




Speech By
Linus Power
MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Fire Ants

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (2.38 pm): I am so pleased that the former agriculture minister, Mr Furner, is here in the chamber today, because he is one of the most passionate people in the fight against fire ants. In Logan, we are absolutely aware of the presence of fire ants in our area. That is why I was so pleased when Mr Furner put in place a \$37 million investment, in addition to the national program, to target things we could do locally. I applauded the fact that, as part of that program, we were able to give out free fire ant baits through electorate offices. I did many information stalls where I gave away fire ant baits, collected the addresses of people, and then got them to do some of that eradication. We recognise the national program is concentrating on the outside area to prevent spread and also to do eradication, but Logan residents wanted to help out by doing their bit to suppress them within Logan. However, I was gutted to see that the new minister has cut this program so that it is harder for Logan residents to get access to fire ant bait.

We have seen breakouts of fire ants in the past. I am concerned that if suppression is not happening in Logan because of these cuts, if there was a breakout in the Darling Downs, in Bundaberg or in any of our other key agricultural areas, the minister would have serious questions to answer about why he cut this program. I have literally talked to hundreds of residents in Logan where I have discussed how to eradicate fire ants from their area. I am really disappointed that this cut means that some of them might take a pot plant or soil into an agricultural area, and it will be the responsibility of the new agriculture minister who cut this program.

We saw the 100-day report, but we saw no positive, proactive measures such as this—cheap and efficient ways to get the message out. This would not only get bait into the hands of residents in Logan but also to get those addresses where we know there are nests so there could be follow-up. Member for Lockyer, you need to be responsible if there is a breakout in Lockyer if it comes to Logan because there was not suppression. You need to get onto the agriculture minister and say, 'Put back this program. Get fire ant baits back in electorate offices so that we can be agents in the fight against fire ants.' This is a government that cuts key things that can make a difference. Logan residents could be part of the fire ant volunteer army and stop it—but this minister has made that harder. This is a cut in the fight against fire ants. We need to stand up to the agriculture minister and restore the program.