

Quarterly report No.3 January–March, 2023–24

Report to: NFAEP National Management Group
Prepared by: Program Office
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NATIONAL
Fire Ant Eradication
PROGRAM

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Summary

This report was developed in accordance with Schedule 4 to report on the National Fire Ant Eradication Program (NFAEP) performance against the work plan 2023–24 (the work plan), focusing on quarter 3 (Q3) of 2023–24, 1 January 2024 to 30 March 2024. During this period, the NFAEP commenced work on one and continued work on 12 of the 24 key performance indicators (KPIs) outlined in the Fire ant response plan 2023–27 (the response plan) and the work plan, and the 3 approved NFAEP change requests (PCR). During Q3, the NFAEP did not commence any formal work on the response plan KPIs outside of capturing baseline data. In relation to the 18 work plan KPIs overall, the NFAEP:

- completed one KPI.
- 5 KPIs are on track for completion.
- 2 of the KPIs are off track, one is expected to be brought back on track with the additional compliance officers while the other one will not be completed this year. The PIN review will be carried forward into the work plan for 2024–25.
- currently at risk of not completing 10 KPIs listed within the work plan as 2 have not started, 3 waiting for data, 5 have minor issues experienced due to significant weather events and are being monitored to bring back under control.

The NFAEP had 16 issues carried forward from Quarter Two (Q2) 2023–24. The NFAEP reported 5 new issues in the NFAEP issue register that would hinder our ability to mobilise and ramp up as originally intended from the work plan to the full response plan. The NFAEP closed 4 issues during Q3. The NFAEP is currently forecasted to complete the work planned within the 2023–24 financial year with a projected underspend of \$22.588 million against the revised budget of \$108.462 million.

As of February 2024, the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST), a Queensland Government funding initiative (\$37.1 million in funding from 2022–26) is now aligned under the National Fire Ant Eradication Program to improve integration and coordination. FAST has allocated a budget contribution to the NFAEP for utilisation of IT systems, facilities, and administrative functions.

Scope

In July 2017, the NFAEP began implementation of the 10–year eradication plan 2017–27 (10-year plan). The plan focused on finding, containing, and eradicating fire ants in South East Queensland. However, the NFAEP is transitioning away from the 10-year plan to mobilise and implement the response plan. This report to the NFAEP National Management Group (NFAEP NMG) provides information on the NFAEP's progress from 1 January to 30 March 2024 against the objectives of the response plan and KPIs of the work plan.

The NFAEP is funded through a national cost-sharing arrangement between the Federal and all state and territory governments. Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) delivers the response on behalf of these cost-share partners. The NFAEP is governed by a NFAEP NMG led by an independent chair and administered by the Queensland Government through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) on behalf of cost-share partners.

The scope of the program's work includes activities to:

- reduce infestation until fire ants are no longer present in Australia
- ensure areas remain free from fire ants
- prevent spread to non-infested areas
- provide evidence to demonstrate freedom from fire ant infestation
- help prevent establishment of new incursions of invasive ant species Australia-wide.

Key insights

Strategic eradication objectives

Progress against program objectives is summarised in Table 1. At a strategic level, there are shared objectives across the NFAEP and Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) that align with Option A of the Strategic Review that will enable the ultimate outcome of eradication outlined in the vision.

Table 1: Strategic eradication objectives

Objective	Progress made this quarter (Q3 2023–24)	Planned for next quarter (Q4 2023–24)
<p>Innovation</p> <p>The NFAEP will expand its innovation capacity and capability, seeking to rapidly improve efficiency and effectiveness across operational activities and transformation of the NFAEP over the longer term. This will include ongoing engagement with technology providers and the broader innovation ecosystem. This includes technology developers and cross-sectoral industries (AgTech, Defence and Mining), equipment, technology, and services (METS), through industry-led innovation hubs and clusters, and universities with a focus on capabilities such as AI, remote sensing, and Robotic Autonomous Systems (RAS).</p> <p>This will be supported by dedicated resources to implement improved technology, applied science, procurement processes, treatment, scheduling, and dispatch, incorporating findings from the operational review, and the</p>	<p>Investigation into the most appropriate innovation approach has been undertaken which will see the NFAEP utilise a “lean” application of resources with heavy engagement with universities and research organisations to develop solutions to NFAEP problems. A first round of seasonal bait trials was conducted that has initiated a more in-depth approach to incorporate brood assessments to learn more about efficacy. A research project in partnership with</p>	<p>Engagement with thought leaders to assist the NFAEP with defining problems that would benefit from innovative projects will be conducted. This will then form the basis of engagement with universities and other innovation-focused organisations to be used as a think tank to fund innovation projects, specifically to improve efficiency and effectiveness of NFAEP activities. The eDNA project will receive an interim report from James Cook University that</p>

Objective	Progress made this quarter (Q3 2023–24)	Planned for next quarter (Q4 2023–24)
<p>Strategic Review. A key operating principle for the NFAEP is the deployment of innovations as a strategic eradication objective. The need to constantly explore new approaches and technologies to help deliver on the NFAEP will mitigate the risk of the pressures on resources, labour, and necessity for confidence in proof of freedom (PoF).</p>	<p>James Cook University assessing the eDNA in the field has been approved with sampling being conducted in an area of recent detection of importance in Oakey.</p>	<p>will inform the suitability of eDNA technology to the NFAEP problem set.</p>
<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Achieving sustainable collaboration across various partners of the NFAEP and FAST is essential.</p> <p>A key focus for FAST is to cultivate relationships in dense urban and complex environments (multi-tenure and multi-responsibility operational situations), establishing a legacy for the NFAEP to continue to activate going forward. Expanding on this, FAST has also commenced projects targeting large land holders include the Rocky Point Cane Growers and primary producers in the Logan River Catchment. Communication, engagement, and behavioural science to build constructive relationships, support the design of collaborative models (including for self-treatment), and manage risk of human-assisted movements is critical.</p> <p>The focus of achieving this strategic objective is to concentrate on effective self-treatment and voluntary compliance in high-risk industries and areas using targeted enforcement strategically and only where necessary, such as Penalty Infringement Notices (PINs), Biosecurity Orders and prosecution.</p> <p>There is also increasing importance for community participation in the eradication effort, where community members will continue to have a key role in reporting fire ant presence and absence, and treating infestations where it is more effective, rapid, and safe to do so. This is a core aspect to both the NFAEP and FAST and will increase in importance as the eradication effort progresses over time. FAST currently has two project to deliver this strategic objective. The first project focuses on community self-treatment where residents can register for free fire ant treatment kits to be sent to them in the mail. This project has been very successful in Logan, Ipswich, and the Gold Coast, and will be expanded into Brisbane in Quarter 2 in 2025. The second</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the third industry forum • Establishment of the fourth community partnership group in the Moreton Bay council area • Partnership agreement established with Department of the Premier and Cabinet to undertake a behavioural insights project and commencement of phase one, which aims to reduce program treatment refusals • Executive endorsement of the primary producers' project plan • Executive and Ministerial endorsement of the responsive treatment transition plan • Commencement of the interim responsive transition project – field teams in the suppression area leave FAST funded bait for residents to conduct future RIFA self-treatment work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the combined council's forum by FAST for responsive treatment transition • Establishment of the combined state government forum by FAST for responsive treatment transition • Delivery of fourth industry forum • Delivery of first developer industry forum • Cross-border forum • Implementation of the primary producers' plan – Logan River Catchment trial • Transition of responsive treat to government (local, state, federal) land holder 1 July 2024 • Procurement of bait types and a pack and send company for the responsive transition

Objective	Progress made this quarter (Q3 2023–24)	Planned for next quarter (Q4 2023–24)
<p>project will transition responsive treatment to landowner and managers commencing in Quarter 1 2025 for government agencies and Quarter 2 for the broader community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of second round proactive IGR bait to 42,000 residents in Logan, Ipswich, and the Gold Coast in March 	
<p>Expansion</p> <p>The NFAEP and FAST will expand activities across all operational areas, following Option A of the Strategic Review, to ensure the 2032 vision is achieved. The degree to which treatment and surveillance can be scaled-up will be reliant on resilient supply chains for bait, labour and equipment, efficient and effective procurement processes, and the efficient and effective use of technology.</p> <p>To ensure the NFAEP delivers on planned scale-up, an Organisational strategy 2023–25 is being developed. The organisational strategy aims to increase the capacity and capability of the NFAEP for the delivery of consecutive annual workplans that will more than double the current capability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemical Treatment variation to increase supply to the Program was drafted for approval by the Director-General (DG) • The significant procurement plan (SPP) for Chemical Treatment 2024–27 has been drafted for consultation • Request for quote (RFQ) for the provision of Drone treatment was finalised and released. • Hard stand sites at Molendinar were secured to operate as a temporary depot site until a main depot at Gold Coast is available • A depot site was secured in the Moreton Bay Region to serve as the main depot for northern operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemical Treatment variation is to be approved by Director-General (DG) • Significant procurement plan (SPP) for Chemical Treatment for 2024–27 to be approved by DG • Contract for fixed-wing treatment pilot to be awarded • Lease executed for a site on the Gold Coast to serve as the main depot for southern operations • Evaluation of RFQ for the provision of Drone Treatment to be completed and contract awarded

Progress against key performance indicators

Work plan 2023–24

Progress against the NFAEP KPIs is summarised in Table 2 in relation to the work plan. Where individual activities are scheduled and finalised across the year, progress reporting may not be applicable to each quarter – for example, complete treatment in Q3.

