

Red Imported Fire Ants and Australian electorates

If allowed to spread across Australia, fire ants could cost households \$1.03 billion, cause 570,800 medical visits and 30 deaths every year. The electorates most likely to be impacted are Durack (WA), Mayo (SA), Blair (QLD) and O'Connor (WA). Eradicating fire ants should be a major budget and policy priority.

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INTRODUCTION

Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA) have the potential to cause significant environmental, social and economic damage. Almost all of Australia, except highland areas of Tasmania and the Snowy Mountains, provides a suitable habitat for RIFA. They can survive floods, and are able to spread into bushfire affected areas, which means their spread is likely to increase with climate change.¹ RIFA were first detected in Australia in 2001 at the Port of Brisbane and in nearby suburbs. Despite more than 20 years of containment efforts, RIFA remain a growing threat.² In 2023, a large outbreak in southeast Queensland spread beyond containment lines,³ and in 2024 fire ants were detected in parts of northern NSW including Murwillumbah and Wardell.⁴ Modelling shows that, by 2035, RIFA are expected to reach the Murray–Darling Basin, as shown in Figure 1.

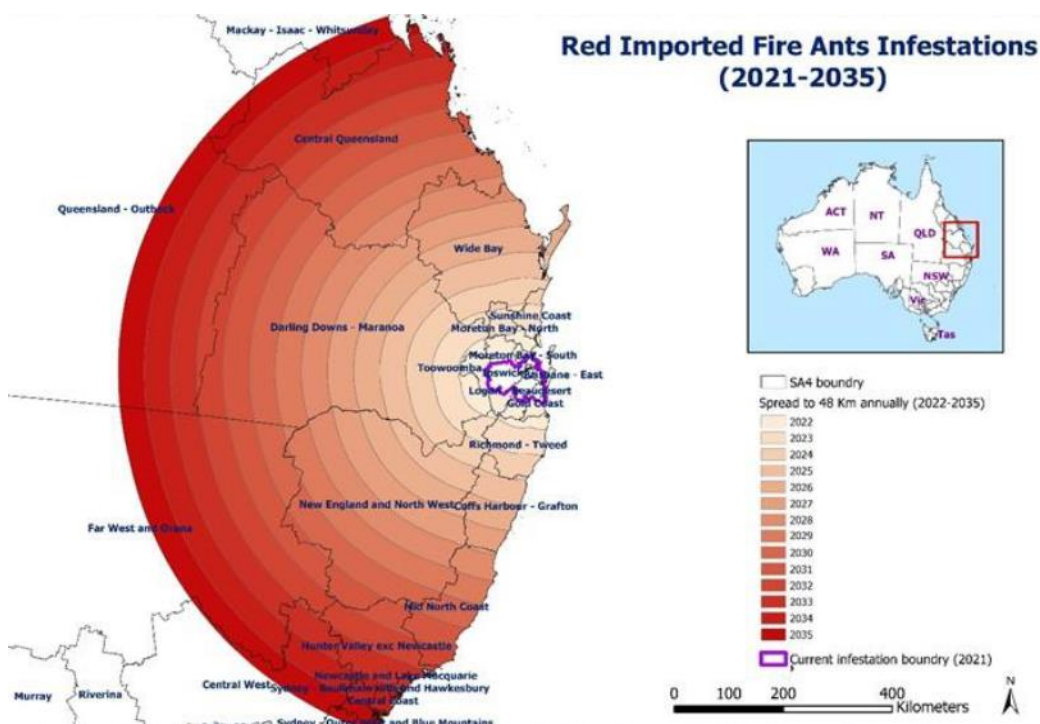
¹ Scott-Orr, Gruber and Zacharin (2021) *National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review August 2021*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/partnerships/rifa-eradication/strategic-program-review>

² National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2024) *Fire ant map*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/fireantmap>

³ NSW Government (2023) *\$80 million to protect NSW against red imported fire ants*, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/80-million-to-protect-against-fire-ants>

⁴ National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2024) *Fire and detections in New South Wales*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/stop/outlier-detections/nsw>. Fire ants have also been detected in turf being transported from QLD into NSW (see NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (2024), *Red imported fire ants (Solenopsis invicta)*, <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/bfs/insect-pests/rifa>)

Figure 1: Spread of RIFA from the current area of infestation by 2035



Source: Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

Previous research by the Australia Institute estimates that the unchecked spread of RIFA across Australia will cost Australia more than \$22 billion by the 2040s. For every dollar spent on eradication efforts, we estimate a public benefit of between \$3 and \$9.⁵ This brief presents a breakdown of some of these costs by each federal electorate.

