

National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP)

Response Plan 2023-27

PROJECT AGREEMENT FOR PEST AND DISEASE
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PROGRAMS

Table 1: Formalities and operation of schedule	
Parties	Commonwealth Queensland
Duration	This Schedule is expected to expire on 30 June 2028. For the purposes of Clause 10 of the <i>Project Agreement for Pest and Disease Preparedness Programs</i> , this Schedule also expires if the Agriculture Ministers determine that the <i>National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) Response Plan 2023-27</i> (Response Plan) should be terminated early. However, in those circumstances this Schedule still allows for the processing of any payments for milestones met up to termination.
Purpose	This Schedule will support the delivery of agreed activities for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (National Program) from 2023-24 to 2027-28 and to facilitate the Commonwealth's cost-shared contributions to Queensland, the lead jurisdiction for the program. The National Program will deliver the Response Plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) reduce infestation until red imported fire ants (fire ants) are no longer present in south-east Queensland (SEQ) and northern NSW regions; (b) prevent spread of fire ants to non-infested areas; (c) provide evidence to demonstrate freedom from fire ant infestation in the SEQ and northern NSW regions; and (d) build capacity and provide eradication expertise on invasive ant species to help prevent establishment of new species Australia-wide. This Schedule varies and replaces <i>Schedule D4 - National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program - South East Queensland 2017-18 to 2026-27</i> , which was executed in June 2023.
Project Elements	Queensland will deliver the actions set out in Response Plan, which was approved by Agriculture Ministers on 13 July 2023. The Response Plan aims to deliver stronger containment, more aggressive suppression and eventual eradication, demanding a more rapid scale-up of effort across a broader operational area. The plan focuses on containing fire ants in a horseshoe—spanning from Moreton Bay in the north, west to the Lockyer Valley and south to Tweed—and conducting eradication treatment around the inside of this band. Any detections outside this band

	<p>that can be traced to the SEQ response are deemed <i>Detections of Importance</i> and will be managed as separate spot eradications under the Program.</p> <p>The project elements for the National Program are:</p> <p>(a) Treatment: The new eradication strategy focuses on containing fire ants in a containment ring (horseshoe) preventing spread (west, north and south) and conducting eradication treatment around the inside of this band and contracting inwards.</p> <p>(b) Surveillance: Treatment will be followed by two years of intensive surveillance to detect and eradicate any residual infestations. For the first two years of operations, delimiting surveillance will be conducted five kms beyond the 10-kms treatment area.</p> <p>(c) Containment: Compliance capability will be enhanced with a new intelligence driven and industry specific operating model to target high-risk industries and activities.</p> <p>(d) Science & Innovation: including new applications of enhanced bait dispersal, artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, behavioral science, and remote sensing through robotic and semi-autonomous systems will be explored.</p> <p>(e) Community engagement: Communication and engagement activities will be scaled up in the short-to-medium term with all work designed to heighten awareness and understanding of fire ants and their potential impact, self-treatment options and what the NFAEP is doing to eradicate the pest.</p> <p>(f) Policy, planning and support services for the program including strengthened governance arrangements through a <i>National Fire Ant Eradication Program National Management Group (NFAEP NMG)</i> and <i>National Fire Ant Eradication Program Consultative Committee (NFAEP CC)</i>.</p>														
<p>Estimated financial contributions</p>	<p>The agreed maximum financial contribution for the National Program is outlined in Table 1 and payable in accordance with the milestones set out in Table 2. All payments are exclusive of GST.</p> <p>The Commonwealth will provide an estimated total financial contribution to Queensland of \$296.424 million in respect of this Schedule.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Table 1 (\$ million)</th> <th>2023-24</th> <th>2024-25</th> <th>2025-26</th> <th>2026-27</th> <th>2027-28</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Maximum Commonwealth Contribution to Queensland</td> <td>28.2</td> <td>74.1</td> <td>73.9</td> <td>79.2</td> <td>41.0</td> <td>296.4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Table 1 (\$ million)	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total	Maximum Commonwealth Contribution to Queensland	28.2	74.1	73.9	79.2	41.0	296.4
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Maximum Commonwealth Contribution to Queensland	28.2	74.1	73.9	79.2	41.0	296.4									
<p>Additional terms</p>	<p>1. The Program will be conducted as a National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA)-like response.</p>														

- 1.1. Reporting obligations are set out in Table 2, but circumstances may give rise to additional reporting being sought.
- 1.2. Queensland will provide performance reports in accordance with **Table 2** during the operation of the Schedule. All reports will:
 - 1.2.1. demonstrate delivery against agreed annual workplans;
 - 1.2.2. address any *NFAEP NMG* endorsed recommendations from completed National Program financial and efficiency audits; and
 - 1.2.3. be provided to and endorsed by the *NFAEP NMG*.
- 1.3. Should reports not be endorsed by the *NFAEP NMG* or require further information to enable progress to be determined, the Commonwealth may request additional information.
- 1.4. Queensland will maintain auditable records of costs and provide the following reports to all cost sharing parties, including the Commonwealth:
 - 1.4.1. financial expenditure forecast report for each quarter, at the beginning of each financial year,
 - 1.4.2. annual acquittal of revenue and expenses at the end of each financial year.
- 1.5. Outlined in the Response Plan, two key reviews will be delivered as part of the program:
 - 1.5.1. Independent effectiveness review of the Response Plan to confirm if program objectives are being met will be undertaken (milestone 5) to support *NFAEP NMG* recommendations to Agriculture Ministers to continue the plan, or alternative arrangements (such as transition to management).
 - 1.5.2. A program review (efficiency and a financial audit) will be undertaken (milestone 8) for the *NFAEP NMG* to support decision-making for the future of the program.
 - 1.5.3. Additional scientific and operational reviews may also be requested by the *NFAEP NMG*.
 - 1.5.4. If terminated, a final program acquittal and reporting will be required in place of the next milestone report.
- 1.6. Queensland will ensure that all recommendations arising from an efficiency or financial audit, or a scientific, operational review of the National Program, which are also endorsed by the

NFAEP NMG, are incorporated into the annual work plan and reported against in all subsequent Quarterly Program reports.

