



## Strategic Review of the National Red Fire Ant Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Terms of Reference

### BACKGROUND

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (the Program) was first established in 2001 in response to the discovery of *Solenopsis invicta*<sup>1</sup> (commonly known as red imported fire ant or fire ant) in western Brisbane and Fishermans Island.

An independent review in 2016 and 2017, found that the implementation of the Program has prevented the widespread environmental, social, health and economic impacts seen in other countries where fire ants have invaded. Based on the review recommendations, funding of \$411.4 million over ten years was approved and a [Ten Year Eradication Plan 2017–18 to 2026–27](#) (Ten Year Plan) was developed which outlines the Program’s objectives and high-level strategy, actions and milestones.

An internal review of the Ten Year Plan was undertaken from January to March 2019 and an Addendum to the Ten Year Plan has been drafted outlining the outcomes and required amendments to the plan. Consistent with the plan, an efficiency and effectiveness review was undertaken in 2019 by Mr Bernard Wonder and found that it was “too early in the life of the Program to conclude that it is effective or otherwise” p 43. Mr Wonder made 37 recommendations, the majority of which have been implemented or modified for implementation.

Under the Ten Year Plan, the Steering Committee may direct a review of any matter including a strategic review of the National Program at any time.

This strategic review of the Program is necessary at a critical juncture for the Program. In its fourth year of eradication treatment, clearance surveillance is now underway to determine its effectiveness, novel eradication approaches are being tried and responsive treatment including greater involvement of the public in eradication is beginning. A number of innovations are under investigation to improve Program effectiveness. The Program is striving to contain the ants north of the New South Wales border. If the Program continues with its current approach, it is clear that the funds available will not enable the Program to achieve its objectives. This review is therefore commissioned to review the foundation Ten Year Plan, the implementation of the Program including variations to the Program and to provide advice on the feasibility and achievability of eradication and any alternative strategies that should be considered. Recommendations on potential options will be used to feed into benefit cost analyses (BCA) of the Program options. The BCAs will be commissioned prior to the end of this review to enable input from the review panel.

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

This review panel will evaluate Program effectiveness in relation to the objectives of the Ten Year Plan, and the feasibility and likely achievability of the current strategy achieving these objectives, in particular the eradication of fire ants. The panel is to assess the current strategy of eradication and alternative strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> Buren 1972



This will include:

- reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of the current Program approaches, assessing the conditions under which successful achievement of the Program's objectives would be feasible. Matters that the review panel may wish to take into consideration are listed in Attachment A
- providing advice on any modifications to the Program that would facilitate achievement of eradication and estimate indicative costs of such a modified Program
- assessing biological and technical feasibility of eradication
- considering alternative options to eradication and a brief assessment of likely outcomes of these options
- liaising with analysts undertaking cost benefit analyses of Program options as required.

In undertaking the review, the review panel may consider all matters related to a strategic review of the Program that they believe to be relevant, including the material contained within:

- relevant previous reviews and audits of the Program, including the procurement and governance audits undertaken during 2018–19, the [Independent Review](#) undertaken 2016–2017 and Mr Wonder's 2019 review
- the Program's [Ten Year Plan](#), Addendum and annual [work plans](#) since 1 July 2017, but particularly since 2019
- the Program's quarterly and annual reports since 1 July 2017, but particularly since 2019
- Steering Committee minutes and [reports particularly since 2019](#)
- [Scientific Advisory Sub-committee minutes and summaries](#)
- [Risk Management Sub-committee minutes](#)
- actions in the plans, including observation of current operations in and off the field
- current and proposed technologies and methods and their effectiveness and efficacy in delivering Program outcomes
- the Annual Community and Industry Stakeholder meetings
- any other relevant material.

The review panel should consult with:

- Steering Committee members
- Sub-committee members
- Program staff who have extensive experience in large scale eradication, successful and unsuccessful strategies
- interested stakeholders
- cost-share partners not represented on the Steering Committee.

## TIMEFRAMES

It is estimated that the review will take approximately 75 consultancy days from commencement date to completion.

## SECRETARIAT SUPPORT

The Program will provide senior secretariat support supplemented by a small team.



## REPORTING

The review panel Chair will provide regular progress reports to the Chair of the Steering Committee and will meet with the Steering Committee as appropriate. A draft report including recommendations on the future of the Program will be provided to the Steering Committee for comment and discussion by 31 July with a final report by 31 August. Following assessment of the final report by the Steering Committee, the report will be provided by 30 September 2021 to the National Biosecurity Committee, the Agriculture Senior Officers Committee and the Agriculture Ministers with accompanying recommendations. The report will be made public.

## COST

Final cost of the review is dependent on the consultants appointed. Funding for the review will be provided by the Program.



## Attachment A – MATTERS FOR POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION

- Relationships and engagement (including communications and stakeholder engagement)
- Social impacts and management of these
- Program approaches to:
  - treatment
  - surveillance
  - intelligence and risk assessments
  - technical and scientific advice
  - information systems
  - taxonomic/diagnostic capacity/capability
  - operational and logistics functions, including the application of regulatory powers
  - finance and procurement processes including use of contractors.
- The management and governance including decision making
- What significant changes were made over the life of the Program that made the eradication Program better, including continual improvement and the identification, development and deployment of innovative approaches.
- Capacity and capability to manage the Red Imported Fire Ant Program
- The limiting factors or constraints that contributed to difficulties.