

## Yellow Crazy Ant

**Northern Australia Priority: Simpler Land Arrangements to Support Investment / Our Business, Trade and Investment Gateway / Good Governance for Northern Australia.**

**State Electorate:** Cairns / Barron River / Mulgrave      **Federal Electorate:** Leichhardt / Kennedy

**Council:** Cairns / Mareeba

### Priority Recommendation

The Wet Tropics Management Authority is seeking six million dollars a year from July 2019 to continue its successful Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program within and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

### Project Overview

The Wet Tropics Management Authority has led the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program since 2013. The program was significantly enhanced in 2016 as a result of a three year funding commitment from the Australian Government (\$7.5 million) and the Queensland Government (\$3.04 million). The program has delivered significant success and can point to on the ground results including:

- eradication declared at three infestation sites
- the halt of the spread of ants on the western boundary within the World Heritage Area
- 160ha at Bentley Park (adjacent to the World Heritage Area and Copperlode Dam) transitioned from full broadcast treatment to intensive surveys and spot treatments due to extremely low ant numbers
- ant activity across the entire infestation area has significantly reduced due to broadscale fipronil treatments.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority, working with the community and its partners, has now demonstrated that it can successfully locate and eradicate yellow crazy ants. Without further funding we will lose the capacity and the expertise for eradication. We believe it is vital to take advantage of this window of opportunity to keep the Cairns and Kuranda districts and the Wet Tropics safe from such a destructive invader.

### An environmental, social and economic threat

Yellow crazy ants (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*) are one of the world's 100 worst invasive species. Once well established, they swarm aggressively and destroy entire ecosystems, killing most other invertebrates and small animals. In such numbers they have the potential to affect photosynthesis and pollination of vegetation communities.

Yellow crazy ants are a threat to productivity in the sugar cane industry and other agriculture, and a direct threat to the health and lifestyle of local residents. They invade houses and yards, spraying acid on people and pets and destroying electrical appliances.

### Yellow crazy ant eradication—a partnership approach

The success to date of the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program is due to the innovative partnerships between the Authority and all levels of government, industry, Traditional Owners, media and community conservation groups.

For example, local Aboriginal ranger groups from Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Djabugay Bulmba actively participate in operational contracts and training programs. The Kuranda Community Volunteer Taskforce has contributed to monitoring, treatments, and property management plans in their area. The sugar industry is now playing an active role in reporting infestations and developing industry protocols to prevent further spread from harvesting machinery and cane trains.

## Yellow Crazy Ant (Cont.)

We have partnered with experts from the Commonwealth and State governments - sharing expertise and resources with Biosecurity Queensland and the Department of Environment and Science; and successfully negotiating more effective permit conditions for the use of fipronil products with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and the Department of the Environment and Energy.

### 2019 to 2022: the battle continues

With the continued collaboration of the Wet Tropics Management Authority and our committed partners we will see a marked decrease in broadscale aerial treatments as infestation areas continue to shrink. The attention will turn to intense surveys with focused treatment of areas with very low ant numbers. Many areas will move into post-treatment validation of eradication and treatment areas will contract.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority has established a program that is achieving significant success and repaying the faith that has been shown by the Australian and Queensland governments to date. Continued funding, post 2019, can only result in continued high value outcomes. The program is delivering and will continue to deliver:

- strong community awareness of the threats of the ants and support for the program—this includes over 200 volunteers from across two local government areas
- strong media interest in the program which has had widespread coverage on TV, regular radio spots and numerous articles in local press as well as Statewide and National Newspaper articles
- value for money, with the Authority successfully delivering on-ground and measurable results on budget and on target
- new and innovative techniques to eradicate tramp ants—the learnings from this program can be successfully applied to other incursions areas in Australia and abroad
- improvements to biosecurity in northern Australia—the program is establishing skills and capacity that will enable immediate and effective response to further biosecurity incursions
- success. The results so far strongly indicate that with continued investment there is a very real potential to achieve ultimate success—eradication within ten years.

Through the continuation of the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program we will see the return of active and biodiverse rainforest country. Residents will be able to reclaim their backyards without fear of attack from the acid sting of the yellow crazy ant. The sugar industry can expect to regain previous levels of production as yellow crazy ant populations continue to decline.

### Key Strategic Drivers

<b>Economic</b>	Identifies the strategic policy, projects and investment required to support continued economic growth and activity
<b>Social Enterprise</b>	Establishes a shared vision in support of improved quality of life for the community
<b>Employment</b>	Provides foundation for a strong economy supporting ongoing employment opportunities and growth.
<b>Tourism</b>	Establishes a shared vision for continued regional tourism branding and diversification