This brief shows that, unless eradication is urgently prioritised, RIFA will cost Australians dearly. We estimate that if RIFA become firmly established across Australia, households would need to spend a collective \$1.03 billion every year to suppress RIFA outbreaks and cover RIFA-related medical and veterinary expenses. Approximately 570,800 people could need medical attention, with 30 people likely to die, mainly of anaphylactic shock.

METHOD

Our estimates are based on the best available data, and draw on prior studies about the impact of RIFA. The following assumptions have informed our method:

- Medical costs

⁵ Le and Campbell (2024) *Red imported fire ants - the benefits of avoiding a national disaster*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/red-imported-fire-ants-the-benefits-of-avoiding-a-national-disaster>

- The population for each electorate is consistent with the 2021 ABS Census.⁶
- 30% of the population will be stung each year.⁷
- 7.5% of people stung will seek medical attention.⁸
- One medical visit costs \$100.⁹
- 2% of people stung will develop an anaphylactic reaction requiring an EpiPen.¹⁰
- An EpiPen costs \$80.¹¹
- 0.02% of people who require an EpiPen after a RIFA attack die.¹²
- The value of a statistical life is \$5.4 million.¹³
- Veterinary costs
 - As a proxy for the number of households affected by RIFA we used the number of occupied private dwellings from the 2021 ABS Census.¹⁴
 - 47.8% of Australian households have at least one dog, and 33.3% have at least one cat.¹⁵

⁶ ABS (2021) *2021 Census -cultural diversify/Geographical Areas/State Electoral Divisions*, <https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml>

⁷ Lopez et al (2024) 'The Human Health Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant in the Western Pacific Region Context: A Narrative Review', p 4, *Trop. Med. Infect. Dis*, <https://doi.org/10.3390/tropicalmed9040069>

⁸ Lopez et al (2024) 'The Human Health Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant in the Western Pacific Region Context: A Narrative Review', p 6, *Trop. Med. Infect. Dis*, <https://doi.org/10.3390/tropicalmed9040069>

⁹ Seyfort (2023) *Cost of doctors appointment to rise for third time this year*, <https://www.9news.com.au/national/gp-appointment-cost-doctors-appointments-rise-for-third-time-in-2023/5862a7ee-7a78-43e8-a01f-3710a201a10c>

¹⁰ Lopez et al (2024) 'The Human Health Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant in the Western Pacific Region Context: A Narrative Review', p 6, *Trop. Med. Infect. Dis*, <https://doi.org/10.3390/tropicalmed9040069>; Kruse (2023) *Fire Ant Bites*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470576/>; Solley et al (2002) 'Anaphylaxis due to Red Imported Fire Ant sting', *the Medical Journal of Australia*, <https://doi.org/10.5694/j.1326-5377.2002.tb04548.x>

¹¹ Chemist Warehouse (2024) *EpiPen 300mcg Injection 1 - Adrenaline (epinephrine)-Private prescription price*, <https://www.chemistwarehouse.com.au/buy/33739/epipen-300mcg-1-injection-adrenaline-epinephrine>; Chemist Warehouse (2024) *Epipen Junior 150mcg 1 Injection - Adrenaline (Epinephrine) (S3)*, <https://www.chemistwarehouse.com.au/buy/65428/epipen-junior-150mcg-1-injection-adrenaline-epinephrine-s3>

¹² Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries: Of people using EpiPens, further 2% require medical attention, with 1% of those resulting in mortalities. Therefore, 0.02% of people need to use EpiPens may be end in mortalities.

¹³ Australia Government (2023) *value of statistical life*, <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-10/value-of-statistical-life.pdf>

¹⁴ ABS (2021) *2021 Census-selected dwelling characteristics/Dwelling and Household Characteristics/Occupied private dwelling*, <https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml>

¹⁵ Animal Medicines Australia (2022) *Pets in Australia: A national survey of pets and people*, https://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/AMAU008-Pet-Ownership22-Report_v1.6_WEB.pdf

- The average number of dogs per dog-owning household has is 1.3 and the average number of cats that a cat-owning household has is 1.6.¹⁶
- 19% of pets that are stung each year will require veterinary care.¹⁷
- One vet visit costs \$100.¹⁸
- Household control costs:
 - We have assumed that people living in apartment buildings will not spend on ant control, while people in occupied standalone houses will. Therefore, our calculations of household investment in RIFA control are based on the number of occupied standalone houses from the 2021 ABS Census.¹⁹
 - Each household in standalone houses will pay \$83 annually in pesticide/pest control expenses.²⁰

Our estimates understate the full cost of widespread RIFA infestation because they do not include:

- Any environmental costs.
- Costs to agriculture.
- Other costs to industry and government that affect:
 - Electricity and water infrastructure;
 - Parks, golf courses and other recreational areas;
 - Schools, day care centres, and hospitals.