2. Each party will contribute funding in accordance with the financial commitments approved by the Agriculture Ministers on 13 July 2023.
 - 2.1. Final contributions will be based on actual expenditure and determined by the *NFAEP NMG* in accordance with the *Principles for Cost-sharing arrangements* and the Response Plan.
 - 2.2. The Commonwealth's maximum potential payments are set out in **Table 2** but, where applicable, will be adjusted to match the Commonwealth's share of actual expenditure as determined under additional term 2.1.
 - 2.3. The Commonwealth's financial contribution to the National Program may be revised in response to:
 - 2.3.1. any reviews or audits of the Response Plan;
 - 2.3.2. any change in the objectives of the Response Plan;
 - 2.3.3. the National Program being 10 percent or more under budget for three consecutive years;
 - 2.3.4. performance indicators, as set out in the Response Plan, not consistently being met;
 - 2.3.5. other cost-sharing partners withdrawing from the National Program or substantially changing their financial contribution; and
 - 2.3.6. other circumstances deemed appropriate by the Commonwealth.
 - 2.4. The Commonwealth Minister may, at their discretion, move all or part of an underspend against a milestone in a financial year to a milestone in another financial year. Such a circumstance may arise where the *NFAEP NMG* has agreed that the Response Plan can be varied to include additional cost-shared activities, or extend duration, without increasing the overall maximum contribution under this schedule.
3. This Schedule will be reviewed in conjunction with reviews of the National Program and decisions by the *NFAEP NMG*.

Table 2: Queensland – Performance requirements, reporting and payment summary		
Performance milestones	Milestone due	Payment
2023-24		
Milestone 1 - July 2023 to December 2023 Annual report (2022-23) endorsed by the <i>NFAEP NMG</i> as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.	March 2024	Up to \$28,200,000 subject to the additional terms.
2024-25		
Milestone 2 – January 2024 to June 2024 First, second and third Quarterly report (2023-24) endorsed by the <i>NFAEP NMG</i> as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.	July 2024	Up to \$38,347,000 subject to the additional terms.
Milestone 3 - July 2024 to December 2024 Annual report (2023-24) endorsed by the <i>NFAEP NMG</i> as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.	February 2025	Up to \$35,750,500 subject to the additional terms.
2025-26		
Milestone 4 – January 2025 to June 2025 First, second and third Quarterly report (2024-25) endorsed by the <i>NFAEP NMG</i> as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.	July 2025	Up to \$35,750,500 subject to the additional terms.
Milestone 5 – Review Response Plan – non-payment An independent review will be delivered to <i>NFAEP NMG</i> to confirm if the new Response Plan has been successful in meeting program objectives. <i>NFAEP NMG</i> to recommend the continuation of the plan to Agriculture Ministers or provide alternative options.	To be confirmed by NMG but no later than Jan 2026	n/a
Milestone 6 - July 2025 to December 2025 Annual report (2024-25) endorsed by the <i>NFAEP NMG</i> as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.	February 2026	Up to \$38,163,000 subject to the additional terms.
2026-27		
Milestone 7 – January 2026 to June 2026 First second and third Quarterly report (2025-26) endorsed by the <i>NFAEP NMG</i> as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.	July 2026	Up to \$38,163,000 subject to the additional terms.
Milestone 8 – Program Review – non-payment An independent program review will be undertaken to define the continuing national response plan beyond FY26/27 to achieve eradication by 2032. This will be used to deliver a detailed proposal for future response plan and eradication program arrangements through the <i>NFAEP NMG to Agriculture Ministers</i> in response to the 2026 Program Review including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of technical feasibility and cost-benefit of eradication • A revised response strategy and plan, with indicative budget • Monitoring and evaluation framework. 	To be confirmed by NMG but no later than Jan 2027	n/a

Table 2: Queensland – Performance requirements, reporting and payment summary		
Performance milestones	Milestone due	Payment
<p><i>Milestone 9 - July 2026 to December 2026</i></p> <p>Annual report (2025-26) endorsed by the NFAEP NMG as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.</p>	February 2027	Up to \$41,025,000 subject to the additional terms
<i>2027-28</i>		
<p><i>Milestone 10 – January 2027 to June 2027</i></p> <p>First second and third Quarterly report (2026-27) Annual report (2026-27) endorsed by the NFAEP NMG as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.</p>	July 2027	Up to \$21,025,000 subject to the additional terms.
<p><i>Milestone 11 - final</i></p> <p>Annual report (2026-27) endorsed by the NFAEP NMG as demonstrating satisfactory progress towards delivery of the Response Plan.</p>	Dec 2027	Up to \$20,000,000 subject to the additional terms.

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this schedule as follows:

Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by



Senator The Honourable Murray Watt
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and
Minister for Emergency Management

June 2024

31/5/24

Signed for and on behalf of the State of Queensland by



The Honourable Mark Furner MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and
Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities

28 June 2024