Table 2: Work plan 2023–24 KPIs

KPI 2023–24	Target	Traffic light	Progress made in Q3	Planned for Q4
Strategic goal: treatment				
Three treatment rounds in outer 5 km Southern Downs local government areas (rural) (LGA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southern Downs 7,436 ha in round 1 Southern Downs 7,436 ha in round 2 Southern Downs 7,436 ha round 3 	Waiting for data	No treatment was undertaken as part of completing round 2 or round 3 in the outer 5 km Southern Downs areas, due to the pending outcome of the habitat suitability analysis.	No treatment will be undertaken as part of completing round 3 in the outer 5 km Southern Downs areas. A decision is slated for approval for the surveillance to occur within this area and then undertake a risk assessment to determine whether treatment is required in the Southern Downs area.
Three treatment rounds in outer 5 km Scenic Rim LGA (rural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenic Rim 48,098 ha round 1 Scenic Rim 48,098 ha round 2 Scenic Rim 48,098 ha round 3 	Monitoring/ minor issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45,731 ha of treatment and an additional 1,800 ha of approved treatment gaps was undertaken as part of round 1 in the outer 5 km Scenic Rim areas. 34,737 ha of treatment and 802 ha of approved treatment gaps was undertaken as part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Round 3 that was due to run from March to June 2024 has been delayed due to a higher than forecasted wet season causing major stand downs for both aerial and ground operations. Round 3 is now expected to start in April 2024 and be completed during July 2024.

KPI 2023–24	Target	Traffic light	Progress made in Q3	Planned for Q4
			of round 2 in the outer 5km Scenic Rim areas.	
Two treatment rounds in outer 5 km Gold Coast City LGA (urban)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gold Coast 17,703 ha in round 2 Gold Coast 17,703 ha in round 3 	Monitoring/ minor issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ground treatment of round 2 started in November 2023, but completion has been delayed due to the excessive inclement weather conditions and ground resources being diverted to respond to outlier detections in Murwillumbah and Wardell (New South Wales). The weather issues caused aerial operations to be delayed from December 2023 to February 2024. 7,205 ha of treatment and 566 ha of approved treatment gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Round 3 was planned to run from March to June 2024, but the weather delays and New South Wales (NSW) responses are likely to delay the start to April 2024 and be completed during July 2024.
Two treatment rounds in outer 5 km Lockyer Valley LGA (urban/rural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lockyer Valley 24,462 ha in round 1 Lockyer Valley 30,450 ha in round 2 	Monitoring/ minor issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23,038 ha of treatment and 799 ha of approved treatment gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 1. 11,690 ha of treatment and 425 ha of approved gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 2. 	Due to the weather delays, round 2 is expected to run into Q4 and is expected to be completed during May 2024.

KPI 2023–24	Target	Traffic light	Progress made in Q3	Planned for Q4
One treatment round in outer 5 km Somerset Regional local government areas (urban / rural)	Somerset 17,022 ha in round 3	Not started	There is no planned treatment during Q3.	Round 3 is planned to run from April to June 2024.
One treatment round in outer 5 km Moreton Bay Regional local government areas (urban / rural)	Moreton Bay 33,700 ha in round 3 (area is an approximate)	Not started	There is no planned treatment during Q3.	Round 3 is planned to run from April to June 2024 however this is now expected to run into July 2024.
Outlier treatment (additional to what is outlined in the work plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kleinton, Minjerribah, and Tabooba with 23,030 ha in round 1 Kleinton, Minjerribah, Tabooba, and Tallebudgera with 25,760 ha in round 2 Kleinton, Minjerribah, Tabooba, and Tallebudgera with 25,440 ha in round 3 	Monitoring/ minor issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18,747 ha of treatment and 1,761 ha of approved treatment gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 1. 6,971 ha of treatment and 195 ha of approved treatment gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 2. 419 ha of treatment and 19 ha of approved gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 3. Ground treatment for round 3 at Kleinton commenced on 1 March 2024, however weather has caused delays in starting Minjerribah, Tabooba, and Tallebudgera. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Round 2 that was planned to run from December 2023 to March 2024 is now expected to be completed in May 2024. Round 3 was planned to run from March to June 2024, however this is now expected to run into July 2024.

KPI 2023–24	Target	Traffic light	Progress made in Q3	Planned for Q4
Outlier treatment NSW (additional to what is outlined in the work plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murwillumbah, NSW with 8,984 hectares in round 2 • Murwillumbah, NSW; 8,984 ha in round 3 	Monitoring/ minor issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 324 ha of treatment and 56 ha of approved gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 2. • Further progress has been delayed due to wet weather, travel distance for ground teams based at the Gold Coast and obtaining consent and access to treat from property occupiers. 	Round 2 was planned to run from January to March 2024, however aerial operations is now due to start in April 2024. The completion of round 2 may now extend into June 2024.
Polygyne treatment (additional to what is outlined in the work plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,830 ha of polygyne treatment in round 1 • 1,830 ha of polygyne treatment in round 2 • 1,830 ha of polygyne treatment in round 3 	On track/ progress as anticipated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,626 ha of treatment and an additional 173 ha of approved treatment gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 1. • 1,506 ha of treatment and an additional 197 ha of approved treatment gaps has been undertaken as part of completing round 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round 2 was planned to run from December 2023 to March 2024 but will now be completed in April 2024 due to weather related delays. • Round 3 is planned to run from March to June 2024. Ground treatment is now planned to start in April 2024.
Strategic goal: surveillance				
<p>The approved work plan set the target of 8% (12,320 ha) of the surveillance area to be surveyed.</p> <p>The approved surveillance plan sets a target of 18 600 ha.</p>	8% (12,320 ha) of the surveillance area for 2023–24 to be completed over a 12-month period with an average of 8.3%, (1,026 ha) of total surveillance completed per	Completed	No surveillance activities are planned to be conducted during Q3 as the focus during this period will be treatment.	Surveillance for the 2024-25 season is planned to commence on 16 June 2024 (focusing initially on western areas).

KPI 2023–24	Target	Traffic light	Progress made in Q3	Planned for Q4
	month in the surveillance period			
Strategic goal: improving the legislation and providing guidance				
Changes to General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO) guideline for residents and industries that deal with a fire ant carrier	GBO guideline changes made and published in 2023–24.	On track/ progress as anticipated	Feedback was received and incorporated into the guideline.	Briefing note to be prepared for Deputy Director-General (DDG) to approve the authorisation of the GBO guideline under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> .
Review soil movement guideline, as required	Soil movement guideline reviewed annually to ensure it is fit for purpose.	On track/ progress as anticipated	Soil movement requirements will be included in the Regulation amendment. Industry consultation will continue.	Continue work with the drafter on the Regulation amendment which will incorporate soil movement.
Penalty infringement notice (PIN) review	Review of penalty infringement notice completed by 30 June 2024.	Off track / critical issues	Scheduled to commence in February 2024. Has been deferred to Q4 due to the Policy team prioritising Regulatory amendment and authorising the GBO guideline to allow industry time to adjust to the proposed regulatory amendments.	Project plan for PIN review will be developed. This is currently forecasted to commence in September 2024.
Queensland and NSW cross-border planning	Planning completed by 30 June 2024.	On track/ progress as anticipated	Incident investigation phase reports were compiled for the detections in Murwillumbah and Wardell, NSW.	NSW response working group continues to track progress and address issues with the cross-border response plans.
Strategic goal: expand the compliance team				

KPI 2023–24	Target	Traffic light	Progress made in Q3	Planned for Q4
Uplift of new compliance officers	Aiming for 41, an increase of 31, from a baseline of 10 positions.	Off track / critical issues	<p>The remaining 18 new positions were subject to a recruitment process during Q3 however, compliance was unable to identify sufficient suitable applicants. The processes remain ongoing. With the introduction of the intelligence led / risk-based model in Q3, an increased focus on data input / analysis has been enhanced. Q3 outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Notices 68 • Biosecurity Orders 12 • PINS Issued 2. 	Recruitment will continue in Q4 with the expectation that suitable applicants will be identified, and onboarding commenced. Q4 will see the development of improved reporting capability to include greater detail to link the non-compliance industry / business to specifics as to type / levels of non-compliance and subsequent regulatory outcomes to provide greater visibility of overall regulatory environment
Training and capability development for new staff members to enhance knowledge of the <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> and powers of entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biosecurity Act 2014 and powers of entry training for new staff members in every Induction • Refresher training is forecasted to occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Refresher: <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> – for field staff in May 2024 – Refresher: Entry process for field staff in June 2024. 	On track/ progress as anticipated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A formal training and development program for all staff across compliance was commenced in Q3 with a finalisation of the approved Program to be finalised in Q4 for a 2024–25 rollout. • A documented onboarding plan was completed for the induction and onboarding of the pending new starters. • Training was received in relation to <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> and Regulations in Q3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> training will be rolled out from May 2024. • The training and development program will be finalised in Q4. • The onboarding plan will be approved and implemented to onboard new starters in Q4.

KPI 2023–24	Target	Traffic light	Progress made in Q3	Planned for Q4
Strategic goal: mobilising the community				
Per cent of stakeholders check their property and local area for fire ants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents (60%) Industry (45%) 	Waiting for data	This data is collected via a survey annually during in Q4.	This data is collected via a survey annually during in Q4.
Per cent of stakeholders that are aware of fire ant biosecurity zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents (55%) Industry stakeholders (75%) 	Waiting for data	This data is collected via a survey annually during in Q4.	This data is collected via a survey annually during in Q4.