Star and Rolfe (2021) have shown that these costs can be considerable.²¹ However, as the availability of reliable data makes these costs difficult to accurately calculate, we have chosen to omit these costs. This means that total costs are likely to be higher than the estimations made in this brief.

¹⁶ Animal Medicines Australia (2022) *Pets in Australia*:

A national survey of pets and people, https://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/AMAU008-Pet-Ownership22-Report_v1.6_WEB.pdf

¹⁷ Barr and Drees (1994) cited in Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

¹⁸ Cyrus (2024) *Vet Fees In Australia Explained*, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/au/pet-insurance/vet-fees/>

¹⁹ ABS (2021) *2021 Census-selected dwelling characteristics/Dwelling and Household Characteristics/DWTD Dwelling Type/Occupied private dwelling and 2021 Census-selected dwelling characteristics/Dwelling and Household Characteristics/STRD Dwelling Structure/Separate house*, <https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml>

²⁰ Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

²¹ Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

RESULTS

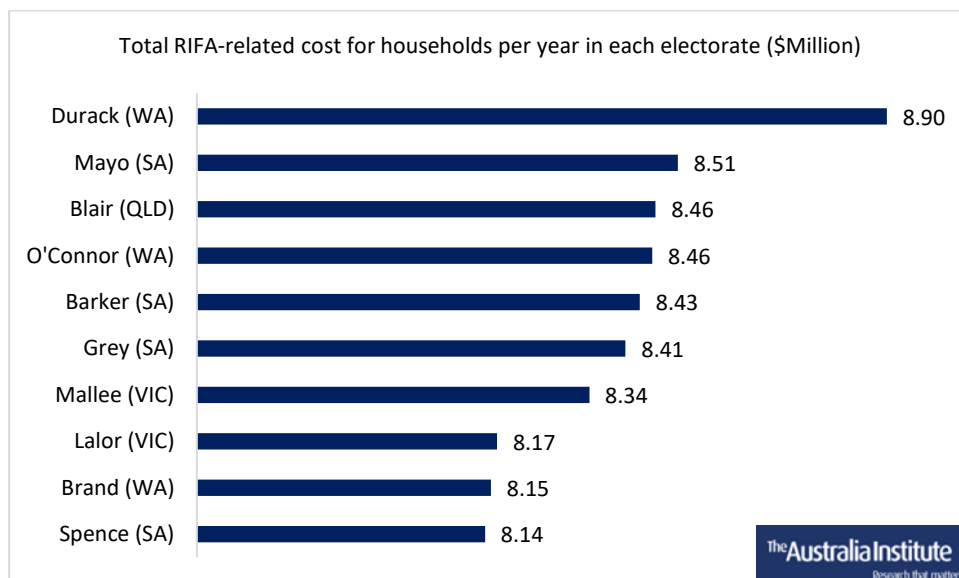
The table below estimates the annual cost of RIFA to each electoral division in Australia. It shows that every year, across the nation, RIFA could:

- Sting more than 7.61 million people (30% of the population).
- Cause 570,823 extra medical visits.
- Cause 152,219 people to develop anaphylactic reactions.
- Be responsible for 30 extra deaths every year.
- Result in medical costs of \$233.66 million.
- Cause 2,150,964 extra vet visits.
- Result in vet costs of \$215 million.
- Cost households \$581.28 million in eradication costs.

The average electorate will spend an average of more than \$6.8 million every year to control fire ants and to pay for related medical and veterinary services. In the average electorate, fire ants will:

- Sting 50,404 people.
- Cause 3,780 extra medical visits.
- Lead 1,008 people to develop anaphylactic reactions.
- Cost medical systems \$1,547,396.
- Cause 14,245 extra vet visits.
- Result in vet cost of \$1.4 million.
- Cost households \$3.85 million in eradication costs.

Figure 2: 10 federal electorates most impacted by fire ants



Source: Calculations by author based on data from the ABS (2021) and other reference sources of the method section.

