

# Red Imported Fire Ants and Australian households

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*If allowed to spread across Australia, red imported fire ants could cost Australian households \$1.08 billion in medical, veterinary and management costs every year. Costs could be largest in NSW and Victoria, each around \$300m per year. Annually, fire ants could cause an additional 623,693 medical visits, and 33 deaths due to anaphylaxis. Pets could need an extra 2.3 million vet visits and thousands could die each year.*

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Rod Campbell

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## INTRODUCTION

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Red Imported Fire Ants (fire ants) were first detected in Australia in 2001, near the Port of Brisbane.<sup>1</sup> Despite more than 20 years of containment efforts, Fire ants remain

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<sup>1</sup> National Fire Ant Eradication Program (n.d.) *How fire ants arrived in Australia*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/stop/how-fire-ants-arrived-in-australia>

a growing threat.<sup>2</sup> If allowed to continue their spread across Australia, fire ants could cause significant environmental, social and economic damage – to the tune of more than \$22 billion by the 2040s.<sup>3</sup> Despite ongoing containment efforts, fire ants have been detected in parts of NSW,<sup>4</sup> and intercepted on transported plant matter in Victoria,<sup>5</sup> Western Australia<sup>6</sup> and Tasmania.<sup>7</sup> Modelling shows that fire ants are expected to reach the Murray–Darling Basin by 2035,<sup>8</sup> potentially threatening its \$30 billion agricultural industry and an \$11 billion tourism industry.<sup>9</sup>

Until July 2025, Queensland was only actively targeting fire ants in the warmer months on the incorrect assumption that their tendency to be less active in winter would result in eradication treatment being ineffective.<sup>10</sup>

All of Australia provides suitable habitat for fire ants except for the highland areas of Tasmania and the Snowy Mountains.<sup>11</sup> Fire ants are highly resilient and can survive

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

<sup>3</sup> 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>

<sup>4</sup> National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2024) *Fire and detections in New South Wales*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/stop/outlier-detections/nsw>

<sup>5</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport (2024) *Red imported fire ants in Australia: Don't Let This Come Back to Bite Us*, p 53, [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportsen/RB000305/toc\\_pdf/RedimportedfireantsinAustralia.pdf](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportsen/RB000305/toc_pdf/RedimportedfireantsinAustralia.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Jarvis (2023) *Media Release – Western Australia declared free of invasive ant pest*, <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook%20Labor%20Government/Western-Australia-declared-free-of-invasive-ant-pest-20231021>

<sup>7</sup> Rojahn (2024) 'Red fire ant imported from Queensland found in Tasmania after package intercepted in post', *ABC News*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-26/red-imported-fire-ant-from-queensland-found-in-tasmania/103391108>

<sup>8</sup> Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

<sup>9</sup> Murray-Darling Basin Authority (2025) 'About the Murray–Darling Basin' in *Murray-Darling Basin Authority Annual Report 2024-25*, <https://www.transparency.gov.au/publications/agriculture/murray-darling-basin-authority/murray-darling-basin-authority-annual-report-2024-25/part-1%3A-overview/about-the-murray%E2%80%93darling-basin>

<sup>10</sup> Invasive Species Council (2026) *Residents urged to seize winter window in fire ant eradication fight*, <https://invasives.org.au/media-releases/residents-urged-to-seize-winter-window-in-fire-ant-eradication-fight/>

Perrett (2025) *Boosting fire ant eradication efforts all year round*, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/102965>

<sup>11</sup> Scott-Orr, Gruber and Zacharin (2021) *National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review August 2021*, p 20, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/partnerships/rifa-eradication/strategic-program-review>

bushfires, making fire-affected areas particularly susceptible to fire ant activity.<sup>12</sup> These “notorious hitch-hikers”<sup>13</sup> can spread via human-assisted dispersal, including on transported plants and plant matter, agricultural equipment and packaging, and can raft on flowing water,<sup>14</sup> as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Fire ants forming a raft on floodwaters**



Source: Invasive Species Council (n.d.)

Fire ants are aggressive and territorial, and if their nests are disturbed, they will swarm and repeatedly sting.<sup>15</sup> As such, they pose a major risk to humans, pets and livestock, as shown in Figure 2.