Response plan 2023–27

During Q1 of 2023–24, the response plan was approved on the 13 July 2023 and funding for the work had not been committed to by all jurisdictions. It was expected that the response plan funding decision would allow the release of funds in Q2 of 2023–24 however this didn't occur as not all jurisdictions had not committed, the revised timeline is now Q4. This resulted in no work formally commencing on the response plan activities unless they were also in the scope of the work plan.

Table 3: Response plan 2023–27 KPIs

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
Measure: Effectiveness (compliance)						
Compliance rate of targeted high-risk industries (activities) across local government areas	This measure will ensure effective, targeted delivery of compliance activities that address noncompliance that contributed to human-assisted movement.	Monitoring Compliance interactions and resulting outcomes from audits and investigations (monthly)	Ten per cent annual increase year on year increase in compliance rate across high-risk industry categories (baseline to be established, target re-visited)	On track/progress as anticipated	The compliance and enforcement strategy was planned for completion in Q3 2023–24. A baseline was captured within this document.	During Q3, baseline data was captured on the compliance rate across targeted high-risk industries. The compliance and enforcement strategy was approved in Q3.
Measure: Efficiency (compliance)						
Cost per unit of compliance audits undertaken	This measure will monitor the costs of undertaking compliance audits to indicate broader	Quantifying cost to undertake compliance audits (cost per audit) (annual).	Target to be determined once year one baseline data has been captured.	Not started	Baseline data will be captured between January 2024 to December 2024 on the number of audits and the	During Q3, a record was maintained in relation to what audits were completed. The type (desktop, physical inspection, industry that it related to).

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
	compliance efficiency and ensure efficient delivery of compliance outcomes.				monthly operating cost of the compliance cost centre.	
Measure: Effectiveness (eradication)						
Confidence in surveillance methodologies deployed to rural, peri-urban, urban areas that provide evidence of proof of freedom (PoF)	This measure will track performance of surveillance as it is deployed to increase confidence.	Monitor outcomes of surveillance for accuracy against the PoF methodology, (annual).	PoF through surveillance tools at pilot sites achieved by 2025–26.	Not started	To be confirmed as per the PoF.	During Q3, a record was maintained in relation to what surveillance was completed.
Measure: Effectiveness (eradication)						
In accordance with the PoF plan the proportion of planned eradication band that delivers >90% confidence in absence of fire ants over a 2–year period	This measure will track effective delivery of eradication effort by measuring resulting probability after a combination of treatment and surveillance	Monitor annual treatment and surveillance operations coverage and ‘gaps’ (annual).	>90% coverage of planned eradication band over a 2-year period (2% gaps).	Not started	Gaps from 2022–23 season.	During Q3, a record was maintained in relation to what was treated and any gaps.

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
(equivalent to 6 rounds of insect growth regulator (IGR) over 2 years per band)	methods may be deployed.					
Measure: Efficiency (eradication)						
Cost per ha to initiate clearance surveillance	This measure will monitor the costs associated with eradication efforts to clear land of fire ants and ultimately PoF.	Treatment and surveillance costs per ha calculated over a 2-year period within the eradication model.	Efficiency target to be determined after first year of the eradication plan. Separate target for urban and rural need to be developed.	Not started	Baseline data will be captured between 2023–24 and 2024–25.	The data is being captured on the number of hectares being treated.
Measure: Effectiveness (workplace health and safety)						
Empowering staff to contribute to a proactive and preventative safety culture, including the maintenance of a robust and responsive Work Health and Safety Management	This measure will monitor the effectiveness of workplace health and safety (WH&S) measures to ensure staff are safe and satisfied with the work environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Safety Committee meetings are being conducted in line with the <i>Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011</i>. Site inspections at all NFAEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of meetings are held as per requirements of the act. Every 3 months. 100% compliance with approved site inspection schedule. 	Not started	Baseline to be captured in 2023–24.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Health and Safety Committee met on 05/03/2024. January 2024 meetings didn't take place due to wet weather stand down and Christmas closure periods. The terms of reference (ToR) was due for an annual review in March 24. The ToR had a change from meetings each month to meetings every 2 months. The ToR undertook consultation with the HSC

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
System (WHSMS).		<p>locations are undertaken in accordance with BQ's framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting of high-risk items to senior leaders is occurring. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3a. TABs reports – weekly 3b. Driving reports – minimum of once per month. Reportable incidents to Workplace Health Safety Queensland (WHSQ) are reported within required timeframes. Risk register framework in place health and safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of high-risk incidents are reported. 100% of incidents reported within required timeframes. Risk registers are up to date and reviewed at minimum annually. HSRs are appointed with each site location being represented HSR training is completed and up to date. FA officers are appointed in accordance with site requirements FA training is up to date for all FA officers 			<p>and was approved by the Executive Program Director on 13/03/2024.</p> <p>2. Site inspections were held at: Laidley on 16/02/2024. Wacol February 2024. Berrinba on 30/01/2024. Mutdapilly on 16/02/2024. Therefore, inspections for Laidley, Mutdapilly and Wacol have been completed within the 4-month timeframe for medium risk areas. However, Berrinba's inspection was completed 5 days outside the 4-month timeframe. Site inspections were completed before the Molendinar and Caboolture sites were operational and have been factored into the site inspection schedule. The other 2 Gold Coast sites (Coombah and Merrimac) are council owned sites but will now be factored into the Program's site inspection schedule.</p> <p>3. Weekly reports are emailed to senior managers, listing all Think Act Be Safe (TABs reports for the previous</p>

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
		representatives (HSRs) appointed first aid (FA) officers, mental health FA officers, and injury management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health FA officers are trained Pro-active injury management is being conducted. Access to rehabilitation and return to work arrangements in accordance with DAFs policies. 			<p>week. The WHS team continue to encourage a positive reporting culture in addition to completing regular field visits to assist in risk identification and education on safe work practices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> There were no reportable incidents to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland or the Electrical Safety Office. The hazard and risk register was developed and approved in February 2023 and has an annual review schedule. The hazard and risk register was reviewed and consultation took place prior to being approved by the Executive Program Director on 20/03/2024. The NFAEP has the following Health and Safety Representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laidley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 officers, both in the role over 1 year, training complete Mutdapilly

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 officer recently elected, training to be completed in September 2024 1 vacant officer role, nominations to be called July 2024 <p>Berrinba</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 officers (1 recently nominated training scheduled for August 2024, 2 officers in the role more than one year, training complete) <p>Wacol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 officer in the role for 3 years, training complete <p>Caboolture (new site)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 officer newly elected, training to be completed in September 2024 <p>Gold Coast (2 sites – Molendinar and Coombabah)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 officer newly elected, training to be completed in September 2024 (Molendinar) 5 nominations have been received with elections to be held for 2 officers in early July 2024 (Coombabah)

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
						<p>Once HSR's are elected, they are required to complete training within 3-months.</p> <p>7. The Program has the following FA Officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laidley x 3 • Mutdapilly x 3 • Berrinba x 8 • Wacol x 3 <p>All team leaders are also FA trained (26 currently).</p> <p>FA risk assessments have been completed (May 2023) which identifies the number of FA personnel for each depot (compliant), including field staff. All FA have current certificates.</p> <p>8. Work is taking place to schedule additional Mental Health FA training to ensure supervisors have been adequately trained.</p> <p>9. The NFAEP WHS team liaised with Corporate WHS team on multiple occasions regarding staff that are currently ill or injured. Collaboration took place with supervisors and</p>

Performance Indicators	Definition and purpose	Method and frequency	Targets	Status	Baseline	Progress in Q3
						Queensland Shared Service Medical Case Management to identify injuries and illnesses promptly and to work collaboratively with the worker, their manager, and the treating medical practitioner for the injured worker to stay at work wherever safely possible and to promote the earliest possible return to work, in whatever capacity the worker can. NFAEP also employee a Senior Injury Management Advisor in January 2024 for a period of 6 months to assist in the case management of several employees on long term suitable duties. The NFAEP is supporting several staff on suitable duties arrangement.

Execution outcome deliverables

Table 4 outlines the status of the execution outcome deliverables.

Table 4: Execution outcome deliverables

Deliverable (30 June 2024)	Status	Commentary
Strategic outcome: Management of ongoing bait costs in a constrained market		
Tender to market, purchase, and trial alternative baits e.g. more effective, faster acting, and more streamline supply chains to improve efficiencies	Monitoring/ minor issues	Procurement processes commenced in Q2 for the supply of Treatment product) with completion scheduled for completion in Q4.
All weather treatment products (e.g. water resistant).	On track/ progress as anticipated	A project to investigate the uptake and comparative success of a commercially available 'wetable' bait option with the current bait products under wet and dry conditions commenced in early 2024. Results to be reviewed for next steps to be confirmed during Q4. Hydrogel crystals was investigated for their viability and was found unviable as alternative to the current corn grit bait formulation.
Provide university funding or grant funds to develop an all-weather bait	Not started	It is not planned that that program will provide university funding or grants to develop an all-weather bait pending the outcome of the planned program trials.
Strategic outcome: Market across risk for human resources		
Full time equivalent (FTE) scale up targets achieved to be able to deliver 10 km treatment band in 2024–25.	Monitoring/ minor issues	The NFAEP submitted a Cabinet Budget Review Committee (CBRC) submission for consideration in November 2023, and a decision was made allowing the NFAEP access to 150 positions FTE positions.
Strategic outcome: Eradication band – treatment		
Based on 5 km eradication band: 158,000 (unique ha)	Monitoring/ minor issues	97,924 ha (62%) of 158,000 unique ha has been treated up to 31 March 2024.