The 10 Commonwealth electorates that will be most severely affected by fire ants

	Commonwealth electorate	State	Number of people stung per year	Number of stung people seek medical attention (Even for non-systemic reactions)	Number of people with anaphylactic reaction needing EpiPen per year	Number of expected fatalities due to RIFA stings per year	Total RIFA related medical cost per year (\$)	Number of dogs/cat are stung that need to be presented to the VET	Vet visit cost per year (\$)	Pesticide and pest control expenditure per year (\$)	Total RIFA related cost for each SED (\$)
1	Durack	WA	60,434	4,533	1,209	0.24	1,855,308	18,836	1,883,638	5,160,608	8,899,555
2	Mayo	SA	52,121	3,909	1,042	0.21	1,600,099	15,232	1,523,200	5,382,467	8,505,766
3	Blair	QLD	56,984	4,274	1,140	0.23	1,749,421	15,323	1,532,301	5,182,022	8,463,744
4	O'Connor	WA	52,821	3,962	1,056	0.21	1,621,614	15,794	1,579,384	5,256,556	8,457,554
5	Barker	SA	51,506	3,863	1,030	0.21	1,581,237	15,791	1,579,099	5,274,069	8,434,405
6	Grey	SA	51,446	3,858	1,029	0.21	1,579,377	16,510	1,650,985	5,177,042	8,407,404
7	Mallee	VIC	50,292	3,772	1,006	0.20	1,543,955	15,620	1,561,994	5,233,399	8,339,348
8	Lalor	VIC	60,397	4,530	1,208	0.24	1,854,185	14,578	1,457,805	4,853,425	8,165,415
9	Brand	WA	54,464	4,085	1,089	0.22	1,672,048	14,640	1,464,033	5,017,848	8,153,929
10	Spence	SA	56,468	4,235	1,129	0.23	1,733,571	15,567	1,556,731	4,852,512	8,142,813

RIFA-related costs by Australian electoral division

Commonwealth electorate	State	Number of people stung per year	Number of stung people seek medical attention (Even for non-systemic reactions)	Number of people with anaphylactic reaction needing EpiPen per year	Number of expected fatalities due to RIFA stings per year	Total RIFA related medical cost per year (\$)	Number of dogs/cat are stung that need to be presented to the VET	Vet visit cost per year (\$)	Pesticide and pest control expenditure per year (\$)	Total RIFA related cost for electorate (\$)
Banks	NSW	48,868	3,665	977	0.20	1,500,245	12,867	1,286,709	2,692,105	5,479,059
Barton	NSW	54,493	4,087	1,090	0.22	1,672,932	14,893	1,489,319	2,440,532	5,602,783
Bennelong	NSW	57,366	4,302	1,147	0.23	1,761,127	15,954	1,595,415	2,658,158	6,014,700
Berowra	NSW	45,771	3,433	915	0.18	1,405,179	11,141	1,114,143	3,465,250	5,984,572
Blaxland	NSW	56,582	4,244	1,132	0.23	1,737,070	12,871	1,287,148	2,721,238	5,745,456
Bradfield	NSW	50,755	3,807	1,015	0.20	1,558,166	13,163	1,316,314	2,917,616	5,792,097
Calare	NSW	50,770	3,808	1,015	0.20	1,558,627	14,777	1,477,652	4,919,410	7,955,689
Chifley	NSW	60,619	4,546	1,212	0.24	1,861,000	14,105	1,410,547	4,368,124	7,639,671
Cook	NSW	44,835	3,363	897	0.18	1,376,435	12,702	1,270,218	2,452,235	5,098,887
Cowper	NSW	51,062	3,830	1,021	0.20	1,567,588	15,728	1,572,827	4,444,152	7,584,567
Cunningham	NSW	48,503	3,638	970	0.19	1,489,036	14,009	1,400,876	3,270,449	6,160,361
Dobell	NSW	48,817	3,661	976	0.20	1,498,670	13,732	1,373,200	4,143,360	7,015,230
Eden-Monaro	NSW	48,459	3,634	969	0.19	1,487,691	14,464	1,446,358	4,446,725	7,380,774
Farrer	NSW	51,935	3,895	1,039	0.21	1,594,398	15,468	1,546,753	4,998,426	8,139,577
Fowler	NSW	52,057	3,904	1,041	0.21	1,598,147	12,421	1,242,148	2,806,313	5,646,608
Gilmore	NSW	49,123	3,684	982	0.20	1,508,073	15,216	1,521,577	4,851,599	7,881,249
Grayndler	NSW	45,219	3,391	904	0.18	1,388,214	14,010	1,400,963	1,432,829	4,222,006
Greenway	NSW	60,463	4,535	1,209	0.24	1,856,202	14,395	1,439,472	4,161,620	7,457,294
Hughes	NSW	45,090	3,382	902	0.18	1,384,263	11,383	1,138,266	3,181,722	5,704,251
Hume	NSW	51,628	3,872	1,033	0.21	1,584,986	13,460	1,346,029	4,697,634	7,628,649