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<sup>12</sup> Scott-Orr, Gruber and Zacharin (2021) *National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review August 2021*, p 20

<sup>13</sup> Department of Climate Change Energy the Environment and Water (2024) *Red Imported Fire Ants in Australia submission*, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=1b3c992b-3a9a-4ee9-981e-a3a5eede7753&subId=752172>

<sup>14</sup> Wylie et al. (2024) ‘Floods and fire ants, *Solenopsis invicta* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae): the Australian experience’, *Austral Entomology*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aen.12692>

<sup>15</sup> Daniels, Alder and Hayes (2025) *Biology & Behavior of Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA)*, <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/biology-behavior-of-red-imported-fire-ant-rifa>

**Figure 2: Fire ant stings on pet puppy and horse**



Source: Invasive Species Council (n.d.)

Unless eradication is urgently prioritised, fire ants will impose a significant financial burden on Australians. Previous research by The Australia Institute found that managing fire ant infestations and injuries could cost the residents of each electorate an average of over \$6.8 million every year.<sup>16</sup> The updated figures contained within this brief estimate that if fire ants become established nationwide, households could collectively spend \$1.08 billion every year to manage outbreaks and cover related medical and veterinary costs. More than 8.3 million people could be stung annually, with 623,000 of those seeking medical attention as a result. Of those stung, 33 could die due to anaphylaxis.

## METHOD

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

- Medical costs
  - Population for each state and territory is consistent with the September 2025 ABS data.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Campbell and Le (2025) *Red Imported Fire Ants and Australian electorates*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/red-imported-fire-ants-and-australian-electorates/>

<sup>17</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (Sept 2025) *National, state and territory population*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/sep-2025>

- 30% of the population will be stung each year.<sup>18</sup>
- 7.5% of people stung will seek medical attention.<sup>19</sup>
- One standard, non-bulk-billed medical visit costs \$100.<sup>20</sup>
- 2% of people stung will need an EpiPen due to anaphylactic reaction.<sup>21</sup>
- An EpiPen costs \$80.<sup>22</sup>
- 0.02% of people who require an EpiPen after a fire ant attack die.<sup>23</sup>
- The value of a statistical life is \$5.87 million.<sup>24</sup>
- Veterinary costs
  - As a proxy for the number of households affected by fire ants, we used the number of occupied private dwellings from the 2021 ABS Census.<sup>25</sup>
  - 49.3% of Australian households have at least one dog, and 33.6% have at least one cat.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 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>

<sup>19</sup> 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, *Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease*, <https://doi.org/10.3390/tropicalmed9040069>

<sup>20</sup> 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>

<sup>21</sup> 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, *Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease*; 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:10.5694/j.1326-5377.2002.tb04548.x>

<sup>22</sup> Chemist Warehouse (2026) *EpiPen 300mcg Injection 1 - Adrenaline (Epinephrine) (S3)*, <https://www.chemistwarehouse.com.au/buy/114359/epipen-300mcg-injection-1-adrenaline-epinephrine-s3>; Chemist Warehouse (2026) *EpiPen Junior 150mcg 1 Injection - Adrenaline (Epinephrine) (S3)*, <https://www.chemistwarehouse.com.au/buy/65428/epipen-junior-150mcg-1-injection-adrenaline-epinephrine-s3>

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> Australia Government (2026) *Value of statistical life*, <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-02/value-statistical-life-guidance-note.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *2021 Census-selected dwelling characteristics/Dwelling and Household Characteristics/Occupied private dwelling*, <https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml>

<sup>26</sup> Animal Medicines Australia (2025) *Pets in Australia: A national survey of pets and people*, p 7 [https://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/SNR-2403006-Pet-Ownership-Study-2025-Designed\\_F3.pdf](https://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/SNR-2403006-Pet-Ownership-Study-2025-Designed_F3.pdf)

- The average number of dogs per dog-owning household is 1.4 and the average number of cats that a cat-owning household has is 1.6.<sup>27</sup>
- 19% of pets that are stung each year will require veterinary care.<sup>28</sup>
- One vet visit costs \$100.<sup>29</sup>
- Household control costs:
  - We assume that people living in apartments will not spend on ant control, while people in occupied standalone houses will. Therefore, our calculations of household investment in fire ant control are based on the number of occupied standalone houses from the 2021 ABS Census.<sup>30</sup>
  - Each household in standalone houses will pay \$83 annually in pesticide/pest control expenses.<sup>31</sup>

These estimates do not quantify the total cost of widespread fire ant infestation as they do not include any environmental costs, costs to agriculture, or costs to industry and government from impacted recreational spaces, infrastructure and service delivery. While these costs can be considerable,<sup>32</sup> the availability of reliable data makes them difficult to accurately calculate. We have therefore chosen to omit these costs.