Deliverable (30 June 2024)	Status	Commentary
Strategic outcome: Compliance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General biosecurity obligation (GBO) guideline released for industry feedback (2023). Develop and implement GBO code of practice. Incorporated in the regulation by end of 2023. 	On track/ progress as anticipated	<p>In Q3, industry feedback was incorporated into the guidelines that will be endorsed by DDG to be authorised under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> in Q4.</p> <p>It was deemed that the need to develop and implement GBO code of practice was no longer required as amendments will be made to the regulation.</p>

Finance

Expenditure to budget

The program is currently \$11.998 million underspent against the current adjusted budget for the work plan and approved variations totalling \$111.461 million (see Table 5). The adjusted budget includes the first year of the work plan of \$84.31 million work plan plus \$3.144 million carry forward and the 2 approved budget variations totalling \$24 million balancing to a new total of \$111.461 million.

Table 5: Funding 2023–24

	Year-to-date (YTD) budget \$'000	YTD actual \$'000	Variance to YTD budget \$'000	Variance to YTD budget %	Year-end forecast \$'000
Revenues	58,031	51,741	(6,290)	(11%)	131,150
Expenses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employee expenses	14,574	11,701	2,873	20%	19,647
Supplies and services*	48,836	39,725	9,111	19%	88,535
Depreciation	215	214	0	0%	287
Loss on sale	0	11	(11)	0%	0
Other expenses	114	90	25	22%	89
Total expenses*	63,739	51,741	11,998	19%	108,462
Surplus/(deficit)	(5,708)	0	5,708	N/A	22,688

* Adjustment to YTD Budget due to technical cash flowing oversight.

Overall operating result

The total NFAEP expenses – \$11.998 million underspent YTD.

Employee expenses – \$2.873 million underspent YTD, which is primarily due to the current level of FTE vacancies and challenges with recruitment activities.

Supplies and services – \$9.111 million underspend YTD. Variations are primarily due to the underspends on bait \$0.975 million aircraft hire \$1.036 million due to available treatment days, underspends contractors \$5.34 million and in other supplies and services \$1.762 million.

Forecast to 30 June 2024

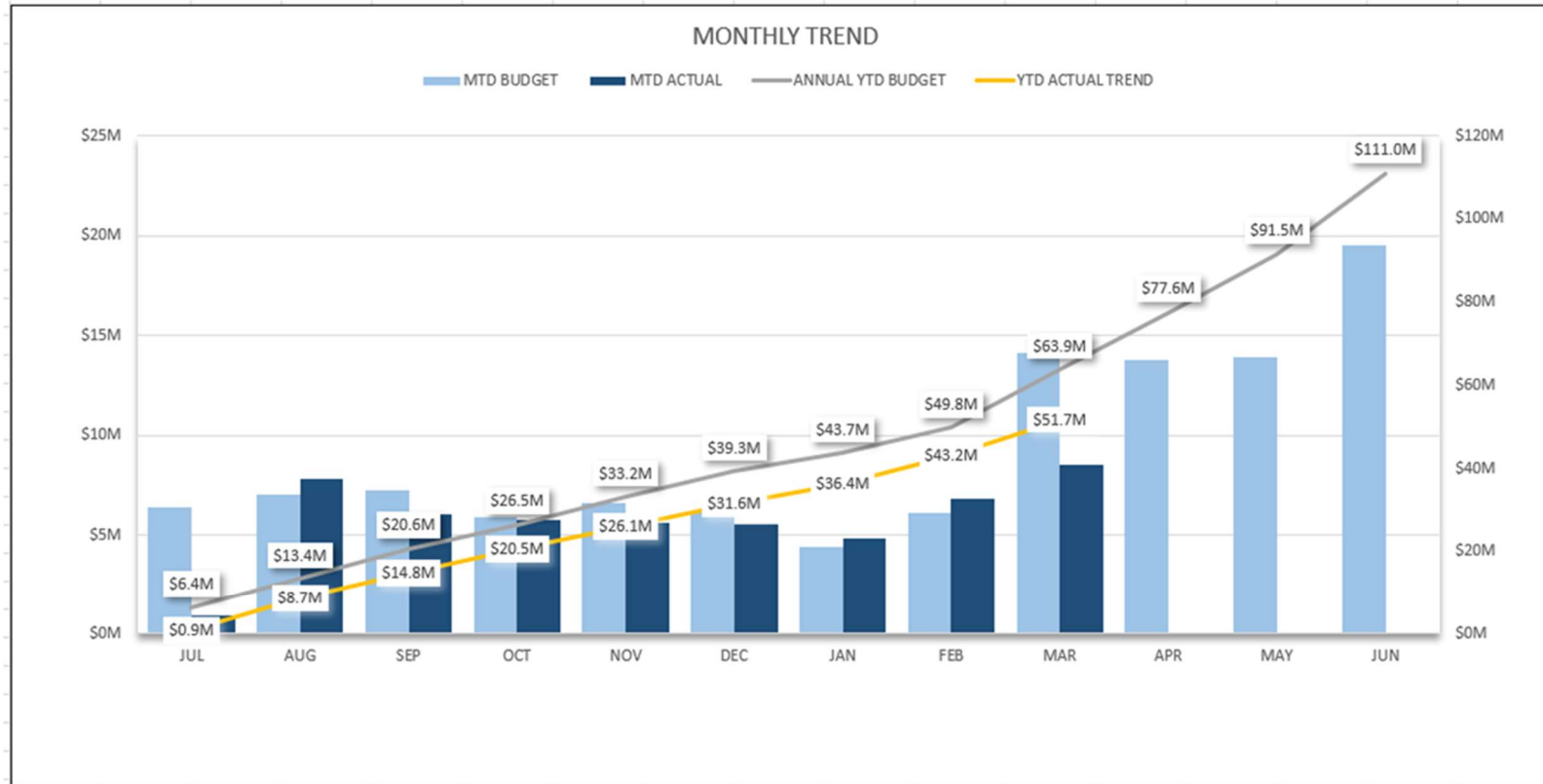
The NFAEP has forecast expenditure at approximately \$108.462 million to the 30 June 2024. Any significant delays with the scale up of operations to the response plan and wet weather will result in a significant carryover.

The NFAEP internal budget is currently entered into Adaptive Insights (AI) the DAF budget management system, currently balanced to the work plan budget of \$87,462,391 with commitments from the NFAEP's contribution partners, however the timing of these contributions will be dependent from each jurisdictions Treasury departments. All jurisdictions have now advised their commitments to the response plan as scheduled with contributions still outstanding from the Commonwealth, Victoria, and Western Australian Governments.

The NFAEP currently has a forecast of operational budget of \$108.462 million with commitments from the NFAEP's contribution partners, however the timing of these contributions will be dependent from each jurisdictions Treasury departments.

- This forecast includes the initial work plan budget of \$87.5 million plus the approved Program Change Requests No. 2 and No. 3 totalling approximately \$24 million.
- It is projected that the program will carry over greater than \$37.8 million.
- The NFAEP's intention is to operate aerial treatment 7 days per week and scale up the ground treatment to 7 days per week where required and available.
- The above forecast is subject to weather conditions and the ability to scale up which includes, commissioning of additional depots and onboarding of required staff.

Figure 1: Budget to expenses trend



Program risk and issues

There were 5 issues raised, and 4 issues were closed during Q3 of 2023–24. During Q3 2023–24, there were 3 new risks opened, and 5 risks closed as of 31 March 2024.

Table 6: Residual risk summary

Rating	Residual Operational	Residual Strategic	Residual Totals
Low	7	6	13
Medium	18	23	41
High	6	5	11
Extreme	0	0	0
Total (Open)	31	34	65
Total (Closed)	88	25	113

During Q3, the residual risk rating was downgraded from extreme to high for risk PRG.RISK.191 due to the change in likelihood and consequence because of existing control being identified and documents as well as treatments being documented.

Risk framework triggers

In relation to the 8 risk triggers identified in the response plan, all risks were mitigated and did not eventuate into a risk trigger event being activated during this reporting period. Table 7 outlines the issues that occurred in relation to the risk triggers documented in the response plan.