Hunter	NSW	52,326	3,924	1,047	0.21	1,606,408	14,513	1,451,336	4,867,950	7,925,694
Kingsford Smith	NSW	54,580	4,093	1,092	0.22	1,675,603	16,020	1,601,972	1,579,407	4,856,982
Lindsay	NSW	56,355	4,227	1,127	0.23	1,730,108	14,808	1,480,810	4,184,777	7,395,694
Lyne	NSW	47,204	3,540	944	0.19	1,449,166	14,594	1,459,406	4,681,698	7,590,270
Macarthur	NSW	61,650	4,624	1,233	0.25	1,892,664	15,006	1,500,612	4,702,282	8,095,559
Mackellar	NSW	46,616	3,496	932	0.19	1,431,114	12,419	1,241,863	2,984,016	5,656,993
Macquarie	NSW	43,599	3,270	872	0.17	1,338,489	12,197	1,219,714	4,129,167	6,687,370
McMahon	NSW	52,695	3,952	1,054	0.21	1,617,727	12,381	1,238,135	3,332,284	6,188,146
Mitchell	NSW	56,464	4,235	1,129	0.23	1,733,433	13,382	1,338,156	3,952,543	7,024,132
New England	NSW	47,595	3,570	952	0.19	1,461,157	14,300	1,430,020	4,784,950	7,676,128
Newcastle	NSW	49,849	3,739	997	0.20	1,530,352	14,787	1,478,748	3,789,863	6,798,963
North Sydney	NSW	50,163	3,762	1,003	0.20	1,539,995	15,415	1,541,468	1,795,539	4,877,001
Page	NSW	50,635	3,798	1,013	0.20	1,554,501	15,348	1,534,801	4,907,541	7,996,843
Parkes	NSW	46,490	3,487	930	0.19	1,427,246	14,036	1,403,573	4,614,883	7,445,702
Parramatta	NSW	60,983	4,574	1,220	0.24	1,872,190	16,239	1,623,902	2,258,845	5,754,937
Paterson	NSW	52,673	3,951	1,053	0.21	1,617,073	15,037	1,503,661	4,775,156	7,895,890
Reid	NSW	60,546	4,541	1,211	0.24	1,858,762	17,253	1,725,283	1,965,689	5,549,734
Richmond	NSW	50,231	3,767	1,005	0.20	1,542,086	15,274	1,527,367	3,928,224	6,997,676
Riverina	NSW	48,405	3,630	968	0.19	1,486,024	14,270	1,427,038	4,768,599	7,681,661
Robertson	NSW	45,592	3,419	912	0.18	1,399,671	13,638	1,363,814	3,734,170	6,497,656
Shortland	NSW	45,577	3,418	912	0.18	1,399,202	13,349	1,334,911	4,257,402	6,991,514
Sydney	NSW	61,265	4,595	1,225	0.25	1,880,820	21,960	2,196,006	192,809	4,269,635
Warringah	NSW	45,246	3,393	905	0.18	1,389,043	13,049	1,304,867	2,007,355	4,701,265
Watson	NSW	54,946	4,121	1,099	0.22	1,686,848	13,553	1,355,305	2,336,616	5,378,770
Wentworth	NSW	43,831	3,287	877	0.18	1,345,599	13,861	1,386,051	892,001	3,623,651
Werriwa	NSW	59,752	4,481	1,195	0.24	1,834,374	13,040	1,303,968	4,101,611	7,239,953
Whitlam	NSW	50,564	3,792	1,011	0.20	1,552,299	14,183	1,418,332	4,497,687	7,468,318