These estimates also do not include impacts on pets other than cats and dogs, nor does it include an anticipated death-toll of family pets or livestock. Fire ants have the

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<sup>27</sup> Animal Medicines Australia (2025) *Pets in Australia*:

*A national survey of pets and people*, p 7

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> Cyrus (2024) 'Vet Fees in Australia Explained', *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/au/pet-insurance/vet-fees/>

<sup>30</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (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>

<sup>31</sup> Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

<sup>32</sup> Star and Rolfe (2021) *Assessing the Impacts of the Red Imported Fire Ant*, Report for Biosecurity Qld, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries; Scott-Orr, Gruber and Zacharin (2021) *National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review August 2021*; Wylie and Janssen-May (2016) 'Red Imported Fire Ant in Australia: What if we lose the war?', *Ecological Management & Restoration*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/emr.12238>

potential to kill cats, dogs, horses, and other animals;<sup>33</sup> however, given the absence of reliable data, we have chosen to omit specific figures from our calculations.

## RESULTS

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The results show that every year, across the country, fire ants could:

- Sting more than 8.32 million people (30% of the population).
- Cause 623,693 extra medical visits.
- Cause 166,318 people to develop anaphylactic reactions.
- Be responsible for 33 extra deaths every year.
- Result in medical costs of almost \$271 million.
- Cause 2.3 million extra vet visits for pet cats and dogs.
- Result in vet costs of \$228 million.
- Cost households \$581.28 million in eradication costs.
- Result in national average household costs of \$154.36, with those in the NT facing the highest costs (\$171.68).

Regarding pet mortality, there are few published estimates of how many pets die following fire ant stings although some sources suggest numbers could be substantial.<sup>34</sup> Given the importance that people attach to their pets, it is worth considering the general magnitude of the impacts fire ants could have. As calculated above, fire ants could result in over 2.3 million additional vet visits for dogs and cats each year. If just one in every thousand of these dies, this could result in 2,300 dead pets.

The table below estimates the annual cost of fire ants to households in each state and territory in Australia.

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<sup>33</sup> NSW Government (n.d.) *How do fire ants affect us?*, <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/biosecurity/invasive-plants-and-animals/insect-pests/rifa/how-do-fire-ants-affect-us>

<sup>34</sup> Wylie and Janssen-May (2016) 'Red Imported Fire Ant in Australia: What if we lose the war?', *Ecological Management & Restoration*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/emr.12238>

## Fire ant impact by state and territory

State / territory	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 fire ant stings per year	Total fire ant related medical cost per year (\$)	Number of dogs / cats are stung that need to be presented to the vet	Vet visit cost per year (\$)	Pesticide and pest control expenditure per year (\$)	Total fire ant related cost for each state/territory (\$)	Household costs per year (\$)
<b>QLD</b>	1,707,780	128,084	34,156	6.8	\$55,639,472	466,098	\$46,609,814	\$121,381,026	\$223,630,311.98	\$152.92
<b>NSW</b>	2,587,350	194,051	51,747	10.3	\$84,295,863	713,437	\$71,343,724	\$165,092,561	\$320,732,148.26	\$161.25
<b>VIC</b>	2,131,290	159,847	42,626	8.5	\$69,437,428	584,987	\$58,498,681	\$151,807,830	\$279,743,938.99	\$152.95
<b>SA</b>	572,460	42,935	11,449	2.3	\$18,650,747	168,703	\$16,870,278	\$46,312,755	\$81,833,779.52	\$146.66
<b>TAS</b>	173,010	12,976	3,460	0.7	\$5,636,666	53,522	\$5,352,212	\$16,584,064	\$27,572,942.05	\$138.00
<b>WA</b>	918,510	68,888	18,370	3.7	\$29,925,056	240,223	\$24,022,331	\$66,646,012	\$120,593,398.39	\$150.19
<b>NT</b>	79,650	5,974	1,593	0.3	\$2,594,997	20,071	\$2,007,088	\$4,307,451	\$8,909,536.34	\$171.68
<b>ACT</b>	145,860	10,940	2,917	0.6	\$4,752,119	41,084	\$4,108,376	\$9,144,608	\$18,005,102.76	\$163.42
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>8,315,910</b>	<b>623,693</b>	<b>166,318</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>\$270,932,348</b>	<b>2,288,125</b>	<b>\$228,812,504</b>	<b>\$581,276,307</b>	<b>\$1,081,021,158.31</b>	<b>\$154.36</b>

