.20pm.

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Service also attended the scene (pictured) to help carry out



the "extrication".

A Queensland Ambulance Service spokesman said he had injured his leg from the landing but was taken to Gold Coast University Hospital in a stable condition.

Coomera Electorate Office

From: outreach+Opposition.Media@streem.com.au on behalf of Opposition Media
<outreach+Opposition.Media@streem.com.au>
Sent: Monday, 27 November 2023 4:33 PM
To: Coomera Electorate Office
Subject: STATEMENT: Premier had no idea fire ants were out of control



Tony Perrett MP

Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

MEDIA STATEMENT

Ant that a cop out!

Premier had no idea fire ants were out of control

I am appalled by reports today that Premier Palaszczuk says she was not aware fire ants had spread from Queensland into New South Wales.

How didn't she know when it's been on the agenda for days?

This disgraceful ignorance is further proof Labor has never taken the spread of fire ants seriously and Premier Palaszczuk and Labor clearly do not care about this issue.

The internal chaos and crisis of Labor means they have not prioritised containing fire ants and Queenslanders will now pay the price for it.

Labor's inability to stop the spread of fire ants has been a total failure.

Labor didn't listen when the LNP and Queenslanders warned them about this issue.

While Labor is infighting, fire ants are marching across Queensland unchecked.

Fire ants are now being detected in tourism hot spots and this could have devastating consequences.

Queenslanders deserve a Government with the Right Priorities for Queensland's Future.

Queenslanders deserve better than the chaos and crisis of Labor.

-ENDS-