Table 7: Residual trigger summary

Risk Trigger (Description)	Mitigation Actions	Residual Risk Rating	Risk update for this reporting period
Climate change/weather events impact on treatment program ability to treat and/or increases potential spread infestation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tactical planning across four years (with a 10-year eradication lens) factors and reduces risk of climatic conditions. Investigation and analysis of baits and deliveries that maintain efficacy in wet conditions. River systems of infested areas mapped for flow and flooding, with the majority having a west to east flow. 	High <i>Possible</i> <i>Major</i>	<p>During the 2023-2024 work year, there have been two major weather events identified by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19 October 2023, BOM advised that El Nino was underway and would contribute to a warmer and drier spring and summer. 8 February 2024, BOM released their 2023 summary of Australia's climate and noted that Queensland had experienced higher than average rainfall. <p>Issue (PRG.ISS.39) Delays due to weather. The Program are monitoring impact to performance. Planned poor weather condition days v poor weather condition days have impacted on the ability to complete treatment – resulting in gaps.</p>
Human assisted movement of RIFA leading to re-infestation, and/or spread outside the operational area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence and planning based compliance model developed to focus on non-compliant, higher-risk industries and activities. Communications plan (annual) developed to focus on higher-risk industries, individuals, and activities. Leverage relationships already established across local government areas. 	High <i>Possible</i> <i>Major</i>	<p>Connected to three DOI issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue (PRG.ISS.28) - DOI Minjerribah was closed during this reporting period. (PRG.ISS. 36) - DOI Murwillumbah (PRG.ISS.40) - DOI Wardell.
Quantum of funding is insufficient to implement plan. The NFAEP budget is insufficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Treasury agreement to provide shortfall funding resulting from funding partner payment delays. All cost share partners have committed funding for the life of the Response Plan 2023-27 (Response Plan), noting Western Australia's commitment is current until the 2025 FY. 	Medium <i>Unlikely</i> <i>Major</i>	<p>Additional treatment recorded and residual risk rating downgraded from High to Medium as all cost share partners have committed funding for the life of the Response Plan.</p>

Risk Trigger (Description)	Mitigation Actions	Residual Risk Rating	Risk update for this reporting period
Treatment systems which result in reoccurring infestations e.g., insufficient treatment gaps in treatment delayed treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigation and review of new outbreaks including genetic tracing. Continual review of treatment protocols. Compliance capability development for new staff members. Provide specialised training to private pest control technicians, landscaping businesses, and local councils. Targeted advertising campaigns to encourage community treatment. 	Medium Unlikely Major	Currently no indication that there are reoccurring infestations because of treatment systems.
A significant infestation is detected well outside of the current NFAEP operations area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and action the serious outbreak protocol. Genetic tracing to determine infestation origin. Communications and awareness raising with relevant local governments. Expand the NFAEP operations area. Increase the capacity of the NFAEP. Implementation of GBO guidelines. Increase Industry and Community engagement (particular in Norther NSW). 	Medium Possible Moderate	Issue (PRG.ISS.28) - DOI Minjerribah was closed during this reporting period. In relation to issue (PRG.ISS. 36) - DOI Murwillumbah & (PRG.ISS.40) - DOI Wardell draft response Plans were written and submitted for NFAEP NMG for approval at the March 2024 meeting however a decision was not reached at the meeting and if the change requests to the scope to include these two response plans has been converted into an out of session response due in April 2024.
Inability to foster partnership with community. organisations and local governments to deliver self-treatment. and community surveillance programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and promote community self-treatment programs. Communication strategies tested and refined to grow community self-treatment and surveillance. Leverage off relationships already established across local government areas (e.g., road corridors). 	Medium Unlikely Moderate	No changes to this risk within this reporting period.

Risk Trigger (Description)	Mitigation Actions	Residual Risk Rating	Risk update for this reporting period
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove barriers for the safe participation, including financial impost, registration, access to information and ease of treatment actions. 		
New infestations at high-risk entry points outside of NFAEP jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and promote community self-treatment programs. Communication strategies tested and refined to grow community self-treatment and surveillance. Leverage off relationships already established across local government areas (e.g., road corridors). Remove barriers for the safe participation, including financial impost, registration, access to information and ease of treatment actions. 	Low Likely Minor	No changes to this risk within this reporting period.
Disruption to essential supply chain for inputs such as baits, surveillance equipment and services, labour, vehicles, aerial services, or information technology hardware.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business continuity included in forward planning and contractual arrangements, including regular environmental scans for alternative suppliers. Strategic workforce capability and capacity measures and an operational logistics team to manage logistic and supply chain processes. Procurement resources dedicated to specific critical processes. 	Low Unlikely Minor	Issue (PRG.ISS.33) Bait procurement. Program has had to enter into short term contracts with bait suppliers as a result of funding decision delays. Resulting impact on overall budget to be confirmed. Program is managing relationships with supplier network. Previous assumptions made about potential supply chain savings are failing. E.g. bait costs.

Appendix 1 – Planned treatment progress (31 March 2024)

The maps provided below outlines the round 1, 2 and 3 treatment progress conducted during the reporting period. Details within the map indicate air (blue), foot (brown) and utility terrain vehicles (UTV – magenta) treatments were carried out within the eradication area (yellow).