Aston	VIC	47,731	3,580	955	0.19	1,465,339	12,934	1,293,398	4,066,004	6,824,740
Ballarat	VIC	45,673	3,425	913	0.18	1,402,158	13,620	1,361,972	4,510,635	7,274,765
Bendigo	VIC	45,767	3,432	915	0.18	1,405,032	13,670	1,367,016	4,741,375	7,513,423
Bruce	VIC	53,742	4,031	1,075	0.21	1,649,870	13,444	1,344,406	4,160,541	7,154,818
Calwell	VIC	56,545	4,241	1,131	0.23	1,735,919	12,776	1,277,586	4,245,616	7,259,122
Casey	VIC	47,233	3,542	945	0.19	1,450,059	12,796	1,279,626	4,532,630	7,262,315
Chisholm	VIC	55,097	4,132	1,102	0.22	1,691,463	14,924	1,492,389	3,762,971	6,946,822
Cooper	VIC	46,884	3,516	938	0.19	1,439,330	14,241	1,424,143	3,019,623	5,883,096
Corangamite	VIC	45,826	3,437	917	0.18	1,406,846	12,759	1,275,876	4,446,642	7,129,364
Corio	VIC	47,773	3,583	955	0.19	1,466,619	14,234	1,423,441	4,412,612	7,302,672
Deakin	VIC	50,133	3,760	1,003	0.20	1,539,083	13,943	1,394,253	4,362,397	7,295,733
Dunkley	VIC	47,404	3,555	948	0.19	1,455,291	13,584	1,358,376	4,141,617	6,955,283
Flinders	VIC	45,107	3,383	902	0.18	1,384,770	13,726	1,372,564	4,399,913	7,157,247
Fraser	VIC	52,916	3,969	1,058	0.21	1,624,533	14,786	1,478,551	3,452,302	6,555,386
Gellibrand	VIC	56,995	4,275	1,140	0.23	1,749,753	14,684	1,468,397	4,291,515	7,509,665
Gippsland	VIC	46,307	3,473	926	0.19	1,421,628	14,288	1,428,792	4,852,346	7,702,766
Goldstein	VIC	46,421	3,482	928	0.19	1,425,119	13,237	1,323,705	2,897,032	5,645,855
Gorton	VIC	53,430	4,007	1,069	0.21	1,640,301	12,506	1,250,613	4,123,440	7,014,354
Hawke	VIC	49,617	3,721	992	0.20	1,523,233	12,911	1,291,139	4,447,970	7,262,342
Higgins	VIC	46,519	3,489	930	0.19	1,428,121	15,380	1,537,959	1,919,790	4,885,870
Holt	VIC	56,177	4,213	1,124	0.22	1,724,619	13,009	1,300,942	4,436,018	7,461,578
Hotham	VIC	58,677	4,401	1,174	0.23	1,801,384	15,410	1,541,007	3,995,620	7,338,011
Indi	VIC	46,986	3,524	940	0.19	1,442,470	14,400	1,439,955	4,934,101	7,816,526
Isaacs	VIC	48,158	3,612	963	0.19	1,478,444	13,643	1,364,275	3,039,875	5,882,594
Jagajaga	VIC	47,661	3,575	953	0.19	1,463,183	13,223	1,322,279	3,916,604	6,702,067
Kooyong	VIC	49,006	3,675	980	0.20	1,504,490	13,904	1,390,371	2,822,000	5,716,862
La Trobe	VIC	50,841	3,813	1,017	0.20	1,560,809	12,633	1,263,310	4,349,781	7,173,900

Lalor	VIC	60,397	4,530	1,208	0.24	1,854,185	14,578	1,457,805	4,853,425	8,165,415
Macnamara	VIC	50,424	3,782	1,008	0.20	1,548,017	18,290	1,828,989	812,985	4,189,991
Mallee	VIC	50,292	3,772	1,006	0.20	1,543,955	15,620	1,561,994	5,233,399	8,339,348
Maribyrnong	VIC	46,022	3,452	920	0.18	1,412,888	13,783	1,378,266	2,849,473	5,640,627
McEwen	VIC	47,968	3,598	959	0.19	1,472,624	12,058	1,205,766	4,266,283	6,944,673
Melbourne	VIC	59,989	4,499	1,200	0.24	1,841,668	21,749	2,174,932	478,163	4,494,763
Menzies	VIC	51,857	3,889	1,037	0.21	1,591,995	14,040	1,404,012	3,725,621	6,721,627
Monash	VIC	43,905	3,293	878	0.18	1,347,874	13,473	1,347,279	4,633,807	7,328,960
Nicholls	VIC	47,852	3,589	957	0.19	1,469,059	14,157	1,415,656	4,761,378	7,646,094
Scullin	VIC	51,120	3,834	1,022	0.20	1,569,375	12,964	1,296,358	4,110,741	6,976,474
Wannon	VIC	46,367	3,477	927	0.19	1,423,452	14,305	1,430,459	4,907,458	7,761,368
Wills	VIC	47,496	3,562	950	0.19	1,458,118	14,241	1,424,143	2,894,127	5,776,388
Blair	QLD	56,984	4,274	1,140	0.23	1,749,421	15,323	1,532,301	5,182,022	8,463,744
Bonner	QLD	48,865	3,665	977	0.20	1,500,152	13,204	1,320,415	3,839,248	6,659,816
Bowman	QLD	47,767	3,582	955	0.19	1,466,435	13,315	1,331,534	4,200,796	6,998,764
Brisbane	QLD	54,977	4,123	1,100	0.22	1,687,779	18,189	1,818,880	2,292,460	5,799,118
Capricornia	QLD	47,938	3,595	959	0.19	1,471,684	13,531	1,353,113	4,337,663	7,162,460
Dawson	QLD	48,625	3,647	972	0.19	1,492,784	14,148	1,414,757	4,219,803	7,127,345
Dickson	QLD	47,871	3,590	957	0.19	1,469,649	12,509	1,250,942	4,009,730	6,730,320
Fadden	QLD	58,385	4,379	1,168	0.23	1,792,423	16,237	1,623,748	3,804,803	7,220,974
Fairfax	QLD	50,840	3,813	1,017	0.20	1,560,782	14,794	1,479,384	3,943,413	6,983,579
Fisher	QLD	51,656	3,874	1,033	0.21	1,585,824	14,860	1,485,985	4,075,466	7,147,275
Flynn	QLD	47,603	3,570	952	0.19	1,461,415	14,118	1,411,841	4,589,485	7,462,741
Forde	QLD	58,004	4,350	1,160	0.23	1,780,707	15,006	1,500,634	4,687,425	7,968,767
Griffith	QLD	53,277	3,996	1,066	0.21	1,635,595	16,403	1,640,327	2,615,745	5,891,667
Groom	QLD	48,259	3,619	965	0.19	1,481,557	13,769	1,376,862	4,220,052	7,078,472
Herbert	QLD	49,214	3,691	984	0.20	1,510,864	14,063	1,406,336	4,127,341	7,044,541