## Queensland

Until July 2025,<sup>35</sup> the Queensland government was only conducting eradication treatments in warmer months, under the false understanding that fire ants were not active in winter. While this may be true for some cold regions,<sup>36</sup> fire ants in Queensland move closer to the ground's surface, meaning that mounds are easier to spot and treat.<sup>37</sup>

If Queensland's fire ant population continues to spread, over 1.7 million Queenslanders could be stung by fire ants every year, with some 128,000 people seeking medical attention as a result. Over 34,000 people could require an EpiPen, and seven people could die. Households could spend \$55 million on medical costs alone.

Households could expect to pay a combined \$121.4 million every year on eradication and treatment of fire ant infestations. For their pet cats and dogs, homeowners could face collective vet costs of \$46.6 million.

In total, Queensland households could expect to spend \$223.6 million on medical, veterinary and management costs. That is a \$35 million increase on the figures calculated by The Australia Institute in 2024,<sup>38</sup> and equates to an annual bill of \$153 per household.

## New South Wales

In total, household costs for those in NSW could exceed \$320 million if fire ants are allowed to spread to the state. Per household, that equates to \$161 every year.

Roughly 2.6 million people in NSW could be stung by fire ants, and NSW hospitals could expect to see an additional 194,051 medical visits and 10 deaths caused by fire ant stings every year. These medical-related costs equate to almost \$84.3 million annually.

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<sup>35</sup> Perrett (2025) *Boosting fire ant eradication efforts all year round*, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/102965>

<sup>36</sup> National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2023) *Eradication Plan 2023 – 2027*, app 2, p 7 <https://invasives.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/National-Fire-Ant-Eradication-Program-response-plan-Appendices.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Invasive Species Council (2026) *Residents urged to seize winter window in fire ant eradication fight*, <https://invasives.org.au/media-releases/residents-urged-to-seize-winter-window-in-fire-ant-eradication-fight/>

<sup>38</sup> Le and Campbell (2024) *Impact of fire ants in Queensland electorates*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/impact-of-fire-ants-in-queensland-electorates/>

More than 700,000 dogs and cats could require a vet visit, costing pet owners more than \$71.3 million annually.

NSW residents could spend over \$165 million per year to suppress fire ant outbreaks and cover pest control treatment.

## Victoria

We estimate that the total fire ant-related costs for Victorian households could exceed \$279.7 million per year. That figure includes \$151.8 million in pest control measures, roughly \$58.5 million in veterinary costs, and \$69.4 million in medical costs. By household, this equates to \$153.

More than 2.1 million people in Victoria could be stung by fire ants, and 42,626 of them could need to use an EpiPen for their fire ant stings. Eight people could die from being stung every year.

The medical system could expect to see an additional 159,847 GP visits to deal with fire ant-related injuries and veterinarians could see an additional 584,987 pet cats and dogs for treatment.

## South Australia

In South Australia, 572,500 people could be stung by fire ants every year, with 43,000 requiring medical attention and some 11,500 needing an EpiPen. Of those who face an anaphylactic reaction, two could die.

The associated medical costs with fire ant expansion into the state could exceed \$18.6 million every year. Pet cat and dog owners could face collective vet costs of \$16.9 million for the 168,000 vet visits needed to treat fire ant stings.

Yearly costs associated with home pest control could reach over \$46.3 million. In total, South Australian households could face an annual bill of almost \$82 million – per household, that is \$147 each.

## Tasmania

If fire ants were to spread into Tasmania, households could face a collective annual bill of almost \$27.6 million in fire ant-related costs. Per household, that equates to \$138.

To treat their yards, homeowners will need to spend a collective \$16.6 million on pest control. More than 173,000 people could be stung in Tasmania every year, with 12,976

having to seek medical attention as a result. For those who are stung, 3,460 may need to use an EpiPen to treat their anaphylactic reactions, and most years, one could die from it. Medical costs alone will cost Tasmanians some \$5.6 million.

Households with pets may also face a cumulative annual bill of \$53,522 for treatment of pet cats and dogs that have been stung. That represents an additional 53,000 vet visits for family pets.