Figure 2: Map of round 1 planned treatment progress

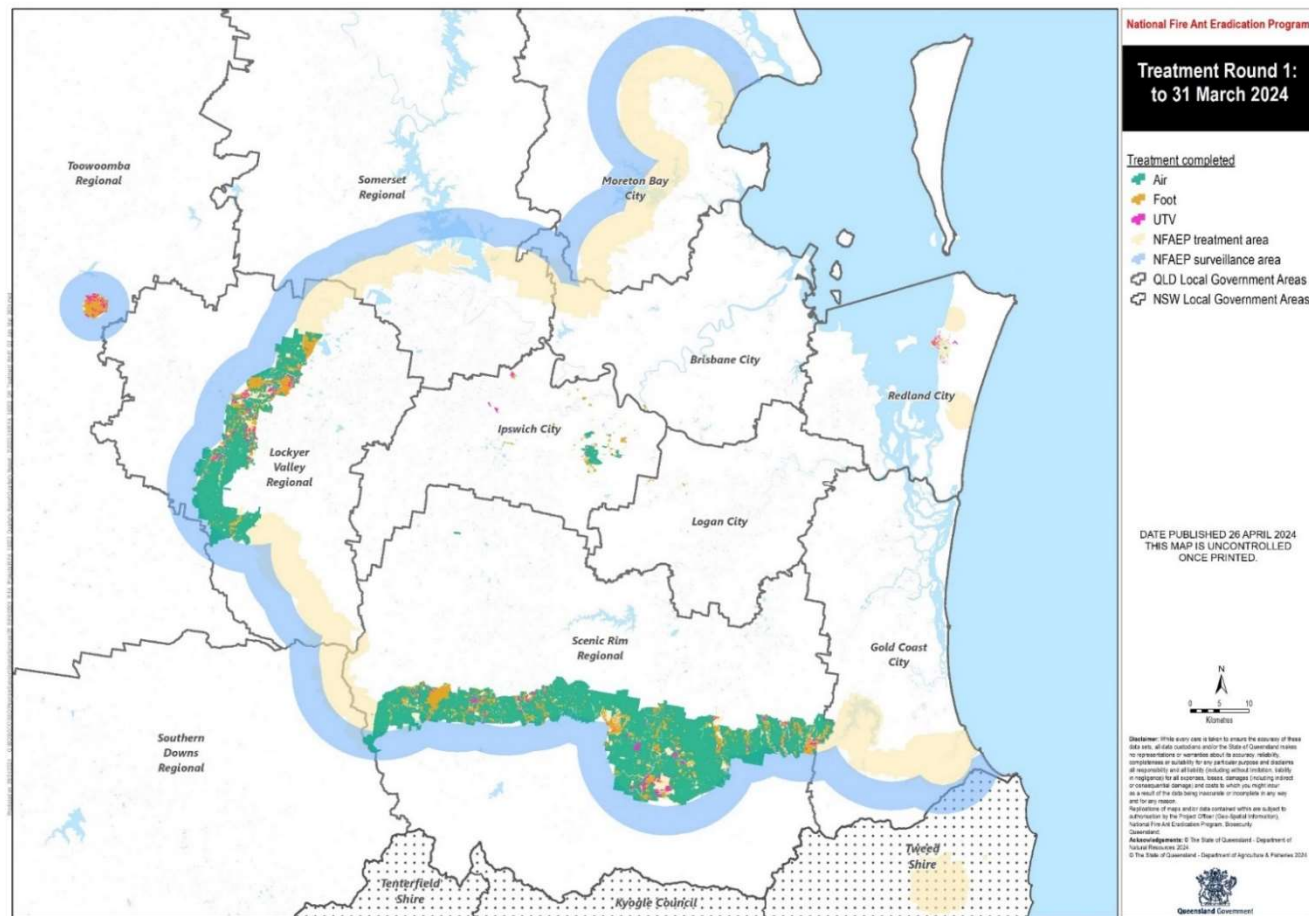


Figure 3: Map of round 2 planned treatment progress

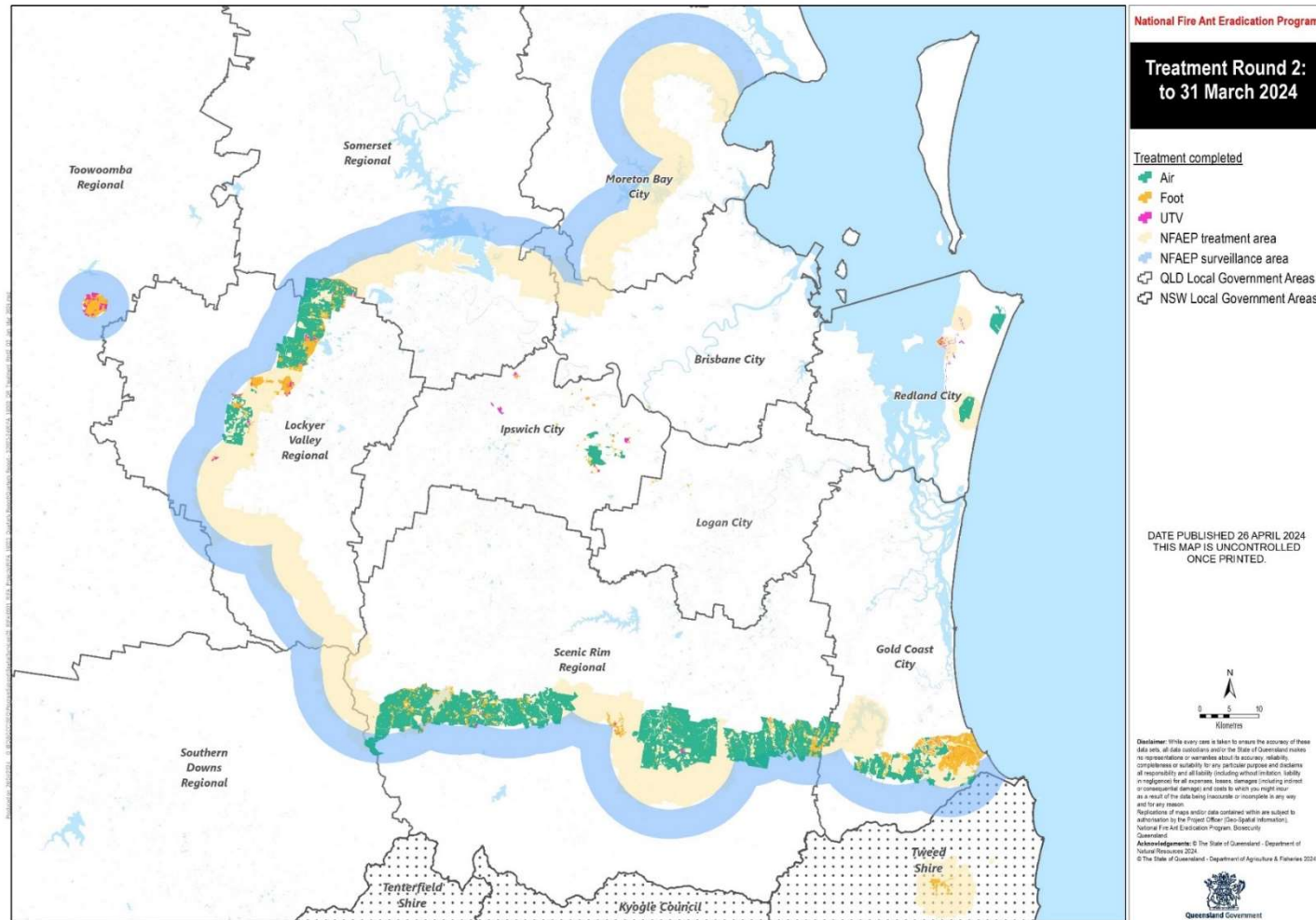
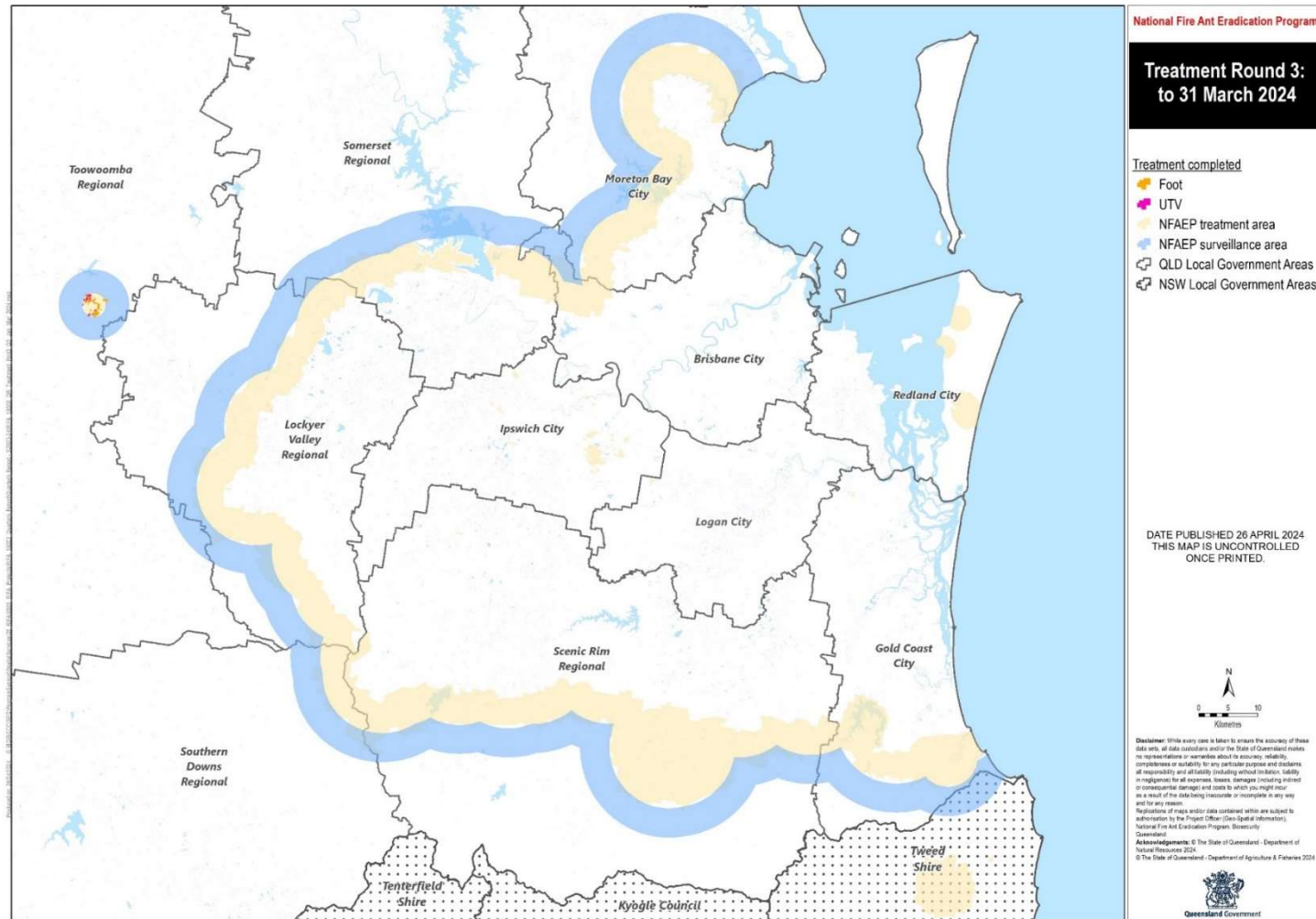


Figure 4: Map of round 3 planned treatment progress



Appendix 2 – Planned surveillance progress (31 March 2024)

The map below outlines the planned and responsive surveillance activity carried out during the reporting. Indications of the map state that surveillance was completed through responsive (delineation – orange) and planned surveillance (clearance – cyan, and targeted – magenta).

Figure 5: Map of surveillance activity for the reporting period

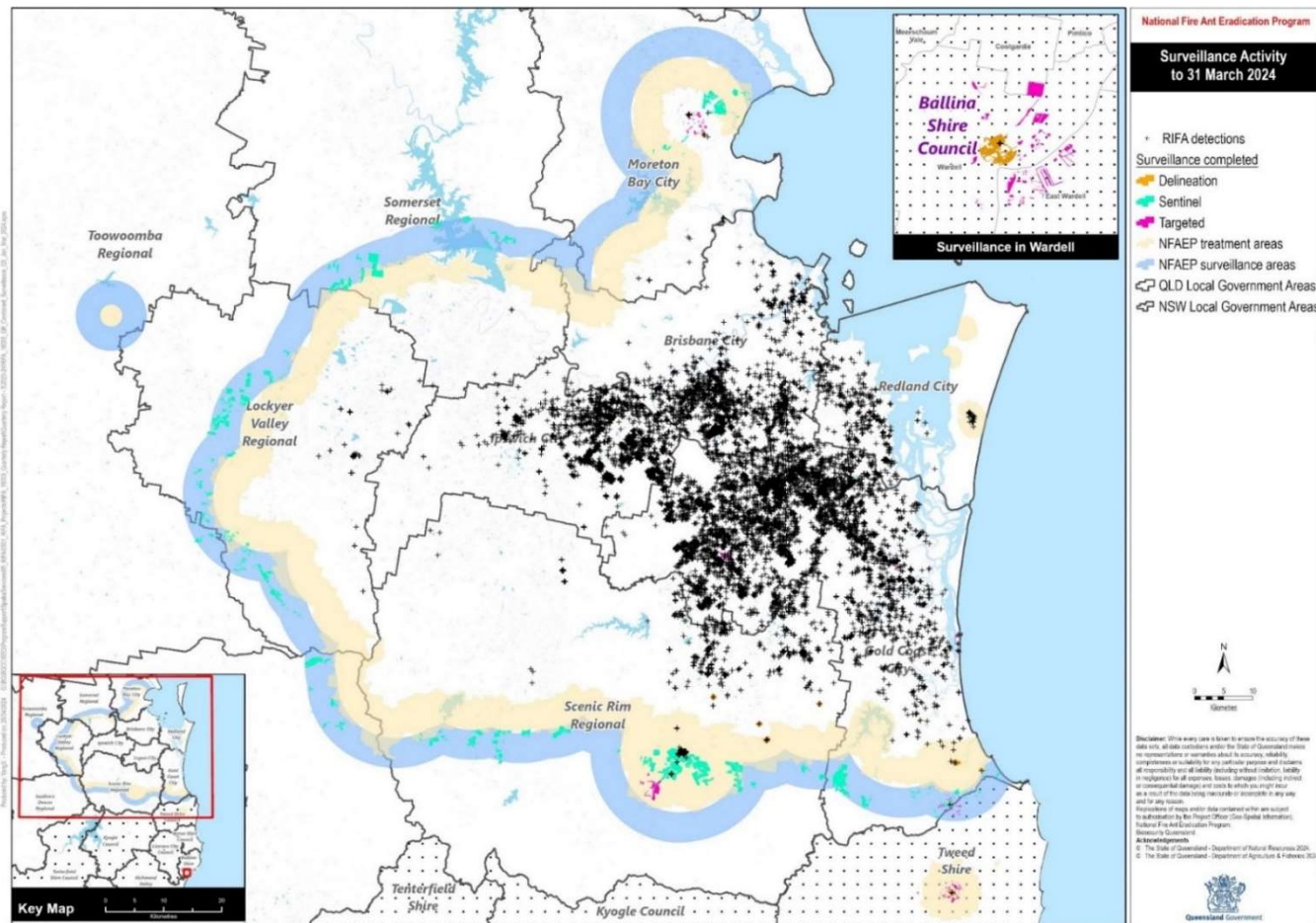


Table 8: Surveillance progress planned and responsive YTD 31 March 2024

Surveillance task	Planned ha	Progress actual ha	Progress % completed
Planned*	9,683	13,706	148%
Responsive**	0	2,523	N/A
Total	9,683	16,229	168%

*Planned surveillance – proactive surveillance on sites outside of current treatment area.