Hinkler	QLD	46,970	3,523	939	0.19	1,441,964	14,666	1,466,621	4,508,145	7,416,730
Kennedy	QLD	51,421	3,857	1,028	0.21	1,578,612	15,798	1,579,823	4,804,123	7,962,558
Leichhardt	QLD	52,686	3,951	1,054	0.21	1,617,460	15,580	1,558,003	3,892,202	7,067,665
Lilley	QLD	48,467	3,635	969	0.19	1,487,949	14,391	1,439,055	3,611,247	6,538,252
Longman	QLD	55,977	4,198	1,120	0.22	1,718,485	15,225	1,522,520	4,772,583	8,013,588
Maranoa	QLD	45,427	3,407	909	0.18	1,394,597	14,161	1,416,051	4,696,223	7,506,871
McPherson	QLD	49,082	3,681	982	0.20	1,506,830	13,983	1,398,332	2,858,188	5,763,349
Moncrieff	QLD	54,643	4,098	1,093	0.22	1,677,537	17,239	1,723,924	2,537,642	5,939,103
Moreton	QLD	50,543	3,791	1,011	0.20	1,551,664	13,495	1,349,494	3,683,374	6,584,532
Oxley	QLD	55,956	4,197	1,119	0.22	1,717,840	13,820	1,381,972	4,456,436	7,556,248
Petrie	QLD	55,586	4,169	1,112	0.22	1,706,475	15,723	1,572,279	4,451,871	7,730,625
Rankin	QLD	56,057	4,204	1,121	0.22	1,720,944	13,853	1,385,305	4,205,776	7,312,025
Ryan	QLD	49,139	3,685	983	0.20	1,508,570	13,170	1,316,994	3,423,584	6,249,149
Wide Bay	QLD	45,671	3,425	913	0.18	1,402,094	13,974	1,397,389	4,486,731	7,286,213
Wright	QLD	54,500	4,087	1,090	0.22	1,673,135	13,610	1,360,985	4,847,449	7,881,569
Adelaide	SA	59,286	4,446	1,186	0.24	1,820,089	17,962	1,796,204	3,721,720	7,338,014
Barker	SA	51,506	3,863	1,030	0.21	1,581,237	15,791	1,579,099	5,274,069	8,434,405
Boothby	SA	52,688	3,952	1,054	0.21	1,617,515	15,992	1,599,231	3,934,864	7,151,610
Grey	SA	51,446	3,858	1,029	0.21	1,579,377	16,510	1,650,985	5,177,042	8,407,404
Hindmarsh	SA	51,760	3,882	1,035	0.21	1,589,020	15,868	1,586,775	4,052,060	7,227,854
Kingston	SA	49,832	3,737	997	0.20	1,529,827	14,585	1,458,485	4,901,648	7,889,960
Makin	SA	52,127	3,910	1,043	0.21	1,600,302	14,509	1,450,876	4,747,102	7,798,280
Mayo	SA	52,121	3,909	1,042	0.21	1,600,099	15,232	1,523,200	5,382,467	8,505,766
Spence	SA	56,468	4,235	1,129	0.23	1,733,571	15,567	1,556,731	4,852,512	8,142,813
Sturt	SA	56,206	4,215	1,124	0.22	1,725,530	16,574	1,657,410	4,269,271	7,652,212
Brand	WA	54,464	4,085	1,089	0.22	1,672,048	14,640	1,464,033	5,017,848	8,153,929
Burt	WA	54,699	4,102	1,094	0.22	1,679,259	14,460	1,446,007	4,815,992	7,941,258

