



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**


**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Fire Ants**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.40 pm): We know that the LNP cannot be trusted when it comes to biosecurity. I was astounded to read in the *Sunday Mail* last weekend—and I table a copy of the article—that the leader of the National Party, David Littleproud, was casting doubt on the national fire ant program, alluding to treatment impacts on pets.

*Tabled paper:* Extract from the *Sunday Mail*, dated 18 August 2024, regarding fire ant mitigation [1579](#).

It is disgraceful that a former agriculture minister of this country was dog whistling about an eradication program—in fact, Australia's largest biosecurity eradication program. The LNP's David Littleproud was the on-and-off agriculture minister of this country from 2017 to 2022 and chair of the Agricultural Ministers' Meeting that oversights this program, as well as the Commonwealth government being the main funding contributor to the program at a 50 per cent cost share. This gave David Littleproud years to get briefed on this program and appreciate the facts, yet he is wilfully ignoring the facts, never bothered to learn them or, more concerningly, is deliberately spreading misinformation about the program.

David Littleproud should know some basic facts when it comes to the bait containing insect growth regulators. For example, an average suburban residential block of approximately 500 square metres would receive about 100 grams of treatment product containing only half a gram of IGR. Based on the available scientific literature and data collected by the department over approximately 20 years of use, the concentration of the IGR treatment used by the department is not considered toxic to humans, flora, fauna or aquatic systems. He should know this as I sent this to him in a letter in July this year. I table a copy of that letter.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 26 July 2024, from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities, Hon. Mark Furner, to the Leader of the National Party and federal member for Maranoa, Hon. David Littleproud, regarding the National Fire Ant Eradication Program [1580](#).

Biosecurity should not be politicised. There will always be legitimate queries and debates, but the recent contributions from David Littleproud should be condemned.

The science regarding this pest is clear. I thank those members of the House who attended the Invasive Species Council briefing by Associate Professor Robert Puckett from the Texas A&M University just this week. The situation in the United States is dire when it comes to fire ants. They cost billions of dollars every year. Robert Puckett is confident that we can eradicate fire ants. He has been out in the field and seen some of the examples of the success of this program down towards the Gold Coast and other locations, and he is convinced that we are on the right path to eradicating them.

**An opposition member interjected.**

**Mr FURNER:** I take that interjection. There were a number of LNP members who were invited. It was not my invite; it was an invite through the Invasive Species Council.

Now is the time for all sides of politics to support this important information and the national eradication program for the good of agriculture, the environment and livability. It is important that people understand the truth behind this and do not listen to the dog whistling and the social media rants disregarding this excellent program that is operating for not only the good of agriculture but also the good of the nation.

*(Time expired)*