

# Eradication of red fire ants from Australia: Statement of Concern

## An open letter to Australian governments

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the spread of red fire ants. We support full eradication of red fire ants in Australia.

Red fire ants will impact Australia's outdoor way of life. They will infest playgrounds, sporting fields and backyards, reduce agricultural output, do serious injury to those who live and work in infested areas and threaten the safety of our children and our unique native plants and animals.

**We call on all federal, state and territory governments to urgently:**

- Fund the eradication of red fire ants to the level recommended by the expert review into the red imported fire ant eradication program.
- Commit to fund the program until the job is complete to provide certainty and ensure success.
- Provide the necessary oversight and transparency to ensure eradication efforts are effective and accountable to governments and the public.
- Ensure effective biosecurity measures are in place to prevent the arrival of new infestations of red fire ants.

### Endorsed by



Open letter facilitated by the Invasive Species Council – [www.invasives.org.au](http://www.invasives.org.au). Authorised by Andrew Cox, CEO, 88B Station St, Fairfield Vic 3078. Photos: Fire ant full frontal, AntWeb.org (cc-by-sa-3.0); inset right, Alex Wild.



# Why we are concerned about red fire ants

## Invasive Species Council

"If Australia fails to eradicate fire ants almost no corner of the continent will be safe from these menacing predators. Fire ants can rapidly expand in numbers and have the potential to invade more than 99% of the nation. Once out of control fire ants would threaten every aspect of Australian life, including our farming communities, schools, sports grounds, tourism industries and unique natural heritage."

**Andrew Cox, CEO**

## National Farmers' Federation

"Red fire ants are a threat not just to agriculture but to the entire Australian community. The National Farmers' Federation advocates for a strong, robust and science-based approach to biosecurity – this includes proactive measures to maintain Australia's favourable pest and disease status."

**Tony Mahar, CEO**

## Nature Conservation Council of NSW

"People love spending time in Australia's great outdoors, visiting stunning beaches, beautiful bushland and iconic landmarks. Fire ants threaten our amazing natural places, and put our unique wildlife at risk. We must do all we can to manage the pending invasion before it is too late."

**Kate Smolski, CEO**

## Tambo Bluff Landcare Coastcare

"Red fire ants are an unacceptable threat to Australia's wildlife, agriculture and the enjoyment of all outdoor activities. Only a national eradication plan can succeed in eliminating this threat from our continent."

**Jonathan Smith, President**

## AgForce

"This aggressive stinging ant is a major threat to the survival of young calves and cattle in southeast Queensland. Human lifestyles and farming procedures would change forever if red imported fire ants are not eradicated. AgForce along with producer members across Queensland agree that surveillance and treatment must continue."

**Charles Burke, CEO**

## Victorian National Parks Association

"Red fire ants could make visiting our great national parks almost unbearable, and cause havoc to many of our birds, mammals, frogs and reptiles. Urgent, effective treatment is essential."

**Matt Ruchel, Executive Director**

## Sunnybank Community and Sports Club

"Fire ants are under control in our area right now but they would be a major disruption to our club's sport groups and community if they get out of control."

**Peter Carroll, Chairman**

## Conservation Council ACT Region

"Australia's stunning biodiversity is threatened by invasive species which take over habitat or even directly kill or eat our local species. We need to take early, decisive steps to reduce and eliminate threats such as fire ants. The leadership and lessons from dealing with fire ants can be shared across other species and other regions to better protect our natural environment now and into the future."

**Larry O'Loughlin, Executive Director**

## Local Government NSW

"We are concerned by the potential spread of red fire ants and the financial costs to affected councils and the social and environmental impacts on their communities."

**Cr Keith Rhoades, President**

## Queensland Regional NRM Groups' Collective

"The demonstrable impact these pests are having on the environment and people fully justify the magnitude of investment required and the NRM Groups in Queensland look forward to working with governments and communities to help implement the eradication program."