Canning	WA	47,984	3,599	960	0.19	1,473,103	13,511	1,351,073	4,486,731	7,310,907
Cowan	WA	54,053	4,054	1,081	0.22	1,659,430	15,180	1,517,981	4,484,905	7,662,316
Curtin	WA	51,912	3,893	1,038	0.21	1,593,698	15,086	1,508,639	3,286,634	6,388,971
Durack	WA	60,434	4,533	1,209	0.24	1,855,308	18,836	1,883,638	5,160,608	8,899,555
Forrest	WA	47,400	3,555	948	0.19	1,455,171	13,630	1,363,047	4,494,118	7,312,336
Fremantle	WA	50,035	3,753	1,001	0.20	1,536,062	14,536	1,453,639	4,047,080	7,036,781
Hasluck	WA	52,422	3,932	1,048	0.21	1,609,346	13,820	1,381,994	4,668,501	7,659,841
Moore	WA	49,234	3,693	985	0.20	1,511,481	13,183	1,318,288	4,332,683	7,162,452
O'Connor	WA	52,821	3,962	1,056	0.21	1,621,614	15,794	1,579,384	5,256,556	8,457,554
Pearce	WA	53,254	3,994	1,065	0.21	1,634,895	13,619	1,361,906	4,797,898	7,794,699
Perth	WA	54,578	4,093	1,092	0.22	1,675,557	17,986	1,798,551	3,190,022	6,664,129
Swan	WA	56,962	4,272	1,139	0.23	1,748,721	17,114	1,711,358	4,061,688	7,521,767
Tangney	WA	55,188	4,139	1,104	0.22	1,694,262	14,428	1,442,783	4,544,748	7,681,794
Bass	TAS	32,993	2,474	660	0.13	1,012,888	10,018	1,001,797	3,221,313	5,235,998
Braddon	TAS	32,867	2,465	657	0.13	1,009,011	10,305	1,030,459	3,505,173	5,544,643
Clark	TAS	33,525	2,514	671	0.13	1,029,218	9,962	996,161	2,836,276	4,861,655
Franklin	TAS	33,550	2,516	671	0.13	1,029,982	9,723	972,302	3,421,343	5,423,626
Lyons	TAS	33,920	2,544	678	0.14	1,041,347	10,307	1,030,657	3,599,959	5,671,963
Lingiari	NT	36,301	2,723	726	0.15	1,114,447	9,486	948,617	2,350,311	4,413,375
Solomon	NT	33,086	2,481	662	0.13	1,015,752	9,382	938,157	1,957,140	3,911,049
Bean	ACT	45,783	3,434	916	0.18	1,405,538	12,911	1,291,139	3,526,089	6,222,766
Canberra	ACT	43,652	3,274	873	0.17	1,340,119	12,998	1,299,757	2,316,364	4,956,241
Fenner	ACT	47,480	3,561	950	0.19	1,457,639	12,712	1,271,205	3,302,155	6,030,999
Total		7,610,970	570,823	152,219	30	233,656,770	2,150,964	215,096,426	581,276,307	1,030,029,503

CONCLUSION

To deal with Australia's fire ant problem, Commonwealth, state and territory governments have formed the National Fire Ant Eradication Program,²² which aims to eradicate RIFA from Australia by 2032.²³ To achieve this target, a Fire Ant Response Plan has been developed to cover the years 2023–27.²⁴ A total of \$592.8 million has been pledged by Commonwealth and state and territory governments to fund the Plan over this four-year period.²⁵ This means that, over the four years from 2023-27, funding for RIFA control amounts to an average of \$148.2 million per year.

However, a 2021 report prepared for the Steering Committee of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program estimates that it will cost between \$200 million and \$300 million per year, every year for ten years, to eradicate RIFA in Australia.²⁶ Previous research by the Australia Institute shows that investing in RIFA eradication is worthwhile, as the benefits far outweigh the costs.²⁷

Current funding for RIFA eradication is far below what is needed, and this puts all Australians at risk. Not only will future costs of mitigation be much higher than the cost of eradication now, RIFA will kill people and their pets. Australia has a crucial window in which to halt the spread of RIFA and protect Australia's environment, economy, and communities, but this requires proper investment now.

²² Australian Government (2024) *National Management Group for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/partnerships/rifa-eradication>; National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2024) *National Management Group*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/home/about-us/national-management-group>

²³ Australian Government (2023) *National Management Group for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/partnerships/rifa-eradication>

²⁴ National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2024) *Fire Ant Response Plan 2023–27*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/home/about-us/fire-ant-response-plan>

²⁵ Australian Government (2024) *Funding, eradication priorities in fight against fire ants*, <https://minister.agriculture.gov.au/watt/media-releases/funding-eradication-fire-ants>

²⁶ Scott-Orr, Gruber and Zacharin (2021) *National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review August 2021*.

²⁷ Le and Campbell (2024) *Red imported fire ants - the benefits of avoiding a national disaster*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/red-imported-fire-ants-the-benefits-of-avoiding-a-national-disaster>