Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 378

Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates

Outcome: Agency

Programme: Director of National Parks

Topic: CHRISTMAS ISLAND YELLOW CRAZY ANT CONTROL

Hansard Page: N/A

Question Date: 29 October 2014

Question Type: Written

Senator Singh asked:

1. What has been the outcome of the Government's investment in Yellow Crazy Ant control on Christmas Island?

2. Were Yellow Crazy Ants implicated in the extinction of the Christmas Island Forest Skink this year?

Answer:

1. Control of yellow crazy ants via targeted aerial and ground-based baiting with the insecticide Fipronil was initiated in 2000 at which time supercolonies covered 18 per cent of the island. Baiting has been highly successful with reductions of up to 99 per cent in crazy ant numbers recorded at monitored sites following aerial baiting. The most recent biennial Island Wide Survey (2013) estimated that supercolonies cover less than 4 per cent of the island. Nevertheless, chemical control of crazy ants is not a long-term solution as supercolonies gradually reform following baiting.
2. The reasons for the decline and possible extinction of the forest skink and other native reptiles are not well understood. A combination of factors is suspected to be involved, of which the impact of invasive species (including but not restricted to crazy ants) is likely to be an important part. Research funded by the National Environmental Research Programme is currently investigating the causes of native reptile decline with a focus on the role of two invasive predators, the wolf snake and giant centipede.