**Andrew Drysdale, CEO**

## Fruit Growers Tasmania

"We are very concerned over the potential expansion of red fire ants if eradication isn't funded into the future. This is a devastating pest in many ways and would immediately halt the transfer of nursery plants across state boundaries from affected areas. The potential economic impact of the fire ants could equal over time that of the Queensland fruit fly."

**Phil Pyke, Business Development Manager**





# Why we are concerned about red fire ants

## Sugarbag Bees

"Red imported fire ants pose a threat to native stingless bees. RIFA have a devastating impact on honey bees in southern USA. This ant is likely to become a pest of stingless bee colonies in Australia. In South America, where fire ants are native, stingless beekeepers often report hive losses to ants. They need to protect their hives to avoid major losses. Stingless bees are important pollinators of natural systems and crops, they must be protected from fire ants."

**Tim Heard, Director**

## Montrose Environmental Group

"On behalf of Montrose Environment Group I support the Statement of Concern. We feel the appropriate level of funding as outlined needs to be taken to ensure eradication of Red Fire Ants from Australia to protect our wildlife and prevent the need to be ever spending money to manage the impacts of this pest if eradication is not achieved and it becomes more widespread."

**Karen Davies, Treasurer**

## Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc

"Biosecurity standards in Australia have been disappointing for quite some time now. Fire ants, myrtle rust, and white spot disease are three issues that readily come to mind. The Federal Government needs to put substantially more \$\$\$s and resources in protecting our country from unwanted pests and diseases; and to eradicate existing problems."

**Frank Ondrus, President**

## National Parks Association of Queensland

"NPAQ is highly concerned what the impact of fire ants will be in Queensland. A fully funded eradication program is essential, in conjunction with effective biosecurity measures to stop further infestation."

**Laura Hahn, Conservation Officer**

## Australian Butterfly Conservation

"The Australian ecosystem has been impacted by many invasive species of flora and fauna. Some of these have seriously negative consequences on many native species but few are likely to impact on Australia's butterflies and moths like invasive species of ant. As many Australian butterflies have developed an intimate association (even dependency) with particular native 'attendant' ant species these are likely to now be under serious threat with the arrival of these highly aggressive non-natives. These will likely both attack Australia's butterflies and moths at all stages as well as attack their attendant ant colonies"

**Nils Beaven, Founder**

## Hinterland Bush Links

"Having worked for 40 years to protect Australia's biodiversity through habitat protection and restoration, it would be a nightmare to see those efforts negated. Acting now to eradicate Fire Ants is critical to the survival of our wildlife and the well-being of our community"

**Susie Duncan, Manager**

## Council of Australasian Weed Societies

"CAWS holds the concern that Australia's ability to control invasive plants in Australian natural, agricultural and aquatic systems would be severely negatively impacted if RIFA were allowed to spread across the country, with high social, environmental and economic costs associated with both RIFA and increased invasive plant species."

**Rachel Melland, President**

## Snowy River Interstate Landcare

"We all rely on communities and agencies to tackle invasive threats when they arise. Fire Ants are a most serious threat and a zero tolerance strategy is a must. We support a unified effort to fund and to complete the eradication of Fire Ants in Australia. Eradication really is a real no-brainer"

**Mark Chaplin, Coordinator**

## Canegrowers

"Our members are on the frontline trying to prevent this stinging ant from becoming a major impediment to agriculture in Queensland. Resources to eradicate imported fire ants are urgently needed to protect people and animals. At risk are our farms, bushland and great outdoors lifestyle."

**Dan Galligan, CEO**

**Open letter signatories:** Invasive Species Council, National Farmers' Federation, AgForce, Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Victorian National Parks Association, Local Government NSW, Queensland Regional NRM Groups' Collective, Fruit Growers Tasmania, Sunnybank Community and Sports Club, Conservation Council ACT Region, Sugarbag Bees, National Parks Association of Queensland, Darling Downs Environment Council, Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc, North Queensland Conservation Council, Hinterland Bush Links, Council of Australasian Weed Societies, Snowy River Interstate Landcare, Montrose Environmental Group, Tambo Bluff Landcare Coastcare, Australian Butterfly Conservation, Canegrowers.

