

# Bushwalking NSW

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The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for the Environment and Water  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

## FUNDING FOR RED FIRE ANT ERADICATION

Dear Minister Plibersek

Bushwalking NSW Inc. is the peak body for bushwalkers in NSW and the ACT. It represents the interests of over 11,000 bushwalkers from 70 bushwalking clubs throughout NSW and the ACT, and provides a united voice to local, state and federal government agencies and other bodies on issues affecting bushwalkers.

As you would be aware, the arrival of the Red Fire Ant in Australia represents an extremely serious threat to the environment, agriculture and our use of public lands such as national parks and playing fields.

According to the Invasive Species Council, a fire ant invasion will be much worse than the cane toad. It would devastate our native wildlife and cause billions of dollars in lost agricultural production every year. Experience from countries like the USA, where Fire Ants have been present since last century, indicates that access to open space areas such as parks and reserves as well as family backyards will also be restricted as the ants are aggressive with a painful sting. This is now happening on sports fields, farms and beaches in Queensland.

Bushwalking NSW was very disappointed to learn that Federal and State Agriculture Ministers declined earlier this year to adopt all the recommendations of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review including failing to increase funding to eradicate the existing infestations in South-East Queensland. Instead of a funding boost, funding will actually decrease this year.

As well all the other threats that the Red Fire Ant poses in Australia, we consider that our capacity to use and enjoy the wonderful public lands in Australia will be marginalised if the Red Fire Ant is not eradicated.

We know from experience with other invasive species that early action to eradicate the problem is the most cost-effective solution. We hope that the consequences of insufficient early action with other invasive species are not repeated with the Red Fire Ant.

We therefore call on the Albanese Government to ensure that all governments increase funding to eradicate the existing infestations in South-East Queensland, in line with the recommendations of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program Strategic Review.

Yours sincerely,



David Bell  
President, Bushwalking NSW Inc  
28 September 2023