



The Hon Tony Perrett MP
Minister for Primary Industries

Our ref: CTS 04015/25

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17 MAR 2025

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
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Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your email of 20 February 2025 regarding petitions to the Queensland Legislative Assembly (4178-24 and 4207-25): *Concerns regarding the National Fire Ant Eradication Program*.

Red imported fire ants are recognised as a key threat under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth). When scheduling treatment, the Program assesses environmental sensitivity in accordance with General Environmental Duty obligations under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld), and other legislative requirements relative to the treatment and eradication of fire ants.

The Program is a nationally cost-shared program funded by all State and Territory Governments and the Federal Government. A 2021 comprehensive independent strategic review of the Program reported eradication remained technically feasible with operational enhancements and recalibration of the Program's strategic and operational business models. The 2021 Strategic Review informed the Program's Response Plan 2023-27, which was universally endorsed by all State, Territory and Federal Government Agriculture Ministers in July 2023.

The Crisafulli Government has always said recommendations from independent reviews should be implemented, and highlighted the former Labor Government's refusal to do so.

Recommendation 6 of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee report: *Don't let this come back to bite us*, recommends an increase in the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce. The Crisafulli Government fully supports suppression activities and this is currently under careful consideration of Government.

An independent review of the Program will occur during the 2026-27 financial year, assessing continued efficacy and feasibility of the national response plan beyond 2026-27. This structured accountability measure ensures public investment is sound and targets delivery towards optimum results for Queenslanders and Australians.

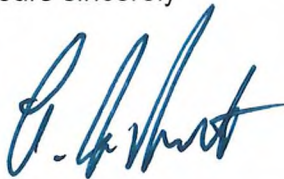
The Program approaches its eradication efforts of red imported fire ants in accordance with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) permit guidelines, under the strict requirements of the national regulation scheme for agricultural and veterinary chemicals. Concerns regarding application of bait should be directed to the APVMA at enquiries@apvma.gov.au.

All Queenslanders hold a general biosecurity obligation to stop the spread of fire ants. The Program is required to access properties (not residences as an inherent legislative safeguard) for the purpose of treating fire ants (see section 261 of Queensland's *Biosecurity Act 2014*). While fire ant nests may not be visible or obvious at certain times, worker ants begin foraging for food within weeks of a newly made queen establishing a nest. It is for this reason that treatment must be conducted across all areas where fire ants have been detected and/or based on spread modelling.

Our state has long appreciated the importance of strong biosecurity for our agricultural sectors, our environment, our families, and our way of life. We call upon all Queenslanders to do their part to help stop this insidious pest.

I thank the petitioners for bringing their concerns to the attention of the House.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Perrett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

TONY PERRETT MP
Minister for Primary Industries