## **Western Australia**

In WA, total fire ant-related expenditure for households could exceed \$120.6 million every year. That figure consists of \$29.9 million in medical costs, \$24 million in vet costs, and \$66.6 million in pest control. For each household in WA, that means an additional annual bill of \$150.

Every year, 918,510 people in Western Australia could be stung, with almost 69,000 seeking medical attention as a result. Of the 18,370 people who are anaphylactic to fire ant stings and need an EpiPen, four could die.

Some 240,223 pet cats and dogs could require vet visits for fire ant sting treatment and assessment, costing pet owners over \$24 million in vet fees.

## **Northern Territory**

Despite the NT having the lowest total estimated fire ant-related costs, totalling some \$8.9 million annually, the burden on individual households would be the highest at roughly \$172 per year.

For pest control and treatment, households in the NT could face a collective annual bill of some \$4.3 million. Those costs are in addition to the potential \$2.6 million in medical-related fees, and vet costs of \$2 million.

Over 79,600 people living in the NT could be stung by fire ants, and more than 5,970 of Territorians could be forced to seek medical attention for their stings. Some 1,593 people could require an EpiPen to treat anaphylactic reactions to fire ant stings. Every three years, someone could die.

## **Australian Capital Territory**

If fire ants were to spread to the ACT, households could expect to pay a collective \$18 million in fire ant-related costs. Per household, that equates to \$163 every year.

Some 145,860 people could be stung every year, with almost 11,000 of those stung seeking out medical attention. Of those stung, 2,917 may need an EpiPen, and most years, someone could die. Medical-related costs for those in the ACT could reach \$4.8 million every year.

Veterinary costs associated with the 41,000 pet cats and dogs who are stung by fire ants could cost \$4.1 million every year. To treat and eradicate fire ants from their homes, homeowners could spend \$9.1 million every year.

## CONCLUSION

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The National Fire Ant Eradication Program, formed by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments,<sup>39</sup> aims to eradicate fire ants from Australia by 2032.<sup>40</sup> This target coincides with the Summer Olympic and Paralympic games to be hosted in Brisbane – the epicentre of Australia’s fire ant invasion.

To achieve this target, the federal government, in collaboration with the states and territories, created a \$592.8 million Fire Ant Response Plan to fund fire ant management and eradication activities from 2023 to 2027.<sup>41</sup> The Plan allocates an average of \$148.2 million per year,<sup>42</sup> and in 2025 the Queensland government provided an additional \$24 million for aerial treatments.<sup>43</sup> In its most-recent budget, the Queensland government provided a further \$7.2 million for the program, bringing its total funding for 2026-27 to \$10.5 million.<sup>44</sup> However, a 2021 report prepared for the Steering Committee of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program

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<sup>39</sup> 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>

<sup>40</sup> Australian Government (2023) *National Management Group for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/partnerships/rifa-eradication>

<sup>41</sup> National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2024) *Fire Ant Response Plan 2023–27*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/home/about-us/fire-ant-response-plan>

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

<sup>42</sup> National Fire Ant Eradication Program (2024) *Fire Ant Response Plan 2023–27*, <https://www.fireants.org.au/home/about-us/fire-ant-response-plan>; Australian Government (2024) *Funding, eradication priorities in fight against fire ants*, <https://minister.agriculture.gov.au/watt/media-releases/funding-eradication-fire-ants>

<sup>43</sup> Perrett (2025) *Media Statement: Record \$24 million boost for fire ant suppression*, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/102225>

<sup>44</sup> Queensland Government (2026) *Budget Measures 2026-27*, <https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/2026-27-budget-bp4-budget-measures.pdf>

estimates that it will cost between \$200 million and \$300 million per year, every year for ten years, to eradicate fire ants in Australia.<sup>45</sup>

Current funding by federal, state and territory governments is far below what is required to eradicate fire ants in Australia, putting all Australians, and their pets, at risk. Previous research by The Australia Institute shows that the benefits of investing in fire ant eradication far outweigh the costs.<sup>46</sup> If eradication is delayed, the costs of mitigation will only rise. Australia has a crucial window in which to halt the spread of fire ants and protect Australia's environment, economy, and communities. To achieve eradication of fire ants, sufficient investment is needed now.

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<sup>45</sup> Scott-Orr, Gruber and Zacharin (2021) *National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review August 2021*, pp 49-57

<sup>46</sup> 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>