**Responsive surveillance – reactive surveillance on high-risk sites near new detections.

Appendix 3 – Planned compliance progress (31 March 2024)

The map below indicates the compliance check activities within the fire ant biosecurity zones. Compliance is indicated by a green triangle, noncompliance a red triangle. There are two fire ant biosecurity zones indicated in yellow and grey.

Figure 6: Map of the compliance activity for the reporting period

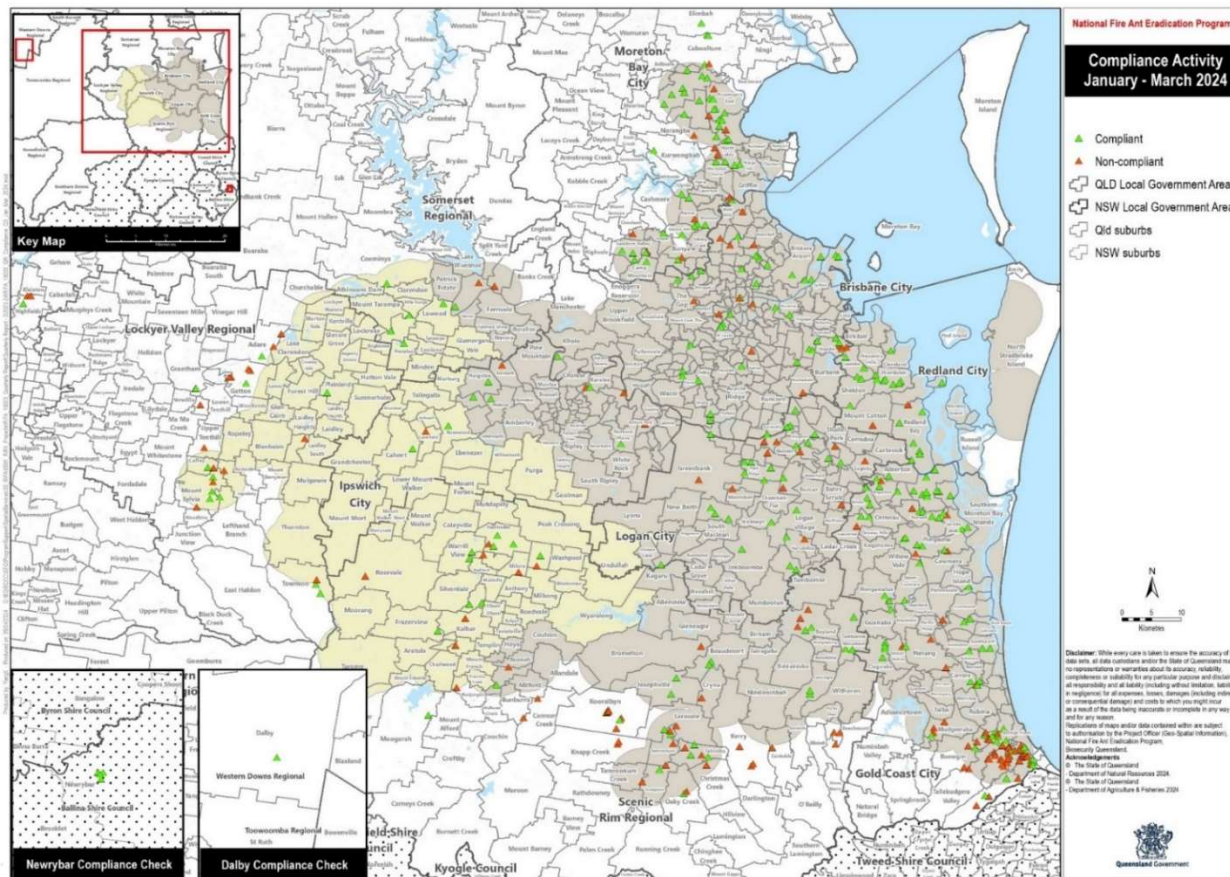


Table 9: High risk industry audits – numbers compliant vs. non-compliant

High risk industry	No. audits	% non-compliant	Comments
Hay	68	34	Some of these properties hold non-compliant hay, however they bale for their own use and have no intention of moving. Other non-compliances were rectified after officers worked with the hay producer
Earthmoving	57	19	Most non-compliance has been rectified. Remaining non-compliance will be re-visited in Q4.
Civil construction and builders	35	0	No non-compliance identified within this industry this quarter.
Landscaping supplier	79	23	All non-compliance that was identified was rectified either within the quarter or at the start of Q4.
Quarry	24	33	Most quarries were found non-compliant for minor reasons. No significant non-compliance concerns identified.
Local council	8	38	Checks conducted with Gold Coast, Moreton, and Redlands across six locations. Officers working with council to rectify non-compliance.
Waste management	9	22	Businesses typically found non-compliant due to the presence of fire ants on the site. Compliance worked with the businesses and PMTs to re-open the business and resolve the non-compliance.
Turf	10	30	All non-compliances detected were rectified within this quarter.
Nursery/potted plants	93	27	Non-compliance typically rectified quickly due to businesses applying chemical treatments to potted plants.
Other	10	20	Concreting, scrap metal, poultry, vegetable grower, DOI tracing. Non-compliance was identified on poultry farms where shed litter was not being managed in accordance with the Biosecurity Regulation 2016.
Total	393	24	Almost a quarter of compliance activities identified non-compliance during Q3. Of these identified non-compliances, the majority were resolved within the same quarter.

High risk industry	No. audits	% non-compliant	Comments
			<p>Local councils were identified to have the highest level of non-compliance.</p> <p>All the non-compliance occurred within Moreton Regional Council, mostly due to confusion over fire ant biosecurity zone changes. Compliance coordinators and officers are continuing to work with Moreton Council to resolve these issues moving forward.</p>

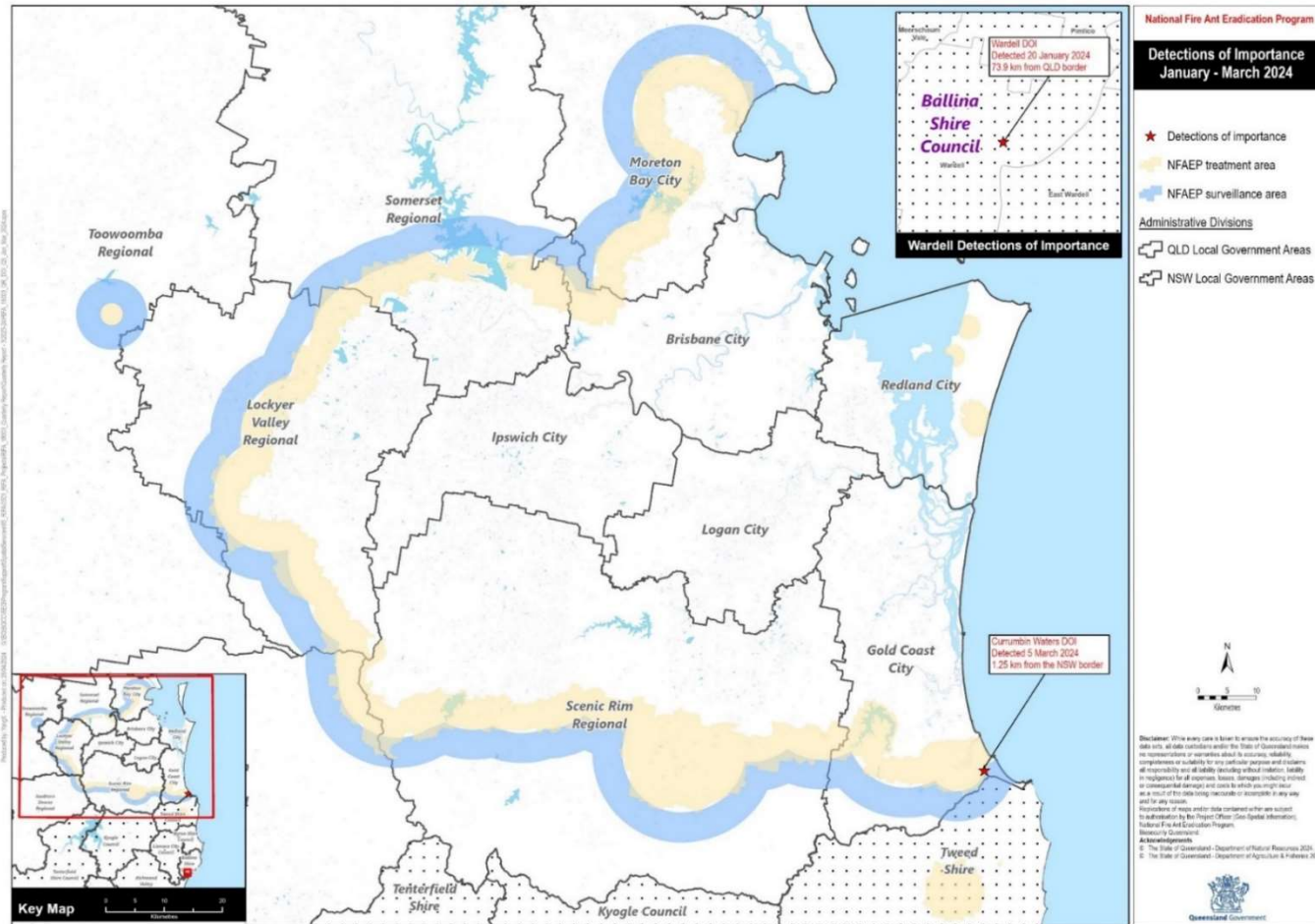
Appendix 4 – Detections of importance in Q3

Detections of importance (DOIs) are new detections that present a risk to the NFAEP's ability to achieve objectives set out in the response plan. Once a DOI is incorporated into the NFAEP's containment boundary and/or has had an eradication response established, the risk is considered mitigated. Detections outside the containment boundary are considered outliers. A detection can comprise multiple nests over multiple properties.

- During Q3, the NFAEP confirmed a DOI in South East Queensland in Currumbin Waters, Gold Coast City.
- The detection was destroyed using a combination of DNI and a broadscale treatment out to 500 m, and surveillance out to 500 m from the nest was undertaken to determine the extent of the infestation.
- The NFAEP is currently completing surveillance on sites with suitable fire ant habitat out to 2 km from the nest to gather intelligence that will inform whether additional treatment and surveillance is needed to mitigate further risk of spread.
- Additional treatment for the Currumbin Waters detection may require a variation to the work plan.
- During Q3, the NFAEP worked closely with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) to contain and eradicate an outlier detection in the suburb of Wardell south of Ballina following a confirmed detection on 19 January 2024.
- The detection in Wardell is the second confirmed detection of fire ants in NSW since they were detected in South Murwillumbah on 24 November 2023.
- Five fire ant nests were destroyed by DNI, and broadscale treatment was applied to targeted areas out to 500 m from the nests. Surveillance out to 2 km from the nests found no further fire ant nests.
- An incident investigation phase (IIP) concluded that it was both technically feasible and cost beneficial to eradicate the incursion with a broadscale treatment zone out to 2 km. It was also recommended to establish a 2 km surveillance zone to delimit geographical distribution.

The map below outlines the DOI within containment (red star) areas. Geographical locations are bound in local government (NSW - grey dots, and QLD - grey) and suburbs (light grey).

Figure 7: Map of detections of importance for the reporting period



Appendix 5 – Stakeholder mobilisation in Q3

Figure 8: Media mentions

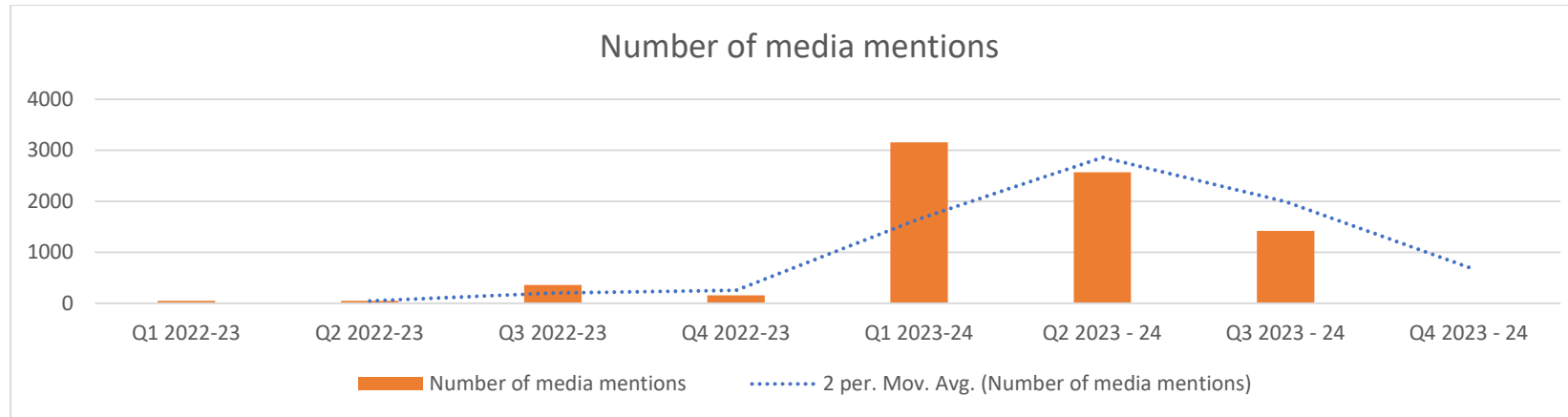


Figure 9: Website page views – fireants.org.au

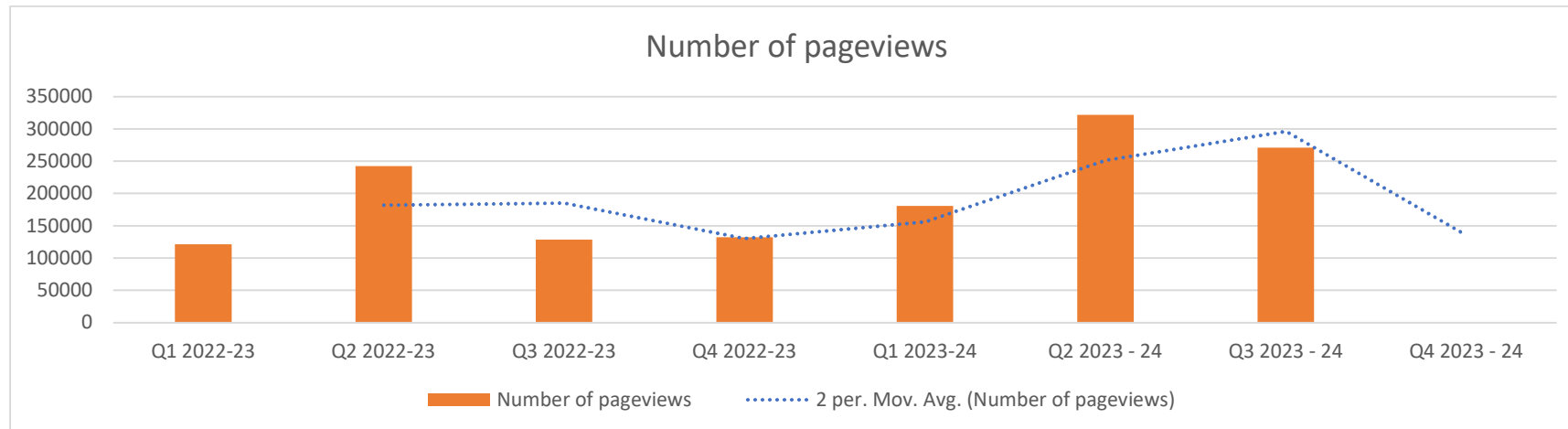
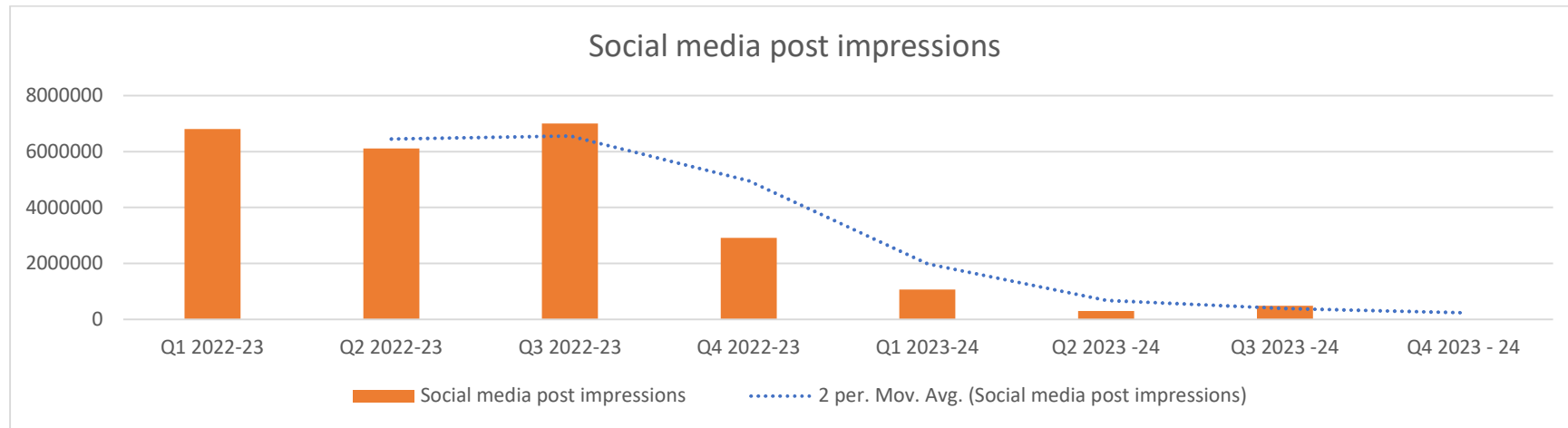


Figure 10: Social media reach**Figure 11: Stakeholder fire ant awareness training**